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of Ontario



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Lundi
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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 21 October 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 21 octobre 2024

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next we'll have a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR BAY OF QUINTE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, a vacancy occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Todd Smith as the member for the electoral district of the Bay of Quinte, effective August 16, 2024. Accordingly, I issued my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following documents were tabled:

—the 2023-24 annual report from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario;

—the 2023-24 annual report from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario;

—a report of the French Language Services Commissioner, entitled *Missed Messages: Investigation into Unilingual Out-of-Home Government Advertising Regarding Health Services* between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2023, from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario;

—a report entitled *Expenditure Monitor 2023-24: Q4*, from the Office of the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario;

—the 2023-24 annual report of the Office of the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario;

—a report entitled *Ontario Economic Monitor: January to June 2024*, from the Office of the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario;

—a report entitled *Ontario's Public Transit Agencies: Ridership, Finances and Operating Subsidies*, from the Office of the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario;

—a request by the member for Davenport, Marit Stiles, to the Integrity Commissioner for an opinion pursuant to section 30 of the *Members' Integrity Act, 1994*, on whether the member for Etobicoke Centre, Kinga Surma, has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention;

—the 2022-23 annual report from the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario; and

—a special report entitled *Maintaining a Level Playing Field: Addressing Misinformation and Disinformation Threats to Electoral Administration in Ontario*, from the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, I need to address the House once again on the issue of the participation of independent members. Since the last time we met, the number of independent members eligible to participate in our proceedings has increased from 15 to 16. As a result, our practices must be adjusted accordingly to provide each of them with a reasonable opportunity to participate in our daily proceedings and in debate.

During question period, I will recognize two independent members to ask questions per sessional day. This will allow us to accommodate all 16 eligible independent members in an eight-day rotation. I should add that each independent member recognized during question period will continue to have the opportunity to ask one question and one supplementary question.

1020

There will continue to be one member's statement allotted to an independent member every sessional day, with each individual member now entitled to participate once per 16-day period.

I want to thank the House for its attention with regard to that statement.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Hastings-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you very much, Speaker. Let me start by welcoming you and all members of this esteemed House back to the Legislature for our fall session. I'd like to extend a special welcome to our newest member, from the Bay of Quinte.

Although most of us have been at Queen's Park for committee meetings and other activities over the past few months many times, as I came back in today, I was reminded of the awe I first experienced when entering this assembly two years ago. It is a profound recognition of the tremendous responsibility entrusted to us by the people. I'm honoured to participate in the government's agenda to continue building Ontario for its residents.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we have created the conditions for hundreds of thousands of new jobs to be added to Ontario's economy, bringing prosperity to so many people.

We are committed to investing in our health care and our education systems to meet the needs of our communities while also strengthening our infrastructure and the economy to ensure that these services remain resilient and to secure a brighter future for everyone.

As we work to build a better Ontario over the coming months, I urge all members to remember that we all want to improve this province and we can achieve this more effectively by working co-operatively and collegially in these hallowed halls.

Once again, welcome back, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much.

FORT ERIE LIONS CLUB AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

Mr. Wayne Gates: The Fort Erie Lions and affordable housing crisis: In September, I attended a fundraising launch for the new Niagara Lions Douglas Heights Seniors Residence project in Fort Erie. The Lions and other volunteers have come together to help solve the affordable housing crisis facing our seniors.

I want to thank the incredible team of volunteers that have made up this committee and that have done so much work getting this project up and running.

The proposed new nine-storey, 62-unit independent living apartment will provide housing for our seniors, including those who are on a waiting list for over 10 years. Forty-five per cent of Fort Erie's population is 55 years and older, which will grow to 50% by 2041. Nearly 3,000 households in Fort Erie are 65 years and older and considered low-income. They need to raise \$1.5 million to qualify for federal funding.

This provincial government has spent \$26.7 million on partisan election ads and half a billion on a private spa in Toronto. What this government should be doing is investing in our seniors and in affordable housing. There is nothing more important than ensuring seniors—the people that built our province—have the housing they need and, quite frankly, Speaker, they deserve.

I'm calling on the Premier and the minister to do the right thing, work together and invest in this crucial project for Fort Erie, Niagara and for all our seniors in the province of Ontario.

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, it's Small Business Week. It's a time to celebrate the hard-working men and women who operate Ontario's over 400,000 small businesses. I'm sending my heartfelt appreciation to the entrepreneurs in Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, whose businesses are the heart of our small towns and villages.

This summer, I was proud to showcase many of these amazing local businesses with members of our government's cabinet: from the Nut Free Gourmet bakery with Minister Thompson to visiting dozens of vendors at the Brockville Farmers' Market with Minister Flack; or Alan Browns clothiers, 1000 Islands Brewing, Tory Deschamps Hair Studio, and 1000 Islands pizzeria with Minister Bethlenfalvy; and Devries Power and Utilities Solutions and 401 Electric with Minister Piccini and Premier Ford. These businesses had a chance to speak directly to our government about how we can ensure to continue to support them.

I also want to recognize our local chambers of commerce that are the very important voice of businesses in our community. It was great for me to celebrate with two of our chambers for their awards of excellence, the Thousand Islands–Gananoque chamber and the Brockville and District Chamber of Commerce, and to also co-host a breakfast with MP Michael Barrett, our local MP, co-sponsored by both the South Grenville and the North Grenville chambers of commerce.

This week, and every week, I encourage all of us to get out and support our local small businesses and thank them, because they're the backbone of our communities.

ETHEL CÔTÉ

M. Guy Bourgouin: C'est avec une grande tristesse que je me lève aujourd'hui dans l'Assemblée pour commémorer la mort d'une membre remarquable de la communauté franco-ontarienne, M^{me} Ethel Côté.

Ethel a consacré sa vie à faire avancer les intérêts de notre communauté et à défendre l'identité, la culture et, bien sûr, la langue franco-ontarienne. Elle a fondé l'organisation de l'entreprise sociale mécènESS dans le but de promouvoir l'égalité des genres, la justice sociale et le développement durable. Alors que nous réfléchissons à sa vie, prenons un moment de silence pour nous souvenir d'Ethel Côté et de l'impact profond qu'elle a eu sur la francophonie ontarienne.

Monsieur le Président, je demande un moment de silence pour la durée de la déclaration de député.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to have a moment's silence. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: It's great to be back in the Legislature this morning. Over the past few months, I've had the opportunity to attend numerous community events and celebrations, and had an opportunity to connect with the residents. These events remind us of the unique tapestry that make our province so vibrant and special. To

the many inspiring individuals who volunteer their time, thank you for your commitment to making Ontario such a great place to be.

Under Premier Ford's leadership, our government has made it clear that Brampton will never again be left behind. I'm so pleased to share that Brampton's new Toronto Metropolitan University school of medicine is set to open its doors next year in September 2025, a beginning of a new chapter graduating medical experts right here in our great city of Brampton.

Our commitment doesn't end there. We're powering forward as we get ready to build and begin construction on critical infrastructure investments such as Brampton's second hospital and the much-anticipated Highway 413, a corridor that's going to alleviate traffic and save drivers up to an hour from work to home every day, letting them spend more time with their families and less time stuck in gridlock.

As our fall parliamentary session begins, I'm excited to be back in the Legislature to debate important bills and continue working on our mandate of making Ontario a powerhouse for generations to come.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Mr. Chris Glover: It's really wonderful to be back in this House and to start working on the issues that people care about most in this province. The Ontario NDP, in this session, we're going to be focused on housing, health care, education and community safety.

I want to start with housing. This Conservative government inherited a crisis of 21,000 homeless people in this province from the Liberal government; they've managed to increase that to 234,000 people who are homeless across this province. In my own riding, we've got tent encampments, in Clarence Square and Little Norway, in parks and under the Gardiner. Every community that I visit in this province has tent encampments, and that is the result of the policies pursued by this government. It is a human tragedy.

1030

There are 2,500 people per year who die from the opioid crisis, which is part of this homeless crisis. Forty percent of the people who are homeless have disabilities, mental illness or addictions. The impact of these tent encampments on the communities, on businesses—it makes people feel unsafe in their communities. It means people don't have access to their public space.

In the last session, I introduced a bill to build 250,000 units of non-market housing, including co-ops, social housing and supportive housing. I'm going to be reintroducing that. We need to get the solution. We know how to solve the homelessness and housing crisis. Ignoring it hasn't worked. We need to build housing. We need to build non-market housing to bring an end to homelessness and to build affordable housing so that everyone in this province has a home they can afford.

ROAD SAFETY

MPP Zee Hamid: Exactly a month ago yesterday, one of the constituents in my riding, who I had crossed paths with many times, tragically died in a car accident. A pickup truck was driving on Derry Road in my riding at very high speed when it struck several vehicles, crossed the median, flipped over and struck a vehicle driven by Muhammad Saleem, who was rushed to the hospital, but despite the best efforts to save him, succumbed to his injuries.

At his funeral, several attendees came up and asked me to raise the issue of road safety in Parliament, so it's very timely that it just so happens that the second reading of Bill 197 is today, the Safer Roads and Communities Act.

One silver lining is that the Milton community came together and quickly raised \$124,000 to help the Saleem family. I know that the bill won't bring Muhammad back, but I'm confident and I have no doubt in my mind that the act will save lives in the future.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Ted Hsu: Welcome back to work—six weeks late, six weeks of new ministers and parliamentary assistants with nice pay raises not having to face the—

Interjections.

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

The House will come to order. I didn't hear anything unparliamentary about what the member said. I apologize to the member for interrupting him.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Mike Harris: Nice podium.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Red Tape Reduction will come to order.

The member for Kingston and the Islands has the floor.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Six weeks of new ministers and parliamentary assistants with nice pay raises not having to face the Legislature and answer questions: not answering questions from people who still don't have a family doctor or give up after waiting hours in emergency, if it's even open; not answering questions from people who can't afford rent increases, or small landlords ruined by delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board; not answering questions from first responders and health care workers injured by increased violence, or downtown businesses and construction workers in my riding who live and work amongst the victims of addictions, mental health and the homelessness crisis; not answering questions about kids without school buses in Renfrew county, and what's going to happen in two years when contracts expire for the Tri-Board buses in Kingston and the Islands; not answering questions about special-ed teachers not spending time on special ed because they have to cover education assistants; not answering questions from a family doctor and an engineer in my riding waiting for child care so that they can go to work; not answering

questions about this Premier's obsession with beer, buying boats and burrowing under the 401.

This government is not listening to the people and not making sure that the people's priorities are the government's priorities.

FARM SAFETY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: There was an accident at my neighbour's farm in Oxford a few days ago that was a stark reminder that farm safety is vitally important. This time of year, farmers are working long days, and they're at the mercy of weather. Harvest time is limited, and they have got to get it done. This is when mistakes can happen that can cost someone a limb or their life.

Agriculture safety week may be in March, but it's important to put farm safety front and centre every day. Farm safety is about knowing what to do to avoid accidents and injuries any time you're working with equipment or livestock. That means keeping equipment fixed up and up to date, taking a break when you're tired, and not cutting corners when you're in a rush. When working, shut down equipment before making adjustments and clearing a blockage, keep the safety guards in place, and don't let kids play around work sites or near equipment. Have a first aid kit and emergency contact numbers handy, and take a charged phone with you when you head out.

For mental health support, the Farmer Wellness Initiative is available to farmers and their families and workers, any time at 1-866-267-6255.

Our farmers are working diligently to provide food for our tables, Mr. Speaker, and it's vital that we support their safety every day.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Mr. Speaker, I have more great news from Essex county. We have a joint task force in Essex county. It's a joint task force between the LaSalle police department and the Windsor police department. It's called the offender management unit, and their job is to track and arrest people who are violent offenders who have violated their bail conditions.

In less than eight months, officers have apprehended 42 offenders on a total of 72 charges. These individuals were arrested and initially charged and/or convicted with serious crimes, including murder, attempted murder, human trafficking, sexual assault and aggravated assault. Seven of these offenders were on bail for charges involving intimate partner violence.

Projects like these are made possible through grants from the government of Ontario as part of the provincial government's strategy to fix a bail system that's been left broken by the federal Liberal government. I don't know how much longer we can afford to keep fixing the Liberal problems, but I'm proud to be part of a government that is fighting intimate partner violence, and even more proud to support our fantastic police officers who work tirelessly to keep our communities safe.

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

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're going to begin with an introduction of this year's cohort of the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme, or OLIP, as we know it. They are Ayesha Ali, Caitlin Arizala, Annie Dowd, Sayyidah Jaffer, Nika Lennox, James Liao, Massimo Rigatto, Madeline Ritter, Megan Ryan-Lloyd and Alex Salton.

OLIP is a non-partisan program which allows interns to gain practical experience in the daily workings of our Legislature. Each of the OLIP interns will complete two placements over the course of their time at Queen's Park, one with a government member and one with an opposition member. The interns are meeting with members this week to determine placements, but there is still time to submit an application. I would encourage all members who are eligible to participate in this exceptional program.

Welcome to Queen's Park. We're delighted to have you here.

Applause.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MPP Jamie West: I would like to introduce Dr. Koka, who is here with the Ontario Medical Association. Dr. Koka is extremely involved in our community in Sudbury and, most notably I think, instrumental in bringing the Northern Ontario School of Medicine to Sudbury.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Welcome back. I would like to welcome to Queen's Park representatives from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association: executive director Stephanie Donaldson; managing director, corporate affairs, Lisa Reinhardt; director of policy, Jennifer McIntyre; managing director of government and public affairs, Shane Gonsalves; and manager of strategic communications, T.J. Goertz.

1040

OPSBA and its board members are recognizing Local Government Week. That raises awareness about the important role government plays in our communities, and that includes our locally elected school board trustees.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Welcome back. I have several introductions to make this morning, so please bear with me.

I'd like to welcome Dr. Alykhan Abdulla, a doctor from Ottawa West—Nepean here for the OMA lobby day.

J'aimerais aussi présenter M^{me} Gabriëlle Lemieux, la nouvelle présidente de l'AEFO, ainsi qu'Émile Maheu.

And from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association: Stephanie Donaldson, executive director; Lisa Reinhardt, managing director of corporate affairs; Jennifer McIntyre, director of policy; Shane Gonsalves, managing director of government and public affairs; and T.J. Goertz, manager of strategic communications.

Welcome, everyone, to your House.

Mr. John Fraser: I, too, would like to welcome Dr. Alykhan Abdulla from Manotick, Ontario, and all doctors who are here from Ottawa on OMA's day.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We have two important associations joining us today. From the Ontario Medical Association, we have Kimberly Moran, CEO; Dr. Dominik Nowak, who is the president; Dr. Cathy Faulds, the chair; and all members of the OMA executive team and association.

Also joining us today from the Association of Ontario Midwives is Althea Jones, board president, and Donika Stonefish, AOM Indigenous midwifery. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mme France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to welcome members of the Ontario Medical Association here at Queen's Park, including their CEO, Kim Moran, and president, the phenomenal Dr. Dominik Nowak. I also want to thank Dr. Popuri Krishna, Dr. Grace Ma, Dr. Dannica Switzer, Dr. Caitlin Krempowich, Dr. David Ohrling, Dr. Amin Meghdadi and Dr. Craig Matheson. Welcome to your House. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, a huge welcome to the Ontario midwifery association.

Mme Karen McCrimmon: C'est un grand plaisir d'accueillir Gabrielle Lemieux, présidente de l'Association des enseignants et des enseignants franco-ontariens.

Welcome to Stephanie Donaldson, executive director of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, and Dr. Alykhan Abdulla from the Ontario Medical Association.

Thank you, all, for your service to the people of Ontario.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Good morning, Speaker. It's great to be back and I'd like to welcome a constituent from Brampton, Talibah Miller-Johnson. Welcome to the Legislature and enjoy your day here.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would also like to welcome some doctors who I'm looking forward to meeting this afternoon. From the OMA: Benu Sethi; Dr. Gary Chaimowitz; Dr. Katherine Chorneyko; Dr. Israa Abou El Nour; Dr. Karen Trollope-Kumar; Dr. Mohammad Tabari; Dr. Daniel Cordovani; and Dr. Madeleine Verhovsek.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Welcome back, everybody.

I also want to welcome the members of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association: Stephanie Donaldson, Lisa Reinhardt, Jennifer McIntyre, Shane Gonsalves and T.J. Goertz. Welcome to Queen's Park and thanks for all you do for our local school boards. Happy Local Government Week.

Hon. Graydon Smith: I just wanted to welcome Dr. Tim Redmond from the great community of Parry Sound in my riding here with the OMA lobby day today. Thank you very much and welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a number of members who would still like to introduce their guests. I'd like to continue, unless there's an objection. Agreed? Okay.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome some doctors from the OMA, including Dr.

Andrew Park, Dr. Linda Groen, Dr. Raghu Venugopal, Dr. Janet D'souza, Dr. David Schieck, Dr. Ross Male and soon-to-be-Dr. Vidhi Bhatt, as well as Rena Menaker from the OMA. It's also good to see Kimberly Moran. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mme Lucille Collard: I see we do have a lot of people from the Ontario Medical Association I met this morning. I would like to welcome to this House Dr. Lee Donohue, Dr. Dannica Switzer, Dr. David Barber, Dr. Katerina Nikolitch, Dr. Amanda Jerome, Dr. Cathy Mastrogiacomio, in addition to Dr. Aly Abdulla, who has been named a few times already.

Je veux également souhaiter la bienvenue à Gabrielle Lemieux, la nouvelle présidente de l'AEFO.

Ms. Laura Smith: Welcome back, everyone. It is my very great honour to welcome Thornhill high school student from Westmount Collegiate and future co-op student at my office, Mr. Harrison Perlmutar. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to welcome all the members of the OMA who are here today. I'm very much looking forward to my meeting later this afternoon. London West is well represented with many fine physicians, but in particular, I want to recognize my constituents Dr. Andrew Park, former OMA president, and Dr. Cathy Faulds, who sits on the board of the OMA. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'm usually the only physician in the Legislature, but that changes today, because we're welcoming the Ontario Medical Association.

I must admit, I'm thrilled to have Dr. Dominik Nowak here, as well as Kimberly Moran. There are far too many friends and colleagues in the galleries joining us today, but two warrant a very special mention. The first is one of my best friends from medical school, Dr. Bharat Bahl, and my former OLIP intern, Rhea Saini, who is a first-year medical student at Queen's. Welcome to you all.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, I'd like to welcome Jan, Tom and Susan from Kerry's Place Autism Services, who are joined by their team: Kevin, Carmela, Osman, Kelly and Cheryl. I invite all my colleagues here to join Kerry's Place tonight for their reception in room 228 and 230. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to welcome Dr. Azim Kasmani from the Ontario Medical Association today from the Niagara region. Thank you, and welcome to your House.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'd like to welcome physicians forming a very strong delegation from Kingston and the Islands today representing the OMA: Dr. Hataley, Dr. Barber, Dr. Zacharias, Dr. Marwaha, Dr. Dockrill, Dr. Smith and Dr. Tabari. Thank you for coming here today.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I just want to recognize—I see Dr. Jobin Varughese from Brampton in the gallery and welcome the other Brampton doctors. If we don't have a big Brampton delegation, don't worry; we'll have a bigger one when that medical school starts churning out students.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to do something a little different. I'm going to welcome all the doctors here today. For everything you do for us, for our seniors and, quite

frankly, I want to thank you for everything you do for me keeping me healthy. Thank you very much for being here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I'd like to welcome Dr. Azim Kasmani, who is the chief medical officer of health for the Niagara region and a resident of Grimsby. He's an amazing father and takes good care of his kids; I see him at soccer practices. I know he's going to be here sharing the message with the OMA. I look forward to chatting with you and appreciate all you do.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Good morning, Speaker, and welcome back, colleagues. I would also like to extend my voice and add to the chorus of welcomes to the Ontario Medical Association, who is here in huge numbers. Over 100 doctors are joining us at Queen's Park today.

I'd like to mention a few of them by name, and I'm going to start with the CEO, Kimberly Moran, Dr. Rena Menaker, Dr. Sierra Avrashi, Dr. Jordan Fung, Dr. Ming Li, Dr. Shaheer Aboobaker, Dr. Travis Carpenter, Dr. Ali Kajdehi, Dr. Anita Rao, as well as Dr. Raghu Vanugopal and their associate Melinda Gibson.

1050

I also want to extend a welcome to Cait Alexander as well as Emily Agar, two powerhouse advocates for ending violence everywhere. They'll be holding a rally outside of Queen's Park at 12 o'clock.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the members that we're not to make political statements in our introduction of visitors.

The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.

Hon. Stan Cho: I'll be quick. I just saw my good buddy, the past president of the OMA here, Dr. Andrew Park, who I bother for free medical advice all the time. Thank you for being here today.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Again, I'm very pleased to welcome Sarah Klodnicki and Myra Zettel of Balance Support and Self Care Studios, a Hamilton-based non-profit dedicated to helping parents and caregivers of children with diverse needs. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting with you later.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I want to welcome an educational professional here today from Essex county. She is the principal of école Saint-Antoine in Tecumseh, and she's been married to me for 26 years. It's my wife, Jackie Leardi.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Welcome.

We have two former members present with us today in the House: the member for Scarborough–Ellesmere in the 30th, 31st and 33rd Parliaments, and Speaker of the 35th Parliament, David Warner. He is joined by Karen Haslam, who was the member for Perth in the 35th Parliament. Welcome to Queen's Park. We're delighted to have you back.

MEMBER FOR
VAUGHAN–WOODBRIDGE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm advised the Premier wishes to raise a point of order.

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to welcome everyone back to the Legislature. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the doctors for serving the people of Ontario. Our health care wouldn't exist without the hard work and dedication that they show day in and day out.

We've just had another doctor join our ranks here. I want to congratulate Minister—Dr.—Michael Tibollo. He ended up earning his doctorate in psychology.

Dr. Tibollo, I can assure you, you're going to be busy with psychology in this group here. You can start off with the top ranks right up there and then work your way down. But I want to say congratulations. I know how hard you've worked for years to get your doctorate.

Congratulations, Michael.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Congratulations to the associate minister.

THE SPEAKER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier has still got the floor.

Hon. Doug Ford: If there was ever a doctorate in serving the people it would go to you, Mr. Speaker. I know you made it public you won't be running. I want to thank you.

Since 1990 this Speaker has served the people of Wellington–Halton Hills. I know that riding changed at one point, but I want to thank you for your dedication to the people of your riding. Thank you for serving the people.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I haven't died and I'm not going anywhere just yet but thank you very much.

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

This being the first sitting Monday of the month, I want to ask everyone to join in the singing of the Canadian national anthem, followed by the royal anthem. We're going to look to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to lead it off.

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR BAY OF QUINTE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table a certificate of the by-election in the electoral district of Bay of Quinte.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): I have a letter dated September 25, 2024, addressed to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, that reads as follows:

“Dear Mr. Day:

“A writ of election dated the 21st day of August 2024, was issued by the Honourable Justice of the Superior Court of Justice, serving as Administrator of the government of Ontario, and was addressed to Christine McIvor, returning officer for the electoral district of Bay of Quinte, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Bay of Quinte in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Todd Smith who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Bay of Quinte, has resigned.

“This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Bay of Quinte on the 19th day of September 2024, Tyler Allsopp has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 22nd day of September 2024, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“Yours sincerely,

“Greg Essensa

“Chief Electoral Officer.”

Mr. Allsopp was escorted into the House by Mr. Doug Ford and Mr. Clark.

Hon. Doug Ford: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Tyler Allsop, member for the electoral district of Bay of Quinte, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

Congratulations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let the honourable member take his seat.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Congratulations.

I understand the member for London West has a point of order she wishes to raise.

1100

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I seek unanimous consent that in the opinion of this House, based on the recommendation of nearly 100 witnesses over the summer at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, that the government should immediately recognize intimate partner violence as an epidemic and bring forward Bill 173, the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, for third reading.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London West is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that in the opinion of this House, the government should immediately recognize intimate partner violence as an epidemic and bring forward Bill 173, the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, for third reading. Agreed? I heard a no.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker, and welcome back.

This question is for the Premier. Over the past five months, since the Legislature has been out, things have only gotten worse for working people in this province. They're telling me they feel like their needs are being ignored, while this government is so bogged down in schemes and scandals like the greenbelt scheme.

We know at least eight people in the Premier's inner circle have been interviewed by the RCMP. Can the Premier tell us who those individuals are and how many still work in his office?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's an honour to rise on this side of the House, and I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. As we have said time and time and time again, our government has been and will be co-operating fully with the RCMP. Any questions about that investigation should be directed towards them.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I can understand why the Premier doesn't want to answer these questions, but it is my job to ask because the people of this province want answers.

Now, we knew the greenbelt scheme went as far as Las Vegas, but according to new reporting from the Toronto Star, this scandal might go even further. Can the Premier tell us why the RCMP would be looking at banking records in Europe as part of their investigation into this government?

Mr. Will Bouma: Speaker, again, through you, this is an ongoing investigation with the RCMP and any questions about that investigation should be directed to the RCMP, and I would urge the Leader of the Opposition to do so, if she has inquiries for them.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The silence tells us a lot. The schemes and scandals of this government are costing everybody in the province. Ontarians deserve the truth. I'm asking these questions because people want us to scrap those schemes. They want us to build homes, hire doctors, fix schools and make life more affordable for people in Ontario.

So I'm going to ask again to the Premier of this province to have the guts to stand up and answer a question about this. Will the Premier tell us who in Europe stood to gain from his greenbelt scheme?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will caution the members that personal attacks don't add to the debate.

The member for Brantford–Brant to reply.

Mr. Will Bouma: Again, I will reiterate: Our government is co-operating fully with the RCMP investigation. Any questions related to that investigation should be directed towards the RCMP.

As the opposition leader did bring that up, we are building Ontario in this province. We are building the highways that the people of Ontario need. We are building the hospitals that the people of Ontario need. We have brought 800,000 jobs back to the province of Ontario, after that member and her government saw 300,000 jobs leave this province. We are getting it done for the province of Ontario. We are building the province of Ontario, and we will remain laser-focused on the concerns of the people of Ontario: housing and affordability. We will get it done.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I would add, actually, that manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario are down under this government. Listen, no matter where I now—

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Look at the facts.

Interjections.

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

We're not even five minutes into it. I have to be able to hear the member who has the floor, okay?

Restart the clock. The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The truth is that no matter where I go in this province, people are feeling stuck. They're stuck looking for an affordable place to live, they're stuck trying to find a doctor, and they're stuck paying the bill for this Premier's schemes and scandals.

Let's talk about another one of those schemes: the luxury spa that's being built at Ontario Place. In the past few weeks, we've learned the cost of subsidizing this project is going to cost the people of this province hundreds of millions, even billions, of dollars.

With everything people are facing in the province of Ontario right now, I have to ask: Which struggling Ontario family told this Premier the answer to their problems was a luxury spa in downtown Toronto?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: The NDP have filed a complaint with the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner is reviewing that complaint at the moment and has specifically asked me not to comment on the matter.

However, like the member on this side of the House said, we will remain laser-focused on rebuilding Ontario Place to make it a place that people can enjoy once again. We will be laser-focused on building more housing for the people of Ontario and making sure that we reduce traffic and congestion in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: People can't even afford to put food on the table in this province and this government is shovelling money into a European spa corporation. Worse, evidence is now suggesting that the bid process for this project may have been compromised from the start. Instead of finding ways to help people, this government was focused on avoiding accountability, passing legisla-

tion to give themselves extraordinary new powers and exempting the project from standards of accountability.

I will go back to the Premier. If the Minister of Infrastructure has been told by the Integrity Commissioner that she can't answer the question while she is being investigated, maybe the Premier can answer this question: Did Therme get preferential treatment in their bid to turn Ontario Place into a luxury spa?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Again, the NDP has filed a complaint with the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner is looking into the complaint. The Integrity Commissioner has asked that I do not comment on that matter.

What I find very surprising is that the Leader of the Opposition walks into this House seeking assistance from the Integrity Commissioner and now is asking me to disrespect him by responding. I will not do that. I respect the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, and I respect the Integrity Commissioner. I will take his advice and guidance.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: This is what happens, I guess, when you have a government under criminal RCMP investigation and with the Integrity Commissioner buried in complaints: They won't even answer a question. They hide behind it.

This government has lost the plot completely, too focused on their own schemes and scandals to manage the basics that people expect of their government. How else could you explain the extraordinary lengths they apparently went to in order to make sure that Therme got access to this public land? Emails that we've uncovered show that Therme was communicating with the government about their bid, despite an NDA, and that the Premier's now-chief of staff was well aware.

To the Premier again, because he certainly could answer this question: Did the government change the rules to give this company an advantage in this scheme, and why?

Hon. Kinga Surma: While the leader of the official opposition continues to disrespect the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, I will not.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what I was busy doing this summer: I was busy travelling the province to announce 54 projects in the province of Ontario that will help build 511,000 homes: for Gananoque, 416 homes; London, \$23 million for 17,000 homes; in Brampton, with my colleagues in Brampton, \$30 million for 12,000 homes; in Prince Edward county, welcoming our very new colleague, \$18 million for 4,000 homes.

Our focus is building more homes and reducing traffic and congestion in the province of Ontario.

1110

HOME CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: Home care patients, their families and health care workers who support them are in a state of

panic. Doctors have described the situation as “utter chaos” after this government suddenly switched suppliers with almost no notice.

The Ontario Medical Association has shared the terrifying impacts of this shortage: home care patients being sent to emergency rooms because their supplies have run out, patients in palliative care unable to get sedatives and people facing life-threatening infections without proper sanitary supplies.

My question, again, to the Premier: How much longer will vulnerable patients have to wait for medical supplies, and what is this Premier doing to fix it today?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The issue that the member opposite raises is absolutely unacceptable. We have been working with Ontario Health atHome to ensure that no patients, no patients’ families, no clinicians are impacted by a logistics issue.

I want to assure the people of Ontario that we have been on this issue since we first learned that there were shortages being delivered. But I also want to remind people that we know this is unacceptable and we are not going to allow this to continue. I am on it. My ministry is on it. As recently as last night, we had another update, reinforcing that this cannot continue in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I would say it is not only unacceptable, it is unethical, actually. This sudden change of suppliers came with absolutely no notice in late September. What was this government playing at?

It is now one month later, and patients and care providers are scrambling to get essential medical supplies. If they get any, they’re getting sub-standard supplies, like gauze that’s not going to reach the standards. This is risking patient safety.

Is this utter disaster in home care because the Premier tried to cut corners yet again? Or is this another scheme to benefit more government insiders at Bayshore?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I said it once and I will say it again: It is absolutely unacceptable, which is why I have directed Ontario Health atHome to ensure that any patient, any patient family, any clinician who has gone and secured necessary medical equipment will get reimbursed. It’s unacceptable, full stop.

We’re making sure that, going forward, this cannot happen again, and we want to assure the people of Ontario that we have been on it since we started hearing that there were concerns about deliveries.

TAXATION

Mr. Matthew Rae: The federal Liberal carbon tax: The members of the opposition and the independent Liberals groan because they have realized—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to ask the opposition to come to order. The member for Perth–Wellington is at high volume, but I still need to hear him. I can’t.

Member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: The members of the opposition and the independent Liberals groan and heckle me right now because they realize they have already lost the next provincial election, because they support the federal Liberal carbon tax.

While members of the opposition parties want more taxes, our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has cut taxes. This has led to billions of dollars flowing into Ontario and over 800,000 new jobs created since we took government in 2018.

Speaker, you may be wondering how we achieved this success. Well, we cut the Liberal taxes they raised and we cut the red tape the Liberals put up.

Can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade update this place on what we are doing to attract more investment and create more good-paying jobs?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Wow. Welcome back. He’s had his coffee this morning.

Speaker, 43,200 new jobs were created in Ontario just last month alone; all were full-time and all were in private companies. Speaker, our manufacturing sector now employs more than 800,000 workers, one of the highest levels that we’ve seen in 15 years. That’s what happens when you lower taxes, reduce red tape and create the conditions for businesses to succeed.

We are seeing companies right across the province invest, expand and create good-paying jobs. Speaker, Ontario is an economic powerhouse; you’ve heard the Premier say this over and over. We are an economic powerhouse. We are the envy of the world, and we’ll continue to let everyone know that we are open for business.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the minister for his response. I’m glad to hear our government will continue to keep taxes low.

Unfortunately, carbon-tax Crombie is promising more taxes for Ontarians and small businesses. This summer, she went on the #onpoli podcast and advocated for a completely new tax, Speaker, during an affordability crisis: the retail sales tax. Speaker, I am just speechless. The Liberal leader wants to raise taxes.

While the Liberals promise more taxes, our Progressive Conservative government will continue to listen to businesses and workers, and ensure the conditions are there so they can continue to succeed. Can the minister please explain how our record of job creation is compared to the previous Liberal government?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, there is no comparison with the Liberal record. Today, there are now more than 860,000 more men and women working today than since the day we were elected.

In our tech sector, employment has increased by over 100,000 workers. Ontario has added 30,000 AI workers in the last two years. In our auto sector, we've landed \$45 billion in new investments, saving 100,000 jobs in the auto sector and adding tens of thousands of new jobs across the supply chain. In our life sciences sector, we've landed game-changing investments of over \$5 billion.

This is what happens, Speaker, when you remove over 500 pieces of strangling red tape, you streamline regulation and you create the conditions for businesses to succeed. We're leading the way and the world is taking—

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

LAND USE PLANNING

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

The Wilmot land assembly is this government's next greenbelt scandal. Wilmot has become ground zero for farmers across this province. Paving over class 1 farmland for a mega-industrial site makes no sense. This Premier has criticized the region of Waterloo, but we now know that it was this government that set the terms for sale, forced the non-disclosure agreements and are fully funding the purchase and/or expropriation of farmland.

The new provincial planning statement just came into effect yesterday. The Wilmot land assembly is in direct contravention of your own policy.

To the Premier: Will you stop funding and driving this industrial site on class 1 farmland, which overrides local democracies and fails rural communities in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

Hon. Rob Flack: Let's be clear: It is the sole responsibility of the region to assemble land and to work with all affected communities and stakeholders, including the Wilmot farmers.

The Premier has made it very clear: Our expectation is that the region treat farmers fairly and respectfully in assembling the land, period. It is no different than any other major investment or assembly project, like we did with Volkswagen, that, I might add, the members opposite approved and supported—a project twice the size with no expropriation that will create 3,000 direct jobs and over 30,000 indirect jobs throughout this great province.

Over the long term, we believe in a delicate but important balance between a thriving farm and agri-food sector while supporting growth, new investment and good-paying jobs, also in the agri-food processing sector.

1120

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Premier set the terms. You're funding the displacement of farmers. They are ultimately responsible. Look in the mirror.

Speaker, agriculture generates \$47 billion in economic activity in the province of Ontario. Finding the balance between economic development and the agriculture sector is possible, but not at the expense of class 1 farmland, and not by kicking farmers off their land. We don't even have cost estimates thus far for this entire deal.

This will be another costly mistake and scandal on behalf of this government. There hasn't been one public meeting—not one public meeting. Farmers in Ontario should not be treated this way.

Premier, will you do the right thing? Will you release the region from the NDA and will you stop funding this mega-industrial project, which displaces and disrespects farmers?

Interjections.

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

To reply, the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the region of Waterloo understands that not having shovel-ready site assembly has already cost them job-creating investments. In their own report, which I'm going to quote from: "Over the last three years, \$10 billion of potential investment and over 14,000 jobs from businesses considering Waterloo region were lost, as different communities were chosen to invest in." So while Ontario did win those investments, companies like Dr. Oetker—who planned to invest \$200 million and who now employ over 430 people—went elsewhere, because the region of Waterloo did not have any land ready.

We're doing our part here to help these massive, job-creating investments come to Ontario, and the region of Waterloo wants to be a destination that people choose to come to, but unfortunately, the Liberals and the NDP are content—

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

The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the new Minister of Energy and Electrification. Mr. Speaker, winter is coming, and that means higher costs to my constituents in Essex county as a result of the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax. Families in Essex county and across Ontario are already paying higher prices for groceries, gas, goods and housing, and now, because of the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax, they're going to pay an extra \$400 per year just to heat their homes.

We believe that Ontario families should not be punished just for heating their homes in the wintertime. Can the minister please outline what measures our government is taking to make life more affordable for people in Essex county and across Ontario?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It's an honour to stand as Ontario's new Minister of Energy and Electrification for the province.

Mr. Speaker, let us affirm that our priority is affordable energy for the people of Ontario, because gone are the days where families were paying 300% more for energy under the former Liberals. Gone are the days where seniors were paying \$1,000 more per year because of an ideological government that did not put affordability as their number one priority. Gone are the days of choosing energy contracts 10 times above the market, leading to the highest rates on the continent.

Our government and our Premier have a plan to generate, to build, to conserve, to store and to export more clean, affordable energy to our province and the world. We are focused on making life affordable for the people of Ontario, and we will not rest until the federal Liberal carbon tax is totally eliminated from our energy rates, from our bills, from our groceries, for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the minister for that response. I know my constituents in Essex are going to be happy to know that this government is prioritizing affordability when it comes to helping all families, and we need this, because the Trudeau-Crombie Liberals are imposing a carbon tax which is nearly 28% of the heating bill when you look at the bill that you receive at your house.

Middle-class families are already being hit hard. How can the Trudeau-Crombie Liberals justify increasing tax on heating fuel and other necessities of life, especially when the cost of living is getting so high? But let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: This government stands by Ontario families and we will continue advocating to scrap the tax, that Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister, how will our government stand up for people in Ontario and for people in my riding, the riding of Essex, and that we never go back to the short-sighted energy disaster imposed by the previous Liberal government.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member for Essex for the question and his leadership. Ontario has one of the cleanest energy grids in the world. We are proud of that record. But what we also recognize is that in order to build our energy system, we need to focus on affordability. Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer in Canada has confirmed that more Ontarians are paying more than they get back under this Liberal scheme.

They want to import this punitive tax to the people of Ontario, bringing the worst policies and ideological convictions of the federal Liberals to the people of Ontario. We say no, because families are paying \$700 more today than they were under the previous plan. Our focus is to use technology, not taxation, to drive the reduction in emissions. We believe we can reduce emissions while growing our economy. That is what this government has done because, Mr. Speaker, we are on track to reduce our emissions, hitting our Paris accord targets without imposing a carbon tax on the people of Ontario.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

MPP Jill Andrew: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The Eglinton LRT Crosstown project is billions over budget, years late and, frankly, riddled with construction problems. Our St. Paul's residents and small business owners have demanded transparent and accurate answers from Metrolinx and this government on when the construction will end and when the line will open.

The only person who seems to be benefiting from this mess is Metrolinx CEO Phil Verster, whose salary has risen from half a million dollars in 2018 to more than \$800,000 in 2022, and we've heard he's going to go to even above \$1 million annually. That's right: He's going to receive raises from this government even though he has failed to understand the assignment. Once again, the government's buddies rake in millions of public dollars while the taxpayer is left with nothing.

Will the Premier stop doubling down on failure and fire Mr. Phil Verster, the CEO of Metrolinx?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We are undertaking one of the largest expansions of public transit in the history of not only Canada, but North America: \$70 billion over the next 10 years. Mr. Speaker, that member knows that we're in the testing and commissioning phase of that project, and we will continue to do so. We have completed construction on that, and we'll continue to test it to make sure it's a reliable and safe system.

Mr. Speaker, this government has delivered like no other for public transit. Let's talk about the benefits to everyday commuters: One Fare, putting \$1,600 back in the pockets of those who use public transit every single day. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The members of the NDP and Liberals voted against that measure as we brought it forward. In fact, they have voted against every single one of our public transit projects that we have put forward in this city. We've seen record gridlock across our province. Our government has a plan, and we're getting it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

MPP Jill Andrew: Speaker, back to the Premier: Two years ago, we, the NDP, demanded a public inquiry into this Eglinton Crosstown debacle. Since then, we've learned that under Metrolinx, the Finch West LRT and the Hurontario LRT projects are also indefinitely in limbo, with no opening date in sight. And most recently, we learned that Metrolinx cut ties with its chief operating officer, its chief transit planner, and the entire department is in disarray. I mean, how do you plan transit without a chief planner? What is going on at Metrolinx? We're all asking.

And let's not forget, it was this government that actually told Metrolinx to keep the opening date a secret from the public. So the schemes and the scandals of this government—they're not getting my community in St. Paul's or any Ontarian anywhere.

My question is back to the Premier. Premier, will you agree to a public inquiry into Metrolinx, or will you continue to double down on your record of failure? Good morning, Premier.

1130

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Mr. Speaker, here are the facts: The NDP and Liberals have gone and voted against every single one of our projects. For 15 years, the Liberals did absolutely nothing in building this province. We see record gridlock because of their inaction.

And the NDP are no different. They want nothing built. The Ontario Line, which they voted against and questioned every step of the way, will take over 28,000 cars off the road and will move 400,000 people every single day.

It's a shame that the NDP and Liberals don't want to support those projects, but that's not new. Every project that this government has put forward—the 413, the Bradford Bypass, Finch, the Eglinton West extension, the Scarborough subway extension—they have doubted those projects every step of the way.

Our government is about building. We have a vision for this entire province. We're leading North America in our expansion of public transit. We will not do the same mistakes that the previous Liberal government—

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Adil Shamji: For the Premier: Do you know what's better than the taste of beer? The taste of beer when you have a family doctor.

You know what's better than beating traffic? Beating traffic on the way to your family doctor.

And you know what's better than getting money in the mail? Getting money in the mail that you don't have to spend on an expensive substitute for a family doctor.

Last week, the Ontario Medical Association said that our health care system is in a state of catastrophe. So where has this government been for the last five months? No doubt on an extended vacation.

Health ranks highest on everyone's hierarchy of needs, but it consistently ranks lowest on the Premier's list of priorities. Lack of health care is threatening the future of our province. How can teachers teach, builders build or drivers drive if they don't have health care?

Does the Premier really think that the last-minute appointment of a former Liberal health minister justifies his five-month vacation while 2.5 million Ontarians don't have a family doctor?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, do you know what's better than 15 years of Liberal dithering and delaying? A government, under Premier Ford, that is getting things done. Two new medical schools in the province of Ontario: Brampton and York. Every single medical school in the province of Ontario has more residency positions, more medical seats available.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Don Valley East, come to order.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The College of Physicians and Surgeons actually assessing, reviewing and, ultimately, licensing internationally trained and educated physicians who want to live and work in the province of Ontario. And of course—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Don Valley East will come to order.

Please start the clock. The Minister of Health has the floor.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: And of course, this morning's exciting announcement: Dr. Jane Philpott, who will be leading and encouraging and expanding on a program that we started in January of 2023 called Your Health plan. We have been able—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The Minister for Red Tape Reduction will come to order.

The supplementary question.

Mr. Adil Shamji: This government has accomplished nothing over the last six years except to drive our health care system into the ground.

Last Thursday at the Empire Club, I watched the Premier gush over the United States and China without mentioning health care once. But in his own riding, 32,000 people don't have a family doctor, which is 10,000 more people than just two years ago.

In the Minister of Health's riding, 17,000 people don't have a family doctor—and yes, that is the same health minister who suggested that the recruitment and retention of doctors in Ontario is not a major concern. Maybe that's why health care is a catastrophe.

As we speak, every hospital in Toronto is in surge, meaning they're stretched beyond their limits—and flu season hasn't even started.

How does the Premier expect Ontarians to get through this winter, let alone the next five winters, when 2.5 million people don't have a family doctor and every single one of our hospitals is understaffed, underfunded and over-capacity?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Ninety per cent—leading Canada—of Ontario residents have access and are connected to a primary care practitioner. We're not stopping there. That's why we are doing the expansions in our medical schools. That's why we are doing the expansion in our residency positions. We are doing the work to make sure that, in the short, the medium and the long term, we will have capacity in the province of Ontario.

I often think if only—if only the Liberals and the NDP, when they were in power, had actually started to plan for an expanding and aging population, we wouldn't be here. But we are, and we're getting it done.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Skilled trades workers are the backbone of Ontario's economy. Whether it's electricians, plumbers, carpenters, machinists and so many more, they are all helping to meet the growing infrastructure needs of our province. Yet, with the looming retirement of a generation of skilled tradespeople, it is more urgent than ever that we address this gap. Given the critical role of skilled trades to our economy, we must act now to provide the right training, incentives and support to build up the workforce for today and for tomorrow. Can the minister please outline what actions our government is taking to address the skills shortage in the trades and ensure that we have enough skilled workers?

Hon. David Piccini: I appreciate the question from the member opposite and thank him for his advocacy for young men and women in the skilled trades. Under the Premier, we have an ambitious plan to build Ontario: a \$200-billion investment into infrastructure.

But we know that one in three tradespeople are retiring. We stand on the shoulders of a golden generation of men and women in the trades who have built this province. It's up to us to inspire more young boys and girls to enter the trades. That's why I'm proud that in Working for Workers Five, we created more learning opportunities into the skilled trades by expanding OYAP. The focused apprenticeship in the skilled trades, our FAST program, is allowing young students in grade 11 or 12 to get hours that will count towards their level 1. It's no different than those who take the Dual Credit Program. We're also expanding the Level Up! skilled trades career fair to over 35,000 students to open an inspiring new career into the trades and help expand their—

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Ontario's businesses are telling us that they are struggling to fill vacancies. These vacancies are causing delays to projects that are critical to our province's economic recovery and growth. This is impacting everything from building new homes and schools to larger-scale infrastructure projects. What's more, despite the demand, many young Ontarians and women still do not see skilled trades as a viable or attractive career path. Incorrect stereotypes continue that the trades are somehow a "second choice" compared to university education or are only for men. The skilled trades are high-paying jobs, in demand, that are providing stable employment and pathways to middle-class successes.

Can the minister share what steps our government is taking to promote skilled trades as a career choice for young Ontarians and women?

Hon. David Piccini: As I was just sitting down and listening to that question, my seatmate reminded me that his young son, who I believe was a page in this place, is enrolled at Canadore in aircraft mechanics. It's exciting to see.

But, Speaker, it's not just about students. It's about breaking down barriers for women. Some of the common-sense changes that aren't that common these days, Speaker, that we've done is bring the same expectations on bathroom facilities from Bay Street to Main Street, empowering more women on the job site.

Not only that; we're keeping women safe. We've expanded regulations to ensure properly fitting protective equipment, or PPE, and I hope all members of this place vote in support of our latest Working for Workers bills to ensure women are safe on the job site, getting rid of the days of "shrink it and pink it" and ensuring that we have properly fitting PPE for women.

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An economy that doesn't work for women doesn't work at all, and I'm proud to see more women enter the trades under the leadership of this Premier.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We are eight weeks into the school year and families in Renfrew county still do not have school buses. The buses haven't been running because this government broke the funding formula and expected school boards and operators to run student transportation at a loss. But instead of fixing the nightmare they had caused, the government just sat on its hands for weeks on end while families made financial sacrifices to get their kids to school, and now, they have forced the Renfrew school boards to cut classroom resources in order to reach a deal.

If this was Toronto, the government would never have allowed this to happen. How could the Premier and the Minister of Education fail Renfrew families so badly?

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

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to stand as the new Minister of Education.

Our government's priority to boards is to provide stability and predictability, which is why every single board received an increase to their student transportation budget for this school year. The members opposite like to mention our funding formula, and I think it's important that all members know that as a result of the funding formula, school boards actually saw an \$80-million increase in funding for school transportation this year. That brings our total investment for transportation in Ontario to \$1.3 billion for the current school year.

What does that mean on the ground? That means that every single board in Ontario received a minimum 3% increase. The member knows, in her own area, we've seen double-digit increases, and that includes Renfrew county as well.

I can assure you as minister and as a mother as well that my duty is to ensure that students are getting to school.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's ironic that the new "new" minister mentioned predictability and stability, because

it's not just Renfrew county; families across the province are dealing with chaos in student transportation, longer walks to school in unsafe conditions, long-term route cancellations and school buses just not showing up in the morning. Meanwhile, school boards are being forced to take resources out of the classroom just to provide this inadequate level of student transportation. This government is failing Ontario families with the funding formula that is another government scheme that is literally leaving our kids behind.

Will the Minister of Education fix the student transportation funding formula so that every child in Ontario can get to school safely every day?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: The funding formula: We went through intensive consultations to arrive at that funding formula, which has, in fact, allowed the increase to be \$80 million across the school transportation fund. As I said, that is a minimum 3% increase for all school boards across the province, with some having a double-digit increase.

I want to assure the member that we are providing stability and predictability to our school boards. That's why, with the change in the funding formula, we were able to increase the funding for school board transportation as well as increasing the funding across the board for all school boards in this province.

We will provide stability to the school boards and ensure that transportation is available to all students.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good morning and welcome back. My question is for the Premier.

People across the province cannot find an affordable place to call home. The situation is dire: Young people leaving Ontario because they can't afford to buy a home, full-time workers not able to pay the rent in the communities they work in and an unprecedented number of people experiencing homelessness in Ontario. The Premier has to stop distracting from the housing crisis and saying no to affordable homes—fourplexes, mid-rises, non-profit co-op and social housing.

Today, I will give the Premier an opportunity to reverse course to fix this problem: Will the Premier stop saying no, and say yes to quickly building homes that people can afford in the communities they love by legalizing more types of homes across the province to bring down costs for housing?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: The question goes right back to the member from the Green Party: Are you going to stop saying no to every single housing plan we have and start saying yes? Because you've voted against every housing project. Every single provincial act we put forward, it's "No, no, no." It's no from the NDP; it's no from the Liberals; it's no from the Green Party. You can't sit your butt on two sides of the fence. You end up getting slivers you know where, and you've got more slivers you know where than you could shake a stick at.

We've created the opportunities for people to go out there and put a down payment by creating 860,000 jobs. We created more manufacturing jobs last year than all 50 US states combined. This year alone, we've seen 165,000 people employed. There are over 137 companies that have invested here, creating 12,200 jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The Premier will take his seat.

The supplementary question.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Let's be clear: What the government is doing on housing is not working. Why would I say yes to a plan that doesn't build homes that people can afford? Year-to-date housing starts are down in Ontario. Most housing experts say it will be impossible for the government to reach their goal of 1.5 million homes.

Let's be clear, people who oftentimes don't agree—housing activists, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, OREA, home builders and academics—all agree on one thing: The fastest and cheapest way to build homes people can afford is to say yes to fourplexes, gentle density and mid-rise housing. People in rural communities and in big cities all say the province holds the key to unlocking affordable homes.

Speaker, I'm going to give the Premier one more time: Will the Premier say no to wealthy speculators and say yes to legalizing multiplexes and mid-rises so we can get to work on building homes people can afford in the communities—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And to reply, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: We led the lead to remove the HST on purpose-built rentals; you voted against that. We eliminated municipal fees on affordable and non-profit housing; you voted against that. We introduced over \$3 billion in new funding for municipalities to help fund housing-enabling infrastructure; you're against that. You're against the \$1.2 billion in funding for those who meet or exceed the housing targets; you voted against it.

All the NDP, all the Greens and the Liberals, it's "No, let's not build homes. Let's not build transit. Let's not create new jobs. Let's go back the way we were for 15 years." You bankrupted this province.

We're creating that environment. We are the envy of the world. We are an economic powerhouse because of our policies.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Before I start the clock again, I'll remind all members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House.

I'll ask the member for Ottawa South to come to order.

The next question. The member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since you announced that you won't be running again in the next

election, I want to thank you for all of your service over the last 34 years. You've been an exemplar for all of us.

My question is to the Minister of Mines. Ontario is home to vast deposits of critical minerals, particularly in the Ring of Fire. These minerals are important for the building of batteries, electric vehicles and other clean technologies. The minerals are key to driving our domestic industries but also to help make Ontario a global leader in clean energy transition.

However, to fully realize this potential, we need a robust and sustainable supply chain that helps industry and local communities. Could the minister please provide an update on our government's efforts to strengthen Ontario's mineral supply chain?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you very much for this question. There are two important legs to this Critical Minerals Strategy. One is the Ontario junior minerals exploration program. We've had phenomenal drill progress and success all across northern Ontario. The latest is cesium that we've just discovered north of Timmins. It's a strategic metal that's required for national security.

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And of course, we've got the Critical Minerals Innovation Fund. The first round of funding for this strategy was oversubscribed. To that end, in the budget 2024, we announced an additional \$15 million over three years to expand the Critical Minerals Innovation Fund. We're really excited to announce the winners of this fund so that they can continue to do the great work they're doing, developing made-in-Ontario solutions.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Ontario is well placed to become a global leader in the supply of critical minerals. Cesium—I hadn't heard of that one before; that's a new one. These minerals, like cesium, nickel, lithium and cobalt, are all important for advanced manufacturing and the clean energy economy. The demand for these minerals is projected to skyrocket as countries around the world transition to electric vehicles and renewable energy.

Speaker, in 2023 alone, the value of critical minerals produced in Ontario was \$6.4 billion. Could the minister please highlight some of the success stories that the CMIF program has produced to date and how they are helping to position Ontario as a leader in critical mineral development?

Hon. George Pirie: Thanks again, Speaker, for the question.

Since 2022, the CMIF fund has invested in 12 industry-led, including Indigenous-owned, critical minerals innovation projects. The first project I would like to highlight is a collaboration between Vale Canada and MIRARCO. MIRARCO, or the Mining Innovation Rehabilitation and Applied Research Corp., is a leader in providing innovative solutions for the mining industry. They are currently developing techniques to reprocess mining by-products to extract nickel and cobalt from mine wastes and tailings to use in the battery supply chain.

The second project is Carbonix, an Indigenous-owned company that is helping to refine processing for convert-

ing mining waste and other by-products into high-energy-density graphite also used in the battery supply chain.

Our ministry will continue to pursue and support innovations in the mining sector that will continue to drive economic opportunities and secure Ontario's critical mineral supply chain.

HOME CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier.

A London West family told me that their father recently suffered a heart attack, a stroke and a hip fracture. He was approved for two PSW visits and four hours of home care per day, plus respite. In the months since, he has never received that level of care on a single day. His family has been forced to step in to attend to his daily needs and they take turns sleeping beside him at night. They haven't had a single hour of respite.

Speaker, why is this Premier forcing family members to become home care providers instead of fixing the broken home care system?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And to reply, the Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There's no doubt that home care and community care needed to have some additional investments, which was why I was so pleased that the Minister of Finance and our government has actually increased home care and community care investments by over a billion dollars.

We absolutely understand that when individuals leave hospital and they continue their treatment pathway in their home communities, in their homes, we need to make sure that the PSWs and the critical infrastructure are there. And that's why we're making investments, whether it is increasing the wages for personal support workers, whether it's expanding the number of opportunities that individuals can learn and become personal support workers, and of course ensuring that we have that critical health human resources when people need it in their homes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question: the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Not only is home care failing families every single day, the supplies needed to provide home care are not available. Ask any physician in the home; they know that under this government scheme, home care patients are being forced to shop and pay for the supplies they need to stay alive, to stay out of the hospital—supplies that this government decided to contract out to Bayshore.

Speaker, why are large corporations who put profit ahead of quality care continually given preferential treatment by this Conservative government? I'd like to ask the minister: Is this another profit-over-patient-care scandal?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: What this is, is a government that has been committed since day one to ensure that home and community care have the investments and the resources they need to do the job that is so important.

For a decade, the NDP propped up the Liberals as they created the longest health care wait times in Ontario's history.

I'm going to quote the Ontario Community Support Association CEO: "Home and community care plays a critical role in the future of a strong Ontario health system. Legislative changes that strengthen this vital service will be important for supporting client care in an integrated health care system."

We're bringing these pieces together to make sure that our loved ones, whether they are in hospital, in a long-term-care home, in their own home in the community, get the support they need when they need it.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Laura Smith: Speaker, my question is to the Associate Minister of Small Business. This week marks Ontario Small Business Week, a time to celebrate and recognize the vital role that small businesses serve in driving economic growth, innovation and job creation across this province and country. Our communities are stronger because of the economic output of small businesses. When they grow and prosper, so does our province.

However, many small business owners continue to face significant challenges. These challenges include high inflation, supply chain disruption, increased operating costs and the harmful Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax.

Speaker, could the associate minister please highlight what our government is doing to support small businesses and why it's essential to recognize and invest in the entrepreneurs who are key to Ontario's economic success?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the great member from Thornhill for her advocacy for her constituents.

Speaker, there are more than 400,000 small businesses across Ontario, accounting for about 98% of total Ontario businesses. They form the backbone of our economy, employing well over two million people right across our province.

The member from Thornhill is absolutely right: Small businesses are vital in keeping our economy competitive and thriving, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to celebrate them this week.

While the previous Liberal government drove business and investment away from this province, this government has acted to create the environment for businesses to grow by lowering taxes, reducing electricity costs and cutting red tape, enabling an estimated \$8 billion in cost savings and supports for Ontario employers every single year.

Speaker, our government will continue to have the backs of small businesses so that they can keep doing what they do best: creating jobs and serving their communities.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the associate minister for her response and her great leadership.

While it's encouraging to hear about the strong leadership shown by our government, many small business owners, particularly in my riding of Thornhill, are still

expressing concerns about the ongoing economic challenges. Many small business owners in Ontario have voiced concerns about the ongoing negative burden that high taxes, excessive regulations and the impact of the Trudeau carbon tax continue to have on their bottom line. Rising operating costs due to these factors continue to put additional strain on small businesses that are already struggling with inflation and supply chain issues.

Speaker, can the associate minister please elaborate on the different supports our government provides to small businesses to ensure that they can start, operate and expand their businesses?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Small Business.

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you, Speaker, and again to the member for the question.

Speaker, under the leadership of the Premier, our government remains dedicated to supporting small businesses on their journey to success. Through initiatives like Starter Company Plus, Summer Company and Futurpreneur, we provide entrepreneurs with training, mentorship and grants to launch successful ventures. Our 47 Small Business Enterprise Centres and many, many business advisory services right across our province offer personalized guidance to help businesses navigate challenges and expand their presence, providing valuable tools and resources to entrepreneurs so their businesses can thrive in today's competitive marketplace.

Our plan is working, Speaker, and we look forward to continuing to create the economic conditions for small businesses to succeed. I encourage all members and anyone watching to support small businesses and shop local. Happy Small Business Week.

ROAD SAFETY

MPP Lise Vaugeois: My question is to the Premier. As confirmed by CBC Marketplace, there is corruption in driver training and driver testing, and there are only 28 people to staff inspection stations across all of northern Ontario.

The government has the power, the means and the responsibility to reduce the number of horrific accidents taking place on our highways. The solutions are staring us in the face, so what on earth is stopping the government from ending the carnage?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We have zero tolerance for bad actors on our roads or those who are training these individuals. The ministry of colleges and training also has a robust program when enforcing against those colleges and private institutions that are carrying this out.

We even made significant investments in both front-line officers as well as facilities across the province, including one just outside that member's riding in Shuniah, where we invested \$30 million in a state-of-the-art project to ensure that we keep people safe.

We will continue to work with our partners at the OPP and others across the industry to continue having the safest roads in the world. We have brought a countless number of measures to this House, which those members have voted against, to increase penalties on bad drivers. We will continue to make sure our roads are safe.

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ottawa West–Nepean has given their notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to their question given by the Minister of Education regarding student transportation. This matter will be debated tomorrow following private members' public business.

There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Once again, it's my pleasure to introduce an educator from Essex county, and she's the principal of école Saint-Antoine, in the town of Tecumseh. We've been married for 26 years. It's my wife, Jacqueline Leardi.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Welcome.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I beg leave to present a report on Value-for-Money Audit: Management of Invasive Species, 2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

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

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

M^{me} France Gélinas: As a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table this report today. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee as well as the substitute members who participated in the public hearings and the report-writing.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from all the ministries and agencies who participated in their respective hearings.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearing and the report-writing deliberations of the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the

Committee, legislative research and our new Auditor General, who is really good.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Madame Gélinas has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I beg leave to present a report on Value-for-Money Audit: Real Estate Council of Ontario, 2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

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

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

M^{me} France Gélinas: No, just thank you to everybody who participated. It was a report that was very well done and informative.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Madame Gélinas has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, pursuant to standing order 113(b).

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. French presents the committee's report.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm happy to share this report, which is a recommendation for all of the ministries and offices of the government that have to be assigned to the various standing committees—and that is this report.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 113(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, pursuant to standing order 109.1(a).

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. French presents the committee's report.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I do not, but I'm happy to move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 109.1(a), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

REDUCING GRIDLOCK, SAVING YOU TIME ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LE DÉSENGORGEMENT DU RÉSEAU ROUTIER ET LE GAIN DE TEMPS

Mr. Sarkaria moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 212, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various Acts with respect to highways, broadband-related expropriation and other transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 212, Loi visant à édicter deux lois et à modifier diverses lois en ce qui concerne les voies publiques, les expropriations liées aux projets d'Internet à haut débit et d'autres questions relatives au transport.

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 minister like to present a brief statement explaining his bill?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This bill is intended to support the acceleration of key highway projects across the province, including Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass, as well as others. We look forward to debating this.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr. Hamid replaces the Associate Minister of Mines, Mr. Smith, Peterborough–Kawartha, replaces the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, and Mr. Saunderson replaces Ms. Triantafilopoulos; and

On the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, Mrs. Martin replaces Ms. Gallagher Murphy, Mr. Dowie replaces the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, Mr. Hamid replaces the Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products, Mr. Pinsonneault replaces the Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform, and Mrs. Smith, Thornhill, replaces Mr. Sandhu; and

On the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, Mr. Grewal replaces Mr. Byers, Ms. Pierre replaces Mr. Sabawy, and Mr. Sandhu replaces Mr. Smith, Peterborough–Kawartha; and

On the Standing Committee on the Interior, Mr. Allsopp replaces Mr. Cuzzetto, and Mr. Pinsonneault replaces the Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products; and

On the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Mr. Sarrazin replaces the Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform, and Ms. Triantafilopoulos is added; and

On the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, Ms. Barnes replaces Ms. Hogarth, Ms. Gallagher Murphy replaces Mrs. Martin, Mr. Jordan replaces the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries, and Mr. Yakabuski replaces Mr. Sandhu; and

On the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mr. Byers replaces Mr. Bouma, Mr. Cuzzetto replaces the Associate Minister of Mines, Mr. Sabawy replaces Ms. MacLeod, and Ms. Triantafilopoulos replaces Mrs. Wai; and

On the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Ms. Hogarth replaces Mr. Clark, Mr. Allsopp replaces Mr. Grewal, Mr. Bailey replaces the Minister of Long-Term Care, Mr. Leardi replaces Ms. Pierre, and Mrs. Wai replaces the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Leardi has moved that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

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On the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr. Hamid replaces the Associate Minister of Mines, Mr. Smith, Peterborough–Kawartha—

Mr. Steve Clark: Dispense.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Madame Sylvie Brûlé from Blezard Valley in my riding for this petition. The petition is called “911 Everywhere in Ontario.”

Since we last met, I am really sad to say that three people in my riding tried calling 911 in their times of need and found out that 911 was not available to them. And 911 is not available in many parts of northern and rural Ontario.

Did you know, Speaker, that Ontario is the only province that does not have 911 on all of its territory? Every other province has made arrangements with Bell to make sure that 911 is available—but it is not, and this has to change. Ontario has the technology. We have the knowledge. We have the skills. We should have 911 available to all, and this is what people who have signed the petition are asking for.

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

Because it's the first day, I'll remind members that the new standing order compels the Speaker to ask members

to briefly summarize the petition and indicate the number of signatures, if they so wish. But a brief summary—and it's not possible to read the entire petition, nor enter into a political dialogue on the issue raised by the petition.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to read the following petition into the record. It is entitled "Support Ontario Families with Autism."

This government cleared the wait-list for individuals seeking therapy, only to create another one. Practitioners left the field, and families were abandoned.

Every year, every hour, every moment without therapy is lost forever, changing the trajectory of countless young lives.

Funding must be based on clinical needs, not on age and income.

I fully support this petition. I urge the government to do the right thing and get funding and supports to children living with autism now.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Wendy Linklater from Capreol in my riding for this petition. The petition is called "Improve Access to Primary Care."

As you know, Speaker, medicare is a program that defines us as Ontarians and as Canadians. Care is based on our needs, not on our ability to pay.

We now know that the best way to provide primary care is through a team. There are a number of those teams that exist in Ontario. We have community health centres, we have family health teams, nurse practitioner-led clinics, Indigenous primary health care teams. All of them are willing and able to take on some of the 2.5 million Ontarians who do not have access to primary care, but they need funding in order to do this. So the thousands and thousands and thousands of people who have signed the petition are asking for one thing: for this government to fund primary health care teams so that they too could have access to primary care.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my good page Nikki to bring it to the Clerks.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to thank the hundreds of London West parents and Londoners who signed a petition to keep classrooms safe for students and staff. The petition recognizes the fundamental importance of safe schools as a place to learn and work in. It also recognizes that there's a lot of pressure that has been placed on our education system, and we are seeing that manifested in increasing reports of violence in our schools. Crowded classrooms, lack of support staff, underfunding of community mental health supports are all contributing to this crisis.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate action to address

the rising violence in our schools, to invest in more mental health resources in our schools and in our communities, and to properly fund our schools so that students have access to smaller classes with more support staff.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Jaimie.

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm very proud to stand in the House today, on the first day back from our long summer recess, to provide this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It has been presented to me to present to this House from the Elementary Teachers of Toronto, and it's entitled—"Stop the Cuts and Invest in the Schools Our Students Deserve!"

They're calling on the government to reverse all the funding cuts to make sure that there are no deficits for the school boards, to ensure that those massive cuts don't result in large class sizes, reduced special education and mental health supports and the resources that the students need.

They are also calling on this House to make sure that the investments flow so that the buildings that have been neglected are going to be properly fixed and they can be made safe again.

I'll be proudly affixing my signature to this petition and handing it back to the table with page Lily.

ANTI-VAPING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Hélène Boily from Blezard Valley in my riding for these petitions called "Protect Kids from Vaping."

Frankly, very little is known about the long-term effects of vaping on youth. We know that there could be an acute effect of vaping on youth called popcorn lungs, but the long-term effects are not known.

We know that aggressive marketing of vaping products by the tobacco industry is causing more and more kids to get addicted to nicotine through vaping.

I know that the government has spent millions of dollars putting vaping detectors in our schools, but it would be a better investment to make sure that kids do not pick up vaping in the first place.

There are many things that could be done to prevent kids from picking up vaping—the biggest one is flavours; the second is where it is accessible to them.

The people who have signed the petition are asking to pass my bill, Vaping is not for Kids, to make sure that we protect our kids from the tobacco industry that is behind vaping, to make sure that they do not get addicted to nicotine in the first place.

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

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The petition I have to read is entitled “Bring Back Rent Control.”

It’s a shame that in this province so many people are homeless. Part of the government’s solution for the homelessness crisis would be to reimplement rent control—this petition is calling upon the government to pass legislation that is available today to make sure that people are paying the same as the last tenant paid. It would provide consistency, it would provide stability, and it would ensure that people maintain the place that they call home, by plugging the hole of vacancy decontrol. This government, if it cared about renters and if it cared about residents, would do the right thing and pass this legislation.

I’m proud to support this petition—I look forward to the government maybe doing the right thing once upon a time—and will deliver it with page Jakob to the Clerks.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that talks about private delivery of surgery. It has been revealed through a report that was done at Kingston university that the cost of surgery in private clinics and independent health facilities costs way more than the same service provided in a publicly funded, publicly delivered hospital—and we’re talking like 100% more to have the same surgery.

We have seen when British Columbia had private clinics for routine surgery that it did not bring down the wait-lists for those surgeries.

We also know that Ontario hospitals have capacity—they have surgical suites, they have OR rooms sitting empty. They would be more than happy to do more hip and more knee surgeries, if only they were to receive the funding that is going to the private clinics. Send that funding to our publicly delivered hospitals, and I guarantee you that they will be able to bring the wait-lists down.

1320

The total amount that the government is spending on private health care facilities has more than tripled in the last mandate that this government has had—so, since 2022, if you look at how much was spent to what we’re spending now, we’re saying three times the amount. We did not see a 300% increase in our hospital budget for surgery, but we are seeing it in the private sector.

Those people are all opposed to this. They want those resources to go to our hospitals so that we can bring down the wait-lists. I fully support them, and I will sign the petition and ask page Nikki to bring it to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank the hundreds of Londoners who have signed a petition in support of my private member’s bill the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act.

The importance of this petition is especially timely now, as we see COVID rates increasing in the province.

The petition talks about the evidence that shows that paid sick days are a very effective public health measure to significantly reduce the spread of infectious disease and lessen the burden on our health care system. It notes that the majority, 60%, of Ontario workers do not have access to paid sick days, especially if they are racialized, especially if they are low-wage. It notes that without access to paid sick days, these workers have to make a choice between potentially losing their employment or not being able to pay the rent and taking a day off work so they can care for a sick child or recover themselves from an illness. It calls on the Legislative Assembly to pass my bill, which amends the Employment Standards Act to provide all workers with access to paid sick days in addition to infectious disease emergency days, and to provide transitional support for small businesses to make that change.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Lily.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Marcel Roy from Azilda in my riding for these petitions. The petition is called “Gas Prices.”

I can tell you, Speaker, that the fluctuation in the price of gas in my riding in northern Ontario is through the roof. I will be driving from my house to my office; it’s about a 50-kilometre ride, and I go by about 10 to 12 different gas stations, depending on which way I make my way to the office, and there will be as much of a difference as \$1.39 in one gas station to \$1.89 in the other gas station—all of this within a 50-kilometre spread. If I go a little bit outside of my riding—let’s say I go east a little bit, towards Sturgeon Falls, there’s a good chance that the price of gas is at least 20 cents cheaper, and if I go a little bit west of my riding, towards Espanola, the price of gas will be even cheaper.

The people of Nickel Belt want to regulate the price of gas. We don’t want to be gouged at the pump anymore. We want this government to do what other governments in Canada have done and many, many US states have done: regulate the price of gas so that the gouging ends.

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to say this once again: The standing order indicates that members can briefly summarize their petition but not get into an extensive debate about the merits of the issue raised by the petition. I would ask members to keep that in mind. That’s the standing order as it currently stands.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I’d like to thank Tom Champaigne from Copper Cliff for these petitions. The petition is called “MS Specialized Clinic in Sudbury.”

Basically, what the petition talks about is that north-eastern Ontario has the highest rate of multiple sclerosis in all of Ontario, yet we don't have a specialized MS clinic in northern Ontario, so people who are often very sick—some become quite disabled because of multiple sclerosis—have to travel long distances down south to gain access to a MS specialized clinic.

The city of Greater Sudbury is a hub in northeastern Ontario, so they are asking the Legislative Assembly to make sure that Health Sciences North receives the funding necessary for an MS specialized clinic to be held in northeastern Ontario, in Sudbury, to serve the people of the northeast.

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

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Melissa Anderson from Val Therese in my riding for these petitions. They are called “Improve Winter Road Maintenance on Northern Highways.”

I know that it feels pretty good right now. It's 20 degrees outside, but it's about to start snowing again. There are many highways in my riding—Highway 17, Highway 144, Highway 101, Highway 69—that are poorly maintained and have led to many, many accidents, many of them deadly, as well as multiple road closures.

They are asking for the same standards that exist in southern Ontario to be applied to the northern highways so that the northern highways are better maintained and people feel safer—that would include Highways 11, 17, 69, 101 and 144 to be considered class 1, so that the snow has to be removed within eight hours after the end of a snowfall rather than what we have now, where it often takes more than a day to two days to get the snow removed.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER ROADS AND COMMUNITIES ACT, 2024

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 28, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I will be sharing my time with, among others, the member for Milton and the member for Brampton East.

It is indeed a pleasure to rise this afternoon to discuss a vital and forward-thinking piece of legislation, Bill 197, the Safer Roads and Communities Act, 2024. I am indeed proud to lend my voice to this debate, on a matter that affects the safety and well-being of all of the citizens and residents of Ontario. This legislation, if passed, will introduce some of the toughest penalties in Canada for impaired driving, address the epidemic of auto theft, and enhance the safety of our roads through various measures.

Ontario has long been recognized for having some of the safest roads in North America. However, as our population grows and our roads become busier, it is imperative that we continue to take decisive action to protect all of us. The Safer Roads and Communities Act, Bill 197, is a comprehensive set of proposals to address the pressing issues of impaired driving, auto theft, stunt driving, and the safety of e-bikes and commercial vehicles.

As a proud father and someone who has, I must say, dedicated my career prior to public service to law and order, I deeply understand the importance of safety and security in my riding of Durham and across Ontario. The Safer Roads and Communities Act holds significant personal and professional meaning for me, as it directly addresses the concerns and well-being of the families and individuals I am so proud to represent. Like my parents before me and, I'm sure, many members of this House; indeed, any members of this House who are parents or aunts and uncles or mentors or leaders within their communities—all of us can relate in those roles about how we worry about the safety of our children and our community's youth on our roads.

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That is why I am encouraged by the measures proposed in Bill 197, such as the stringent penalties for impaired driving and auto theft. Knowing that there are tougher consequences for those who choose to drive under the influence or engage in reckless behaviour gives me confidence that all children and residents in Durham and across Ontario will be better protected.

One of the most critical components of this bill is its focus on impaired driving, and I've seen first-hand, as so many of us have, the devastating effect that intoxicated drivers can have on any one of us randomly when they get behind the wheel and drive and inflict harm and fatalities. Statistics show that one in three roadway fatalities involves impaired driving by alcohol or drugs. In 2022 alone, more than 20,000 Ontarians had their licences suspended for impaired driving. And over 10,000 impaired driving charges have been laid by the OPP thus far this year. This is a clear indication that more needs to be done to deter this dangerous and reckless behaviour.

Thankfully, the Safer Roads and Communities Act proposes several measures to combat impaired driving and send a strong message that impaired driving will not be tolerated in Ontario.

For instance, the introduction of a lifetime driver's licence suspension for those convicted of impaired driving causing death is a significant step forward. This measure ensures that individuals who have shown a blatant

disregard for the safety of others by driving impaired and causing a fatality will never again have the privilege of driving. This is not just a penalty; it is a necessary action to protect the public from repeat offenders who pose a serious threat to road safety.

Currently, those convicted of impaired driving can voluntarily install an ignition interlock device to reduce their licence suspension. However, the Safer Roads and Communities Act will make it mandatory for all convicted impaired drivers to install these devices. Ignition interlock devices require the driver to provide a breath sample before the vehicle can be started. This ensures that they are not under the influence of alcohol while driving. This measure is crucial in preventing repeat offences and rehabilitating impaired drivers.

The bill also introduces a time-limited zero-tolerance condition for alcohol and drugs for anyone convicted of impaired driving. This condition will begin after the driver satisfies the ignition interlock and rehabilitation requirements. By imposing a zero-tolerance policy, we are making it clear that there is no acceptable level of impairment for those who have already demonstrated poor judgment by driving under the influence.

To further deter impaired driving, the Safer Roads and Communities Act proposes longer roadside licence suspensions that would apply for first and second-time drug- and alcohol-related offences. Currently, drivers receive a three-day roadside suspension for their first incident or occurrence and a seven-day suspension for their second occurrence. This bill, if passed, would increase these suspensions to seven days for the first offence and 14 days for the second offence. These longer suspensions will serve, I submit, as a stronger deterrent and emphasize the seriousness of impaired driving.

Auto theft is something that is addressed, rightly so, in this proposed legislation. Auto theft has become a growing problem across our province, with incidents increasing by 72% from 2021 to 2024. In Toronto alone, auto theft increased by 81% over the same period, and violent carjackings rose by 78% from 2021 to 2022. This epidemic of auto theft not only results in significant financial losses, but also poses a serious threat to public safety.

In Ontario, in the first half of 2023, car thefts added up to more than \$700 million in losses, and the Insurance Bureau of Canada estimates these cost every driver in Ontario an extra \$130 a year.

That is why I am proud to state that this bill introduces escalating driver's licence suspensions for individuals convicted of auto theft. The penalties would be as follows: for a first offence, a 10-year licence suspension; for a second offence, a 15-year licence suspension; and for a third offence, a lifetime licence suspension.

The bill also includes measures to support law enforcement in their efforts to combat auto theft. This includes enhanced powers for police officers to stop and inspect vehicles suspected of being involved in auto theft. These stringent penalties and enhanced enforcement measures would deter auto theft and protect Ontarians from the dangers associated with this crime.

Auto theft is not just a property crime; it is a crime that has far-reaching impacts on our communities. Victims of auto theft often experience significant financial hardship, emotional distress and a loss of personal security. By imposing severe penalties on auto thieves, we are taking a stand against this crime and sending a clear message that it will not be tolerated in our Ontario.

Stunt driving is another dangerous behaviour that this bill seeks to address. Stunt drivers put innocent lives at risk with their reckless actions, and we must take strong measures to deter this behaviour. The Safer Roads and Communities Act, Bill 197, proposes mandatory minimum licence suspensions for stunt driving, ensuring that those convicted face significant consequences for their actions.

Currently, courts have the discretion to suspend a driver's licence following a stunt driving conviction; however, this bill would ensure that minimum suspension lengths are applied in each and every case. For a first conviction, the proposed suspension would be one year; for a second conviction, three years; for a third conviction, a lifetime suspension, reducible to 10 years under certain criteria. Any subsequent convictions will result in a lifetime suspension that cannot be reduced. These mandatory minimum suspensions would send a strong signal to those considering engaging in stunt driving.

Bill 197 also includes measures to improve e-bike safety. E-bikes have become increasingly popular as a mode of transportation, but their use has raised safety concerns. The Safer Roads and Communities Act proposes the creation of regulation-making powers under the Highway Traffic Act to categorize e-bikes into distinct classes, each with its own prescribed safety requirements.

Now, if I may, Speaker, I'd like to allow my time to be shared with the member for Milton.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the member from Milton.

MPP Zee Hamid: I'll mostly speak from my heart.

As many people here know, we have a blended family of six kids between the ages of 17 and 22. My youngest got his G2 this summer, and the older ones are 22, so they haven't been driving for all that long. Every single time they leave the house, my heart sinks a little bit. I've installed a dash cam in all my cars that record forward, backward, sideways and every which way.

While I recognize that Ontario is one of the safest jurisdictions for drivers, there are still bad apples, and the numbers are going up.

Back in the 1990s, when I was in high school, we were legitimately convinced that when our generation started driving, there would be no more drunk driving. And yet, in 2022, there were 22,000 impaired drivers who were charged by police, and that number, unfortunately, has actually gone up since then.

When I made my member's statement earlier today, I talked about one of my constituents who lost his life just a month ago yesterday. He went out to run an errand and never came back, all because of an irresponsible driver speeding so fast that he hit not one, not two, not three, but

eight different vehicles before rolling over. That father is never going to come back home to his three children.

When I started looking into it after that, I realized a stat that I had no idea about: Every single day in this province, someone loses their life because of irresponsible drivers. I—sorry; because I knew the constituent personally, it's hard to talk about him. Everyone who knew him knew him as a loving father, as a caring husband, as a gentle soul, as a kind neighbour. He was a good person who is no longer around because of one irresponsible driver.

1340

While I recognize that Ontario has the safest streets in North America, we must not let our guard down. That's why I'm so grateful to Premier Ford and Minister Sarkaria for bringing this bill, for increasing the penalties. Here, in 2024, if you still get behind a wheel impaired, the penalties need to go up, because you've demonstrated yourself to not be trusted with the responsibility and privilege of driving. If you end up killing somebody, you don't deserve a second chance. I'm grateful to the minister for bringing this act that takes that chance away from them. As many of us know, one in three fatalities in this province happen because of impaired driving—they happen on the road, happen because of impaired driving.

When the minister presented this bill a few months ago, he made a statement. He said the ministry did a pilot and they tested drivers, and one in five drivers tested positive for drugs or alcohol. One is too many, and that's a lot, which is why our government is increasing penalties on drunk drivers, on impaired drivers. If they get caught, they have to pay for ignition interlock, as they should. Their licence will be suspended for a lot longer—if they do it again, even longer; and a third time, a lifetime ban, as it should be, because they've demonstrated themselves to not be trustworthy.

I also want to touch base on something else that we know about that's not directly related to this, which is population growth. If you look at my riding of Milton—24 years ago, the town of Milton had 30,000 people. In 24 years, our population has gone up to 180,000. By 2051, we're projecting hitting 450,000 people. With the increased population and increased population density, we have more vehicles on the road. We have more drivers, more younger drivers. We have more traffic, and that increases the impact that irresponsible drivers can make—drivers who choose to get behind the wheel impaired, drivers who choose to drive in a way that's stunt driving, drivers who put their selfishness ahead of safety of others.

Safety is not a political issue. Impaired drivers or stunt drivers don't care about political stripe. It's an issue that impacts us all. It's an issue that impacts our communities. It's an issue that impacts our families. This bill will make our streets safer for generations. It will make a generational difference. I want to go back to the Saleem family I talked about this morning, who lost their father, and say our government is doing something about it. Our government is making sure that no other child loses their father; that no other parent loses their children; that no one loses their spouse or their friend or their neighbour or their

loved one. This bill takes bold and decisive action in fighting back against this.

As the minister mentioned, make no mistake: These drivers are criminals, and we are the party that's tough on crime. The drivers who get behind the wheel and get into stunt driving, the drivers who get behind the wheel impaired and still drive are criminals, and they should be treated as such. It's a violation of trust that should cause them to lose the privilege of driving—forever, if need be.

This is also one of the unique situations where it's a proposal that has widespread support from everyone. I spent the summer—especially since last month's funeral—talking to a lot of people about it, and I have yet to meet a single person who doesn't support it. Often, when you explain what we're doing, their reaction is, "Oh, what do you mean it hasn't been done already?" If you talk about stakeholders, the Insurance Bureau of Canada supports it, auto retailers support it, vehicle manufacturers support it. Big-city mayors have come out in support of it. There are very few instances where an amendment, a bill, an act has that widespread support. That's because we all recognize that the problem of safe roads, the problem with safer communities is something that impacts us all.

During the summer, I met a constituent who had his SUV stolen from his driveway. About a couple of months later, when he had replaced the vehicle—same driveway, same house—it was stolen yet again. This bill increases penalties for people engaging in this kind of criminality.

As you know, the rate of auto theft has gone up a lot, and the responsibility—let's be honest and transparent—is exclusively on the shoulders of the federal Liberals and their policies; there's very little we can do at the provincial level. But I'm really happy to see that we have a minister who takes the leadership to use every single tool in our power to fight back against crime, to fight back against carjacking, to fight back against auto theft, to fight back against impaired driving, to fight back against stunt driving.

I'm looking forward to unanimous support of this bill because, as I mentioned, this is something that impacts every single one of us; it is something that impacts every family.

I want to be able to go back to my riding and visit the Saleem family again and tell them that we can't do anything to bring their father back, but we're making sure that it doesn't happen to any other family after today. We're making sure that no one gets out and drives in a way that's irresponsible, that's dangerous or that's criminal and gets to do that again. We're making sure that the penalties for stunt driving go up—that you lose your licence for a year after the first time around, that you lose your licence for multiple years after the second time around, and, if you do it again, you lose your licence forever. That's how it should be.

Speaker, as I mentioned, people want us to be tough on these criminals—and I won't apologize for using the word "criminals," because it is criminal. People want us to take action. People want us to make sure that those who get on

the road drive safely and those who put their selfishness ahead of others' safety lose the privilege of driving.

When I was talking, I couldn't help but picture the face of Muhammad Saleem. When I met their three children—they're between the ages of my kids, and the youngest is younger than my child. Seeing them at the funeral and knowing that their father would never come home—just picturing their faces breaks my heart again and again. I want to make sure that doesn't happen to anyone else.

With that, I'm looking forward to this bill going through with unanimous support. I'm looking forward to our streets staying safe because of acts like this. And I'm looking forward to really, really tough penalties that act as a deterrent—penalties that are so tough that people think twice before driving irresponsibly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. It's always a privilege and an honour to be able to speak for the people in the riding of Kiiwetinoong.

Meegwetch to the speakers to this bill, the Safer Roads and Communities Act, Bill 197. I know they talk about, and the bill addresses, the issue of people driving when impaired.

Where I come from, there are other types of conditions that create dangerous roads, dangerous driving. In the wintertime, drivers in northern Ontario are two times more likely to die in a car crash compared to drivers in other parts of Ontario.

What impacts will this bill have for the people living in northern Ontario?

MPP Zee Hamid: Thank you for that question.

As I mentioned earlier, one in three fatalities that happen in this province happen because of impaired drivers—one in three, and that does get worse in winter.

What we're doing here is increasing penalties for impaired drivers, increasing penalties for stunt drivers, increasing penalties for drivers who shouldn't be on the road. That will make our streets safer for everyone in the province, in southern Ontario and northern Ontario, eastern Ontario and western Ontario—all across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I want to thank the member for his passionate presentation.

I, too, have children of that age—a little bit older than yours—and I have to unfortunately assure you that that worry that you have about your children driving never really goes away. In fact, my 80-year-old mother is still concerned about my driving to this day.

1350

Through the Speaker: Can you please expand on the measures and the impacts that impaired driving has on all of our society—the numbers of the fatalities, the cost to our society?

MPP Zee Hamid: I've mentioned the impact.

Thank you for the question. Thank you for the story.

I actually ride a motorcycle, as well. I went out on Saturday for the first time since I got elected, and my father called me every single hour to make sure I was okay. I said, "Dad, I'm 45. I'm good. I got this." And I understand that; the worry doesn't go away.

As I mentioned, if someone is caught driving impaired after this bill, they're going to be required to put an ignition lock in. That's something that's optional right now. They will be required to put an ignition lock in, and if they don't clear, they can't drive, end of story. If someone kills someone in impaired driving, they lose their licence for life—permanently, forever.

Unfortunately, our Criminal Code is federal. We're doing everything we can at our level to control this massive, massive issue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for your presentation today—and the minister before. Both you and he indicated that your government is taking driving under the influence or impaired driving very seriously.

Given that statement, I'm wondering if your government is still offering plea deals to drunk drivers to get off the potential of getting a criminal record and only having a Highway Traffic Act fine.

MPP Zee Hamid: Anyone who is caught impaired driving will lose their licence privilege for a time, and they will have to put in the ignition lock to be able to drive. Anyone who ends up killing someone in doing impaired driving will lose their licence permanently. We are not taking it lightly. We're going tough on crime and tough on criminals, including criminals who chose to get behind the wheel impaired, whether it's from alcohol or drugs. We're doing the same thing with stunt drivers. We're making sure that our streets stay safe, not just for us, but for generations to come; for our children as well as for us—because, as you mentioned to my colleague there, our parents worry just the same.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I listened with great interest to the remarks from the member. If we were to go back and look at what is on the books, during COVID the government lowered the charges for impaired to help with the backlogs, and we still have those lesser penalties. So I'm wondering what the message is here. Bill 197 proposes to get tough on impaired drivers, but how effective will this be when the government still has a policy allowing impaired drivers to plead down to non-criminal offences under the Highway Traffic Act, avoiding those criminal convictions? What is the message, and what is the plan?

MPP Zee Hamid: From longer roadside licence suspension, to mandatory ignition locks, to lifetime suspension/ban, our message is clear: If you are convicted for impaired driving, there will be significant consequences for your actions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: I appreciate my colleague from Milton's very passionate, personal remarks this morning.

I know there are provisions around e-bikes in this legislation. It's something new for the 21st century. We're seeing this more and more in communities across Ontario, not just downtown Toronto. We are dodging, it seems—walking last night; I was dodging a few.

I was wondering if you could talk about some of the important work we're doing, ensuring that our legislation is modern for the 21st century on road safety for e-bikes.

MPP Zee Hamid: Thank you for the great question. It's actually something that's very personal to me, because I used to use an e-bike to commute to town hall when I was on council. My son took it from me, and I went out once to his university; once I saw the mayhem, I took his e-bike away. He's not allowed to get it back until after this bill passes.

I see that municipalities across Ontario are struggling to regulate e-bikes. It's a new way of getting around. It's good, but it's causing mayhem, because it's always tough to figure out how to regulate new things.

I thank you for the question. I thank Premier Ford and the minister for their leadership in this new mode of transportation and getting ahead of it before it becomes an issue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It's always an honour and a privilege to be able to rise on behalf of the residents from St. Catharines.

I'm going to go back to the impaired driving penalties. The member mentioned that this bill toughens the penalties for impaired driving. It should also be addressing the underlying problem, actually, of the court backlogs that allow impaired drivers to plead down on lesser charges, simply to get through cases quicker. It just seems to me that it's like you're trying to get it over with and get it through.

Why does the government continue to allow impaired drivers to plead down to non-criminal offences under the Highway Traffic Act, undermining the very tough penalties it claims to impose for impaired driving?

MPP Zee Hamid: Thank you.

Interjection.

MPP Zee Hamid: I'm just waiting for the member to finish their question.

The ministry is proposing new measures—stricter measures than any other jurisdiction in North America that I know of—that introduce lifetime licence suspensions for anyone convicted of impaired driving causing death. It requires anyone convicted of impaired driving to install an ignition interlock device. It introduces time-limited, zero-tolerance conditions for anyone convicted of impaired driving. It introduces mandatory remedial education and treatment for first and second-time alcohol- and drug-related occurrences. It introduces longer immediate roadside licence suspensions for first and second-time alcohol and drug-related occurrences. It clarifies police authority to stop vehicles and administer tests for impaired driving

off the highway. It launches a province-wide campaign on the dangers and consequences of drug-impaired driving. And it develops a plan to provide additional tools and training for officers to detect drug-impaired driving.

Thank you for the question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Quick question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate what the government is proposing to do upon a conviction. In order to get a conviction, the crown prosecutor actually has to prosecute, and at the moment, the government's direction to prosecutors is to try to plead down to a Highway Traffic Act offence.

If the government is telling prosecutors to plead down, how will anyone actually get convicted and face these tougher penalties?

MPP Zee Hamid: As I mentioned, anyone convicted of impaired driving will have tougher penalties. They will have to install an ignition lock. Anyone who causes death while driving impaired will lose their driving privilege for life. These harsher penalties the second time around—a lifetime ban the second time around. It's not just limited to impaired driving; it extends to stunt driving. It extends to anything that makes our roads unsafe.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today and to be back in the chamber after a very lengthy break that this government has taken. It's almost like they're trying to avoid something. It's like they're trying to hide from something. I suspect that that has to do with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the current investigation this government is under, but I'm sure they would claim otherwise.

Today, we're here to speak to Bill 197, the Safer Roads and Communities Act. This bill makes various amendments to the Highway Traffic Act relating to impaired driving, high-risk driving behaviours, car theft and a few other important areas. For my time today, I'm going to be mainly focusing on the areas of auto theft and also speaking a little bit about e-bike regulations, highlighting how this bill could also be adapted to go the extra mile to keep our communities and citizens safe.

In general, this bill is meant to improve community safety, and it's meant to keep road users and people safe. It purports to increase penalties for stunt driving and impaired driving—very important things, but I would suggest that this government has its reaction all wrong. That is actually the point: that it is reactionary rather than being proactive. Nowhere in this bill are there any preventive policies to keep road users and drivers safe, like the NDP has put forward with Bill 15 and Bill 40. The policies put forward in this bill to keep road users safe are important, but we want to continue pushing for a proactive policy. Why not stop it before it even starts? We need to be listening to the people who have been weighing in on these issues when it comes to road safety. They've been being very, very vocal for a very long time, and it's time that we heed their words.

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In this bill, and particularly as it relates to auto theft, the threat of losing a licence—is that really going to act as a solid deterrent to car thieves? Let's face it; they're already committing an act which is, by its nature, illegal. Would they then be worried about not having a licence to drive? How does that make any sense?

This government would like to say it is being tough on crime, but it's not looking forward; it's reacting. It wants to punish people after the crime has been committed. I would suggest that it's actually the most expensive and the least effective way to employ legislation in this province.

Looking across the province and across Canada, auto theft numbers are way up. It speaks to our cost-of-living crisis. It speaks to the destruction of rent control. It speaks to all of the people who have really suffered under this government's failed policies. More than 70,000 private vehicles were stolen across Canada last year, and in Ontario alone that number is 30,000; nearly half were taken in Ontario. This is according to the Équité Association, an anti-crime organization that is funded by insurance companies. Our entire country of Canada has an auto theft problem so severe that the Insurance Bureau of Canada has called it "a national crisis."

Now we have to ask ourselves the question, as legislators: Is this bill really going to deter car thieves? I strongly doubt it.

The Conservative government would like to pat themselves on the back. They would like to sloganeer. They would like to pretend that they are tough on crime and punish those bad actors, as we hear them say that time and again, but does that actually stop people from stealing cars? No.

The proposed penalties in this bill are pretty serious. The first offence will earn offenders a 10-year licence suspension; a second offence is 15 years; a third offence will result in a lifetime driving ban. But will that actually work? Will those things keep people from driving? The suspensions will apply only when the thefts are accompanied by aggravating factors such as violence or stealing for organized crime. As has been pointed out by members of His Majesty's loyal opposition, people charged with those offences can plead down to a non-criminal offence.

According to a TVO article, which I loved, on auto theft: "As we often see with the Ford government, it's not quite clear what its plan is here beyond trying to look like it's tough on crime and treading on federal territory to do so...."

"That's not to say we should let criminals off the hook, but the reality is that, if the goal is to prevent crime in the first place, threatening to suspend a driver's licence isn't going to get the job done. Governments, particularly the Ford government, ought to be more concerned with results than adopting show policies that won't do anybody any good."

I'd like to thank David Moscrop for yet another, as always, spicy quote from TVO.

Auto theft is a hot button issue. We see this government now has an associate minister responsible for auto theft.

This government wants to get good headlines out of this. It makes for some decent slogans about being tough on crime and punishing the bad actors, but this bill really only sounds good. When you dig deep into it, it really isn't that effective whatsoever.

This government can use the issue of auto theft and they can put the blame on the federal government, but they want the public to forget the fact that this government is still, themselves, under RCMP investigation. They closed down Ontario Place overnight due to supposedly unsafe roof panels, even though these very same roof panels are used in one out of 12 schools in Ontario, which are open at this moment with young people in there. I don't see this government closing those out of a fear of child safety or a fear of public safety. We also saw the government cut down all of those trees overnight at Ontario Place, under the cloak of night, in a very duplicitous, disturbing and, quite frankly, irresponsible fashion. They were afraid to face the music, so they did it under cover of night because they were afraid of public backlash.

Instead of just critiquing how this bill does not deter auto theft, I want to provide some alternative suggestions that this government could employ to meaningfully and proactively address auto theft.

The first suggestion is to inspect vehicles with problematic VINs. The 17-digit VIN is a vehicle serial number. It's intended to help governments, police and insurers link a vehicle to its owner to prevent all manner of auto theft and fraud. In Alberta and in Saskatchewan, there are cases where a clerk in the vehicle registration office or insurance company finds an issue with the VIN of a vehicle being registered, so then the vehicle is flagged for inspection. However, those inspections don't happen in Ontario. It makes it easy for thieves to sell stolen vehicles with very little fear that someone will check on the vehicle's history.

This government has signs on the highway saying "Open for Business." I think this government really needs to put signs on the highway saying "Open for Fraud," "Open for Car Theft."

John Tod, after 32 years as a theft investigator with the Ontario Provincial Police, started working for a business that helps provincial governments sniff out phony vehicle registrations as a way to curb vehicle theft. Tod said the lack of an inspection program in Ontario is actually making the province a destination for thieves to register vehicles stolen in other jurisdictions. He said, "I've been warning the Ontario government about this for four years."

Why hasn't the government listened to experts—why?

Although only about 2% of vehicles entering the registry are flagged for inspection in the provinces where his company works, it's enough to make a significant dent in curbing the trade of stolen vehicles and trailers, Tod said.

In Ontario, there are about one million vehicles added to the registry each year, and that amounts to a rather big problem.

Tod went on to say, "We're now talking about 10,000 to 20,000 vehicles a year being entered onto the Ontario registry that in other jurisdictions would require a manda-

tory inspection. That undermines the integrity of the registry. We know for a fact that there are vehicles being REVINed that are stolen.”

Even the OPP commissioner, Thomas Carrique, speaking in his role as the head of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, told a House of Commons committee that mandatory inspections of vehicles with problematic VINs should be required.

Why is Ontario a hotbed for vehicle theft under this government? Why has this government not chosen to act proactively?

A second way that we could address auto theft: Instead of punishing people after the fact, instead of having people go through the loss of their vehicle, possibly losing time off work, losing money and having all sorts of ancillary costs, we could inscribe VINs on catalytic converters.

I had the opportunity to meet with Enterprise Rent-A-Car in my riding, and they have video of thieves who can within two minutes get under a car, clip the catalytic converter and away they go. These thieves will then take these catalytic converters—because they contain precious metals, they’ll take them to a scrap dealer to extract them; they can gather anywhere from \$50 to \$300. It’s really a disturbing trend. Enterprise has taken to having to put fences around their yards to increase security because it was happening in such a pronounced and prolific way; especially for CUVs, SUVs—vehicles that it’s very easy to get underneath—it is even faster.

For victims, replacing a stolen catalytic converter can easily cost more than \$1,000, and it makes their vehicle undrivable for days or weeks as the part is ordered and the part is installed, especially when there’s a backlog for the creation of these devices.

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You think about those mounting costs, you think about those ancillary costs, you think about people who have to call in that day—what if somebody has a boss who’s unforgiving, what if somebody misses picking up their child from school, what if they cause a safety concern for that child? There are so many things that this impacts.

According to Allstate Insurance Co. of Canada, the theft of catalytic converters rose 60% last year; it was up a whopping 1,700% between 2018 and 2022. That’s on this government’s watch, yet we see no action being taken.

Number one, we could inscribe catalytic converters with the vehicle identification number, the VIN.

Another hack I want to mention in this House that is gaining popularity is to paint the catalytic converters so that thieves avoid them because they’re easily identifiable and it’s an open sign that this is a traceable unit. According to the Ultimate Guide to Catalytic Converter Etching and Theft Prevention, “Vibrant orange hues contrast strongly against typical undercarriage black and greys, drawing extra attention to painted converters compared to factory colours.” This shows that orange is, after all, the best colour. According to the police, “The distinctive marking will make it easier for the police to be able to detect stolen catalytic converters.”

In Surrey, British Columbia, a program is being offered to residents to have their VIN etched on a vehicle component to prevent it from being sawed off and illicitly sold. A report from the city reads, “The requirement that a VIN be etched to the catalytic converter provides law enforcement the ability to trace the origins of the catalytic converter and to determine whether it was stolen. If the VIN has been tampered with, then the scrap metal dealer must not accept the catalytic converter”—I’m going to get back to that second part of the scrap metal dealers in just a minute. Businesses, such as repair shops, that are part of the program will be provided posters to show that they offer the etching of the VIN number on catalytic converters. Vehicle owners will be given window decals to show that the catalytic converter has been etched to deter thieves from targeting the vehicle—again, proactive. Why react to a stolen catalytic converter when you can prevent it from happening in the first place?

A similar program is being run in Alberta. Staff Sergeant Luke Halvorson from the Alberta RCMP said, “Engraving programs assist law enforcement in identifying stolen catalytic converters, returning them to their rightful owners and laying charges in these types of cases. We encourage citizens to consider engraving their vehicles’ converters. Not only does this support us in our work of tackling this type of crime in our communities, but it also makes it harder for thieves to profit from your stolen property.”

We see jurisdictions that are leading the way when Ontario is, quite frankly, lagging behind. Ontario could follow suit; they could take this proactive step in deterring auto theft by requiring VINs to be etched onto catalytic converters.

My third suggestion for how to deter auto theft is to update the scrap metal dealer legislation to require records when these materials are being purchased.

As part of the Manitoba provincial government’s plan to address this significant issue in catalytic converter theft, scrap metal recyclers in Manitoba will now have to follow strict regulations when buying and selling. Buyers are required to record details of every transaction involving scrap metal, to keep the records for two years, and to provide them to law enforcement when asked.

It’s another case where Ontario could be a leader in tackling auto theft and take a proactive stance by updating scrap metal dealer legislation rather than just punishing auto thieves after the fact and after the crime has been committed. It’s like they’re waiting to close the barn door after the horse has run free, again.

Just to move on from auto theft, this bill talks extensively about e-bike regulations. Based on this bill—does this government agree that e-bikes are welcome in our community and that we should be encouraging them without imposing needless red tape? It doesn’t seem like it. This government removed the definition of “power-assisted bicycle.” Are they now going to be considered mopeds? I have questions and really no answers, and I would love if the government would provide clarity about how they plan to use these new e-bike regulations.

The government has signalled it intends to use the new regulatory authority in Bill 197 to make new regulations governing e-bikes, but it hasn't provided details except, "The proposed legislation would enable the government to categorize more dangerous e-bikes into distinct classes such as by maximum weight or speed...." Based on this section of the proposed new legislation, can the government provide more details about its plans for new e-bike regulations? Does it agree that e-bikes are comparatively inexpensive and sustainable alternatives to vehicles, and in some areas have been popular as a non-polluting alternative? The Ontario government needs to make its intentions for e-bike regulations clear.

This bill also removes the definition of "power-assisted bicycle" from the Highway Traffic Act, which means e-bikes will now fall under the definition of "motor-assisted bicycle," with vehicles like mopeds. Does the government intend to regulate e-bikes similar to mopeds? This section about e-bikes is another example of legislation put forward by this Conservative government that is unclear, murky. It leaves the meat of the legislation to the regulations.

Speaker, as we look at Bill 197, it's not that it is unsupportable, but I would say that, given an analysis of it, it really doesn't achieve what it purports to set out to do. Instead of proactively ensuring that people will not have their cars stolen, instead of ensuring that people will not go out to their vehicle and find it won't start because their catalytic converter has been clipped—there are opportunities where Ontario could be a leader, Ontario could protect people before their car is stolen, Ontario could protect people before their catalytic converter is removed. Not only would this make logical sense—to make sure we stop the crime before it happens—but it makes good fiscal sense. If we protect people, it will cost far less in the long run by not involving the courts, which are in a terrible backlog situation, but it will also make sure that people are able to carry out their lives safely and with the vehicles that they have themselves purchased.

I would also suggest that this bill almost does seem like flimsy window dressing. It seems as though this government wants to employ all sorts of slogans saying that they're tough on crime and that they're taking this seriously—"auto thieves beware"—but what they're threatening is taking away someone's licence, in the worst cases. If someone is not afraid of the legal consequences of stealing a car, are they really going to be that worried about the consequences of driving without a licence? It doesn't seem to make any logical sense. Further, when you consider that this legislation is also supported by current laws on the books that allow impaired drivers to plead down to non-criminal offences, this legislation lacks merit and is not as strong as this government pretends it is.

I suggest that the government should change its "Open for Business" signs on the highways to "Open for Auto Vehicle Theft and Fraud."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for your presentation. I know much more about catalytic converters now than I ever did before.

I'm wondering, though, about your thoughts on the punishments in the act that relate to being convicted of driving under the influence under the Criminal Code, which, of course, can only happen if you proceed through a court process to do that, and whether or not the government should change its approach and direct courts to no longer take plea deals for dangerous driving and to actually pursue convictions under the Criminal Code.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

We know that this government is pretending to be tough on crime. They are very fond of these words, these gestures without any real merit, without any real strength or without, really, any backbone to them, quite frankly.

It has been exposed that there is current legislation under the Highway Traffic Act that people who have been charged with impaired driving have been able to plead that down into a non-criminal offence. This government is allowing that to happen. They have rubber-stamped it. They have allowed it to continue. So this whole notion that they're being tough on crime, that they're being tough on auto theft, that they're being tough on impaired driving, simply does not pass the sniff test. They're not being hard on it whatsoever. They're being hard on our ears by making us listen to empty statements.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Section 23 of this bill, which replaces section 24, provides that a person who fails to stop for an emergency vehicle when that emergency vehicle has its lights flashing will be subject to a minimum fine of \$2,000 and a maximum fine of \$10,000, or a term of imprisonment for a term of not more than six months, or both. That's on the first offence, so a minimum of a \$2,000 fine, maximum of a \$10,000 fine and a term of imprisonment of a maximum of six months, or perhaps even both. Does the member believe that those punishments are too severe, too weak or somewhere in between?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: To my colleague across the way, those punishments might mean something if people were actually getting convicted, but as a former trial lawyer himself, I'm sure he would be well aware that when there is a stick that's never been used, it really isn't that much of a threat whatsoever, is it? This government can talk endlessly about how they are increasing fines, but when those fines are never levied, do they really exist and do they really matter? They're simply newsy, they're headlines, but when they're not actually being employed and deployed by the court system, and people are not being convicted of those things, do they really exist? I would posit that, unfortunately, they do not. They are meaningless when they're not being ascribed in a court of law.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's good to be back after a very long five-month—

Interjection: Hiatus.

Miss Monique Taylor: —hiatus. Thank you. That's a good word to be used in this context, for sure, because there's so much work to do in this province.

I'm happy to hear that we're talking about car thefts. In Hamilton alone, in 2022, we had 1,436 vehicles stolen. In 2023, we had 1,608 vehicles stolen. And within the first month and a half of 2024, there were already 174 cars stolen. We know that that continues to rise, and I'm sure those numbers are quite high.

Does this legislation actually do enough to tackle the issue? I know there are things like changes to the VIN identification and that kind of program that can actually have a bigger impact, but what we see before us today, is it truly going to fix the problem of vehicle theft in our communities?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for an excellent question. Really, it comes down to the question: Would you rather, number one, have your vehicle stolen and that person be punished? Do you want justice in that way? Do you want revenge in that way? Or would you rather never have your vehicle stolen in the first place because it was protected? It's a very simple question.

We, as the official opposition, have composed some very proactive, forward-thinking solutions, as informed by the experts, such as ensuring that the VIN number is on catalytic converters, that the VIN registry system is being used, making sure that when these things are being flagged, they are inspected and making sure that Ontario is not a jurisdiction where 30,000 stolen vehicles are being rehomed.

It's deeply disturbing that this government, which would pretend it's tough on crime, is actually opening the door to crime.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member opposite for his speech this afternoon. I was listening and appreciated him sharing his concerns around this, and also, obviously, some of the support that he has for some of these measures. I'm glad to see that road safety is something that there is unanimous support in the Legislature from all corners about it, in principle.

I want to ask specifically about stunt driving, because I'm not completely naive to the fact that stunt drivers are often young people or young men, in some situations, and they don't always think about the consequences of that action. They might be thinking that they're racing a buddy. Perhaps it's on a road somewhere. Perhaps it's out in rural Niagara. Perhaps it's in a city as well. You hear about these kinds of situations.

I want to just ask the member if he can share a message to those, again, predominantly young men who aren't thinking about what the consequences can be. I know people who have been killed due to speed, often because of stunt driving, and I know people have been seriously

injured because of some of those decisions. I'm wondering if he can share a message to those people about thinking before they drive too quickly and why this legislation is important to reinforce that message.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank my colleague from across the way for the question. Myself, I still retain an M licence. I used to ride a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, and it was something that I loved. My partner and I used to go on many trips. However, we began to stop the frequency of our motorcycle trips as a result of road safety.

You know, something where if you were in control, then you don't have to worry—you can control the variable, you can make sure that you're being safe; however, when there are other vehicles on the road, sometimes you're not safe. Stunt driving is very much a concern. It's also very frightening to be on a motorcycle when you're driving on a road with motorists, with people driving a vehicle, who might not actually see you, might not notice you, because, quite frankly—let's face it, Speaker—in any battle between a motorcycle and a vehicle, the vehicle always wins, the car always wins.

I think road safety is something that is important, and I think as well that making sure that we prevent crime before it starts is also important. So I look forward to this government employing some of the recommendations that we have presented here as the official opposition, so they can tackle the problem in an authentic, verifiable, legitimate way.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to ask a question as we're discussing this bill about—well, ostensibly about—safer roads and communities. I have had the opportunity to ask this question of various ministers and government members, but I'll ask you. Because as we see that car thieves are gaming the system in Ontario, that they're able to get new VINs for stolen vehicles at ServiceOntario counters, the government has been getting lots of advice from insurance, from former law enforcement, and yet we don't see the protections in place that we would anticipate to protect the integrity of the VIN database.

I guess my question is, if someone in Ontario can steal a car, register it, make quick cash and be good to go, what should we see in this bill from the government to protect the VIN registry and Ontarians from car thieves?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an excellent question, to my friend from Oshawa, because, if I may draw an analogy or comparison, it's almost like a counterfeit artist is taking money to the bank to have it certified, to then pass it off, and nobody will ever know that it's a counterfeit to begin with, because it has been legitimized.

In Ontario, we're allowing that to happen with the VIN system. Instead of investigating problematic VINs and finding out what their provenance is, where they've come from and why there's an issue with their VIN number, we're actually condoning theft, in a manner of speaking, in an institutional way by issuing new VINs. This government could do the right thing. They could take a look at

the 30,000 vehicles that are being stolen from Ontario and think about all the vehicles that are being legitimized through authentic, official channels that this government is allowing to happen. By their neglect, they're actually supporting auto theft.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's great to finally be back here in the Legislature after our five-month hiatus. It's great to be debating something as important as safer roads and communities. I think, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, as we've heard throughout the afternoon already, that while the bill purports to be tough on crime and purports to take measures that will make our roads and communities safer, it doesn't live up to the name or live up to some of the rhetoric. It tries to make it sound like the government is going to do something about the stolen vehicle epidemic in Ontario, but I don't think it will have much impact. It says that it's going to do something about drinking and driving, but I'm not sure that the changing consequences that are in the bill will, in and of themselves, do much to change drinking and driving.

Take for a second the stolen-vehicle elements. If you're someone who steals a car, you're already someone who is open to breaking the law. If you go to jail as a result of that offence and you come out, we hope that you have been rehabilitated and you will no longer want to break the law. Part of that is being able to go out and get a job so that you can earn a living and take care of yourself and maybe take care of your family. That is, obviously, exceedingly difficult to do in our society if you're not allowed to drive a car.

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And so they're setting those people up for failure from the start: to either re-enter illegitimate ways of making money, like stealing cars in the first place; or potentially, Madam Speaker, driving without a driver's licence. Obviously, if you drive without a driver's licence, you don't have insurance, and that doesn't make our communities or our roads safer. In fact, I would argue that that can make our roads less safe, because in the event of an accident, you don't have insurance. Obviously, the consequences of that can be profound for yourself and for those who you may injure or harm as part of that accident.

So if the government wanted to get tough on stolen vehicles, it would give police agencies the resources they need in order to get tough on stolen vehicles, in order to stop those vehicles from being stolen in the first place.

We now have a minister responsible for stolen vehicles. Perhaps he could work with the auto industry to make those vehicles less easy to steal. If pushing the button to start the car is what makes these things so easy to steal, I don't know that that's worth the convenience of not having to turn the key. I'm sure everyone here is old enough to remember turning the key. I don't think that was all that inconvenient. And so we now have a minister responsible for stolen vehicles and he should be occupying himself with making them less easy to steal in the first place.

Now, in terms of the changes as it relates to drinking and driving: Again, it sounds like they're getting tougher—tougher consequences for those who commit that offence—but those consequences only come into play if the conviction actually happens. If prosecutors are told to plead those down to dangerous driving or some other non-criminal consequence, than those tougher consequences can never actually be applied.

And so someone will have gone through the process of being arrested, I'm sure, the embarrassment and the emotional trauma of having to end up taking months through that process to end up getting the equivalent of a ticket or a fine, which could've been done at the front end if we had, in Ontario, a process similar to what they have in British Columbia and Alberta. It doesn't feel to me like it's actually making the resource problem any better because the resources are still being used. The police officer is still taking them to the police station to get the secondary test. You're still occupying court time by having it in the process for however many weeks or months it takes in order to get there and then you're just pleading it down to the same offence that could've been done on the roadside if we had the same process they have in British Columbia and Alberta.

And again, Madam Speaker, why do we think that people will simply stop driving if they don't have a driver's licence? These people have demonstrated and indicated already through their existing actions that obeying the law isn't, perhaps, their top concern. And so if they're needing to drive, to take their kids to school or to go to work—any number of things—I think we would all find it very difficult, in this room, not to be able to drive to take care of the day-to-day issues in our lives. People are going to drive; they're just going to drive illegally by driving without a driver's licence and without insurance. That, I don't think, makes our communities or our roads any safer.

So there are ways to combat some of these issues beyond simply making the consequences tougher. But there are other ways that we can make our roads and communities safer—ways that the government is choosing, at least in this bill, not to put forward, and I'd like to talk about some of those for a moment.

We've heard about stunt driving. The police can't be everywhere, all the time. We know that. They do a great job, but they can't be everywhere, all the time. But, at least in my community, I could tell you that two or three or four streets, the main drags where the stunt driving and the racing happens on Friday night, on Saturday night—the police know what those are too, but they can't be there all the time. What can be there all the time, though, is photo radar, but photo radar has very specific points in where it can be installed. It has to be installed near parks and schools or in community safety zones. Many of these main drags where you have street racing aren't going past parks and schools, and therefore aren't in community safety zones. We can give municipalities the tools to install photo radar in some of those well-known drag-racing areas, so they can actually help combat the epidemic of street racing.

I think that's even a regulatory change and I'm not even sure we need a bill to do that; that's something the government could do pretty quickly. Even if it was a bill, I'm pretty sure it would probably have unanimous consent to try to crack down on some of this stuff.

The government could invest in giving municipalities funding for more of these tools, whether it's photo radar or red light cameras or licence-plate-detection technology for police vehicles, or something that was tried in the city of Ottawa: A major concern, especially in the fall as we are getting back to school, is that school buses are back on the road after two months off. We're back here after five months off; school buses are only off the road for two months and people fall out of practice of seeing school buses on the road. What happens is you see a spike in people going around the stop signs. That, obviously, is very dangerous. It puts our kids at risk and it's dangerous in our communities because school buses are, more often than not, on very localized community roads. That's where they're generally picking kids up, and so we're putting these neighbourhoods and our communities at risk.

A solution there could be something that was done in Ottawa, which was to put video cameras on the school buses. It's basically a school bus photo radar, but for the stop sign. This has been highly successful in the city of Ottawa, but it's very expensive. We know the cost challenges that school bus providers are already facing as a result of underfunding, but they could, or the municipality could on their behalf, install these cameras on all buses, or on more buses, with some financial help from this government. That's help that they could provide today. It's help they could provide tomorrow. It's help to do this kind of thing that the government could provide in the economic statement that we know is coming in the next couple of weeks. That is an investment that would actually make our streets and our communities safer, and it's an investment that I think everyone in this Legislature would applaud.

And so, while this legislation purports to want to be tough on crime, it's not clear to me that it will actually live up to that hype, and in fairness, there's so much more the government could be doing to try to make our streets and our communities safer.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

MPP Andrea Hazell: To the member from Orléans: Thank you for your presentation on the legislation. My question is going to be around our road safety. I hear it loud and clear, and you've also given some options that truly make sense. Do you think this legislation is moving fast enough, or do you think there is enough in this legislation when it comes to holding—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I apologize to the member, but I thought that time was being shared.

We're now moving on to questions. Questions?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I've been listening to the member's comments on the bill, and through you, Speaker, I wanted to ask the member his thoughts—well, we already heard his thoughts on our licence suspensions for

convicted criminals. My question is very simple: Do you support making life harder for convicted criminals who are robbing people of their time, their peace, their moral compass? Do you support making life harder for those convicted criminals or not?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Certainly, I think that convicted criminals should face tough punishment. What I don't support is a government that doesn't actually want to convict criminals. You can't convict criminals if you tell your prosecutors not to prosecute them for the crime. If you tell them to plead the crime down to a fine, then they're not going to have a criminal record. You can't get tough on criminals that don't exist because you failed to prosecute them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

1440

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question to the member was further to what he was just answering of the government members. We've been hearing today in the government remarks about being tough on crime, about convictions, but I guess my question to the member is, what happens if we're not seeing those convictions? If the government doesn't prioritize making that change in policy that had been enacted during COVID to deal with the backlogs but has not yet been removed from the books and continues to still be government policy—if you can't get that out of the way, then we won't get convictions. We won't ever get to that stage. So perhaps you could share with us why on earth the government would talk about it being a priority without actually making the policy change.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, we know that this government likes to write cheques with its mouth that its policy implementation simply can't cash, and this is just another example of that. They want to get tough. They want to be seen to be getting tough. But in their day-to-day practice, they let things slide. That may have been a good approach during COVID in order to help whatever was going on; I'm not going to get into the details of their COVID flip-flops and their mistakes that they made during the COVID pandemic. But I think we can all agree now that if we're going to make someone go through that months-long process of being arrested, hiring a lawyer, going to court and that entire process, we shouldn't then have it pled down at the last minute. We should actually try to convict them of the crime that they've been arrested for.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I'm going to caution the member from Orléans with regard to his language.

Now, I recognize the member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

MPP Andrea Hazell: My question is around road safety. To the member from Orléans, I think about young people's first, second and third offences. So my question is very simple to you: Do you think this legislation is taking enough action? Is it moving fast enough? Does it have a quick approach to hold those young drivers accountable for their first, second and third offences?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I think a better approach would be giving police officers and police forces across the province and municipalities across the province the resources to actually catch more people in the act of breaking some of these rules. Whether it's updates to where and how photo radar is installed, whether it's the financing to municipalities or to school bus companies to put the video-evidence-capture technology and software onto school buses so we can find people who bypass the stop sign, there are financial investments that this government can make. It can open up its chequebook and give the police and municipalities the resources to actually catch more people in the act. Hopefully, if you get that \$300, \$400, \$500, \$600 fine for stunt racing or other traffic violations, that will be part of the process to change your behaviour.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): There's not enough time for more questions. I'm going to move on.

Further debate?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: It's great to be back in the House after a good break connecting with constituents, and it's also great to talk about the important legislation that we have in front of us, Safer Roads and Communities Act. As we go into second reading, I'd like to talk a little bit more about how this act is going to benefit all Ontarians as we strengthen our laws and makes this one of the most rigorous drinking and driving laws throughout Canada.

Speaker, it's without a doubt that our province is ranked among the top jurisdictions with the lowest fatality rates on roads. However, in order to stay consistent with our rankings and work towards reaching the highest rank, we need to continue strengthening legislation to keep our roads safe. That's precisely why the Minister of Transportation, along with our government, put forward critical legislation aimed at establishing the most stringent penalties in Canada for impaired driving.

Without a single doubt, our government has taken the safety of our constituents and we're keeping them at the top of our mind, as people deserve to live, travel and contribute to society without having to fear for their safety or the safety of their belongings.

Ontarians are well aware of the troubling rise in vehicle thefts plaguing our province. This alarming trend cannot continue, and decisive action must be taken to put an end to it for the safety of our communities. The legislation, Safer Roads and Communities Act, would crack down on these criminals that are seemingly taking advantage of our judicial system. Our government and Ontarians have had enough. Unlike the previous governments and our federal government, we're taking action to finally implement measures and fight this epidemic.

In 2022, more than 20,000 Ontarians had their licence suspended for impaired driving. Another completely unacceptable statistic so far this year: Over 10,000 impaired driving charges have been laid by the OPP. Compared to 2022, that's an increase of 16%. During my time as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, a roadside survey of Ontario drivers was conducted by the ministry. The survey found very concerning results. Firstly,

it found that one in five drivers tested positive for drugs, alcohol or both. Secondly, it found that, since 2014, the number of drivers who test positive for drugs has increased by 55%. These are alarming numbers. We cannot allow these numbers to increase more and more, furthering the risk of everyday Ontarians' lives.

Mr. Speaker, this strengthening in legislation will create the necessary rules, provide the necessary tools and foster the environment to stop all forms of on-road criminal activity. This legislation will introduce a lifetime suspension of a driver's licence for individuals convicted of impaired driving. This decisive measure reflects our unwavering commitment to public safety and justice.

Last March, Peel Regional Police brought a possibly impaired driver to 22 Division, and guess what he scored on the breath test, Speaker? Nearly a whopping four times the legal limit. That is close to 0.32%. The average person at this blood alcohol content can experience inadequate breathing, loss of bladder control, an inability to walk and possible loss of consciousness. Imagine the type of irreversible damage this person could have done if he was not caught by law enforcement and the spike in 911 calls from concerned Bramptonians? Luckily, we didn't have to find out that day, because law enforcement got him before the act.

Even yesterday, when I was at a family gathering and I was meeting with a few friends of mine, they were telling me that, on the way over, they had an impaired driver who was swerving left and right around them and almost hit them in a vehicle car crash, and they were happy that the authorities were able to tend to that very quickly.

But, as this continues, we are introducing some of the toughest penalties across Canada to ensure that we deter people from drinking and driving and ensure that they have a safe ride home. Our government is willing to do everything we can to ensure roadside safety and clean up our roadways. Driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs is completely unacceptable and intolerable.

To mark an emphasis on how far back our government goes in its concern for public safety and to battle drug use, in 2022 we opened addiction recovery and treatment hubs spreading across the province which will support individuals struggling with substance use. We've strengthened supports at consumption sites.

Bramptonians and Ontarians alike can rest assured that our government has a robust plan to do everything it takes to make sure dangerous drivers cannot get back on roadways. If passed, this act would implement a lifetime driver's licence suspension for anyone convicted of impaired driving causing death under the Criminal Code. Our province cannot withstand hearing about more and more impaired driving deaths, and our government's message is simple: We will not stand idly by while people continue to take advantage of the current laws. And this lifetime suspension for impaired driving causing death makes that abundantly clear. This is not a risk worth taking—as it never was.

Mr. Speaker, in this bill, there is more that we are implementing to combat impaired driving. Currently, in Ontario, anyone that is convicted of impaired driving can choose to install an ignition-lock device to reduce their licence suspension. We are saying, enough with that. We are going to require those convicted drivers to install an interlock device upon licence re-instatement. They may choose to sit out of this option, but this will result in being prohibited from driving for their licence suspension and ignition-lock term.

Changes like these are critical to how we tackle this epidemic. According to statistics provided by Peel Regional Police, since January 1 of this year to June 30, so far we've had 402 impaired driving incidents. When this statistic receives another update, I really hope it does not jump to another number anywhere near the total for 2023, which was 1,023.

It's imperative that we work together to prevent further incidents and ensure the safety of our roads and our communities. It's clear to us that Ontarians want more measures to be taken to prevent drivers from even thinking about taking the risk of driving impaired. This is why this bill, if passed, would implement a time-limited zero-tolerance condition. This zero-tolerance period would begin once the driver completes both the ignition-lock program and the requirements of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's Back on Track program.

Speaker, a zero-tolerance policy would enable various benefits to drivers and communities as it sends a strong message that impaired driving is unacceptable. We should always be the understanding way. By enforcing this condition, our government aims to reduce the likelihood of repeat offences, ultimately enhancing road safety for all. Mandating offenders to complete programs like the ignition interlock and the Back on Track initiative before the zero-tolerance period begins acknowledges that recovery from addiction and behavioural change takes time and intentional action. It lays the foundation for a more responsible future and decision-making while operating a vehicle.

1450

Our government wants to enable a sense of accountability and responsibility. Implementing this measure holds offenders accountable for their actions. It emphasizes personal responsibility in maintaining sobriety and adhering to the law, which can contribute to a greater sense of accountability. Our government wants to foster a more responsible, critical-thinking-backed driver environment, and measures like this are a key piece of our road map.

We include educational workshops and myths and facts about alcohol and other drugs, which includes a treatment workshop where they learn why people drink or use other drugs and how it affects lives, and then a follow-up interview and assessment to determine whether a person understands and is ready to move forward and never repeat this offence again.

To strengthen our commitment on this even more, this bill, if passed, will implement longer roadside licence suspensions for first- and second-time drug- and alcohol-

related offences. Presently, Ontario's drivers face a three-day roadside suspension for their first offence and a seven-day suspension for their second offence. These measures will also extend to young and novice drivers, as well as those who exhibit poor performance on field sobriety tests or have a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05% or higher.

We cannot allow irresponsible drivers to influence other drivers and make it seem okay or normal for these things to happen. Driving under the influence is not acceptable at all, nor should it ever be an option for anybody.

There are many resources that folks can utilize to avoid driving under the influence. In my riding of Brampton East, there are various alcohol-licensed establishments where constituents go and enjoy and go out for a night and indulge. They're able to have a good time, but it needs to be a responsible good time. I support all sorts of reasonable fun that you can have with your friends and family, but one thing that should always be top of mind is: How am I going to get home tonight after a night of drinking? It doesn't matter if it was one, two or three; you need to always have a plan on how you're going to make a responsible way back home.

The tools available in this day and age make it so much easier for people not to worry about how much fun they can have. You have ride-sharing, you have taxis, you have ride pools, public transportation; perhaps a designated driver to take you home safe and sound. That's one less irresponsible driver on our roadways, and that's saving a life and making sure that we respect the privilege of driving. Driving is not a right; it's a privilege that is given to us. We need to make sure we uphold the standards when we get behind the wheel.

However, there are more measures that we still need to take to cement our government's message. Drivers would receive a seven-day roadside licence suspension for their first drug- or alcohol-related offence, and if they were stupid enough to try again for a second time, their licence would be suspended for 14 days.

Alongside these measures, the act, if passed, would synchronize the look-back periods for all drug- and alcohol-related incidents. A look-back period establishes the framework for escalating sanctions for repeat offenders. Currently, the administrative and monetary penalties and licence suspensions are subject to a five-year look-back period. Our government's plan to harmonize all look-back periods at 10 years is just another determination of how far we're willing to go to instill in people to think not once or twice but thrice about getting behind the wheel in an impaired state.

Speaker, Bramptonians are not shy to voice their concerns about the support law enforcement has to keep our roads and communities safe. Policing is central to keeping our roads safe, and ensuring these roads are safe requires that we equip law enforcement with every available tool necessary to effectively combat impaired driving. To this point, that is exactly what our government is going to do. We're going to strengthen the abilities to provide essential tools needed to conduct this.

If enacted, this bill would amend the Highway Traffic Act to make it clear that police have the authority to stop drivers for sobriety testing, regardless of whether they're on a highway or driving in other areas. Our government is making it absolutely crystal clear that evading the police is not going to work. Our officers are determined to put public safety first and keep impaired and irresponsible drivers off the road, and that's what we're going to do.

But as we continue, Speaker, auto theft has become a rising problem across the province. I've seen it first-hand in my riding of Brampton East, when I get calls from constituents waking up in the morning and not being able to go to work or not being able to take their family member to the doctor—not being able to do critical, everyday tasks because their vehicle is no longer outside their home.

So far, Brampton has been victim to about 2,847 auto thefts, according to the Peel Regional Police crime mapping portal. That's just shy of 3,000 thefts this year. Imagine the value of all those vehicles combined and how much is being taken out of the hard-working people of Brampton and all Ontarians across this province. Thieves are resorting to weapons to carjack diligent Ontarians and Bramptonians, and they're jeopardizing our safety, our roads and our communities.

My riding is a very suburban, family-friendly and family-driven area where you always see moms and dads picking up their kids and dropping them from school, going to work and doing their daily routines. I've always been an advocate of safety for my constituents in hopes that no one should ever fall victim to these spineless crimes.

If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, anybody convicted of auto theft would face a driver's licence suspension. Individuals convicted of a crime would receive a 10-year suspension for their first offence, a 15-year suspension for their second offence and a lifetime suspension for their third offence. When it comes to these offences—I know there has been a lot of conversation in the House of how effective this is. Losing the ability to drive is losing a tool that gets you to and from places, to get to work, and that's a serious consequence when it comes to auto theft. We're taking everything that we can in this provincial government's power and throwing it on the books so criminals pay the price. Somebody who steals a car and then gets convicted loses their driver's licence; that's a privilege that they have now lost. Their life is about to get a lot more complicated, and that's the message that we're sending: We're going to make life harder for convicted criminals.

As we work with the federal government and we push the federal government to bring in stricter laws, stronger bail reform laws and stronger laws in general—I hope they bring in minimum sentencing; that's what I would love to see, if the federal government came to the table and did that—we're doing everything we can as a province to make sure that the lives of those criminals are as difficult as it possibly could be.

Our message is very clear: Think twice before you go and make that act, don't steal anybody's car and, if you do, rest assured that the government is going to come after

you. We're equipping Peel Regional Police and all of our police forces across Ontario with every resource that we possibly can to ensure that these criminals are put behind bars and not let out back onto the streets.

If you heartlessly steal somebody's vehicle, a vehicle they worked long and hard hours to obtain, you'll be revoked of your driving privilege and face further challenges of which you have caused—the harm you've caused for the person you've stolen that vehicle from.

Since 2021, carjacking in Peel region has increased by 45%. Although these are troubling statistics, our government has stepped up in investing in our law enforcement agencies, enabling them to strengthen their resources to catch those criminals.

In 2023, thanks to the terrific work by our Solicitor General, Minister Kerzner, our government is investing \$18 million over three years to assist police services in combatting and preventing auto theft. In Peel, especially, our government invested an additional \$51 million to ensure that we're working hard to catch these criminals. The funding supports in advanced technology, surveillance systems and training to improve investigative capabilities is essential for our police forces, and our government is providing that and we're more than happy to support our police forces, to support our front-line officers, because they're the ones who keep us protected and safe day in and day out.

Carjackers are not the only spineless criminals who are endangering the lives of everyday Ontarians. Just last month, a neighbourhood in my area of Brampton East, a few minutes down the street from my home on Country-side and Ross Drive, a 19-year-old was charged for stunt driving after racing another vehicle going 159 kilometres an hour in a 60-kilometre-an-hour zone—completely unacceptable and ridiculous. Going 100 kilometres over the limit in a residential neighbourhood; clearly the safety of pedestrians, families and communities was not a concern for this driver. To make my point, my riding is a very community- and family-driven area, so especially in that particular area of—you have kids coming home from school, you have kids walking around, I'm sure just like many ridings around this great province.

Which brings me to a stomach-turning revelation: In June 2020, a father and a husband in my riding was informed of a life-altering tragedy: He'd lost his wife and three little daughters to a reckless driver. It gets worse: The convicted was charged with dangerous operation of a motor vehicle in connection with a separate incident just two days before this one. To put more nails in the coffin, it was found that he was operating the vehicle under the influence at about eight times higher than the legal limit of THC per millilitre of blood.

This is a prime example of how these drivers don't take the law seriously or the consequences that could follow a serious incident. Because of criminals like him, a father lost his family, the love of his life and the light in him and, on that particular day, it was Father's Day weekend.

Our government is taking action. In 2021, we enacted the MOMS Act, which highlighted the licence suspensions

and vehicle impoundments for individuals involved in stunt driving, street racing or aggressive driving. Now our government is strengthening legislation through the Safer Roads and Communities Act. Currently, the courts have the discretion to suspend a driver's licence after a stunt driving conviction, meaning that the minimum suspension length may not be enforced in every case. If passed, this bill would amend the Highway Traffic Act to ensure that anyone convicted of stunt driving faces a mandatory minimum licence suspension. This means one year for the first conviction, three years for the second and a lifetime for the third, which can be reduced to 10 years under certain criteria.

1500

Speaker, if passed, the bill will allow e-bikes to be categorized into distinct classes. Today, these e-bikes often exceed the permitted weight or power-assisted speeds. Through this bill, each class would have its own prescribed vehicle safety requirements, such as speed and weight limits, as well as operator requirements, such as a minimum age for drivers and passengers.

That's not all that our government is doing. Our government is taking action to strengthen MTO enforcement officers' ability to carry out the ministry's commercial vehicle program. Public safety is an all-hands-on-deck situation, and our government is ensuring that all parties are playing a vital role. Speaker, if passed, drivers would be mandated to move over for MTO enforcement vehicles when their lights and signals are activated. Additionally, MTO enforcement officers would be granted the authority to confiscate fraudulent or suspended drivers' licences.

Thankfully, Speaker, our province has remained as one of the safest jurisdictions in North America, but as I mentioned earlier, there's still always work to do. Our government is committed to working with the people of Ontario and everybody in this Legislature to ensure that we have some of the toughest rules across the country.

By 2026, Brampton has a forecasted population of 800,000, and by 2051, about one million. Through the Safer Roads and Communities Act, we'll pave the way to ensure our roads will be safe, communities will be safe, and Bramptonians and Ontarians can work and drive without fearing for their safety. Through this bill, we'll maintain preventative measures, crack down on criminals and instill fear in those who think they can continue to take advantage of our laws that are in place to make sure we keep everybody safe.

I hope everybody in this House supports this bill. It's a great bill that's going to ensure that we keep roads safe. I know while I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation and we were doing consultations and I had the opportunity to speak to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, they were hugely supportive of the measures that we're taking. They also believe that these changes are going to make meaningful impact, and it was great to hear from them that what we're doing is the right thing. We're going to ensure that roads are safe, and we're going to keep our standards high and we're going to keep our laws strict.

Thank you, Speaker for giving me the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: I was listening to the member and his debate on Bill 197, but I did hear him bring up safe consumption sites. We know that this is a problem across the province. We are seeing addiction levels—we see a human crisis of people overdosing in our communities. And we have the Ford government and the Ministry of Health closing down our safe consumption sites, which is simply legislating people to die in the province of Ontario. In Hamilton, we have two safe consumption sites only, and both of those will be closing, with no options in sight for other safe consumption sites to open up.

Can the member please tell me his views on safe consumption sites and ensuring we have safe places for people in our communities?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I definitely support the government's decision to start closing the safe consumption sites. I feel like the Minister of Health is doing an amazing job as she moves forward in ensuring all Ontarians are going towards the right direction.

When I talk to local constituents every single day in my riding of Brampton, they talk about what that attracts to that local community. If we have a safe injection site, let's say in my area, in Bramalea City Centre, which is a mall visited by thousands of people, those are not the people I would like to see our kids and our families interact with as they enter that particular mall.

Our government is doing great things when it comes to this, but I'm going to bring the question back to the bill. We're introducing this legislation to ensure that our roads stay safe and that we have the highest standards throughout the country.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to my colleague for his remarks earlier and for talking about Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Earlier this year, we had a school group in here from Niagara, the Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving. They actually met with the Minister of Transportation, Premier Ford and the Minister of Education to talk about the work that they do in schools to prevent senseless death and injury.

I'm hoping you can tell me a little bit more about Bill 197 and how that will ensure that Ontario will continue to have some of the safest roads and the safeguards that will be put in place to keep our roads safe for the next generation.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd like to thank the member from Burlington for that amazing question and the great work she does to ensure our communities remain safe. When the opportunity presented itself and I had the opportunity to speak to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, a lot of the conversation we had was based on the interlocks. They were talking to us on how people would game the system and get away from using the actual interlock itself.

These new changes that we're bringing in the bill that make it mandatory for them to have an interlock before they start operating their vehicle are going to be essential moving forward to strengthen our drinking and driving laws. I feel like the Minister of Transportation made this great change to our system to ensure that these people no longer can avoid it. If they don't want to put in the interlock, they won't be allowed to drive. It's that simple.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I've listened to the member from Brampton East and I just have a question. I've gone over this bill, Bill 197, and there's a lot of confusion about what the changes will be for the e-bikes in the near future. E-bikes are a vital resource for residents in my area—as well, as I've seen, in the GTA here—to keep a roof over their heads. People use them for their jobs and to get back and forth for their jobs, but also to pay the bills. That e-bike is number one for them to be able to get that bill, the affordability.

The NDPs really focused on why residents are not able to afford a roof over their head, or food on the table or paying their bills. Given the ongoing confusion in this bill and the lack of clarity surrounding e-bike regulations, how can this government justify starting another consultation process without providing any concrete plans—or no solutions, which is typical—to address the issues raised by an e-bike user? I'd like you to speak to an e-bike user who is going to possibly lose their job.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the member opposite for that question regarding e-bikes. The changes that we're enacting in terms of the definition of e-bikes is going to define different types of e-bikes. With the advancement of technology, we need to start working towards improving our laws, so we can tackle each individual issue. When it comes to e-bikes, there will be multiple categories that are defined, based on the level of power that that e-bike will be using, to make sure that our roads continue to stay safe.

The Minister of Transportation is definitely going through consultations and working towards building regulations that can then ensure that Ontarians are safe. We do see every day, even if we walk outside this Legislature, the use of e-bikes. If we order food, if somebody needs to go about their day and make a quick stop—in Toronto, it's very easy to commute via e-bike. We want to make sure that it's done in a safe and proper manner, where nobody else is injured or harmed in the process, and we're going to continue to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'd just like to thank the member from Brampton East for his presentation. I thought it was excellent and I think it's a really good bill. My question is, what is “zero tolerance”? And the new zero-tolerance condition: How long will it last?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: When we mean “zero tolerance,” we're referring to a lot of the great things that we put into this bill: a lifetime suspension when a person

is convicted of, basically, killing a person while driving. A lifetime suspension means you're no longer going to be able to have your driver's licence.

We've seen that time and time again, when we speak to victims and they talk about their horrific stories and experiences that they've had. This is one thing that they really talked about: “Why should that person be allowed to be back on that road after causing such a horrific accident?” It's changes like this that make us one of the strongest provinces in Canada, to have the strongest laws against drinking and driving, because it's completely unacceptable. It's a privilege, not a right, and we need to maintain that. They need to know that this privilege can be taken away if not used in a proper manner.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Actually, I listened with interest, especially because the member has served as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation. Having always served in opposition, I haven't been in the room where those decisions are made. And so I'm quite curious, as the member talked about having had that opportunity, why on earth are we not seeing stronger policies or the reversal of that policy that was brought in during COVID so that people can't plead down, and some of these convictions that the government members are talking about might actually happen when it comes to impaired? Or why on earth are we still allowing it to be so easy to register a stolen vehicle in the province of Ontario if car theft—and we know car theft is a real problem—but when there is an actual avenue to registering stolen vehicles that seems to be quite easy, why on earth is the ministry not prioritizing shutting down that expressway to registering stolen vehicles?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the member opposite for raising that question. The safety of all Ontarians is of top priority for, I believe, all members that are in this chamber.

When we talk about stolen vehicles, we see that the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery is doing an amazing job in terms of making sure that our ServiceOntario sites are working efficiently and properly.

Speaker, we take a look at the investigation that was just done by the police a few short months ago and all those who were convicted of fraud. That shows that portions of our system, our checks and balances, are working. But Speaker, there's always more that we can do to ensure that Ontarians remain safe. I know that the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery is committed to ensuring that all loopholes in the system are going to be closed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for his passion for road safety and obviously his passion to ensure that every one of Ontario's drivers gets home safe, and that those who are on our roads as well are being protected and that they're able to enjoy the roads that have

been built up over the years here in this province—that we do take for granted, but that I know have been built up by so many.

I'm going to go back to the stunt driving question that I asked earlier. What message do you have to young people who are thinking about stunt driving, why it's important to avoid that, and what impact could it have on their future and the future of others around them?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Eight-second response.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: My answer is simple: Don't do it. Don't put your own life at risk. Don't put somebody else's life at risk. Be a responsible adult.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's always an honour to rise in this House to speak to important legislation: Bill 197, the government's bill, entitled the Safer Roads and Communities Act.

Speaker, I'd like to start my remarks by saying that any time we are debating legislation that is going to improve the conditions of our community, or keep our residents safe, that is always a good thing. But as we peel back beyond the title, we have to recognize that we need to get to the root of the problem, and also deal with the crux of the problem. I certainly support, in principle, the need for Ontario to get tough on impaired drivers, stunt driving as well as car thieves, an issue that's plagued many communities large and small. Nobody in this House would want those bad actors, those bad drivers, those reckless drivers and dangerous drivers on our roads. We need strong legislation that deters these behaviours as well as legislation that can punish the perpetrators.

But like many of the government's previous bills, going beyond the title, we start to trip into a different problem. And that is that the bill is rushed, it's sloppy and it fails to get to the root of the issue. It certainly is not going to create a condition that will eliminate car theft and dangerous driving altogether.

We need solutions to prevent auto theft. This is a problem we are seeing across Ontario. There are tools that this government can act on right now that can make that happen. The government could crack down on the re-VINing of stolen cars, working with manufacturers on tracking technology. This is something that government has the power to do but has chosen not to. It befogs me on why the government is still allowing vehicles with fake VIN numbers to be registered as if they were legal. The threat of losing your licence is simply not enough to deter car thieves. We recognize that transit is bad, but if people are not scared to go to jail for 10 years for auto theft, they're certainly not going to be scared because they're waiting for transit—and transit and buses that may never come, just like the subway that is under construction.

Protecting VIN numbers and ensuring the integrity of that registration system is going to go much further than what this bill puts forward. It could be not just one situation, but it could be a combination of things that have to move forward. If a car thief is not deterred by the

prospect of spending 10 years in prison, something that is already permissible under the current Criminal Code, are they really going to be deterred by the prospect of spending 10 years waiting for the bus?

Auto theft is a huge problem in Ontario. We recognize that. It is incredibly stressful for any members who have been violated, anyone who's been a target of crime. It is expensive for those who actually have lost their vehicles. It is very, very difficult. Lives are disrupted, and for many people who rely on their vehicles because of work, it becomes heartbreaking for their family.

Constituents who have experienced this have reached out to me. They've shared horrible stories about their cars being stolen from malls, from school campuses, as well as from their home. This must be remedied, and the government has an opportunity to work with local law enforcement, work with provincial-level strategists, as well as the manufacturers, to ensure that they do everything they can to prevent this all-too-prevalent problem.

Manufacturers, of course, also have a responsibility here. We recognize this. The modern convenience of keyless technology is now becoming the problem. It is actually enabling criminals to intercept those wireless codes much more readily, and that allows for the tampering and the stealing of the cars.

This government bill does not acknowledge the backlog that we are seeing in the courts. Apprehending someone, laying charges, does not guarantee a conviction, and if the court backlog is so bad, as we see it repeatedly time and time again in Ontario, there's no way to enforce the judgments. All this talk about being tough on crime doesn't actually result in tougher rules and legislation imposed and enforced on crime. We see this as we heard from survivors who took to the front of the lawn today at Queen's Park to call out this government for their inaction of not addressing the backlogs in the criminal justice system, where this government has underfunded the system and allowed dangerous perpetrators and criminals to walk free.

Our jails right now are full. We now see more and more individuals in segregation. The detention centres are overflowing and many of the people who are sitting in government custody do so at—85% who are occupying those spaces have not been convicted of a crime because they haven't been able to get to trial.

What we're seeing now is the crown prosecutors working with the defence and the justice to reduce the charges, and the plea bargains are going all over the place, which means that the people who have committed the crimes, if they're guilty, are not getting the due punishment that they deserve—and certainly not the one that's intended to come out of this bill. It's extremely costly, and we're seeing more and more that this government is not serious when it comes to access to justice.

Will we see interventions and penalties that this bill is talking about ever actually going to be imposed on the justice system? We won't see drunken drivers who have killed be punished in the way that they should because of plea bargains, because of the bargaining down to a lesser

charge, because of the backlog in the courts, because of the pressure on the crown prosecutors to downgrade those charges so that trials can be sped up. We will not see justice for survivors. We will not see justice for victims of crime. So what good is a bill when the justice system and the court system don't work?

1520

I wish that the bill took a much more proactive approach when it comes to road safety. NDP Bill 15 and Bill 40 that were tabled in this Legislature over the past two years would have done that. Bill 15, Fairness for Road Users Act, would have forced a drunk driver to listen to a victim impact statement. It would have also ensured higher fines for drivers who have killed or seriously injured others under the Highway Traffic Act. Bill 40, Moving Ontarians Safely Act, is a bill that actually would have ensured that those who are facing the criminal would have their day in court and have their statement be heard.

Speaker, I think it's very important for all of us to recognize how survivors, victims who have experienced ruthless and dangerous crime need to have a pathway to justice, but also a place of healing.

It's absolutely important for convicted persons to perform community service, including community service related to road safety and driver safety education.

If the government truly, truly cared about ending road violence and if they truly cared about road safety, they would not be threatening to rip out bike lanes. I am a cyclist, and I know that bike lanes are important for cycling safety. I'm also a driver, and I know how stressful it is to drive when a cyclist has no protected-barrier bike lane to give them separation distance that allows them to travel safely in their lane and me as a driver to do so in my lane. Driving is safer and less stressful when bike lanes are properly installed.

Road safety is critical. I believe that we as parliamentarians should all be striving to reach those conditions for our communities.

Pedestrians have been killed—they've been killed by road violence in Ontario.

I want to quickly share two stories of two mothers in my community, in Regent Park, who lost their lives to road violence. Ismathara Ratna, who was 39 years old, a mother of three, a beloved family member, a sister, was killed by a drunk driver in June 2019. She will never get to hug her kids again and she will never be able to sit with her family again because of reckless drunk driving. Another mother in my community was killed, also by an act of motorist road violence: Bilkis Khanam, who was 42 years old and pregnant eight and a half months. She was struck and killed almost instantly. She is also survived by her husband and other children.

I take the issue of road safety and community safety very seriously. If we had the right tools in this bill—100%, we should be doing everything we can not just to support it, but even strengthening it more. But that's not what we have before us. I'm not saying that I won't support the bill, but there is significant room for improvement. Since the bill is before us, this is the time for us to improve the bill.

My communities will never have Ismathara and Bilkis back, but we can do everything we can to ensure that we can keep the next moms, the next set of dads, the next set of grandparents and the children and all vulnerable road users safe. You are a vulnerable road user if you are a pedestrian; you are not covered with two tonnes of steel. If you are a cyclist, you are a vulnerable road user. And we need to do everything we can to protect those people.

Roads are, of course, places where people travel—we walk; we roll; we cycle. That's a good thing. It should be a pleasant space for all of us to use. It should be beautiful. Roads are also these wonderful connectors to community. They allow us to travel from place to place. They also give us a sense of neighbourhood. And main streets and small businesses are supported when a road is well designed. That's why it's so important for us to have complete streets.

When we talk about road safety, when we talk about safer communities, we must take a full-lens approach to it—it can't be one little thing here from one little column that doesn't connect you to another place in another column.

We can talk about the King Street pilot project or the Bloor Street bike lanes, two pilot projects that were adequately studied and then brought forward for changes and modifications and improvement. And then ultimately, after years of consultation and then restudy and further modifications, it was made permanent by city council. The opposition that we saw at the beginning from some of the business owners has moved away, and now we have the strong support of all of the business community, asking us to do more to keep their community safe and also to slow down the traffic, so that if a pedestrian or cyclist is struck, they may have a chance to survive.

Speaker, I'm also concerned about what we see in Bill 197 when it comes to broad regulatory authority that this bill offers the government. It could work well if it is used prudently, or it could be abused if we put too few limits on what this broad authority enables. The government has yet to explain what this new authority is intended to do. And it is this lack of explanation and intention that causes concern. We also know that this government has moved dubious, sleight of hand legislation in the past, where one thing is just swapped out for another. So we need to know now, not later when no one is listening, what this government intends to do with that broad authority. Asking us to vote on something that doesn't have the details is really challenging.

Bill 197 removes the definition of "power-assisted bicycle" from the Highway Traffic Act, which means that e-bikes will now fall under the definition of "motor assisted bicycle," with vehicles such as mopeds that require class M licences, plates and insurance. The government has not answered the question about whether or not they intend to regulate e-bikes in a similar fashion as mopeds. This gives quite a bit of concern, because during the bill known as Bill 282—in 2021, we heard from hundreds of e-bike users who said that the government was getting the e-bike classification wrong. In fact, they haven't even proclaimed those sections of the act, and

they're now once again starting a new consultation process—talk about red tape and bureaucracy. Why do they not do these things in advance? Writing good legislation is far easier and better than cleaning up shoddy legislation. Bill 282's e-bike provisions were broadly criticized as flawed by cycling advocates—never proclaimed, for they are now being repealed. But this government is saying that they will figure it out in regulation. Well, that doesn't give me a lot of confidence, nor does it give anybody else confidence. And worst of all, it is entirely untransparent. How are we supposed to trust this government, who got it so wrong the first time, that they're now going to get it right this time?

E-bikes are here to stay. They are efficient. They're a cost-effective method of transportation. They keep cars off the road. They reduce traffic for drivers. They reduce emissions. They allow delivery drivers to get around efficiently. They allow individuals and families and cities to live car-free while they're able to help get their groceries and pick up their kids. We all know Ontario is a very expensive place to live. People are being squeezed everywhere. The middle class is certainly feeling it. When the transportation projects that the government boasts about don't get finished, people are stranded, and they're trying to do the very best they can to get around. For longer distances, e-bikes are a viable and fun option.

1530

So yes, e-bikes do need regulation. They can be fast and, if operated improperly, they can also cause serious injury. Drivers are not used to sharing the road with them, and e-bike riders do not always have the specific knowledge to operate safely.

I'm concerned about this bill opening up e-bikes to be classified as mopeds requiring that class M licence, registration and insurance.

We need to get this right. There are thousands and thousands of e-bike users already on the road, and they would like to know how they should be operating, under what regime in Ontario.

Ontarians deserve safe roads and a court system that decides road-regulated cases fairly and swiftly. We also deserve e-bike regulation that responds to the current-day conditions and promotes environmentally friendly choices.

Despite these weaknesses in the bill, the bill is supportable. I would say I feel lukewarm about it, because we need all the other components to work in order for the bill to be strong.

We need the government to really come clean and talk about what their undisclosed plan for the e-bikes is, and be really upfront and transparent about this new regulatory authority that is enabled by the bill.

Saying that you are tough on crime is absolutely meaningless and toothless when you refuse to fix the broken court system, when you underfund the court system and you understaff bail courts, when you don't invest in bail supervision and bail enforcement. Saying that you're tough on crime while taking pictures with police officers doesn't make our communities safer. Saying that you are tough on crime by creating an imaginary

ministry and naming an MPP as the Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform doesn't mean that cars in Brampton aren't being stolen daily.

This is an opportunity for the House to get this right. "Tough on crime" is absolutely useless when the government is not being smart on crime. The stakes are high. People's lives are at risk. People's automobiles, an extension of their livelihood, are at risk and compromised. This government has the tools to fix it all, including the easiest fix—verification of the VIN system and regulating that properly—and they are choosing not to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): It's time for questions.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Can you talk a little bit about the impact of having an accident when you are a vulnerable road user and what we need to be doing in terms of prevention?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you so much to the member from Kitchener Centre for her important question.

We, as Ontarians, at various points of our lives, will all be vulnerable road users. When you walk onto the street as a pedestrian, you are a vulnerable road user. Every Ontarian starts their life as a vulnerable road user.

We need to have more education. We need to have more active enforcement on the lawbreakers. We need to ensure that people know the rules of the road. We also need to slow down when it comes to special areas where we see seniors, as well as students and school zones.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I appreciate the comments from my friend across the way.

We've heard quite a bit this afternoon about VIN numbers on stolen vehicles and the modification of those.

In the recent auto theft summit held in Ottawa this past February, we heard that 80% of stolen vehicles are leaving our shores within 24 hours, and some 10% are used in the commission of other crimes, and of the 10% remaining, very few of them are really impacted by the VIN changes; they are broken down for parts.

I'm wondering if the member opposite might like to comment, then: When you get those statistics, understanding where we need to be focusing our efforts, do you really think that the VIN registration system is going to have a big impact—when it's less than 5% of the stolen vehicles?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you so much to the member from Simcoe–Grey for his important question.

That is exactly the attitude the criminals will want this government to take: "Look over there. Go chase that little cloud of dust over there, and leave the VINs alone." They would like us to leave the VINs alone. And as we leave the VINs alone, guess what? They are registering stolen vehicles with fake VINs. That is something the government can control; they are choosing not to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank my friend from Toronto Centre for an excellent presentation

and bringing many things to this government's attention that they, hopefully, were listening to.

Would you like to comment on the really glaring, obvious, nonsensical contradiction of this government pretending to be tough on drunk driving and then selling beer at gas stations? Is this logical?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member, my dear friend, who is always so well-spoken in the House and everywhere else I see him.

No, it's absolutely not logical to be selling alcohol in gas stations.

I'm not even sure how to answer that question, because as much as we want to quote Mothers Against Drunk Driving for their support of tougher fines and penalties against drunk driving, Mothers Against Drunk Driving will also tell you that is not a good way to actually prevent drunk driving.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have taken a look at this bill, and I note that there are new fines being imposed in various parts of the bill, some of them as high as \$10,000. I think that is a deterrent to crime. Some of these fines are in addition to various other penalties, including the suspension of drivers' licences, and then it goes on to even more severe penalties, such as imprisonment.

I believe severe penalties constitute a good deterrent for crime. The more options that a sentencing judge has at their disposal, the more likely it is that the sentencing judge will have an option that will fit the crime and deter the offender. I open it up to the member to offer her views on that.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member from Essex for that question.

On paper, it certainly looks good. I think that many municipalities have increased fines on bylaw breaches, because it looks good and it's demanded of their residents.

The problem with increased fines and not actual enforcement, prosecution and real-life punishment is that it goes rewarded—and that's what exactly happens when this government doesn't actually fund the courts, which will ultimately be the only ones that can actually enact the punishment. Not to mention that the Criminal Code already allows penalties—up to 10 years in jail.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank my friend for the excellent presentation. I thought it was interesting how, in your remarks, it goes all the way back to the lack of care with access to justice in Ontario. As my friend mentioned, during the pandemic, in order to try to clear some backlog in the courts, we allowed for people convicted of serious impaired driving charges to plead down to a Highway Traffic Act offence. That was three years ago. Right now, the Ottawa Courthouse is quadruple-booked. If you have been waiting for your day to stare someone who has harmed you in the face for a serious crime, you have a one-in-four chance of getting a trial. So it is still clogged.

1540

In this instance, what Mothers Against Drunk Driving is saying to this government is that they don't understand the rhetoric versus the reality. On the rhetoric side, they hear a lot about getting tough on impaired driving. On the reality side, crown attorneys across Ontario are letting people walk. Why?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: That question from the good member from Ottawa Centre is an important one, and it's one that's been asked by many legal observers. It's been one that's been asked by victims who have lost family members because of drunk driving.

It's about political choice and priority. At any given time, the Minister of the Attorney General could revoke that order. There's nothing that stops him from doing that. He's choosing not to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the member opposite's contributions to debate this afternoon. I wanted to ask the member opposite if the member could share a little bit more about some of the issues around stunt driving and, specifically, similar to the question I've asked other members, if the member had a message to those who participate in stunt driving; those who think, "Oh, you know, this is nothing more than a harmless little race on the road here. This isn't going to have a big impact on anyone or on myself, my future or the lives of the people around me."

I'm wondering if she could share a message to those individuals who are thinking about stunt driving, and then also perhaps if she believes that this legislation helps to put some emphasis behind that message, which, I'm assuming, similarly to the others who I've spoken with in the chamber, is going to be a message that says, "Think before you act. Recognize that your actions could have a hugely detrimental impact on your community." Does this legislation build on that message? And perhaps she wants to share her own message as well.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member from Niagara West for the question. Absolutely, we do not want to see reckless, dangerous driving on our city and urban and rural streets.

I have a five-year-old. I walk him across Yonge Street every single day to make sure he gets to his public school, and I hold his hand very tightly. Even though the traffic is not moving very fast at that time in the morning and even though there aren't even that many cars, little boy is only five, and if he gets struck, he's done.

You don't need to be a drunk driver or a reckless driver. We all want to see our families come home at nighttime. So to those who may engage in stunt driving, who may be reckless or thoughtless about how they operate a motor vehicle, not only should you not do it because you may actually hurt someone, but you actually will hurt yourself. Your family loves you, and they want to see you go home at night.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon on behalf of the residents of Simcoe–Grey and join the debate on the third reading of Bill 197. It's also great to be back in the House today after a very busy five months in the riding, in which I was able to announce over \$565 million in government funding and investments in my community for schools, infrastructure and hospitals.

If passed, this legislation would improve safety on the road while protecting families and communities. The Safer Roads and Communities Act has three key themes: combatting alcohol- and drug-impaired driving; strengthening public safety; and enhancing alternate vehicle and truck safety. This bill would target road users who engage in dangerous behaviour such as impaired driving and stunt driving. It will be tough on those who are convicted of auto theft to make our communities safer and more secure. We will also be looking at ways to improve safety for e-bikes and commercial vehicles to make our roads safer.

Over several years, we have seen a rise in crime on our roads, and we know there is more work to be done. We've heard statistics from other speakers today saying that Ontario has some of the safest roads in Canada and North America, but we know that there is work to be done. More than 20,000 Ontarians had their licence suspended for impaired driving in 2022. The OPP have charged more than 10,000 people with impaired driving so far this year, which represents a 16% increase over 2022. That is why our government is taking these steps to introduce legislation with the toughest penalties in Canada against impaired driving. We know that there is much more work to be done and we will not stop working towards safety on the roads and in our communities until we see that our efforts have paid off. This is an iterative process and really there is no finish line. If we can improve safety and can improve the well-being of our community members, then it is worth ongoing efforts to improve.

Speaker, this bill has the potential to continue revolutionizing some of the safest roads in North America. As previously mentioned, our province is ranked among the top jurisdictions for lowest mortality rates on the road. I want to thank Minister Sarkaria for his leadership in this role, to the Solicitor General for his role, to the Attorney General for his role and for this House and this government in moving these initiatives forward.

Building on the foundation of the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, 2021, the Safer Roads and Communities Act, if passed, will target the bad actors and the primary causes of serious injury and fatalities in order to improve road safety and keep families and the residents of Ontario safe. We've heard awful stories this afternoon about those that drive while intoxicated and the havoc they wreak on the lives of others. Through this bill we will ensure those who choose to drive while intoxicated and endanger other people will be held responsible for their acts.

The Ministry of Transportation also conducted a roadside survey of Ontario drivers in 2022 and found that one in five drivers tested positive for drugs, alcohol or both. This is an unbelievable statistic and absolutely unacceptable. Another statistic on impairing driving caused by

drugs or alcohol shows that those drivers who operate while impaired account for one in three fatalities on Ontario's highways. The Office of the Chief Coroner also found that between 2012 and 2020, the number of drivers who were killed and subsequently tested positive for cannabis had more than doubled. These figures are a clear indication that something must be done to combat and reduce the number of accidents that are being caused from driving while under the influence. That's why in order to protect drivers and their families in our province, we are increasing the penalties to be the stiffest in Canada for those convicted of driving under the influence.

We are also implementing follow-up requirements such as the use of ignition interlocks and counselling to ensure that when they drive, they will not drive while intoxicated. Previously under the old legislation, drivers convicted of impaired driving had the option of voluntarily installing a conditioned interlocking device to reduce the times they had a licence suspension. They could forfeit the choice to drive entirely by waiting until their licence suspension and ignition interlocking term was over—that was a work-around. We've recognized that, and when you look at the statistics of individuals convicted numerous times for impaired driving, we have to take action.

Under this act, now drivers who abuse their driving privileges and drive impaired will have no choice than to install the device under our zero-tolerance policy. This is an essential tool moving forward ensuring that drivers convicted for impairment are properly monitored and measured to ensure that they don't do it again.

Further, this legislation, if passed, will increase the amount of time licences are suspended for intoxicated driving on their first and second occurrences. We will also be lengthening the amount of time for look-back periods for all drug- and alcohol-related occurrences from five to 10 years. This will further ensure that we are monitoring those who have posed a risk in the past to ensure that they change their conduct, or they are caught.

Speaker, we will also impose a lifetime licence suspension on those found guilty of driving impaired and causing death. It is a privilege to drive and, if abused, this privilege can and should be taken away. The trends and the statistics paint a glaring picture. Enough is enough. We now need to take action to show our communities that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated, to protect our communities and to mete out the proper punishment for those who don't.

1550

We know that we need the proper policing and enforcement to ensure that our roadways are safe and drivers are being monitored. That is why we will be increasing several measures to support our police officers. We are proposing to amend the Highway Traffic Act to allow for officers to administer sobriety testing wherever and whenever they think appropriate.

Along this same line, we will also be cracking down on auto theft like never before. We have never experienced car thefts to the degree that we are seeing them today, and the increases are unprecedented. Canada has been burdened by this crime and Ontario has been a hot spot for

this criminal activity. According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, our province alone has experienced over \$700 million in losses and \$500 million specifically in the greater Toronto area. We must minimize the number of thefts and increase the punishment that follows.

In Ontario, there's a car stolen every 14 minutes, so during the course of my comments today and the question period that follows, two cars will have been stolen. This cannot become a standard that Ontarians grow accustomed to or tolerate.

Auto theft in this province rose by 72% between 2021 and 2024, and, during that same period of time, auto thefts surged by 81% in Toronto and violent carjackings grew by 78%. Ontario's citizens have the right to expect that we will react and make meaningful changes that will improve safety so that people do not need to worry about their cars being stolen or their homes being invaded.

This past February, I had the privilege of attending the auto-theft car summit in Ottawa which was attended by the Prime Minister and six of his ministers. I think it was really the first time that the federal government recognized the severity of the problem, but also its part in the organized-crime food chain. During that summit, we heard statistics that 80% of the cars stolen in Ontario are on a shipping container and leaving our shores within 24 hours. Some 10% of those cars are used in subsequent crimes and only 10% of those vehicles stay in Ontario, many of them being chopped and sold in parts.

What is essential here, though, is to understand how the crime operates and why it is that these changes are necessary in our legislation. Changes are necessary in the Criminal Code, but the reality is that this crime is carried out by a number of actors who have a very limited role. The cars are stolen in Toronto, often by kids under 18. They're then driven to Montreal, often by kids under 18. That is because, if they're caught, they're young offenders. The Criminal Code treats them differently and the sentences are so light that they're often back on the street within weeks. The real profiteers are probably not even in Canada.

The question for us today is, how do we move forward making meaningful changes to our legislation that will recognize how this criminal organization works and punish the individual elements and actors according to their roles? Simply saying that the Criminal Code already has a provision for this doesn't help. There needs to be further repercussions that are much more specific and surgical in how the accused and those bad actors are treated so that there is proportionality.

The right to a driver's licence is a privilege, so the long-term implications of the longer suspensions have a very real impact for the criminal actors. If the federal government will not make the changes, we must do it in this House to the extent that we can. An individual who is found guilty must be subject to increased licence bans, which can include up to a lifetime suspension for repeat offenders. This sends a strong message to the criminal population, but, also, as indicated, the specific actors that we're trying to target.

As I've said and has been said in this House today, we are doing what we can to combat the rising auto theft epidemic; however, we are urging the federal government to re-evaluate their penalties on offenders, to take action that they undertook to do in February of this year at the summit conference, and to make meaningful changes to help make Ontarians safer, but also our roads safer and our property safer.

Speaker, we're also looking at significant changes in this legislation to the Highway Traffic Act that would further increase and impose consequences on stunt drivers by building on the work that the 2021 act made. As it stands right now, minimum suspension periods aren't always used because courts have the discretion to suspend a driver's licence after a conviction for stunt driving. We are taking it a step further now by making a mandatory minimum licence suspension to anyone convicted of stunt driving. That means one year for the first conviction, three years for a second and a lifetime suspension, reducible to 10 years under certain criteria, for a third.

In my riding of Simcoe-Grey, Wasaga Beach has had a number of instances of stunt driving as a result of impromptu car rallies, where drivers from across the province descend on Wasaga Beach on a given weekend. We have seen first-hand the havoc they can wreak in the community in terms of road safety, property damage, but also their attitudes.

A number of them were arrested and charged. They told us in the evidence that came out during the hearings that part of the cost of coming to the rally was that they pooled money together to pay fines for any of the individuals who are charged. That's unacceptable. We have to think of a more surgical and enhanced way to target that, and licence suspensions will accomplish that.

By eliminating the need for a court order and giving the court the authority to extend the maximum duration of a suspension for a first or second conviction, the province is attempting to amend the Highway Traffic Act to guarantee that anyone found guilty of stunt driving receives the minimum required licence suspension. That is a way—again, we have seen the workaround on the fines. We need to get right to the heart and to show those individuals their conduct will not be tolerated.

The final topic I'd like to discuss today is the work that we're looking at to look at the e-bikes for travel and work. We've seen a huge evolution in the e-bike industry over the last few years. I'm an e-bike user. I have a heart condition, so it's a pedal-assist bike. When I was a council member in Collingwood, we had a huge issue on our trails with individuals who wanted to bring their e-bikes on them. Trails are open for hiking, it's for active transportation, so an e-assist pedal-bike, our council decided, was allowable. However, an automatic e-bike that had a throttle and didn't require any pedalling is not.

We have to be very careful in our municipal roads and our cities. When I walk back and forth from here to my apartment, you see there are pedal bikes; there are large e-bikes that probably weigh upwards of 600 pounds, and they're going 32 kilometres an hour; you've got the

scooters, and they're also going 32 kilometres an hour; and then you've got your motor vehicles, your cars, on the road. That kind of mix is extremely dangerous. When those bikes are heavier and those speeds are faster, the crashes are going to cause much more serious injuries.

This legislation is looking at, how do we break down those categories to ensure the safety of all road users? At the end of the day, that is what we want to guarantee the residents of Ontario: safety for all our road users. To do that, we have to make sure that we properly categorize and regulate the different types of vehicles, recognizing the huge explosion that's happened in the e-bike sector and the important role that they can play in our transportation issues. But it's not a one-size-fits-all. These bikes come with different risks and different implications should they become involved in a crash.

The intent of this is to ensure that each classification has its own set of rules governing vehicle safety, looking at weight and speed restrictions, as well as operator criteria such as a minimum age for both drivers and passengers.

We believe, through taking this action, we will be leading the country and our province to make sure that we are embracing innovation but enhancing driver safety and public safety across the province.

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Currently, the MTO has been able to lay approximately 3,600 charges and take more than 1,200 unsafe vehicles off the road, highlighting the inevitable positive changes that will follow if this bill is passed into legislation.

We need to monitor vehicles on the road to make sure that they comply and to make sure that the vehicle drivers have the appropriate training.

We know that working together with all bodies of government is important to prioritize the safety of Ontarians.

According to research, around one out of every five fatalities on Ontario's roads and highways each year are caused by large-truck incidents. Through working with the MTO officers, we will have more boots on the ground and cars on the road patrolling and monitoring drivers, especially commercial drivers.

Our roadways are only going to become more congested and busier with the growth that our province is experiencing and will continue to experience in the foreseeable future. We need to make sure that everyone, including all our road users, are protected, respected and that their safety is recognized as paramount. That is what this legislation is about.

We are trying to table the Safer Roads and Communities Act with a zero-tolerance policy for drivers who put the lives of other individuals at risk by driving irresponsibly or intoxicated. We recognize the need for updated rules for e-bikes and truck drivers, and we recognize the problematic behaviours on the road such as stunt driving and the threats to our communities through auto theft. We believe we need to act boldly and decisively to discourage these activities and make sure that our residents are safe in all of our communities across Ontario. Our residents deserve to be protected and to know, when they go on the

road, that it will be predictable, and that whether they are commuting on a bike, in a car, on a highway or on a municipal street, they will not be putting their lives at risk by getting on the road.

We want to guarantee Ontarians safe passage to and from work or whatever their errands are. We also want to ensure that their cars and their property are protected from robberies and carjackings.

It has been a priority of this government to respect the safety of Ontarians and call out the bad actors.

In this past budget, we allocated \$134 million for five helicopters so that police have enhanced surveillance to track down vehicle theft and stunt driving as well as impaired driving.

We're committed to ensuring that Ontarians are safe whether they're on their way to work, on their way to taking their children to school, or coming back from doing errands. That is why I will be supporting this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from London-Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: When I think about the statistics that the member has mentioned—one in five drivers drive impaired, whether it's alcohol or some other form of drugs. It really leaves me to think—all the work that has been done over these decades—why people still continue to do that. I looked it up on the Internet, and the reasons, honestly, are not even rational reasons why they would do that—because the risk that what happens could be the outcome of drinking or being driving impaired, compared to why you want to get behind the wheel while you're drinking, is far from acceptable.

This government has put in their legislation that it provides indefinite suspension of a driver's licence if the person is convicted under the Criminal Code while they're impaired, causing the death of another person—there are cautions to that because the federal jurisdiction is under the Criminal Code.

Can the government explain, did they actually investigate and make sure that what they're proposing can actually be put into legislation and not be challenged in court?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. It's a good question.

It comes to jurisdictions. While the Criminal Code is a federal jurisdiction, the Highway Traffic Act is provincial. The legislative changes we're proposing to make are going into the Highway Traffic Act, which will be then taken into consideration by the judge in the sentencing. So, yes, we're confident that the jurisdictional issue won't pose a barrier.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Hon. Trevor Jones: Thank you to the member from Simcoe-Grey.

The member from Simcoe-Grey briefly touched on e-bikes. I think communities large and small are feeling the impact of—what we have, on one hand, is increased, safer, more efficient and clear mobility, and at the same time, a

whole series of new risks and vulnerabilities to all road users.

Could the member please speak in more detail on the proposed redefining of e-bikes and why we're doing that as a government?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the associate minister for his question; it's an important one to your ministry, as it is to all Ontarians.

I can say, coming from my riding of Simcoe–Grey and then coming to the city, we don't have the same level of use for e-bikes yet, but because of the expanding of the modalities, there's such a range—an e-bike, 10 years ago, was probably an e-assist bike where you had to pedal, and now we're seeing independent bikes that operate on a throttle. We're also seeing scooters, which go incredibly fast, and you're standing, so if you get in an accident, your risk of injury is much higher. I think what we're seeing is—because of the different types of bikes, the speeds they can go, the weight they can go, and the injuries that are happening, and how they complicate traffic—that there really is a need to look at how we would do that. Most of these e-bikes can pass a scooter or a moped, so they're going extremely fast. It's a change in the road usage and a change in the safety considerations, which are having a huge impact on Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I want to continue that line of questioning.

In northern Ontario, there's a brand new business in Kapuskasing that sells a lot of e-bikes—different e-bikes, also. We've seen more and more. We're really concerned with this, because a lot of people bought those. If we're going to change the definition and all of a sudden now they're going to have to get a class M or get insurance, I can tell you, a lot of people will have a big paperweight to use, because they may not be able to get the classification or even buy insurance for those. That's concerning for me, because I know friends who bought them—because they're using these little bikes, some of these mopeds and bikes, because they have a hard time walking, but they're going all over in the town. So if now this classification comes and shuffles this around and changes, I'll be getting a lot of questions; you'll also be getting a lot of questions, as a government. I'm really concerned with not seeing this language or definition right now to be addressing that, because there will be a lot of questions coming my way on this particular point.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: That's part of the process that we're anticipating. We're going to go out for extensive consultations to get a better understanding of what people are using these different bikes for, how far they're driving them, where they're using them—in your community, 30 years ago, it was probably the same discussion with snowmobiles; I know it was in my mine. The snowmobiles were using local trails and sidewalks. Do you know what? I think that's all part of evolution. It's going to be an ongoing discussion. We're looking forward to having it,

and then, based on that information, we'll be making the distinctions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I would like to hear more about the government's plan for prevention—we have after the first, second, third. I've worked with young people my whole career, as a social worker, and I worry about the lack of prevention that's represented in this bill. We could really do a lot by preventing alcoholism—traffic accidents etc. Can you speak to the plan for the next iteration to address prevention?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the member for her question.

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We heard earlier a discussion about safe consumption sites. We've seen what's happening in BC. We know that we have to make upstream investments, and that is exactly what this government is doing under Associate Minister Tibollo with the HART Hubs, by putting this in our education curriculum. If you've got a first offence, you're going to go through some counselling that will take you through the impacts of drinking and driving. Responsible consumption is an issue all across the province and across Canada, for legalized drugs and alcohol. So, yes, this is an ongoing discussion. And since the pandemic, we've certainly seen a rise in the consumption of all those things. Mental health and the use of drugs and alcohol is an important discussion, and it affects every part of our lives, and it happens to have a very deadly aspect on our road—so prevention is the topic.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I thank the member from Simcoe–Grey for his presentation.

As we've gone through this legislation and we've heard the various comments in support of it and not supportive, one of the things that has been consistent is the idea of prevention.

Would you like to speak to the zero-tolerance requirements that are being brought in as a method of preventing future bad actions by people who have already been convicted?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I think you're referring to the transmission interlock. If somebody has had a conviction for impaired driving, then they are not able to opt out of that during the suspension process. They have to put the interlock on their car, and it will track them moving forward. As you know, if you blow into it and you have alcohol on your breath, it won't start the car. That's one aspect of it.

The other aspect is in the roadside pull-overs. You don't have to have a headlight out; you don't have to have been driving suspiciously. The police can pull you over, they can do a sobriety test, and there are minimum suspensions. If you blow under the legal limit, but you're not at zero, then you can have a roadside suspension—seven days the first time, 14 days the next time. That will trigger other implications as well.

We're working at trying to identify those drivers at risk or making a mistake, and make sure that they are acknowledged and disciplined accordingly. Then, certainly, moving forward, if you have been convicted, you can't get around the interlock device.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): A quick question.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I didn't really hear an answer to what my colleague from Kitchener Centre asked specifically about drunk driving.

People who are getting pulled over for impaired driving are pleading down to lesser charges and getting away with it. The cognitive dissonance on that side of the House when they're talking about being tougher when it comes to drunk driving, and yet they have allowed an expansion of alcohol sales in corner stores and gas stations, is actually starting to contribute to the problem of people's alcoholism and drunk driving.

So I'm curious, and I would like an answer: What are you doing to actually prevent people from becoming addicted to alcohol in the first place, rather than dealing with it after they've driven drunk?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I'll just refer you back to my last answer to my colleague from Hastings.

We have got zero tolerance to identify drivers at risk. Minister Tibollo has instituted some wonderful programs across the province. We have in our high school curriculum programs about drugs and alcohol. We are looking at mental health across the board.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm happy to rise and speak to the bill before the House, which is about road safety, something near and dear to my heart.

As some members of this House know, around this time last year, I rode my bicycle from Ottawa to Toronto. My goal in doing that, as the critic for active transportation and transit, was to talk to people in all different kinds of communities—downtown ones, like where I served in Ottawa Centre, but smaller communities like Brighton, Ontario; like Kingston, a city in itself; Oshawa, a suburban community; and Toronto—Scarborough. I wanted to talk to residents about how safe they felt on our streets, getting around, and what I heard disturbed me.

While I will say before this House that I'm glad the government continues to talk about the need for having a serious policy with respect to road safety, I am very concerned that to this day and in this debate this afternoon, I continue to hear government members say that Ontario roads are among the safest in North America—I've just heard the minister say they are. I would say that depends on where you measure it.

Mr. Guy Bourgoïn: Where you live.

Mr. Joel Harden: Where you live—as the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay just said.

If your goal is to be fine with the fact that every day, there will be a rate of 134 people critically injured or killed on our streets—if you're fine with that, then, yes, Ontario has some of the best streets in the world; it's true. The

Ministry of Transportation releases road collision statistics. Look it up yourself. I see my new friend from Bay of Quinte looking at me quizzically. There were, in the last reportable year, 49,106 collision incidents caused by drivers that caused fatal or serious personal injuries in Ontario; that is a rate of 134 per day.

When I stopped in Kingston—and I talked to city councillors, I talked to police officers, I talked to different kinds of road users. One of the people who came to the town hall in Kingston who is an emergency room physician, when I presented him with those statistics, also looked at me quizzically, and he said, "Joel, I can tell you at least on any given shift, I'm seeing all kinds of people come to the emergency room. Your numbers are too conservative."

So that's my question I would like to begin with this afternoon, on this road safety debate. Why is the government happy that, every day, 134 people in this province are critically injured or killed on our streets? Why are they happy with that?

I'll quote the minister's words back to himself: "Everyone deserves to return home to their loved ones safely at the end of the day"—followed by a quote about impaired driving: "Too many families in Ontario have had their lives torn apart by the careless and shameful actions of impaired drivers."

Well, in 2016, the Ontario Provincial Police said that distracted driving was responsible for three times the amount of death as impaired driving—people driving while using their phones, people not taking due caution getting around all kinds of different communities. And I can tell you who is getting mowed down in the course of those people operating their vehicles: vulnerable road users. Road workers, paramedics, police, people responding to incidents, pedestrians, cyclists, scooter users, persons with disabilities—those are the people who are paying the price for the government being fine with our lackadaisical attitude to road safety. And honestly, I don't understand it, given what they say—unless you peel the onion back a little bit and you think about rhetoric versus reality.

My view, as a politician, is that I don't judge people by what they say; I judge people by what they do. And a previous mayor of this city here in Toronto—the Legislature is in Toronto—Rob Ford, once said the following, which I think is the actual philosophy motivating this government. This is what he said in 2010:

"I compare bike lanes to ... swimming with the sharks. Sooner or later you're going to get bitten...."

"And every year we have dozens of people that get hit by cars or trucks. Well, no wonder: Roads are built for buses, cars and trucks, not for people on bikes."

"My heart bleeds for them when I hear someone gets killed, but it's their own fault at the end of the day."

That's the indifference behind the policy.

When I talk about a rate of 134 people critically injured or killed every day in this province, on our streets—those are just numbers. So in the time I have left, I want to talk about the human beings, because they're not just numbers;

these are people. These are our moms, our dads, our brothers, our sisters, our neighbours.

I want to talk about Audrey Cameron, a 16-year-old high school student in the west end of our riding, in Ottawa Centre, who was hit by a reckless driver, thrown into the air, as she crossed the street going to Nepean High School. The driver was running a light and threw Audrey into the air, witnesses said, about 12 or 13 feet. When Audrey landed, it cracked her helmet in half. Her pelvis was shattered. Her left knee was shattered. She has traumatic brain injuries that she's going to be dealing with for the rest of her life. When EMS brought her to the hospital, she had to be put into a coma so they could find a way to treat her out of her injuries. This is a badly planned stretch of road in our community, on Carling Avenue. Municipal councillors like Jeff Leiper and Riley Brockington, who I'm proud to serve with, have been raising this issue with municipal officials for years. The response is always the same: Protected infrastructure costs money. Protected infrastructure is difficult.

1620

Well, I guess the question I would ask, Speaker, through Audrey's experience is, what actually, at the end of the day, is difficult? Is it difficult to make the investment of a few thousand dollars to make sure we can plan for human error, to plan for people who recklessly drive whatever vehicle in our city? Or what about the cost of Audrey being wheeled in the EMS to the emerg? What about the cost of her being in a hospital bed? What about the cost to of her family who missed work as they stayed at her bedside for a week while she was put into a coma? What costs more, Speaker?

I would say the same thing about Abu Bakr Sayed. I met the Sayed family when I was doing my bike ride, Speaker. You remember; you were there for the press conference and we met the Sayed family from Scarborough. Mr. Sayed was killed during his normal morning walk in Scarborough by a driver who had repeated incidents of reckless driving; he had a history of it. He tried to flee the scene. They will never get their grandfather back, but their plea to me and to the government was that they make sure that distracted drivers, impaired drivers pay a consequence. So now before the House we finally have a bill that talks about the indefinite suspension of someone's driver's license for impaired driving.

But what about distracted driving? What about someone who has a pattern of recklessly driving a vehicle? There's no indefinite suspension for that. In fact, the law in Ontario under the Highway Traffic Act is a fine of a few hundred dollars and you hope you have a successful day in court. That's the law right now. That's the law.

The member for Sudbury is sitting in front of me; I want to go to the story of Mr. Robert D'Aloisio, who in 2017 was biking on Paris Street in Sudbury and was hit by an impaired driver. He had practised dentistry in Sudbury, Speaker, for 60 years—an incredibly physical, incredibly healthy man, beloved by the city of Sudbury, killed in an incident. You know what there wasn't in that big four-lane

street in Sudbury? Protected bike infrastructure, Speaker; nothing to protect Mr. D'Aloisio.

But if we fast-forward to another incident that happened in this city—six cyclists that I'm aware of have been killed in Toronto this year by reckless or impaired drivers. Julia Cleveland, a big figure in the Toronto jazz music scene as I understand it, lived over in the Junction, I believe in your community. In the Junction, two cars collide, one car going extremely fast. The car that initiates the collision spins out of control, goes up onto the sidewalk last month and kills Julia—two other pedestrians critically injured.

But you know what might have prevented that accident, Speaker? The mayor of Montreal was speaking about it recently, Valérie Plante, who doesn't make a habit of doing dumb culture wars on bike lanes. She looks at the evidence and says, "How do you plan a community to make sure everybody can be safe?" If there had been a concrete barrier between that stretch of street and the sidewalk, it could have saved Julia's life. But no. We are about to go through a ridiculous debate—without any evidence from the government side, I will add. The minister is sitting over there. He has yet to produce any evidence to show that bike lanes cause traffic congestion. But this spot could have been designed differently and it could have saved lives. Because people make mistakes. Reckless behaviour is common to human beings. You design communities to prevent against that.

I want to talk about JP Grindell. JP was a young man in Ottawa Centre who was going to school at Adult High School—a great place, intersection of Rochester and Gladstone. But if you look at how that intersection had been designed, Speaker, the bike lane, which is not protected—there are chevrons written on the ground—kind of goes up to the intersection, but there's always a lot of construction activity there, because of the highway and we're building homes—all the stuff we need in our community. But a smart design of that infrastructure would have set the bike lane back or would have set the truck back so they could see on the right that there was a vulnerable road user, a cyclist, a scooter user or something. But in this case, when JP went to turn right, and the truck turned right in front of him, the dump truck driver couldn't actually see JP. He was pulling a payload behind him. The truck and the payload ran over him and dragged him—killed him instantly.

I have on my website, Speaker, and I invite members of this House to go check it out—I write a column for the community every week. This one was called, if you Google the words, "Let's Organize Now for Safe Streets." If you go to that, if you put that into your search engine, you will see pictures of me visiting with Nicole and Bill Grindell, 20 years after JP was killed at this intersection. You will see the picture of the dump truck driver who is responsible for this, but who couldn't see JP, with his head in his hands, his life forever changed. I talked to one of JP's friends who was there, who was a nurse. The trauma from this incident, losing a friend, pinwheeled her into a life of mental health illness and addictions, from which she's recovered. Think about all the tragedy that happens

because we couldn't plan the intersection of Rochester and Gladstone well enough—three people.

When I was in Brighton on my bike ride, the same thing happened to me. I had taken a stop. I was getting some Gatorade. A big dump truck was there. I said, "Hey, I'm on this bike ride about road safety. Can I get up into your cab? Would you mind if I got into your cab to just get a sense of the sightlines?" He said, "Sure, come on up."

There's no way I can see things into the corner of the truck when I was checking mirrors in the driver's seat. Don't worry, folks, I didn't try to drive the vehicle. I'm not licensed for that.

The gentleman said to me, "Joel, when I'm on a construction site, there are flag people that guide me around the site. That's the law. But when I move off the site and I'm out there in the community, you're darn right I'm worried about where the cyclists are, where the people are. I need to be extra careful, but you can't see everything."

Every time we don't take road safety seriously, which this government continues to do, people lose their lives. People get critically injured, and it's not right. It's unnecessary. So this is what I would say: There are good things in this bill. We heard from the member from Toronto Centre earlier this afternoon. We'll hear from other members. We are all opposed to auto theft. We all want to make sure that there are rigid rules in place to deal with stunt driving. No one in this House will oppose this. What am I officially fed up with in this House are people who talk about safety and encourage chaos with the words they use from their platforms.

When I send vulnerable road users to meet with you, and you meet with them and you shake their hands and you say, "Thank you. I really understand where you're coming from," and then you proceed to wage a war against bike lanes, I don't take you seriously anymore. I don't take you seriously anymore because the evidence is very clear. Just as the minister once upon a time said, "Everybody wants to get home safely. Everybody wants to not be trapped in traffic and gridlock"—well, maybe get on some of your transit projects which are billions of dollars over budget, so you can get people out of cars. Maybe deal with the fact, looking at the latest figures here, that about 85% of 401 users in a given year are single-passenger occupants. Maybe they would be much better served being on a train or a bus if it came regularly, if it was affordable for them, if they could get to work and do what they need to do.

Why don't you do something about your transit mess? Take some cars off the road that way. Why don't you stop pitting road users against each other? I'm a driver. I'm a cyclist. I'm a pedestrian. Because of some of the sports I've played in my life, maybe I'll be in a wheelchair towards the end of my life. I want to have a safe way to get around, and that's not going to happen if, as Mr. D'Aloisio found on Paris Street, you're basically dealing with a freeway inside a city and people—the minority of people, the reckless road users—driving unsafely.

The government talks about a zero-tolerance policy. What I would love for this debate and before this bill comes back for third reading, when it goes to committee—

I would like a zero-tolerance policy on empty rhetoric. I would like a zero-tolerance policy on silly culture wars. I would like a zero-tolerance policy on talking about the bicyclists being the problem or the motorists being the problem or the wheelchair user—no, we all live in our communities, and we all have to figure out a way to get home safe.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Zero tolerance on corruption

Mr. Joel Harden: A zero-tolerance policy on corruption would be nice too.

I also want to talk about Ali Sezgin Armagan. Ali Sezgin Armagan was a food delivery worker killed on Avenue Road in August 2024. According to statistics that I was able to get through Mayor Chow's office, this is a terribly dangerous part of Toronto. Toronto, relative to other communities, has got a lot of bike infrastructure, but food delivery workers have been getting mowed down in this stretch of road. Mr. Armagan is the third in four years. So when we all get home later tonight, we want to kick back with a pizza, watch the game, relax a little bit from our overheated debate in this House, and you pick up the phone and you order your food, it's someone like Mr. Armagan who is responsible for bringing that to you. But we lost him, Speaker. We lost him because of a truck that couldn't see where they were going and a bike lane that was being used up and a man that was being pushed into traffic.

1630

His cousin who brought him to Canada—Mr. Armagan was from Türkiye—said she remains inconsolable, as she told me recently. She has a hard time sleeping—thought that this was going to be his opportunity to make his life in Canada. That's the story of our country, right? People come here to make a better life for themselves and their family. Here's a guy who will never get that opportunity, and it wasn't his fault. I don't blame the truck driver either, actually. I blame our lack of seriousness as legislators to build safe communities. That's who I blame. We don't point fingers in this business; we should be pointing thumbs. We should be looking at ourselves. We should be saying, "How do we make sure that we don't set the goal of 134 people being critically injured or killed a day as acceptable? The best in North America."

We set the goal that the government of Finland and Denmark have set, which is called Vision Zero. It's the philosophy that the city of Toronto has subscribed to, that my city of Ottawa has subscribed to. The goal is not 134 people critically injured or killed every day; it's zero—zero. And guess what? In Finland and in Denmark, they have accomplished it. Are there still collisions? Yes. Are there fatalities? No. In some of their major cities, Helsinki or Copenhagen, no. And if you look at pictures of the usage rates of vulnerable road users, cyclists in particular, it is dense. There are a lot of vehicles using these roads.

In France, the city of Paris last year surpassed the milestone of having more active transportation users than car users—in the city of Paris last year. It was one of the mayor's obligations in getting ready for the Olympics. It has transformed the city into a place where people could

get around so they could see their various events, do their various things.

Mayor of Montreal Valérie Plante set the same objective: “We have to figure out a way for people to get around the city.” Now, the skeptics will say, “But wait a sec. Joel, you’re an inveterate cyclist. Maybe you’re crazy enough to cycle in the winter, but most people won’t because it’s unsafe.” Well, in Montreal, the bike lanes get cleared first and the roads get cleared. Everybody has an option to get to where they need to go. People are healthier. There’s less congestion. I mean, Montreal has got congestion, don’t get me wrong.

But the government can’t keep talking about safety and then encouraging conflict in their rhetoric. They can’t keep talking about reducing traffic while adding to it by failing on the transit front and declaring war on bike lanes.

I was interested to see, in Deputy Mayor Amber Morley’s town hall in Etobicoke the other night, that the fire chief of the area declared before the room that their access to critical incidents has not gotten worse with bike lanes; it’s gotten better, because the bike lanes are built to a width where the emergency vehicles can utilize them, if need be. It’s an expressway for them to get to somebody when they’re in distress, in those critical seconds to save somebody’s life.

Again, what I’ll say to the government, Speaker, is that a lot of what you’re trying to accomplish with this bill is admirable, but stop playing games with people’s lives.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre for his remarks this afternoon on a very important piece of legislation. I know he talked extensively about bike lanes during this debate—his prerogative—but I want to ask him a question about our progressive enforcement of licence suspension for vehicles causing death and also vehicle suspension for those impaired as well. It’s a 10-year licence suspension to begin with for their first conviction, 15 years for their second and a lifetime suspension for the third. Does the member opposite support that important issue?

Mr. Joel Harden: Absolutely. But what I would say back to the member is, why don’t you have the same seriousness with distracted driving? Why does it take somebody being intoxicated to become liable to indefinite licence suspension? For the Sayed family in Scarborough—this was a guy who was involved in three incidents before he killed this man. Yes, he’s incarcerated now, but there’s no justice. We could have had a regime for regulation of driving that would have caught him the first time and taught him to be a better driver. He would have had to sit through a victim impact statement, potentially, so he could hear from the Sayed family, volunteer in road safety work, maybe be a crossing guard, do something productive and prevent the killing of this grandfather.

So I support what the member is talking about, but we need to be as serious about distracted driving as we are about impaired driving.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member for Ottawa Centre for advocating for safe bicycling in our province. He has had a campaign called the Safety Ride for People and the Planet.

He’s also raised a very important point, and I think we missed it. It’s distracted driving, as he said. In Ontario in 2021, distracted driving was responsible for 17% of all accidents. That’s huge. I know that our caucus here, our member from Oshawa, brought a bill forward, Bill 15, to talk about what we need to do. Prevention is one. Education is another. You mentioned that we need prevention before it happens, but if that does happen, I know the bill that she presented talked about increasing penalties to a minimum fine of \$2,000 to a maximum of \$50,000, imprisonment not exceeding two years, or both, and a licence or permit suspended not exceeding five years.

Are those some of the things you’d like to see, perhaps, in this bill when prevention is the first step? But then, if something does happen, would you want more serious outcomes when there is an accident because of distracted driving?

Mr. Joel Harden: The member is talking about the member from Oshawa and Bill 15, which, as I understand, is still a bill before this House. This would empower judges to be able to make determinations that would levy serious penalties.

The government, with this bill, is finally coming towards the idea of indefinite licence suspension for impaired driving. I support that, but what the member from Oshawa’s private member’s bill would do is build upon that, giving jurists the opportunity to specifically target folks.

I’ll talk about Serene Summers, who two years ago in our city was critically injured by a driver who then fled the scene. When he, through his legal representation, tried to not be present at the hearing, the justice of the peace cancelled it and then compelled him to be there, so he could see Serene’s family and grapple with what he had done. These are powers we need to give jurists and decision-makers, so people who are reckless and indifferent to the suffering of others—we need to wake them up, so I support it, for sure.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question? The Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: Speaker, you’re getting better at that every single time. I appreciate the opportunity to stand.

I always appreciate the passion and the vigour that the member for Ottawa Centre brings to this place. I guess it strikes me a bit strange that if he’s so fired up about the issues that he feels aren’t addressed in this legislation—he’s had the opportunity and members of the opposition have had the opportunity for a number of years now to sit here in this chamber, and I’ve heard him talk regularly about being a proud young socialist. Now he’s coming out and saying we shouldn’t be divided into all these silly—“culture wars,” I think is what you referred them as. I

didn't know that advocating for safer streets counted as a culture war, but this is your language, not mine.

This is the result of a lot of consultation and feedback from the people of this province. It's overwhelmingly supported in my riding. Over 70% of people in Niagara support it, according to an article from Pelham Today.

Why didn't he bring forward measures that he clearly is very fired up about? I mean, he's speaking vigorously. He's shaking his fists. Clearly he cares deeply about the things that he thinks are not in this legislation, and I know he's had the opportunity to bring forward bills, so why didn't he bring forward bills on the issues that he claims to care so much about?

Mr. Joel Harden: What I'll say to my friend from Niagara West is this: I did bring forward a bill, Bill 40. It would have filled some of the gaps that this legislation doesn't have. You voted against it. That's okay. That's your opinion. We can disagree in this House.

This is where the "culture war" reference comes in, my friend. What I don't like is people making insincere arguments based on no evidence, saying that traffic congestion is worse because of protected infrastructure not just for cyclists, but people in wheelchairs and scooters, because I haven't seen the minister make that case. He doesn't have the evidence to make that case, but he keeps repeating the point. That's called a fake culture war, in my opinion.

I'll just end by talking about Pat Lindal from St. Catharines, my friend's mother, who was hit in an intersection in March 2023, thrown 50 feet, had her tibia cracked, her clavicle broken, taken from her home and put into long-term care until very recently. This was a reckless driver who was trying to beat her as she was walking across the intersection. Think about the freedom that was taken from that person because of our lack of interest in protecting her safety. There have to be real consequences for people who are distracted and reckless and not just impaired.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Next question.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci à mon collègue. Tu es passionné quand tu parles et c'est tout le temps un plaisir de t'entendre parler.

Ma question est, avec un projet de loi nommé « les routes plus sécuritaires pour les communautés »—puis j'entends le ministre qui dit qu'on a les routes les plus sécuritaires en Amérique du Nord. J'ai entendu un reportage de

Marketplace qui parlait de camionneurs qui pouvaient payer pour éviter ce qu'ils appellent le « MELT »—pour être « trained », être éduqués puis être préparés pour conduire un camion. On ne parle pas d'une auto, là; on parle d'un camion. Ils sont derrière la roue.

On voit que, moi, j'ai présenté « Chad's Law », qui était justement un de mes commettants qui est quasiment mort, qui est arrivé dans un face-à-face. On a eu une personne qui est décédée dans le coin de Thunder Bay. On a plein de camionneurs qui ne sont pas qualifiés sur nos routes. Puis là on entend le ministre aujourd'hui qui s'est fait poser une question par notre collègue et qui dit : « On a les routes les plus sécuritaires. » C'est comme si ce n'est rien qu'un incident parmi d'autres. Pourtant, c'est systémique.

Dans le reportage, ils ont parlé de multiples écoles qui vendaient le permis. Puis là, on a du monde non-qualifié qui conduit, derrière un camion. Je peux vous dire, tu rencontres un 18 roues et tu es avec une auto ou un pick-up, comme on l'appelle, ce n'est pas toi qui survit.

J'aimerais vous entendre là-dessus parce que le ministre ne semble pas comprendre la situation du Nord. Tu l'as dit toi-même, ça dépend où tu vis. Parce que je peux vous le dire, sur les routes 11 et 17, le monde a peur et il y a du monde qui meurt. Il devrait se réveiller, le ministre.

M. Joel Harden: Merci pour cette question. C'est pertinent. Et voilà un autre exemple qui montre que mes amis au niveau gouvernemental ne sont pas sérieux. Ils disent d'une main que, « Oh, OK, nous sommes sérieux. On doit s'assurer que tout le monde est en bonne sécurité dans la rue. » Mais dans l'autre, il n'y a pas les lois nécessaires, il n'y a pas la régulation nécessaire pour s'assurer que les personnes qui cherchent la chance pour être camionneurs, une occupation importante dans notre province, soient capables de le faire.

Et voilà aussi, sur la question de l'enlèvement de la neige sur les autoroutes au Nord : Il y a beaucoup d'instances où le gouvernement, encore, n'est pas sérieux. Donc, comme mon ami a dit déjà, il y a les vies, il y a les personnes qui peuvent mourir à cause des actions qu'on n'est pas préparés à faire maintenant.

Donc ici, de notre côté, nous sommes prêts pour les actions. C'est au gouvernement de changer la loi pour s'assurer de la même chose.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): There's not enough time for another round of questions.

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
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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
Allsopp, Tyler (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	
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
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 Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	Oakville	Associate Minister of Mines / Ministre associé des Mines
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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 Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
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 (IND)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hamid, Zee (PC)	Milton	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
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, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Associate Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre associé de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
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
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Electrification / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Électrification
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre 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 and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Ministre associé de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
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, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences Deputy Government Whip / Whip adjointe du gouvernement
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
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 Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
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 / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
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 des Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à 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
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	