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Mercredi
23 octobre 2024

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 October 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 octobre 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REDUCING GRIDLOCK, SAVING
YOU TIME ACT, 2024

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

Mr. Sarkaria moved second 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): Would the Minister of Transportation like to lead off the debate?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to note that I'm sharing my time with the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington and the member for Mississauga–Erin Mills.

This legislation is about a common-sense approach. We have seen that over the past many years, Toronto has become one of the most congested cities in the world. We rank, in fact, the worst in the world according to a recent study from TomTom. This bill will help address many of those challenges.

We are not anti-bike-lane; this is about a reasonable approach. Less than 2% of the population commutes by bike to work. It does not make sense for us to rip up our busiest roads in the city, make it harder for people to get around and introduce bike lanes in those positions. This is about an approach that will ensure people get to and from work easier, quicker, faster, be with their families, and also appreciate the congestion that is happening across this province. The status quo just will not work any longer.

As you know, I'm here to discuss plans to make life more convenient and affordable for drivers who have spent years—a lot of their time—in gridlock. Ever since our government took office, we've made it a priority to build highways, transit and other critical infrastructure, because the fact is, Ontario's population is growing at a

historic rate. In fact, right here in the greater Golden Horseshoe, we are expected to have a population of 15 million by the year 2051. If we don't act now for that growth, the gridlock that is already costing our economy \$11 billion a year in lost productivity and robbing hard-working Ontarians of the time they deserve with their families will only get worse. Our government won't stand for that. That's why we're tabling bold and decisive action to build a better Ontario.

Earlier this year, our government tabled the Get It Done Act. That bill received royal assent in May, bringing in a new suite of measures specifically designed to accelerate the construction of key infrastructure projects and save Ontarians money. And Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Get It Done Act, we're cutting red tape to get shovels in the ground sooner on priority projects like Highway 413. This is critical. Highway 413 could save drivers 30 minutes each way during rush hour.

That's why we're continuing to get it done for the people of this province by proposing new legislation. The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, if passed, would build on the success of the Get It Done Act. It would help us build highways faster and make it easier for people and goods to get where they're going. It would bring oversight to new bike lanes in Ontario to ensure we aren't slowing down traffic on our major roads. Because, Mr. Speaker, there are millions of drivers in Ontario, and it is our job to stand up for them.

If passed, the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act would create a new Building Highways Faster Act, or BHFA for short. This act would allow us to designate priority highway projects, similar to how the Building Transit Faster Act allows us to designate priority transit projects. This would help us accelerate the construction of Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass and the Garden City Skyway bridge, and support our quick delivery on projects that will keep Ontarians moving for generations to come. These projects would benefit from streamlined requirements for relocating utilities. Ontarians would have the authority to request access to information on infrastructure owners' assets so work moves forward without unnecessary delays.

Crucially, the Building Highways Faster Act would also let us facilitate 24/7 construction around the clock for priority highway projects. This is a game changer. We've seen this specifically on the Gardiner Expressway: 24/7 construction has helped us move it even quicker, will save us a year, and we're already four and a half months ahead of schedule. We'll continue to have more good news on the Gardiner Expressway in the days and weeks to come.

This act would also streamline property expropriation and create new penalties for anyone who is obstructing field investigations and taking possession of crown-owned land, because we need to ensure we're using every tool in our tool box to speed up construction so we can get Ontario families and businesses out of gridlock.

Mr. Speaker, we can all agree that the needless delays on Ontario's roads and highways are costing taxpayers their valuable time and their hard-earned money. We need to build highways faster. One of the ways that we can do that is by relocating utilities and updating infrastructure owners' asset information quickly. Another is by working as long as it takes—around the clock, if needed—to build the highways we need to support our growing population. We can introduce stiff penalties for those who would obstruct a field investigation or attempt to interfere with work on land the crown owns and leave no stone unturned in our plan to build the transportation infrastructure that we need.

Far too many commuters in the GTA know the pain of being stuck in traffic. Unlike the opposition, our government will not just sit there wishing that gridlock will magically disappear. We have a plan—a plan to build. We need to make sure that construction on Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass begins as soon as possible.

Highway 413 has been studied and debated for over 20 years. I've read the reports—the assessments from 2007, 2024 and every year in between—and there will be more reports coming. And after two decades, what's changed?

The only thing different is our worsening traffic. The NDP and Liberals continue to object to our plan to build.

0910

Just imagine being a worker living in Whitby, Pickering or Scarborough and seeing the time it takes to get to work increase year after year. Imagine living in Mississauga, Brampton, York, where the time it takes to get to Toronto has skyrocketed. We can do better. We have a responsibility to do better for the next generation.

That is why the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act would exempt Highway 413 from the Environmental Assessment Act on early works and create a new accelerated environmental assessment process for the project. We are working hard so that the early works for the 413 could proceed even before that is completed. As we move forward to build Highway 413, we will continue to apply strict environmental oversight. As part of the accelerated environmental assessment for Highway 413, my ministry will prepare an environmental impact assessment. This report will summarize baseline studies of the project in order to identify Highway 413's potential environmental impacts and what measures we can take to mitigate them.

We will continue to consult with municipalities, the public and Indigenous communities to take all measures to mitigate them. We will continue to consult with Indigenous communities and carefully consider their feedback. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will review our work to confirm we have assessed Highway 413's potential environmental effects and move forward accordingly. The solution represents the best of both worlds.

Once complete, Highway 413 will connect the regions of York, Peel and Halton, running all the way from Highway 400 in the east to the Highway 401/407 interchange in the west. This highway will save drivers as much as 30 minutes per trip. That's five additional hours each week for friends and family, doing the things you love, rather than being stuck in gridlock. I truly believe all Ontario families, workers, students deserve that. This act will help make that a reality.

Highway 413 will also support the economy and the job market. During construction, Highway 413 will create up to 3,000 jobs: heavy equipment operators, drilling and coring contractors, concrete and steel workers, utility contractors, environmental specialists, laboratory technologists, safety inspectors and more. These are good jobs that allow young men and women to gain skills that will serve them for life, where they can buy a home, raise a family. These jobs help to build a better community and a better Ontario for all of us. It's not just those working on the project; the construction is expected to contribute \$400 million to Ontario's GDP each year.

It's time we make sure this game-changing project can proceed without any unnecessary delays.

The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act has multiple solutions to keep people moving. It would not only streamline the process for Highway 413, but it would also allow us to accelerate construction of other designated priority highway projects—projects like the Bradford Bypass. This four-lane freeway will save drivers in York region up to 35 minutes per trip. The Bradford Bypass will connect Highway 404 in the east to Highway 400 in the west, contributing \$274 million to our GDP each year of construction and supporting almost 2,200 jobs during this project. Once complete, it will help bring more relief to the most congested highway corridors in North America.

In April, I was proud to award the detail design contract for the west section of the Bradford Bypass. In July, we got shovels in the ground on a lane of Highway 400 that will connect to the Bradford Bypass. In the coming months, we'll have even more progress to share on this critical project.

If the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act passes, we will be one step closer to getting construction of the Bradford Bypass under way and improving the lives of people who call York region and Simcoe county home.

The legislation would allow us to accelerate our plans to twin the Garden City Skyway bridge, because more than 100,000 vehicles cross the Garden City Skyway bridge each and every day. As part of this project, we're building an entirely Toronto-bound bridge across the Welland Canal. Once construction is complete, we will then rehabilitate the existing bridge. This will allow us to strengthen a critical link between Ontario's international border crossings and the greater Golden Horseshoe.

In April, we issued a request for proposals to twin the Garden City Skyway bridge. Passing the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act would help us make progress even faster.

Our government understands that fighting gridlock is about more than building new highways. It's about thinking outside the box. That means making sure that our existing roads in the province are doing what they are supposed to do, which is to keep traffic moving. We need to look at the factors involved in traffic, including usage, construction and, yes, of course, bicycles.

Although Toronto consistently ranks among the world's most livable cities, that is changing. People in the greater Toronto area are losing 98 hours a year because of traffic—hours they could be spending with their families. The city has the third-longest travel times in the entire world. When you try to figure out what has changed, it's not hard to look down University Avenue or across Bloor and Yonge and find the pretty obvious culprit: bike lanes that are just not used, removing traffic on some of our heaviest corridors. I hear from my colleagues, not only in Toronto but those with the same issues from Mississauga to Kitchener, London, as far as Ottawa and, as well, in my community of Brampton. That's unacceptable, and we need to do something about that.

Our government has nothing against cyclists. In fact, we support bike lanes where they make sense. But when congestion has skyrocketed and our roads are out of control, it makes no sense to remove traffic lanes and replace them with empty bike lanes.

To those who say bike lanes don't impact traffic: Why do so many of those studies only factor in use on days of perfect temperature, when it's not too hot, not too cold and certainly not raining or snowing?

That is why, if passed, the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act would require municipalities to obtain provincial approval before installing new bike lanes that would remove a lane of traffic. Municipalities will need to provide us data on a set of criteria, including impacts to road capacity, road safety, traffic volume, construction-related delays, emergency response times. We would create a thorough process for receiving and reviewing these submissions because new bike lanes must have a consistent, common-sense approach.

Our government believes bike lanes and cars can share the road in the right circumstances, but as we are seeing across our province, that is not what is happening. So we are bringing forward informed decision-making and oversight on bike lanes.

Our government also takes highway safety and consumer protection very seriously. If you're involved in a collision or your vehicle breaks down on a highway, we believe that drivers should have confidence in who will come to help them and safely tow their vehicle, and confidence knowing you won't be gouged for those same services.

We've heard the horror stories. Well, Madam Speaker, thanks to our government's first-in-Canada tow-zone pilot program across Ontario, GTA drivers have had peace of mind over the past few years if they need to call on the services of a tow. Our tow-zone pilot was established in 2021, creating restricted towing zones on our four sections of provincial highway and the GTA.

0920

Madam Speaker, Ontario's provincial highway network has some of the busiest roads in the world. With the pilot, on these sections of highways, only authorized towing companies are allowed to move vehicles. This has made clearing vehicles off the highway faster and safer, strengthening consumer protection and ensuring bad actors in the towing industry can't take advantage of innocent drivers who need the help.

Data shows that the pilot met vehicle clearance standards more than 95% of the time. In fact, of drivers who received a tow through the program, less than 1% had a complaint. Numbers speak for themselves, and that's why we need to keep this program.

The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act would make the tow-zone pilot permanent by moving it under the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act, or TSSEA for short. This came into effect on January 1, 2024, and improves the provincial oversight of the towing and vehicle storage industry. It establishes a certification system that requires tow operators, tow truck drivers and vehicle storage operators to be certified by the province to be tow operators, tow truck drivers and vehicle storage operators. It establishes standards for consumer and customer protections, and roadside behaviours, including penalties for non-compliance. It shows the bad actors in the industry that we won't tolerate these actions.

Madam Speaker, there's more this government is doing. We're taking action to keep costs down for drivers, to help municipalities prevent and repair potholes, and we're moving forward to raise speed limits on 400-series highways. We'll continue to discuss more of those measures and our plan for this province as we move forward, through this piece of legislation and through some of my other colleagues, who will also be speaking to this.

But in conclusion, Madam Speaker, on my remarks, I want to speak about one of the most important parts of this legislation, which I have already touched upon: It's about a reasonable approach to bike lanes. It's about making sure people can get to and from—whether it be work or back to their families—in a reasonable time. It doesn't make sense to rip up some of our busiest arterial roads, not only here in Toronto, across the province and install bike lanes. We've seen congestion at an all-time high. This is about a reasonable approach, not ideology. We need to work together to develop a system that works for everyone, and we will continue to do so.

With that, Madam Speaker, I want to wish you a very happy birthday and then also pass it off to my colleague.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Thank you. Yes, I am 29.

I recognize the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you, Speaker, and happy birthday to you as well.

Speaker, I'm very pleased today to rise on behalf of residents of my riding, Hastings–Lennox and Addington, to speak in support of the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You

Time Act. I will be sharing my time, as has been mentioned, with the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills. And many thanks to the minister for his comments already.

Under Premier Ford and Minister Sarkaria's leadership, we are building a stronger transportation network across the province. For years, the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, of course, refused to invest in the infrastructure that our communities need. They sat by as our population grew and they built nothing. But our government knows that you need to build a strong transportation network to ensure that our province remains the best place to raise a family and build a career.

That's why our government is focused on building new roads, new bridges and new highways. This is so you can spend less time in traffic and more time at home with your family. That's why we have a plan to tackle gridlock and keep our province moving. And, Speaker, part of that plan is to bring back some common sense to our roads.

The minister highlighted the many ways the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act will benefit drivers across this province. Building new highways in the GTA and bringing common sense to new bike lanes will give drivers in the big cities more, better time to spend with their families each day. That is a priority for this government, and it always will be.

We also want to make life better—driving better—for drivers who live in the smaller municipalities, and we do have a plan to get that done as well. Most people who have driven a vehicle have had the misfortune of, at some point, driving over a pothole. At the best of times, potholes make congestion worse by causing drivers to slow down to avoid hazards on the roadway so that they don't damage their vehicle, break an axle. At the worst of times, it's a serious safety issue, causing damage to vehicles and sometimes leaving drivers stranded on maybe a desolate stretch of highway in the middle of the night.

As a former mayor of a small municipality, I know that not all municipalities have the same resources and the financial capacity to deal with and to prevent or to repair potholes. Smaller municipalities sometimes struggle to address road maintenance issues, and our government intends to lend those municipalities a helpful hand. That's why we're moving forward to develop a pothole prevention and repair program for small municipalities. Unlike the previous Liberal government, who ignored our smaller municipalities, we're listening and we're stepping up to help the small communities repair the roads that all of us use.

Whether I'm visiting a community, on the phone, or at the AMO or ROMA conferences, one of the things that mayors ask for the most is to help fix our roads. I know personally, because it's one of the things that I advocated for when I was a mayor. This program could include provincial funding to assist municipalities with preventing and repairing potholes, providing technical support to municipalities and establishing common standards and specifications to quality roadwork. Unlike the NDP and the Liberals, who say no to just about every solution, on

this side of the aisle, we're doing everything we can to keep traffic moving and keep our roads in good repair in every part of the province. We're serious about putting drivers first, no matter where they live and no matter where they are going.

A pothole prevention and repair program for small municipalities will come with many benefits—for starters, a smoother ride for drivers. Municipalities would have the support they need for routine maintenance to prevent potholes, such as pavement inspection, routing and sealing. Developing ministry-approved standards and specifications for such roadwork would help to ensure drivers in smaller rural municipalities enjoy a smooth and stress-free ride. Traffic will flow freely, municipal roads will be safer and the chances of drivers damaging their vehicles will be greatly diminished.

No driver in Ontario should have to swerve out of the way at the last second to avoid a pothole. Drivers know the impact that potholes have on their vehicles. The first thought that most drivers have when they hit a bad pothole is, "I hope my car is all right." I know that's the exact question I've asked myself after hitting potholes, unfortunately. The pothole prevention program will help save drivers money, reducing unnecessary wear and tear caused by these damaging potholes. Once we get this program up and running, life will be better for drivers all across the province.

Developing a pothole prevention and repair program will build on the work we're doing across the province to make life easier for drivers in many ways. Our government is spending close to \$28 billion over the next 10 years to expand and repair the highways, the roads and the bridges that connect Ontarians to housing, jobs and all sorts of opportunities. The Ontario highways program features an online interactive map—it's quite neat to explore—providing the latest information on 635 different highway projects all across this province. This includes 593 rehabilitation projects and 42 expansion projects that will help keep people moving across the province of Ontario. This year alone, we're committing \$3.9 billion to repair and expansion projects so that drivers can reach their destinations quickly and safely.

0930

This summer, our government got shovels in the ground to replace the Wilson Road overpass in Oshawa, laying the groundwork to continue widening the 401 in the Durham region. We're also replacing the Simcoe Street and Albert Street underpasses in Oshawa and rehabilitating two overwater bridges between Bowmanville and Clarington, in addition to rehabilitating the overpass at the Highway 35/115 interchange west of Bowmanville and the Westney Road overpass on the 401 in Ajax.

The eastern corridor of the 401 accommodates approximately 120,000 vehicles and 10,000 transport trucks carrying over \$380 million worth of goods every single day. By getting construction under way on these much-needed upgrades, we're standing up for drivers and shortening commute times for thousands of Ontarians.

Just last month, we got under way to resurface sections of the eastbound and westbound lanes of Highway 401 near Kingston, from Westbrook Road to Highway 15. We're resurfacing all four ramps at the Sir John A. Macdonald interchange in Kingston and replacing the concrete on two bridges between Sydenham Road and Highway 15.

In August, we announced that we completed major improvements to the Bay of Quinte Skyway Bridge, which serves as an important link and a connection to the 401 for the communities of Prince Edward county. This project helped create good-paying jobs in that area and will keep the drivers of the Bay of Quinte moving. And I know, just like the former minister, Todd Smith, the new member for the Bay of Quinte, MPP Allsopp, will be a strong voice for the members in that region.

As a member who myself represents a riding in eastern Ontario, I know first-hand the critical link that Highway 401 is for our communities across this province. That eastern portion of the 401 is an essential part of the province's highway network that connects Ontario, Quebec and the US for travel, international trade and economic development. We will continue to move forward with vision and purpose to improve and expand our highway infrastructure all across the province.

Speaker, unlike the previous government, the Liberals and the NDP, who didn't invest in northern Ontario, our government's highway projects will help to create jobs and improve safety on our northern roads and highways. We are well on our way to achieving our goal of widening more than 100 kilometres of the Trans-Canada Highway from Thunder Bay to Nipigon. We have now completed seven sections of that project. Last summer, we widened 8.6 kilometres of the Trans-Canada Highway between Ouimet and the Dorion East Loop from two lanes to four lanes. This project will save lives and make it easier to drive along the north shore of Lake Superior.

We're also moving forward to widen Highway 17 between Kenora and the Manitoba border. Highway 17 is a very important strategic link in the Trans-Canada Highway system as there are no alternative routes in the event of a collision or road closure. For years, the previous Liberal government talked about twinning the highway to the Manitoba border, but failed—failed to get shovels in the ground. It is this government under the leadership of Premier Ford and the strong voice from the local MPP there, Minister Rickford—we are finally twinning the highway from Kenora to the Manitoba border. By widening this vital corridor, we are reducing travel times, protecting critical trade links and promoting economic development and safety throughout northern Ontario.

When you're driving long distances, having a safe place to stop and rest is essential, whether you're in a commercial vehicle or travelling in your personal vehicle. That's why we're carrying out the largest expansion of rest areas in the province's history. In 2021, our government introduced a five-year plan to expand the province's rest area network by building 10 new rest areas, rehabilitating 14 others, and adding 165 new truck parking spaces to four

ONroute locations. Modern, heated washrooms, more lighting and truck parking spaces—we are committed to giving the hard-working women and men in the trucking industry and drivers across Ontario a safe place to stop and rest, and we're making great progress to expand that rest area network. To date, we've finished construction on three new rest areas and completed major improvements at seven other locations across the province.

These are the upgrades that Ontarians have been asking for for years. The Liberals refused to improve our northern highways and our rest areas. But unlike the previous government, our government is getting it done.

This summer, we started an expansion project at the Batchawana Bay rest area on Highway 17 north of Sault Ste. Marie. We're adding newly constructed entrance and exit lanes, giving drivers year-round access to heated washrooms, and building a separate parking area with nine spaces for commercial vehicles. Drivers will benefit from free WiFi and personal device charging stations, a modern touch, and we're adding underground infrastructure that will allow for electric vehicle charging stations in the future.

Our government is embracing innovation to improve traffic flow and road safety in northern Ontario. We're currently working to increase passing opportunities on the highways in northeastern Ontario, and this includes some innovative designs, such as a 2+1 highway. The 2+1 model is a three-lane highway featuring a centre passing lane with a median barrier that changes directions every two to five kilometres, helping vehicles pass safely. These highways have been used successfully in other countries around the world—Sweden, Ireland and Australia—and I know several municipalities in northern Ontario have passed resolutions in support of this design. So, in many ways, thanks to the strong local voice from Minister Fedeli, the new 2+1 highway will make it safer to travel in Nipissing. No other jurisdiction in North America has built a true 2+1 highway, and our preliminary work will help determine the suitability of the 2+1 model in other parts of the province. This will be a first for Ontario, and we'll continue to look at our counterparts from around the world as we seek out innovative ways to enhance our transportation infrastructure in the years ahead.

Our government is committed to reducing travel times while ensuring that our provincial highways remain among the safest in North America. We're taking a bold step forward to get people moving quickly without compromising road safety in any way.

Since 2022, our government has used an evidence-based approach to raise the speed limit on sections of provincial highways across the province where it is safe to do so. That year, we raised the posted speed limit to 110 kilometres per hour on six stretches of highways in southern Ontario and two pilot sections in northern Ontario. This summer, we raised the speed limit on 10 additional sections of highway, saving drivers valuable time and helping to move goods quickly. And we're about to take that effort to the next level. We will now expedite work to raise the speed limit to 110 kilometres per hour on

additional sections of the provincial highways, again, where it is safe to do so.

Our responsible, measured approach over the past few years has shown us that raising the speed limits in sections where it is safe to do so does not compromise the safety of Ontarians, and it allows everyone to get where they're going faster. Prior to the 1970s, speed limits on select provincial highways were higher than 110 kilometres per hour. Our data analysis from the past two years reveals that highways that are designed or upgraded to accommodate higher speed limits remain just as safe.

Ontario has some of the safest roads in North America. For more than 20 years, we have ranked in the top five jurisdictions with the lowest fatality rates per 10,000 licensed drivers, and we take pride in that track record. We will continually work to make our roads even safer. So that's why we tabled the Safer Roads and Communities Act earlier this year. We know that raising speed limits where it's appropriate is the right thing to do for drivers.

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Putting drivers first isn't just about building highways, reducing congestion and keeping roads in a good state of repair. It's also about protecting drivers' pocketbooks. We want to make life easier for drivers across the province, and that means keeping costs down. Since 2020, our government has temporarily frozen fees for driver knowledge tests and road tests. This has already saved drivers \$35 million to date, and we're going to keep those savings going.

Current regulations require the province to increase driver testing fees every year after 2026, based on the consumer price index. But if the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act passes, it would enshrine the current fee freeze into legislation, helping to ensure that Ontarians' money stays where it belongs: in their wallet. Any future fee increases would actually require a legislative amendment. Maintaining the current fee freeze will help Ontarians save another \$72 million this decade. We're putting money back in Ontarians' pockets and making sure that it stays there for years to come.

We all know that people across the province are struggling with the cost of living. Now is not the time to increase driver testing fees—not when hard-working Ontarians are fighting to make ends meet every day to feed their families. By tabling legislation to freeze the fees, we're standing up for families that have been stretched to the breaking point. We're not going to increase fees at a time like this, especially not when driving is such a necessity for so many, especially in the rural areas. People rely on driving for their livelihoods. They need to drive to work or operate a vehicle as part of their job. They need vehicles to get to appointments, to visit family members and to lead an independent life. And they shouldn't have to pay more just to take a knowledge or road test. If the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act passes, driver testing fees will remain affordable and predictable, because that's what Ontarians deserve.

Freezing driver testing fees would build on the success of the Get It Done Act, which froze fees for driver's

licences and Ontario photo cards. With this new legislation, we're fighting harder than ever for drivers across the province. We're proposing to keep costs low so Ontarians can get behind the wheel and lead a productive life, contribute to our economy and enjoy all that this province has to offer. That's what everyone in this province deserves.

Speaker, the previous government raised fees on drivers every chance they got. They raised fees on licence plate stickers, so instead, we scrapped the sticker. They raised fees on Drive Clean, so instead, we scrapped the fees on Drive Clean. They raised the gas tax, and we cut the gas tax and have kept it low. They brought in a provincial carbon tax, and what did we do? We scrapped the provincial carbon tax.

It's very clear: We are the only party that is focused on keeping costs down for Ontarians.

Ever since our government was elected, we've fought to make life better for the hard-working Ontarians who have made this province such a great place to live, work and raise a family. And part of that is putting drivers first. The Get It Done Act demonstrated the intent to keep traffic flowing and build the infrastructure needed to support Ontario's growing population. The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act would, if passed, provide additional tools to construct highways quickly, keep costs down and make life more affordable for every driver in the province.

By developing a pothole prevention and repair program, we're showing smaller municipalities that the government of Ontario has their backs, and we're here to help you keep traffic moving. By taking a responsible approach to raising speed limits on provincial highways, we're ensuring Ontario's roads remain the safest in North America while we continue to stand up for drivers, Speaker. And by freezing fees for driver testing, we're making it easier than ever for Ontarians to get behind the wheel and keep costs low and predictable for years to come.

Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals want to make it harder for people to drive. They vote against common-sense solutions to tackle gridlock. They say no to investing in highways. They say no to finding solutions to get drivers home faster. They couldn't be more out of touch. Unlike the Liberals and the NDP, we are focused on common sense and building new highways across this province.

I hope my Liberal and NDP colleagues will finally say yes to tackling gridlock. I hope the Liberals and the NDP will vote to support repairing potholes in smaller communities. Instead of saying no, support the common-sense solutions that Ontario drivers need.

The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act includes other measures aimed at accelerating the construction of key infrastructure and, as the Minister of Transportation said earlier, measures to ensure new bike lanes contribute to increased road capacity and do not impact the flow of car traffic. We've seen an explosion of new bike lanes in big cities since before the pandemic started. Back when there were far fewer cars on the roads due to lockdowns,

it was unclear how they would impact traffic. Those cars are back now, and the bike lanes are slowing down traffic when congestion is already out of control in Toronto and other large cities across the province.

At this time, Speaker, I'd like to hand it over to my friend and colleague the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills to further discuss bike lane proposals in the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I am really delighted to stand to speak about this bill, because it is helping the people of Ontario. When we talk about highways and driving and traffic, I would like to make sure that I put it on the record: Traffic is annoying. Spending an hour and a half one way—meaning three hours a day—on the road to reach work, or back from work, is wasting energy, wasting money, adding to the pollution and taking time which we can spend with family or doing other things more beneficial than on the road.

When we talk about traffic, there are very limited solutions to get traffic going: adding capacity to roads; highering the speed to get more traffic flowing per hour, the number of cars; getting reliable transportation where people can use public transportation if their circumstances allow and save themselves from driving; and the fourth is innovative solutions, which is that we have to think out of the box to get something un-ordinary to get things working. There is no rocket science here; there are only a few parameters which we can add or tackle to help the issue, and this government is doing the four of them, doing all of them.

We are building a new road, 413, which is promising to take lots of the heavy traffic, the truck traffic, outside the 401, outside Toronto, and allowing the 401 to be more fluent, moving cars faster, smaller cars, adding capacity to the north, where we can actually expand housing. People can move and live in the northern areas of Toronto, and they can still reach their job place in a reasonable time. So adding a highway is actually not only easing the traffic on the 401; it's actually opening new opportunities for people to move outside the congested area around the 401 and the exits of the 401.

Talking about adding more cars per hour, highering the speeds on the 400 series of highways has been a very good idea to do, given the fact that even the technology of cars has improved. The amount of distance and the time you need to brake is getting better. So with all those technology controls, you can actually prevent a lot of accidents with a higher speed.

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Car technology—which, 29 years ago when I came, when I, for the first time, drove on the 401—is not the same technology cars have today. I'm not talking about EVs; I'm talking about even regular cars with cameras and sensors and better technology and brakes. They actually can brake faster; they can have a faster response time to prevent or change the speed or brake. So highering the rate, the speed, the limit on the highways will allow us to

move cars faster so the amount of flow of cars per hour will be more. It's indirectly adding capacity to the highway, moving more cars.

Now, talking about the transportation, the transit: I think this government has been doing a great job in adding infrastructure. We know infrastructure projects take years to establish, so even if we have the problem today, if we start it today, we are not going to see the results of that for a few years, when the highway gets finished or the transportation line gets built. So it's not only thinking about today; it's thinking about the future, thinking about how we envision the status of traffic and the status of Ontario 10 years from today.

With the rate of increasing immigrants and even people moving from different areas to Ontario, to the GTA, to the Golden Horseshoe area—it's anticipated in 2051 to reach 15 million only in the Golden Horseshoe. This means maybe time and a half to two times of what we have today. So we can imagine, if we, today, complain about traffic, what would be the case in 10 years from today or six years from today if we don't do something to change that, to change the destiny of this and how it's going to happen and how it's going to look at that time with all those cars and people on the streets.

We are talking about adding manufacturing jobs. We are talking about building more factories. We are talking about having more trade with our southern neighbour, the US. How are we going to do that? How are we going to attract new businesses if it is deadlocked traffic? We can't move goods fast. We can't move raw materials fast. How will the investors find it lucrative to build a new factory in that? We need to change this. It's the future of the province, not only for transportation, but for industry, for trade, for everything—for day-to-day work, for day-to-day traffic travel for employees and people living here and there.

Also, with the prices of houses in the Toronto area, people start moving out, trying to find reasonable pricing outside the area of Toronto, which adds more travel time to go to work if they happen to work in the downtown or someplace closer in the mid-GTA. That is adding more load on the transportation, adding more load on the highways.

If we talk about Mississauga, which is my area—and lots of people say Mississauga is not as bad as Toronto. I agree. But we actually become so congested and things are getting—we need to look into that. We don't want to reach the same level of congestion like Toronto.

The Hazel McCallion LRT is a good example. We are investing in infrastructure. We are investing in public transportation to make sure that we have the different options. It's different options; there's no one-size-fits-all.

Some people will be able to take the public transportation. I commuted on the Milton line for about five and a half years daily from Mississauga to Toronto because my work was on York Street. It was amazing, because the proximity of my work and the proximity of my home aligned with the Milton line, so I could use that. For some people, their job is in different areas, so they might have

to take two or three transportation methods if they want to use public transportation, which adds time.

But we actually even tackled that. The One Fare we did for transportation allows people to take the GO train and then take the TTC with the same fare, saving \$1,600 a year for commuters who commute from and out to Toronto.

So it's a 360-degree vision; it's not one item. But this bill in itself actually carries a lot of that vision.

We need to add capacity to the highways. We are talking about the 413 and accelerating that. We don't want this highway 10 years from today. We actually needed this highway yesterday. We need that, like, now. So accelerating or helping to accelerate this process is a very good thing. We need it as fast as we can.

Changing the inspection and environmental requirements process doesn't mean that we are compromising. We are just trying to make it faster. Allowing construction work to go 24/7 on the highways has been a no-brainer. When you drive in the morning, coming to Toronto, and the highway is reduced to one lane, that's a nightmare. With this amount of traffic, trying to reduce that to one lane is impossible.

I, last week, had to drive to Kitchener for an event. It's a weekend, 3 o'clock in the afternoon, so it makes sense that traffic should be reasonable and not lots of cars on the road. It took me two and a half hours from Mississauga to Kitchener—two and a half hours to reach Kitchener—because of construction. I can just try to visualize: What if that was 8 o'clock in the morning, trying to go to work? What would be the case? Not only the fact we have maybe five times the number of cars on the road at the time. I'm talking about people rushing to get to work and who have an appointment to meet, like a time to arrive to work. What would be the case at that time? Action is really needed, and this government is taking that action.

Talking about transportation infrastructure, not only are we adding the LRT to Mississauga; we are now getting the Milton line to be two way, all day. I had been commuting on that line for five and a half years, as I mentioned, and we had, at the time, only five trains. The first one started at 7:30, then 7:50, 8:10, 8:30, 8:40—five trains and that's it. So if you missed the last train, you got stuck in traffic trying to drive. We need a GO train because that will link Mississauga to the GTA, to Toronto.

We also talked about investments. I don't think there is any provincial government that added as much investment as this government did: \$28 billion for highways and roads; \$70 billion for public transit. I didn't hear about any government that did that.

The Ontario Line is a brand-new line, an underground line, a subway line. Many projects are coming. We are talking about the Dundas DRT; it's, again, like an artery for Mississauga to allow Mississauga to grow, especially when we know that we are having lots of high-rises coming in Mississauga. There are 39 cranes now in Mississauga building high-rises. This means thousands of people will be moving into those apartments. How will those people get in and out every day to work, to live, to move around the city? We need those investments. The

Milton line and MiWay is one of the biggest, and it will help a lot of people, to encourage lots of people to use public transportation.

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Comparing 35 minutes, for example, in my commute, coming from Mississauga to the GTA, to Union Station—a 35-minute GO train ride versus an hour and a half or an hour and 15 minutes in traffic. It makes sense. It's much easier. You ride. You don't have to drive. You don't stress. You read something. You review your emails. It's very nice, if it is convenient. That's what we are trying to say. If we can build public transportation which can be reliable and convenient and my set-up allows that—I have a specific time to arrive, 9 to 5—then it might work. It will encourage me to leave my car, hop on the GO train and go to work.

Also, one of the bill items here is bike lanes. Bike lanes are a very good idea to help protect bikers and encourage people to use bikes—and we know that's in a specific period of the year, not the whole year, not every day. It's there; it can work. But at the same time, if I take a two-lane road and remove one lane, I actually took 50% of the capacity of the road; mathematically, 50% of the capacity of that road is gone. It's not only that it's lost, because if I have one lane, that means any car that slows or stops to turn right or left will impede the whole line of cars until it finishes that turn, and that will add more time. So it's not only taking 50%; it's actually taking maybe 70% of the capacity of the road. So we need to be reasonable in choosing the roads which we add bikes to.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for—

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm not surprised that the government has got a bill before the House about gridlock, because this is the government of gridlock. I'm wondering if they're prepared to apologize to the road users of Ontario for the transit mess they've created in this province.

I just heard my friend say over there that they're investing in transit. Do you know what they're investing in, Speaker? They're investing in the 82 executive vice-presidents who work for Phil Verster. They're investing in failing LRT projects in the Hurontario, failing LRT projects in the Eglinton Crosstown, failing projects with the Ontario Line, not to mention my city in Ottawa, and it causes gridlock, and they need someone to blame. And who's that going to be? Wheelchair users, scooters, people who walk, people who use their bike.

You're looking for someone to blame. Point a thumb; don't point a finger.

Are you prepared to fix your transit mess now so we can get traffic moving in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I thank the member opposite for the question.

This government and this province will continue to invest in that infrastructure, in our transit systems. I know the member has a personal bias against that particular organization. But ultimately, continuing to invest, when

the previous governments failed to, is the way forward for our residents.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Well, thank you very much, and happy birthday to you, Madam Speaker.

Do you know what? This announcement is a victory for common sense. I'll tell you, in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I put out a poll on Friday. Over 600 people responded to that poll, saying to get rid of the bike lanes on Bloor Street immediately. Now, we did have under a hundred people who were in favour, and I've responded to all those, because we want them in the right places. Over time, the city of Toronto has put those bike lanes in the wrong locations, which has hurt our small businesses and has just put traffic at a standstill.

To the minister: Minister, tell me, what are you going to do about these bike lanes? And maybe you can comment on Bloor Street for me.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to really thank the member for all of her advocacy on this topic. We met with not one, two, almost 50-plus business owners. I've never seen that much excitement around an announcement. They came to that establishment, that community, and they spoke about how they weren't heard when these policies were put forward. Thank you to my colleague for raising that issue, for bringing it forward.

As my friend from Mississauga said, it has made it almost impossible to get around that city at some of the busiest times. Across Bloor Street West, for example, we stood there for about 10 minutes, I think, outside and not a single bike went by. It's about a reasonable approach. We're not anti-bike-lane, but it has got to make sense. It has got to be in a way that doesn't impact the 90-plus per cent of people who are using that road to get to and from work. We can't make it worse than it already is. That's why this policy—

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. It's always a pleasure to be in here, especially on your birthday, Madam Speaker.

We need to get away from the rhetoric of cyclist versus driver versus pedestrian. It's people: People who drive, people who bike, people who walk. Many of us do all of those things. Stop with the divisive rhetoric, is what I would encourage you to do.

My question is, in April, the Premier said, "I believe in letting municipalities determine what is good for their communities and what is not good for their communities" in reference to building fourplexes—which is a logical solution for housing, by the way, but we won't go there. Why has this changed now? Why is the government overstepping into municipal planning, wasting money, ripping up existing infrastructure, causing more traffic and risking the safety of the 22,000 Ontarians who cycle daily? That is a fact from the Share the Road coalition.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: What I will say is, once again, this is about a reasonable approach, looking at

who uses the road. Stats Canada itself says that there is about 1% of people who commute to work by bike. We can't be ripping up 50% of our biggest, largest, most used roads. This is about a reasonable approach. Not to mention the weather: We've got snow, we've got cold weather, we have rain. We have to take that into consideration as we move forward on these policies.

Toronto has seen some of the worst gridlock ever and it's only getting worse. There are two reasons for that. A lot of it has to do with the bike lanes that have been put forward in an unreasonable manner. The second is that the member's own party refused, when they were in government for 15 years, to invest in public transit. It's this government that is getting shovels in the ground on the Ontario Line, the LRTs across this province. It's the inaction of previous governments that—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: While this government talks about fast-tracking the Garden City Skyway project, we all know in Niagara that this bridge isn't plagued by traffic. If we are serious about addressing congestion, why not prioritize an all-day, two-way GO train all the way to Niagara Falls? The QEW 2013 environmental assessment clearly states that the Skyway deck replacement needs to be done by 2025 as it had reached its end of life, which becomes a safety issue.

I ask, why has the government delayed necessary maintenance, pushing the end-of-life repair to its brink? If you are serious about reducing traffic in Niagara and on our highways, if you care about our environment, why aren't we fast-tracking GO service right now all the way to Niagara Falls?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I can't believe the member from Niagara Falls. He's voted against the work that has needed to go forward to make the Garden City Skyway bridge.

Let me educate that member: 100,000 vehicles cross that bridge each and every single day. Do you know how important it is, how many border crossings we have, how important it is to our economy?

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That member, on the increased expansion of GO Transit for the Niagara line, actually voted against that increase to service. But that's not a surprise. The Liberals and NDP will set up roadblocks to try to stop us for every one of the investments we have made, whether it be on public transit or whether it be on highways. They want the status quo. They don't want anything to change. We won't accept that. It's because of their policies in the past that we're in this position anyway. They don't want to build highways. They don't want to build public transit—

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

Mr. Billy Pang: I come from Hong Kong, with a population of over seven million people who highly rely on public transit and subways. At basically every single subway station, there is a transit-oriented community accommodating more than thousands of homes.

To the minister: How will our transit-oriented communities help reduce the gridlock?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: That member is absolutely right: We're building housing where it makes sense, and we're building across this province. We're building these historic transit projects that, unfortunately, I can't believe the NDP and Liberals won't support. They sat on their hands and did absolutely nothing when they had the balance of power for almost 15 years. They didn't build transit, they didn't build highways and they didn't invest in the future—the Ontario Line; the Yonge North subway that I know the member opposite is a big proponent of. It's going to bring almost 37,000 people within walking distance of the Yonge North subway once that is completed and once that is built. I know that member has advocated for more transit and has advocated for more subways to be built.

It's a shame, though, that when we know that we can take almost 28,000 cars off the road with the Ontario Line, the members opposite, the Liberals and NDP, would oppose that. It just baffles me.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have time for one last question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to ask a question of the minister. As we're starting to discuss a bill about reducing gridlock, I wonder why this minister has decided that ripping out existing infrastructure in municipalities would make things better.

Also, I wonder if this minister will finally consider removing the 407 tolls for trucks to move them off the 401, to get GO trains actually going, or to finish the Eglinton Crosstown; if any of those real ways of reducing gridlock are on his agenda.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Back to the minister for a final response.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The NDP and the Liberals have had all summer to go and speak to constituents, listen to them and ask them what they're feeling on the roads, the gridlock that they are facing. And look at them: They're still back in the session—they're opposing Highway 413. They're opposing the Bradford Bypass. And let's look at their record: They voted against expanding GO Transit services across this province. We just increased it by over 300 trips a week, and we'll continue to do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we've run out of time.

Interjections: Aw.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I know.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Lorne Coe: Lakeridge Health has teamed up with Ontario Tech University in the region of Durham to drive

health care innovation and address Durham region's evolving health care needs using artificial intelligence. The Partnership for Advanced Technology in Health Care seeks to enhance patient care and improve health outcomes for the region of Durham through the sharing of cutting-edge research with practical applications.

This new partnership further reinforces Lakeridge Health's dedication to integrating technology that benefits both patients and health care providers. Importantly, the university's new collaboration with Lakeridge Health provides a unique learning opportunity for Ontario Tech students—a new generation of leaders in health care and technology—as they work to uncover AI solutions that will improve health care services across the region.

Collaborations with exceptional academic institutions like Ontario Tech are key to building a health care system that not only serves today's needs but anticipates the health care challenges of tomorrow.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: This government is struggling to deliver on the basics, like affordable housing, health care and education. Instead of fixing what they've broken, they're peddling distractions: first, the fantasy \$1-billion tunnel under the 401, and now bulldozing over municipalities by announcing new legislation to destroy bike lanes. It reminds me of one of the first culture wars from this government—ripping out EV charging stations.

This government doesn't care about financial or ecological costs.

Why would you spend money destroying existing infrastructure? You're making taxpayers foot the bill for your destructive agenda.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario said, "Requiring provincial approval [for bike lanes] would be a significant overreach into municipal jurisdiction." Municipal planners work hard, the community has been engaged, but once again this government is making decisions without the proper process—just like closing the Ontario Science Centre overnight due to supposedly unsafe roof panels when one in 12 schools in Ontario have these same roof panels.

This government refuses to fix their mistakes, like selling off the 407 in the first place, but also handing over a billion dollars to the 407's owners during the pandemic.

Conservatives pretend bikes are the problem. Wasteful Conservative ideology is the problem.

Premier, stay in your own lane and quit acting out your petty grudges from your time on Toronto city council.

WINDSOR INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I rise today as it is once again time to roll out the red carpet for a beloved part of the Windsor-Essex community fabric, the Windsor International Film Festival. WIFF is celebrating 20 years strong this year, and starting tomorrow night—I'm looking

forward to being there as soon as the Legislature is done—it will be delivering its biggest lineup of feature films yet.

By the numbers: 213 feature films, 42 countries represented, 23 local films, 58 francophone feature films, 46 films selected from the Toronto International Film Festival, 141 films from world-leading film festivals, and 75 feature documentaries.

I've already got my tickets for the longest film of the festival—celebrating *The Tragically Hip: No Dress Rehearsal*, clocking in at 261 minutes.

The heart and soul of the Windsor International Film Festival is Vincent Georgie, the executive director of the festival. Vincent began as a volunteer for the festival in 2009 and has served as executive director and chief programmer since 2013, so 11 years now.

Year after year, Vincent and the WIFF team deliver an incredible event that not only brings visitors to our community, but a veritable experience like no other that comes right here, close to home, back in Windsor-Essex.

Thank you to Vincent, the entire WIFF board and the team for your incredible work delivering the festival once again and for making Windsor-Essex incredibly proud.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker.

Remarks in Anishiniimowin.

Speaker, 130 members of Red Rock Indian Band and their supporters brought traffic to a halt between eastern and western Canada at the Nipigon bridge for an hour on Monday. This peaceful highway shutdown followed the discovery of human remains at a construction site for a new visitors' centre in Nipigon. One of the four ancestors whose remains were uncovered in May was from pre-contact, and they were found in their original burial place. But the remains are incomplete.

Red Rock Chief Allan Odawa Jr. stated that Parks Canada failed to follow its own protocols by not having an archaeologist on-site, and both the federal and the provincial governments were hindering the search for the remains. Instead of treating the remains with respect, around 150 loads of earth were relocated, and some of those remains are in those 150 loads of earth.

The Red Rock Indian Band continues to call on the federal, provincial and private actors to stop being an obstacle in their search for the ancestors and to prevent this from happening in the future. They are asking for policy change so that this does not happen again.

Meegwetch to the Red Rock Indian Band and supporters for your advocacy and solidarity.

1020

SCHOOL FIELD TRIP

Mrs. Robin Martin: I rise today to address the disturbing Toronto District School Board 15-school field trip turned protest featuring anti-Israel chants and “Zionism Kills” stickers that occurred on September 18 of this year.

Students were instructed to dress as settlers in blue shirts and to chant, “From Turtle Island to Palestine, occupation is a crime.” As Brian Lilley at the Sun wrote, “That chant, pushed on students as young as grade 3, not only drags the war Hamas started into a rally that was supposed to be about clean water, it pushes a” Marxist “ideology onto students.”

Education is not a tool for indoctrination. It should not be used to further political agendas or to impose one-sided views. Our educators have a responsibility to nurture the minds of future generations and encourage them to think for themselves. As this government has made clear, students deserve an education that focuses on the fundamentals like reading, writing and math, not one that diverts precious time away from classroom learning in favour of political activism.

Mr. Speaker, our government takes this matter very seriously because we know that parents send their children to school to learn and not to be used as crowd extras or fillers by activists posing as teachers. The Premier noted that teachers should stick to teaching, and the minister has now ordered an investigation into how this happened. I look forward to the findings of that investigation and will always stand for a back-to-basics education that focuses on nurturing each individual student's success.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Speaker, things built in the past were made to last, but not anymore. Nowadays, manufacturers want the things you buy from them to break down a day after the warranty ends. Hey, but no problem, right? They'll just sell you their latest model that comes in a new flashy colour—wow. You still want to keep it, though? No problem. They'll fix it for you at double the cost of buying another one. So hey, why don't you just buy another one and throw yours in the garbage and add it to the growing pile?

Okay, so you're having none of it. You want to repair it yourself or maybe go to the local repair shop and get Fred to fix it at a cheap cost. Well, that's when the company mascot goes from the cute little puppy to the angry wolf. That's the last place they want you to go, and they have many strategies to stop you.

Speaker, in our smart world of glued-on batteries, digital locks and products designed for the dump, it's time to take a stand. We deserve the right to repair our own stuff that we paid for at a fair cost, and my Bill 187 will make it happen. I urge the government to support it.

The right-to-repair movement is strong and growing. To learn more about it, come out to the first-ever Canadian Repair Convention this Friday, October 25, in London, Ontario, at the Ivey Spencer Leadership Centre or join online at canrepair.ca.

THANKSGIVING

Mr. Billy Pang: Last week, I had the pleasure of hosting a Thanksgiving celebration at the Angus Glen

Community Centre in Markham–Unionville. It was a heartwarming event, with vibrant performances from 12 seniors clubs and a full house of local residents, all coming together in the spirit of community.

We were also honoured to have Premier Ford and Minister Lecce join us, making the occasion even more special. The celebration truly reflects the spirit of Thanksgiving, bringing people from all walks of life together to celebrate community, diversity and gratitude. It reminds us of the importance of staying connected, supporting one another, and fostering a sense of belonging in our ever-growing and diverse community.

Our community thrives because of the dedication and co-operation of the residents, who continuously work to build a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the performers, volunteers and attendees for their contributions in making this event such a resounding success. Together, we created moments of togetherness, abundant joy and lasting memories for everyone.

Ontario is stronger and more united when we value community and celebrate our shared traditions through events like this. From the bottom of my heart, a big thank you to my neighbours and friends.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Michael Mantha: Over the summer recess, I had the opportunity to travel back and forth across my riding, meeting with people in every corner of Algoma–Manitoulin. I tried to use the extra six weeks we were away to get in as many events, meetings and constituency clinics as possible.

The government also tried to make the most of the extended recess, outlining their agenda while avoiding scrutiny here at the Legislature. However, the priorities that they broadcast into the headlines were very different from what I was hearing from people in Algoma–Manitoulin.

The Premier's priority was spending \$225 million to put alcohol into convenience stores, while hospitals in my riding were looking at how it was going to avoid million-dollar deficits under this government's budget.

The government prioritized billion-dollar mega highways in the GTA, while in the north, we've been waiting over a decade for the government to finish four-laning in Highway 69 to Sudbury.

The Premier announced that he wanted to spend billions to tunnel under the 401 and add more lanes, while on Manitoulin Island, people were stuck waiting for hours at a broken-down swing bridge that the government hasn't put a timeline on to replace.

Close to \$7 billion in pay back for the government's unconstitutional Bill 124; meanwhile, children with autism are left on the wait-list for services which continue to grow longer each year.

I can safely say that what this government chose to spend this summer focusing on does not match the priorities of the people I spoke with in Algoma–Manitoulin.

NORBEC MANUFACTURING PLANT

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: I rise today to share an exciting achievement in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. Recently, we celebrated the grand opening of Norbec's state-of-the-art manufacturing plant in Strathroy, marking a significant step forward for our community and for Ontario. This \$45 million investment is not just a privilege for our local economy but a strong testament to our government's work in strengthening Ontario's manufacturing structure.

This new facility, Norbec's first in Ontario, third in Canada, will create 70 high-skilled jobs, full-time jobs providing opportunities for engineers, production operators and many others.

We are proud to have the support of our government, which contributed \$1.5 million through the Regional Development Program. This facility will not only help Norbec better service customers here in Ontario, but also tap into the growing Midwest US markets.

This is more than just a new factory. It is a symbol of growth, innovation and the opportunities that lie ahead for our region. I look forward to seeing the great impact this facility will have, and as we look ahead, it is clear that this investment will boost both our local economy, and Ontario's position as a manufacturing leader.

Here's to a bright future for Strathroy, Norbec and all of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Matthew Rae: I had a very busy summer and early fall in my beautiful riding of Perth–Wellington. I attended over 260 events and meetings, and it was great to be able to meet with the hard-working people across my riding, the ones who are helping us build, feed and create a prosperous Ontario. I had the opportunity to make many announcements as our government continues to build a better, stronger and safer Ontario, whether it was the \$14.2 million to the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund which provides money to our municipal partners to build roads, bridges, sewers that we rely on; or the \$1.3 million to train the next generation of municipal equipment officers through the Skills Development Fund; or the \$307,000 for the rural economic development projects across Perth–Wellington; or the \$8.3 million and \$14 million for the Land Ambulance and the Dedicated Offload Nurses Programs in Perth and Wellington county, respectively; or the \$34 million for broadband and high-speed Internet expansion across southwestern Ontario. And there's more, Speaker: the \$1.39 million through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund for Sommers generators in Stratford to help them build hydrogen generators in Ontario, creating good-paying jobs locally.

These are only some of the investments our Progressive Conservative government is making in communities across Perth–Wellington. I look forward to working with all my colleagues in this place to continue to invest in health care, infrastructure and economic development, and keep taxes low for the people of Ontario.

1030

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Laura, Jozef, Ewelina, Kinsley and Patrick Porzuczek. He is the spokesperson for Re-Open the Minden ER and Minden Matters, and they would very much like to meet with the Premier of Ontario.

Premier Ford, if you have a few minutes, please meet this family—a very nice family. You will like them, I guarantee you.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to introduce a very good friend of mine, a good friend to the region of Peel. Dave Wakely just recently clocked in 14 years as the union president for Peel paramedics. Let's give him a big, warm welcome. Welcome, Dave.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd also like to echo the huge welcome to the Porzuczek family from Save the Minden ER. I also want to welcome Janice Jim from Waterloo. She's here for the bike rally this afternoon.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I have quite a wonderful list of people to recognize today from the ministry team. We have my chief of staff, Crystal Mason; we have my legislative assistant, Michael Zwiep; we have my director of policy and stakeholders, Brittany Greenland; we have Patil Imasdounian, the senior communications adviser; Chris Mills, the senior policy adviser; Adam Sa-Di Meo, intern; as well as Ali Shahsamand, my senior communications adviser. Thank you for all the work you're doing across the province. I appreciate you very much.

Mr. Joel Harden: I also want to thank my friend Janice Jim for being here and just salute the friends who are filing into the building, as I understand it: Alison Stewart from Cycle Toronto and David Laing from BikeBrampton.

Just a quick note to what my friend said earlier: It's not a bike rally at 5 o'clock today, Speaker, it's a citizens' place. If you walk, if you use a wheelchair, if you scoot, we all care about safe communities and the impact of our policies. So come and join us.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Today I'd like to welcome Julianna Wong and Ethan Wong, who will be competing for Team Canada in jiu-jitsu in Greece next week. I think they're in the House. If we could just stand and give them a round of applause and a send-off as they leave this Friday.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'd like to welcome the labour leaders from the education sector who will be joining us shortly in the gallery from RÉFO, ETFO, OSSTF, OSBCU and COPE, and in particular the education workers Shauna Heath, Alison Slack, Amie Boyak and Jennifer Bibby, who gave us a demonstration this morning of the protective gear that they wear to our schools every single day. Welcome.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome the Porzuczek family to the Legislature today. Specifically, I'd like to welcome Patrick; his wife, Laura; and his children, Kinsley, Jozef and Ewelina. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Graydon Smith: I'd like to welcome the Invasive Species Centre here for their Queen's Park day today, specifically Sarah Rang and Colin Cassin. I know others from ISC that are here.

There are many partner organizations, too: Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Forests Ontario, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association. We're looking forward to seeing all of the members here at the reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230. Thank you very much and welcome.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome some guests from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, who I'll be meeting with later today: Anita Chiu, Kaitlyn Forbes and Bryan Shone, who is the executive director for the Hamilton Child and Family Supports. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce a very good and longtime friend of mine, Ishmael Van Der Rassel. Now, Ishmael lost his mum recently, and that's why she's not here to visit with him today.

Mr. Ross Romano: I've got a few introductions this morning with members from the riding, so I definitely want to recognize a few individuals.

First, I'd like to briefly recognize the value of exercise to good and overall health. We have the members of the Ontario Kinesiology Association with us here today in the gallery. Kinesiologists are the experts in the science of human mobility and exercise, and Ontario is the leader in that field. I'd like to recognize the secretary-treasurer, Jory Kettles, from my own riding in Sault Ste. Marie.

Our Minister of Forestry has already indicated that the Invasive Species Centre from Sault Ste. Marie is here today. I also want to welcome the group. I don't want to repeat all of that. Please join us for the reception at the end of the day today for the Invasive Species Centre.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha has informed me that he has a point of order that he wishes to raise.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to wish a happy birthday to my good friend from Flamborough–Glanbrook, who looks 10 years younger than me.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Happy birthday.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. You may recall that the rural municipality of Brighton, which is

located in the riding of the Minister of Labour, felt that the only way to get this government to pay attention to them was to hire one of the Premier's friends, Amin Massoudi, to lobby for them. Now, we know this Mr. Massoudi was in Las Vegas getting massages with a greenbelt developer and a Conservative MPP and was a guest at the Premier's daughter's wedding. Now that the government is, however, under RCMP criminal investigation, can the Premier tell us when he last spoke to Mr. Massoudi?

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I will repeat, and as we have said many, many times to the Leader of the Opposition, the Integrity Commissioner has issued a report; the Auditor General has issued a report. Our government has reversed course on a policy that was not supported by the people of the province of Ontario. We have accepted all of the recommendations that have come from that report, but what we are doing and what we have been doing since day one is focusing on rebuilding the province of Ontario that was left a mess by the Liberal-NDP government previously.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: First of all, I've got to say, I don't think that when the good people of Brantford–Brant elected that member opposite, they elected him to do that—I mean, really.

But look, here's what we've noticed: There are people who matter to this Premier and there are people who don't, people he will protect and people he won't. We know who doesn't matter to this Premier: two and a half million people with no doctor, the one in five Ontarians who can't make the rent, the one million Ontarians relying on a home-care system that is in crisis. Who does matter to this Premier? Developers looking to get rich when his government removes their land from the greenbelt or political staffers turned lobbyists like Nico Fidani-Diker or Amin Massoudi who buy a ticket to an event in the Premier's own—to the Premier's family's event, and then they get a ministerial zoning order or other benefits for their clients.

Why won't this Premier put regular people first for once, instead of his friends and donors?

Interjections.

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

The Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I just ignore the rubbish that comes over from the opposition. But I'll tell you who we worry about. We worry about the 16 million people that live in this province. We worried about the 300,000 people that lost their jobs under the NDP, under the Liberals. That's who we worry about. We care about the 860,000 people who are working who weren't working under your government. We worry about the people who need to go to the hospital, who had rundown hospitals because you never built hospitals; we're building 50 new sites or additions—and \$50 billion. We're worrying about the investments that you chased out of this province never to come back again; we've seen close to \$70 billion of

investment and \$45 billion in the EV sector that's going to employ thousands and thousands of people. We're worried about people stuck in traffic day in and day out; you're against building the 413 and the Bradford Bypass. We worry about people getting their doors kicked in, putting a gun to their head that you're okay with letting these criminals out on bail early—

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Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

I'm going to remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

Start the clock. The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Now that we have the Premier's attention, apparently, maybe he'll actually answer the first question I asked, which was whether or not he has spoken to Mr. Massoudi or when the last time was that he spoke to Mr. Massoudi.

Ontarians should be able to trust that when their government decides to spend their money, that decision is based on evidence and public interest. But this Premier proudly says he doesn't care about evidence or even what the people think as long as it apparently works for his friends, for party insiders. This is at the very heart of why his government is under criminal investigation by the RCMP.

I want to know from this Premier: Who's lobbying for the people of Ontario, and do they all have to hire an insider lobbyist?

Hon. Doug Ford: I think the people of Ontario had an opportunity to speak in the by-elections. We won all three ridings; I think you came a distant third. By the way, in the next election we look forward to taking care of that row, that row and that row over there, which is going to happen, because people know life is better in Ontario than it was six years ago. They have certainty now, they have jobs now, they're bringing home a paycheque that they never had before under your left-wing regime of "don't build anything, let's kill businesses, let's all go around and hop on our bicycle and go down the crowded streets that are just absolutely insanity right now on Bloor, on Yonge, on University." No.

People want reasonable judgment, and that's what we're giving the people of Ontario. We're putting money back into their pockets instead of your greedy little pockets.

Interjections.

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

One more time, I'm going to remind the members to make their comments through the Chair, and I'm going to add that personal insults add nothing to the debate.

Start the clock. The next question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I'll tell you how people in Ontario are feeling right now after six years of this

government: They're feeling stuck. They're struggling. They're stuck on wait-lists. They're stuck—

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, in traffic. They're stuck with a government that isn't interested in fixing their problems.

One of the best examples of this is this government's failure to deliver on public transit. There are currently at least three major transit projects right here with no opening date in sight: Eglinton LRT, Finch West LRT, Hurontario LRT—all promised to the people of Ontario, but there is no sign of when they will be open.

Can the Premier tell the people of Ontario the date of when they will be able to start using the public transit that they already paid for?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I thought this morning, "Be nice when you get in the Legislature," and I'm doing my best. But when you talk and you say—I've got to watch my words here—they're stuck in traffic, but the same person is voting against the 413, the Bradford Bypass, Highway 3, Highway 11/17, the expansion on 401 east and voting against getting rid of those nasty, terrible bike lanes that are on main arterial roads, we have a different thought process: Put them on the secondary roads.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we're spending \$70 billion on the largest transit project in North America to get people out of their cars, to make sure they have an equitable and reasonable plan to get to work.

We also did the One Fare, that you voted against—you'd rather charge more people more money—so when you come in from the GO train and you stop at Union Station, you don't have to pay another fare—

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

Once again, I remind the members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House.

Leader of the Opposition, supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, that was a lot, but I didn't hear a date. I did not hear a date—no dates, once again.

Speaker, millions of Ontarians are working harder than ever to get through the month. They're waiting for a raise that never seems to come. Meanwhile, their Premier gives a 300% raise to his million-dollar man, his buddy, the CEO of Metrolinx, who—I just want to point out again—hasn't completed a single project on time or on budget.

Can the Premier explain to Ontarians who use transit and who work 12-hour days why they get nothing while the Premier's buddy over at Metrolinx gets a 300% raise?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about that we have the highest minimum wage in the entire country, because we worry about those people, and how we've created the opportunity to have a bigger paycheque and a better job, because we created the environment and the conditions for companies to invest here. There were over 137 companies worldwide that invested \$11 billion that are employing 12,200 people that didn't have a job.

Last year, we created more jobs here in manufacturing than all 50 US states combined. That's what economic development's about, making sure you give the people a lift up.

And speaking of lift up: the LIFT tax credit, going to the most vulnerable people out there; making sure that we have people on ODSP who are getting the rate of inflation of 5%, putting more money into their pockets, giving them the opportunity, and yes, the people on—

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's a disappointing response, Speaker. Whenever the Premier finds himself in a corner, he likes to punch down—always—on the most vulnerable Ontarians. It's very unfortunate and, frankly, irresponsible of this Premier.

But look, another thing that really galls Ontarians—Ontarians who are struggling—and I'm going to tell you, it really drives people crazy, and this is hard to believe, but follow along here: There are not five, not 10, not even 15, but 82 Metrolinx vice-presidents—82 VPs—and zero opening dates. And they just keep getting these 300% raises while the Premier takes teachers and nurses and health care workers to court to freeze their wages.

Why, oh why, does the Premier keep rewarding Metrolinx for failing to deliver for the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition is so concerned about this, why did she vote against the largest transit project in North America? Why did she vote against reducing the cost of fuel that we know—God forbid, which will never happen, by the way—that if you're ever in government, you'll jack up taxes like you did before and take money out of peoples' pockets? That's what you believe.

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You believe that government can spend the money better than the people. We don't. We believe in putting money back into peoples' pockets until they can go out for dinner, buy a pair of sneakers, maybe get their kids new clothes.

When you and the Liberals were in power, they were in stress. You bankrupted this province. Companies were leaving because the environment wasn't there—high taxes, some of the highest in North America, the highest energy costs in North America, red tape and regulations. Well, my friend, we've changed all that. That's why we have become an economic powerhouse around the world. People are coming here from all around the world to invest and to live and to raise a family. We had a record amount of people—

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

One more time, I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair. Remember, you're addressing the Speaker.

The next question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the Premier. When a government awards contracts with taxpayer

dollars, it's a violation of the Members' Integrity Act to give preferential treatment to one bidder. But in awarding the Ontario Place contract to Therme, there was no fairness monitor. The Therme lease requires taxpayers to pay a billion dollars for a parking garage and to bulldoze the west island. The bid submission deadline was extended, and one of the late bidders was Therme. A Therme lobbyist contacted the bid evaluation team during the evaluation period. A government drawing showed a Therme-like attraction on the site six months before Therme was officially awarded the contract.

My question is, did this government give Therme preferential treatment?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: As I said on Monday, on the first day in the House, the NDP have filed a complaint. The Integrity Commissioner is reviewing that complaint, and the Integrity Commissioner was very clear with me that he did not want me to comment on this matter.

What I will comment on is the fact that we are investing \$970 million for water infrastructure projects across the province of Ontario so that people like us, their children, our neighbours, our friends, have the ability to purchase a home and live in a home in the province of Ontario. I will continue to focus my efforts to make sure that housing is affordable in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I don't know how you pivoted from Ontario Place to housing, but the only housing this government has built are the tent encampments that are now in every community across this province.

When this government is spending tax dollars or giving away publicly owned property, Ontarians deserve answers. The Therme lease requires taxpayers to pay \$450 million for a parking garage, even though the government told prospective bidders that the government would not consider proposals requiring taxpayer-funded parking.

Yes or no, did Therme's proposal require a publicly funded parking garage?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I suppose I will recognize the Premier.

Interjections.

Hon. Doug Ford: I'll wait until the chirping stops there. Okay, good. Thank you.

You know, I wouldn't trust the NDP running a lemonade stand because they'll end up going bankrupt. That parking that we're working on right now will be the number one income generator, and by the way, no one gets it, but the people of Ontario get that income. That's the difference between how they operate and how we operate. We operate this province like a business. It will be the most profitable area of that whole complex of Ontario Place. It will be the number one tourist attraction in all of Canada. When we get it completed, five to six million people will be going there every single year.

Therme invested \$700 million. It was a clean, transparent bid overseen by many authorities to make sure it was clean and transparent, but they would rather leave it as a weed patch and be going in there and watching weed come up through the grounds, and people probably smoking weed there too, the whole place. That's the difference—

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

LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR

MPP Zee Hamid: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. It feels like almost every day, we hear about companies expanding their operations in Ontario. Compare that to when Liberals were in charge and we would hear about companies shutting down their operations and moving out of Ontario on a near-daily basis. But by reversing the destructive anti-growth policies and lowering the costs across the board, we're seeing businesses create good-paying jobs for hard-working Ontarians throughout Ontario, including in my riding of Milton.

Our life sciences sector is one example that has seen important growth in recent years. Last week, our government launched a plan to ensure the sector continues to grow in the years ahead.

Speaker, can the minister please share with the Legislature how the recently announced phase 2 of Ontario's Life Sciences Strategy will benefit the people of Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: After the success in landing \$45 billion in new auto investments, we told the life sciences sector that we are making a hard pivot now and making life sciences our focus. We launched phase 2 of our life sciences strategy where we're investing \$146 million to solidify the province's position as a global leader in biomanufacturing and health sciences. So far, Speaker, we've landed \$5 billion in new life science investments. Since we introduced our strategy, nearly 5,000 new life sciences jobs have been created. We have an ambitious goal to hit 85,000 workers by 2030, a 25% increase.

Speaker, with our life sciences strategy we are ensuring that we will continue to build on the momentum you just heard—

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

MPP Zee Hamid: The life sciences sector is an immensely important industry for Ontario's economy now and in the years ahead. We want more life-saving medical breakthroughs to happen right here in our province and, with our life sciences strategy, our government is ensuring that this sector continues to grow in the years ahead. Global companies now know that this is not the same Ontario as when Liberals were in charge. Our government has created a thriving business environment, putting Ontario in a position to attract investments in every single sector from auto to life sciences.

Speaker, can the minister share further information about the important investments that Ontario's life sciences sector has made?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: As I mentioned a minute ago, over \$5 billion in new life sciences investments have already taken place. Last week, the Premier, Minister Jones and MPP Skelly, we opened North America's cell and gene therapy manufacturing and AI centre of excellence in Hamilton at OmniaBio. It is an \$850-million investment, 250 jobs, but they told us there, it's going to 500 new jobs.

Sanofi, we there for the opening of their \$800-million investment. Shortly, we'll be at the opening of their \$925-million investment where they'll make the seniors' flu vaccine—1,225 new jobs. Roche, a \$500-million investment to open their Global Pharma Technical Operations in Mississauga—500 new jobs.

I can go on and on, Speaker, because with our life sciences strategy, we are ensuring that there are going to be more game-changing investments.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's been two decades since Ontario said it would stop institutionalizing Ontarians with developmental disabilities, yet in 2020, this Conservative government gave \$2.67 million to a Toronto organization, Jake's House, to reinstitutionalize 30 adults with developmental disabilities inside a long-term-care home in Lucan. When it opened, the Conservative MPP said, "This is a model that I think will work in every community, every region across the province."

My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services: Does this Conservative government now believe in reinstitutionalizing Ontarians with developmental disabilities?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank my honourable colleague for the question. When we announced our vision for the sector with our partners through Journey to Belonging, we made that very clear. That is what's driving all the efforts and our collaboration with all the family members, those with lived experience, all our partners on the ground, towards that vision of Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion. The member is aware of that.

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That's why we're investing over \$3.5 billion in the sector: so that every single person in this province can live independently as much as possible, whatever they want, and to make sure they also have the support in their communities. That's why we're working with all our partner to make sure that has happened.

Journey to Belonging is a long-term vision of us and the sector, and we're not going to at all deviate from our plan to make sure that everyone has the supports in their communities. Every single person should have the chance to succeed and thrive in our community.

When it comes to our government, we'll do everything we can and work with our partners to make sure that happens.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Ontarians with disabilities deserve better than a new institutionalization model, but this government rubber-stamped it. That is not the journey to belonging.

On October 3, 2024, MCCSS terminated funding for Jake's House, but there are lingering questions: Did MCCSS ever consult families and other providers? Where are the RFPs to select the most skilled and capable organizations? Did any other organizations submit a proposal? Was the location even inspected before people lived there?

My question is back to the minister: Can you commit that this government will stop, and forever stop, the institutionalization of Ontarians with disabilities?

Hon. Michael Parsa: To the member, I'll repeat again, that is the vision of Journey to Belonging. That is our vision, along with our partners on the ground: that everyone in this province can live the lives they choose. We're supporting them with all the supports they need—again, along with our partners on the ground, with our vision, Journey to Belonging.

That's why we're investing record-breaking numbers. Investment for the developmental services sector under this government has increased by \$1.2 billion since we formed government. More important, supportive living so that people can live as independently as they want has increased by over \$700 million since we formed government.

All of those are clear examples that we are working with all our partners to make sure they have the supports and the resources they need to succeed and thrive in their communities, and they will always have the support and the commitment of this government.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Electrification. Ontario is entering a period of rapid growth and transformation. We're building new homes and major infrastructure projects at a record pace. We're attracting job-creating investments from global companies and leading the charge in the electrification of industries in Ontario.

As a result of these investments, our electricity demand is set to surge dramatically in the coming decades. Our government has promised a comprehensive energy strategy to meet this challenge. Ontario families need assurances that our energy system will have the power to keep our electricity system running, unlike the disruptions they faced under the previous Liberal government.

Can the minister please elaborate on how our government plans to meet the rising demand for power while ensuring that energy remains affordable and reliable for all Ontarians?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member for Whitby for his leadership in this House as we work together to ensure this province has the power we need to fuel our growth. We need 75% more power. That is equivalent to adding four-and-a-half cities of Toronto to

the grid by year 2050. Our Premier has a vision to build a clean, affordable, reliable energy future for the people of Ontario as we lean into non-emitting nuclear power to drive that growth—affordable energy that we’re building on time and on budget, a rarity in the space, but it is our value proposition to the world as we lead in building the first-in-the-G7 small modular reactors. We lead the largest continental nuclear expansion in our history.

Our focus is affordability. The Affordable Energy Act will guide the way as we lead with the largest energy expansion with a focus on affordable energy, a sharp contrast to the former Liberals that increased rates by 300%.

We’re keeping rates on, power on and, more importantly, we’re keeping it affordable for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: My supplementary is to the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries.

As Ontario grows, businesses—especially those in energy-intensive industries—rely on stable, affordable and clean power to thrive. Our province’s push towards electrification, along with a significant rise in housing and industrial development, means that the demand for energy will only increase. In Whitby, businesses are concerned about having consistent and affordable energy to carry out their day-to-day operations. Reliable and clean energy is crucial to ensuring that companies choose to invest in Ontario rather than look elsewhere.

Speaker, through you to the associate minister, how will our government balance the need for economic growth with ensuring that Ontario’s energy supply remains reliable and affordable for all?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to acknowledge the leadership of the member for Whitby for his advocacy on behalf of those job creators and industries from his riding. He’s been a strong voice, and I want him to take back to his riding a message of confidence when he speaks with job creators and industry to know that this is a government and a Premier that will have their back every step of the way.

When you look at the track record of reducing the gas tax by 10 cents a litre; when you look at the comprehensive electricity pricing plan to ensure that industry and small businesses have supports that they need to have reliable, affordable energy; and, yesterday, an announcement to ensure that we have an integrated energy vision for this province; as well as, on Monday, news that Minister Lecce, Minister Calandra and myself announced to ensure that we’re making it faster and cheaper and easier to connect new businesses to the grid; you can see very clearly that this is a track record of a Premier and a government that want to continue having the back of those businesses in his riding.

So when the member goes back and speaks with industry, when he speaks with job creators, they can know we have a strong plan, a confident plan to ensure that we have accessible, affordable, reliable power for many,

many years to come that will, of course, be affordable and supported in every community—not just in Whitby, not just in Niagara, not just in Toronto, but in every single corner of this province.

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: In my riding, St. Catharines, we have Biolyse Pharma, an oncology pharmaceutical manufacturing company that is being pushed out of Canada entirely. Why, you ask? Because they are losing RFP bids to overseas international manufacturers, some of whom are offering their pharmaceuticals at a higher price point.

Ontarians deserve made-in-Ontario solutions. Speaker, my question is to the Premier: Will you commit, right here, today, to working with Biolyse Pharma immediately, preventing the closures of their Ontario-based operations, and protect Canadian-made products right here in Ontario?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite raises an important point, and that is, as we expand the pharmaceutical, the medical supplies, the medical equipment manufacturers in the province Ontario, how do we ensure that we have a pathway so that they can make sure that those new drugs, that those emerging technologies are actually being offered to Ontario residents?

That’s why I’m so pleased that Premier Ford has taken this on in his new leadership as head of the COF and ensured that we have a process in Ontario and in Canada specifically to make sure that, as these emerging technologies come forward, we have a pathway for them to provide those products in Canada, in Ontario.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I hope that means that you’ll be sitting down immediately and speaking to an Ontario-based pharmaceutical right now in Biolyse Pharma.

The Premier needs to take responsibility for provincial procurement rules and oversight here. It’s clear that this Ford government is passing the buck once again, despite constantly talking about creating real solutions right here in Ontario.

Again, my question is to the Premier: Will you step up and protect good-paying jobs that are already here, much-needed jobs that Biolyse provides in this sector?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

1110

Hon. Victor Fedeli: That’s an interesting question, considering you voted against the very answer to that. We have BOBI, Building Ontario Business Initiative, that legislates that more than 10% of what we buy in the province of Ontario must be made in Ontario. That’s about \$3 billion a year that’s being bought. Now, sadly, you voted against that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We would not have expected anything other than that from you.

But we can also tell you that during the pandemic, when we found that zero of our PPE was being made here—domestically, we are now at 74%, and when our nitrile glove plant opens, we will be at 94%, Speaker, of all PPE being made domestically and a lot—

Interjection.

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

The next question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ted Hsu: Doctors came here Monday, imploring the government to stop the crisis. They've left 2.5 million people in Ontario without a family doctor.

In Kingston, the entrepreneurial CDK clinic moved ahead on its own, in February, hiring staff and rostering new patients, but the result—a scramble to get in, daylong lineups—was called “the Hunger Games of health care.”

Besides all the people without family doctors, the problem is it's hard to pull them off the Health Care Connect waiting list, even eight months later. Getting data should be management 101. My local Ontario health team, which is setting up the system to connect people to family doctors and health homes, would be helped a lot if they could know all their local people on the wait-list. No private health information has to be released.

When it comes to the family doctor waiting list, why can't this government help local leaders innovate and get it done, instead of keeping central government control?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know, on Monday, when I sat down with the OMA, we had a good conversation about how, in fact, Ontario is leading Canada with 90% of residents matched with a primary care provider. We know we can do more, which is why, on Monday, I was so pleased to be able to ask and task Dr. Jane Philpott to make sure that we continue on our path.

In February, when we announced 78 new primary care multidisciplinary teams, it was an exciting time for communities across Ontario, in Kingston, in Minto-Mapleton, to ensure they've already hired and started to take on patients who have been looking for primary care providers—78 across Ontario.

By bringing Dr. Philpott on, we're actually going to be able to continue to work and increase that 90% number so that within five years, we will have 100% of the Ontario residents who want a family physician having access to it.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: The city of Kingston, hearing the people's cries and not waiting for this government to get it done, spent \$1 million to recruit health care staff, including \$100,000 for the Greenwood clinic to hire RPNs and support staff and free up family doctor time.

Some 2.5 million Ontarians don't have family doctors and this government is only starting to ask around for help.

So here's some advice: Build on local leaders in Kingston who've had success on their own. Thanks to local initiatives, Greenwood clinic cleared the Health Care Connect wait-list in their geographic health home on October 8.

Why hasn't this government provided family health organizations, like Greenwood, funding to build up staff or add allied health professionals and connect more people to family doctors? Why should the city of Kingston have to get it done on its own?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: And why do the independent Liberals continue to vote against our investments in primary care?

In addition to the 78 new and expanded primary care multidisciplinary teams, we also invested \$20 million, funding to boost existing teams, because we know that we have exceptional, world-class clinicians in the province of Ontario who want to provide care in their communities. And they have a government who is going to get it done, whether it is expanding primary care, whether it is new medical schools in Brampton and in Scarborough and in York region—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Independents, come to order.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: —whether it is every single medical school in the province of Ontario having additional access and medical seats and residency seats.

Northern Ontario School of Medicine has an almost 50% increase in their medical seats. Why do we do that? We do that because we know when we train Ontario students in Ontario, they stay, they practise, and we become the beneficiary.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Ric Bresee: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. We know the European Union represents one of the world's largest and most developed markets, with 27 countries and a population of over 447 million people. Given the increasing global demand for reliable, safe and high-quality agri-food products, Ontario must remain a key player in these markets.

Minister, your recent visit to the EU comes at a critical time, as the European Union is looking for dependable trade partners. Strengthening these relationships is critical to ensuring that Ontario farmers, like those in my riding, and agribusinesses across the province continue to grow their exports.

Speaker, will the minister please share with us the specific outcomes from this trip and the connections he made that will help our agriculture sector?

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you to the member from Hastings-Lennox and Addington. We were there this summer, along with the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, for a great beef barbecue for the Hastings beef farmers. So, well done.

First of all, I thank the Grain Farmers of Ontario. They were on this mission. They did a great job. In particular, I want to thank Jeff Harrison, the chair of the GFO, and Crosby Devitt, the CEO. They represent 28,000 grain and oilseed producers in the province, with six million acres of corn, soybeans, wheat, barley and oats. They did a great job.

Actually, Speaker, when you combine the EU with the UK, we're looking at a market of 520 million people—a great opportunity for agri-food producers in this province, because they are importers of ag commodities and food.

In an uncertain world, yes, reliable, stable and high-valued commodities and food are asked for by this market. We're going to reinforce, we're going to engage and we're going to explore these markets on behalf of all of our farmers. We're getting it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the minister.

It is an increasingly competitive global market and it's clear that collaboration with our international partners and policy-makers is absolutely crucial. The European Union is seeking to secure reliable, long-term food supply-chain relationships, and Ontario's agricultural sector is ready to meet that demand. Ontario has a unique opportunity to leverage our strengths and expand our reach across Europe, building on the momentum of your recent trip. Supporting Ontario's agribusiness champions at events like the SIAL agriculture show in Paris is essential for gaining visibility and establishing these new partnerships.

Speaker, would the minister please explain how his meetings in Brussels and in Paris will help to strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector over the long term?

Hon. Rob Flack: The big take-away in the EU is motivation to both protect and strengthen their food supply. When you think of Ontario, Speaker, in 2023 we exported \$26.2 billion out of this province, up 65% since 2019.

While in Europe, we met with Ambassador Ailish Campbell, the ambassador to the EU; special envoy to the EU and ambassador to France, the Honourable Stéphane Dion; and their trade representatives. I can't say enough about them, how they helped us access stakeholders, helped us meet with new and emerging markets and customers. They opened doors and did a really, really good job.

We attended SIAL, the largest food show in the world and met with some potential investors. I look forward to working with the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to ensure that we capture these markets for this province.

Most importantly, we met with customers who are already doing business in the EU, like Hensall District Co-op and Beretta Farms. We're creating the environment for our people to succeed. We're getting the job done.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Last week in a landmark case the Ontario Court of Appeal found that global heating is risking the lives and well-

being of the people of Ontario. Young people, led by Sophia Mathur from Sudbury, brought this case to press this government to protect us all.

Will the Premier finally put in place a plan and a target to help protect people from the climate crisis?

1120

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

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I am proud to be the alternate Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks while Minister Khanjin is on parental leave.

We are taking action on climate change. We are proud to lead the way in Ontario for Canada's progress. Ontario's leadership under this Premier is responsible for 86% of our progress toward tackling climate change.

As the government of Canada is set to miss its targets, we are on track to meet ours. In fact, we are achieving this because of many initiatives, including being a global leader in electric vehicle production. We are working with industry instead of against them, such as our government's investment in green steel at Dofasco Hamilton, and our historic investments in conservation, at the same time holding polluters to account with increased fines and top emission-performance standards.

We're proud of our record. We are getting it done in the fight against climate change.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In fact, Speaker, this government should be embarrassed by its targets and by its efforts to date.

The climate crisis is driving up the price of food and insurance. People see it in their grocery bills; they see it in their insurance bills.

As we've seen in the past month with hurricanes in the United States, global heating is deadly and can cause destruction in the billions of dollars. We've already seen the impact of forest fires on northern and First Nations communities, disrupting their lives and destroying homes.

How bad does it have to get before this government will take the effective action that we need now?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Premier Ford has said, and I agree, we can be both strong stewards of the environment while building the Ontario of tomorrow. That's what this government stands for. We can tackle climate change while building the Ontario of tomorrow and creating the conditions for economic success and prosperity for all. That's why we've welcomed more than 800,000 new jobs to Ontario under our time in government thus far, since 2018.

I can tell you what's driving up the price of everything, including groceries. It's the regressive Liberal carbon tax, supported by the NDP in Ottawa. Call your cousins in Ottawa and tell them to bring down that corrupt Liberal government in Ottawa.

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

The next question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. This summer, the minister arrived in Norfolk county unannounced for a photo-op. I'm curious if the minister actually drove through Haldimand county and across the Argyle Street bridge in Caledonia. Had he, I'm certain reconstruction would have begun the very next day. Rather, this government continues to dither and delay.

Last Tuesday at 5 p.m., I received notice that at 9 the next morning, the bridge would be closed for three days for inspection. Oh, my stars, everyone knows this 100-year-old bridge is in a critical state. It needs reconstruction, not inspection.

This government is inspecting the bridge continually to ensure that it is still safe to traverse. That is frightening. This is now my fifth time standing in this House, asking the same question, and yet, this government is playing Russian roulette with the lives of the people crossing that bridge.

Speaker, through you, to the minister, what is the date of reconstruction?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: As the member knows, the detail and design of the bridge replacement is complete and our government is in the process of obtaining final approvals to proceed to construction.

But, Mr. Speaker, we're in this situation because for 15 years, the members of the opposition who were in power, the Liberals, did absolutely nothing to build this province. They didn't build roads. They didn't build highways. They don't believe in building highways. They don't believe in building roads and bridges.

Our government is committed to doing that, and that project is a part of our plan to build Ontario and a part of our plan to build and support Norfolk county. We will continue to do that. I'll work with the member and the members of the community to ensure that we get that done.

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

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: No disrespect, but nobody cares whose fault it is. You are the government of the day. Get the job done.

If the minister isn't willing to commit to a reconstruction date, then let's go down the road from the Argyle Street bridge to Haldibrook Road and Highway 6. Ministry staff recently met with Haldimand county to discuss this very deadly intersection, and the minister has in his inbox a letter dated October 18 from the county, emphasizing the urgency of installing traffic lights. I have here, straight from the notes of the MTO project status briefing—which says construction is planned for 2028, subject to approvals being received and relocation of existing utilities being completed—2028? I've sent the minister a list of the accidents at Highway 6 and Haldibrook Road. Sadly, 10 people have lost their lives over the past two years at this intersection, and, again, this government is going to dither and delay until 2028? Isn't this the government that created the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction?

Speaker, through you to the minister: How many lives must be lost at this deadly intersection before this government makes this a priority?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Mr. Speaker, building across this province is the government's priority, and those projects are very much a part of this, as the member knows. We are going to continue to work and look all across Ontario, especially at those communities the member has mentioned, and make those a part of our plan, as we have in the past.

This is the only government that believes in building and believes in getting shovels in the ground. That member and others have voted against many of the projects that we have put forward in our budgets and in government to support more investments into road infrastructure, into bridges.

Mr. Speaker, we've just introduced legislation that will allow us to designate even more projects to go to 24/7 construction and find ways to get shovels in the ground quicker and faster.

This is a government that gets it done. And we will work not only with the member but those in the community to ensure that we continue to build the infrastructure that supports their community, and for generations to come.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

October is Women's History Month. This month, we reflect on women's significant achievements and contributions to this country, while recognizing the unique obstacles women have had to overcome. While significant progress has been made, there is still more to be done to help attract more women to pursue good-paying careers in the skilled trades. Our government must continue working on behalf of all women to implement measures that reduce those obstacles.

Will the associate minister please tell this House what actions our government is taking to help women get the skills they need to achieve the success that they deserve?

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Thank you to the wonderful member from Flamborough-Glanbrook for what she's doing, especially on a global scale, to bring awareness of how Ontario is working to end human trafficking and intimate partner violence. Thank you for doing that.

Mr. Speaker, over the summer, I've been quite busy going around to different locations and announcing the \$26.7 million in the Women's Economic Security Program. This program is significant because it's helping women who are low-income get the skills and training needed to get a really well-paying job, especially in the skilled trades.

I was in Burlington, with the member from Burlington, talking about the carpentry program at the Burlington skills centre and listening to the stories of women whose lives have been changed because now they are able to

afford to take care of themselves, get housing and purchase a vehicle to get to and from work. These women are saying that they feel so much more secure.

I want to make sure that we're continuing to do this, because we know that when women are financially independent, they are safer.

That's the kind of future we're creating for women in Ontario, and we're going to keep doing this for women.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Our province is facing the biggest labour shortage in over a generation. Every day, roughly tens of thousands of jobs are going unfilled in Ontario, costing this province billions in lost productivity. Our government knows that women are a big part of the solution.

It's critical that we do everything we can to attract more women to pursue fulfilling and good-paying careers in the skilled trades. Will the associate minister please share more details on how our government is breaking down barriers and helping women right across Ontario to develop the skills that they need to enter these in-demand careers?

1130

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: The programs that I mentioned, like the Women's Economic Security Program that has 25 locations across Ontario, \$26.7 million, but also the Investing in Women's Futures Program that has 33 locations across Ontario—it means removing the barriers that are preventing women from being able to engage in these programs, addressing food insecurity, addressing child care barriers, addressing all the things that are preventing women from being able to be in the driver's seat of their economic future. And these programs are working. We've seen over 10,000 women engage in these programs and getting jobs, and they are feeling secure because they're now able to take care of their families.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're doing this as a whole-of-government approach as well, working with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. They've reported that we've seen an increase of 51% of women in the skilled trades since we took office in 2018. That is significant. We haven't seen increases in women in the skilled trades like this in decades. But this is what our government is doing, because we know women are the future. And we know that—

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

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Violence is an urgent and growing crisis in our schools. Classrooms are being disrupted daily, and behaviours like kicking, hitting, biting and throwing objects have become part of the everyday routine of school. Some educators are going to work every single day in Kevlar. This violence is preventable, because it's being driven by the failure of an underfunded education system to meet the needs of every child.

So today, for parents and students who are concerned about this violence, and for the educators who are going to school in military-grade equipment, will the Minister of Education commit to implementing our emergency plan to end school violence, yes or no?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Well, Speaker, as a mother of three, I understand first-hand how important it is to send your child to a safe, nurturing environment. As a former educator in the post-secondary sector, I understand the care that all educators take to ensure that their classrooms are welcoming environments that allow students to be their best selves. And as the Minister of Education, I know that we must all play a collective role to support and safeguard our schools, whether it's teachers, parents, school boards, principals, vice-principals, educational assistants, lunchroom monitors, guidance counsellors, local community supports. These are the people who care about our teachers and our students in the class. In speaking with all of these individuals in the past few months, it is abundantly clear that we all agree: Violence is never acceptable in our schools. That's why my ministry will continue to invest over \$220 million for student safety and well-being, including for special education. I know that's something the NDP has never stood behind us.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question, the member for Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Ontario's education workers love their students, but they shouldn't have to endure physical violence as a routine part of their job. The right to a safe workplace also includes people working in schools.

The Conservative government has the power to make the changes and investments needed to end school violence, but instead they defunded our students by \$1,500 per student. They're out of ideas or they simply don't care, Speaker.

Fortunately, New Democrats, we met with families, we met with education workers, and they developed our plan to end school violence. They've asked us to bring it forward.

My question, Speaker: Will the Conservative government implement the emergency plan to end school violence so that Ontario's children and our educators can learn and work in safety?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, violence is never acceptable in our classrooms. But when it comes to student safety, the NDP's report card on the subject shows there is a clear lack of understanding and the inability to grasp the basic concepts when it comes to student safety in Ontario. They voted against investing over \$58 million to school boards for student safety and well-being. This is money that specifically is allocated to protecting our students and our teachers in the classroom.

But the opposition didn't just vote against core funding. Every time we invest in student safety, the NDP simply says no. The NDP says no to \$4.2 million to prevent bullying and cyberbullying—I'm going to hope they will support Bill 194, my colleague's cyber security bill—\$1 million to enhance supports across the province, \$1.5 million for anti-hate initiatives.

Speaker, if the NDP stopped using mental math when playing their politics, they would realize that they have voted against every single measure that supports student safety in our classrooms across Ontario.

TOURISM

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. Ontario's tourism sector is a cornerstone of our economy, attracting millions of visitors each year and showcasing our province's incredible diversity and beauty. However, many in the industry are still facing challenges in the recovery from the pandemic, with labour shortages, rising costs and competition from other regions being ongoing concerns. Tourism operators and local businesses are looking to our government for clear leadership and support, especially in regions that depend heavily on seasonal visitors and tourism dollars, like Prince Edward county in my home riding of Bay of Quinte.

These operators need to know that our government will have their backs, and that we will support them with a long-term growth and resilience strategy. Can the minister please explain what our government is doing to support Ontario's tourism industry?

Hon. Stan Cho: First of all, wow—so much better-looking than the last member for Bay of Quinte.

Last night, I joined Minister Lumsden at Tim Hortons Field. I know the minister here has a Grey Cup championship under his belt, but I was there for the tourism summit to talk with the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario about the importance of tourism and what a big economic driver it is here in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, Ontario is a big province, and I know the Liberals get nosebleeds north of Eglinton Avenue, but the reality is that Ontario can fit 14 European countries inside its borders, has two time zones and goes to the third coast—that is, of course, the Arctic Ocean through James Bay, which we are connecting through the Northlander we are bringing back in a couple of years.

That's why this government invests \$155 million into this vital sector through a series of investments, including into that member's riding: because we understand tourism is hugely important in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Ontario is indeed blessed with natural wonders and a rich cultural landscape that draws millions of visitors each year. From Niagara Falls to the bustling streets of Toronto, to my communities of Belleville and Quinte West, the potential for growth in our tourism sector is undeniable.

However, as we look beyond the immediate recovery from the pandemic, it's crucial that we consider how Ontario can position itself on the global stage in a highly competitive tourism market. While our government is committed to making Ontario a world-class destination, many are asking how this vision will translate into action on the ground.

Can the minister please elaborate on the long-term outlook for tourism in Ontario?

Hon. Stan Cho: Well, locally, we've invested over \$600,000 last fiscal into that member's riding to support tourism, but he asks a very important question: How do we promote tourism more broadly? We have a lot to offer in this province. Not only do we have four beautiful seasons; we have natural beauty, colours on the leaves changing astonishingly, visitors coming from all over the world and the 7th natural wonder of the world in Niagara Falls.

Speaker, you know my personal story: my mom, a beautiful lady; my dad, not so beautiful. She only said yes to marrying him because he said, "I can show you Niagara Falls." That's the kind of draw we have in this province. That is what we're going to promote.

We're going to continue to put the pieces of the puzzle together. This government is getting it done for tourism in Ontario.

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

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches—East York has informed me she has a point of order she'd like to raise.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: On a point of order to correct my record: Earlier today when I was questioning the Minister of Transportation on why he's meddling in municipal planning with Bill 212, I inadvertently said 22,000 Ontarians cycle daily, when I meant to say the solid fact is that 22% of Ontarians cycle on a daily basis.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Members can rise on a point of order to correct their record.

VISITORS

Mr. Brian Riddell: I would just like to introduce the best constit team in Ontario, who are sitting up there: Grace Camera, Miles Vaughan, Melissa Young and Ana Maria Ruiz.

DEFERRED VOTES

COMMERCIAL TO RESIDENTIAL
CONVERSION ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LA CONVERSION
D'UN USAGE COMMERCIAL
À UN USAGE RÉSIDENTIEL

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 201, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act with respect to change of use exemptions /
Projet de loi 201, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement à l'égard des exemptions en matière de changement d'usage.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

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

On October 22, 2024, Mrs. McCrimmon moved second reading of Bill 201, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act with respect to change of use exemptions.

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

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom
Bell, Jessica	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Bourgouin, Guy	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Bowman, Stephanie	Harden, Joel	Shamji, Adil
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hazell, Andrea	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Burch, Jeff	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Clancy, Aislinn	Karpoche, Bhutila	Tabuns, Peter
Collard, Lucille	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Fraser, John	McCrimmon, Karen	Vaugeois, Lise
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

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

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Harris, Mike	Riddell, Brian
Anand, Deepak	Hogarth, Christine	Romano, Ross
Babikian, Aris	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Barnes, Patrice	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bouma, Will	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Bresee, Ric	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Byers, Rick	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Calandra, Paul	Learidi, Anthony	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, David
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Graydon
Coe, Lorne	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Flack, Rob	Piccini, David	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pinsonneault, Steve	Yakabuski, John
Hamid, Zee	Quinn, Nolan	
Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 36; the nays are 67.

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

Second reading negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome back to the Legislature the Porzuczek family from Save the Minden ER. They've come here. They've brought in 4,900 signatures on petitions to have the Minden ER reopen. Welcome to your House, everybody.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would also like to introduce the Porzuczek family, but I will name them: We have Kinsley—Kinsley, do you want to wave? We have Ewelina. We have Jozef. We have Laura and Patrick. Welcome to Queen's Park.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Dave Smith: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

AFFORDABLE ENERGY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE

Mr. Lecce moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 214, An Act to amend various energy statutes respecting long term energy planning, changes to the Distribution System Code and the Transmission System Code and electric vehicle charging / Projet de loi 214, Loi modifiant diverses lois sur l'énergie en ce qui a trait à la planification énergétique à long terme, aux modifications touchant les codes appelés Distribution System Code et Transmission System Code et à la recharge des véhicules électriques.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister care to briefly explain his bill?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, the Affordable Energy Act would enable the implementation of the province's first integrated long-term energy plan with a focus on affordability. It would also prioritize zero-emission nuclear energy to meet growing energy demand, expand programs to help families and businesses save money and energy, support EV adoption and, as well, reduce last-mile connection costs.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Nina Tangri: As Associate Minister of Small Business, it is my honour to rise in the House today in recognition of Small Business Week. Since our government took office, we have been champions of Ontario's entrepreneurs and small businesses, and proudly celebrate their contributions to our communities. Our government has taken deliberate and decisive steps to ensure Ontario's businesses have the right conditions to succeed. By lowering taxes, reducing electricity costs and cutting red tape, we have enabled an estimated \$8 billion in cost savings and support for Ontario employers every year. In Ontario, 98% of all companies are small businesses with fewer than 100 employees. The small business community is over 400,000 strong, and employs more than two million people.

As a government, we want to unleash Ontario's entrepreneurial spirit, so that our innovators, risk-takers, and job creators feel empowered to start and own a business in communities right across our province. We will always be staunch supporters of Ontario's job creators. In six years, we have never raised a single provincial tax and we have stood firmly against the federal carbon tax, which makes it more expensive to do business. Our government recognizes that more money in consumers' pockets means more money going back into small businesses across our province and more money to help families pay for food, heat and necessities.

We have taken an all-of-government approach to support small businesses across sectors and regions. Through a wide range of services, programs and tools, our government is ensuring business owners have what they need to seed, start, and scale their businesses, both at home and in the global marketplace. We have established critical networks in communities across our province through 17 regional innovation centres and 47 small business enterprise centres that provide on-the-ground support, guidance and advice through seminars, workshops, training and funding, to help businesses create their global footprint and reach new international markets.

To help our next generation of business leaders, just last month, Ontario invested an additional \$2 million in Futurpreneur Canada, which will support 300 businesses in creating 1,200 jobs. This program helps young entre-

preneurs access financing, mentoring and support tools to launch their businesses. We are proud of these young entrepreneurs for embracing the Ontario spirit and we're proud of the work that our government is doing to support them in achieving their dreams.

In June, we made an investment of \$500,000 over two years in the Fédération des gens d'affaires francophones de l'Ontario, the FGA, to help Ontario's francophone entrepreneurs start or grow a business through free business advisory services in French.

In our 2024 budget, we announced that we're investing more than \$13 million over the next two years in our Starter Company Plus program, and over \$4.5 million over two years in the Summer Company program.

Digitalization is redefining the future for small businesses. It's a critical factor in the success and growth of Ontario's companies, enabling them to release products to the market faster and reach the right customers. Through our government's Digitalization Competence Centre, Ontario is placing its small and medium enterprises at the forefront of digital transformation, supporting them to adapt and thrive in this digital evolution. This includes promoting digital literacy through education, coaching and training to help small businesses understand the benefits of digital adoption and championing the commercialization of technologies.

Whether it's a dream, an idea or a small start-up, we want to make it easy for people in Ontario to open a business by having tailored supports in place for a variety of needs. We're listening to stakeholders like chambers of commerce and local businesses across sectors and regions, to ensure we continue to help unleash greater economic opportunities for Ontario's SMEs.

Throughout the summer, I've had the opportunity to participate in consultations, engagements and round tables across several industries and sectors to inform future supports and resources. Hearing from these diverse groups will continue to help inform our government's efforts.

1510

I know from personal experience that starting and running a business requires a great deal of time, sweat equity and effort. In fact, it can be overwhelming. That's why we're working hard to reduce that burden, starting with bringing government into the 21st century.

To make starting a business easier, our government launched ontario.ca/business, a one-stop shop for provincial services and supports to help business owners find what they need to grow here at home and in the global marketplace. We've laid out 10 steps to start a business, how to apply for permits and licences that businesses need, and consolidated the workplace rules and regulations that employers need to follow to be good corporate citizens.

We also created a customizable guide. In just a few minutes, with just a few questions, aspiring entrepreneurs will receive tailored and specific information to make starting their businesses easy. We will continue to work hard to make things even easier.

Ontario's small business owners demonstrate day in and day out what it means to be dedicated, to dream big

and to create opportunities. Part of what makes our province so special is this ambitious spirit of entrepreneurship—the Ontario spirit. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are creating the right conditions for businesses to succeed and invest in this province. Open for business and open to job creation is the path to economic strength and resiliency.

Thank you to all our small businesses for the important role you play in our communities and in strengthening our economy. Happy Small Business Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today on behalf of Ontario's official opposition to recognize Small Business Week. On the side of the official opposition, there are many former small business owners who now call this party home.

The small business sector comprises 80% of Ontario's economic backbone. It is the lifeblood of our province. I think of all of those brave entrepreneurs, all of the people who have risked their own finances, their home finances; who have risked the relationships with family; who have sometimes compromised those relationships by their commitment to their business. It is really an amazing journey that they have been on.

I also want to thank all of our wonderful local chambers who support small businesses through many different programs and interactions. It has been incredibly difficult throughout this most recent time in history because of the pandemic, and I was really honoured that, as the official opposition, our Save Main Street plan was endorsed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. We recognized that the lifeblood of Ontario's economy is those small businesses, and providing those direct supports to them would ensure business continuity and success for the entire province.

I think it's important also that we recognize the need for not simply residential rent control, but the need for commercial rent control. There are many businesses that are now on the brink as a result of unethical landlords—people who are land banking—who are really putting them in a situation where they have to decide whether they want to continue their business or whether they want to close. It is really such a shame.

Two days ago, we had an opportunity to meet with the Ontario Medical Association. Many of those doctors having to run their physicians' offices—it's almost as though they are like a small business. One of them actually mentioned that their rent was going up at an exorbitant rate, and they weren't sure whether they could make it or not.

Also, I wanted to mention—and I hope this House will acknowledge and recognize the number of businesses that will be sold in the next 10 years. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has estimated that over three quarters of businesses will be sold within the next 10 years. These businesses, where are they going to go, Speaker? Are they going to be sold to a hedge fund? Are they going to be sold to a multinational? I hope that this House will consider the importance of employee owner-

ship as a strategy to maintain those thriving, Ontario-based businesses.

But you see those owners really want the best bang for their buck, and you cannot blame them whatsoever. They're in business and the bottom line is the bottom line. But these hedge funds and multinational corporations often have deeper pockets than employees. For employees to purchase the business, they simply don't have the means, the resources or the capital.

There have been some changes, however. The federal government finally got around to honouring their promise to establish, through legislation, employee ownership trusts. Now, what is upsetting is that that will expire. It is time limited. But it does allow these businesses to sell for a higher price. It allows employees to end up owning the fruits of their labour. It has meant that there will be fewer layoffs. They can weather economic storms far better. Through this legislation, it exempts the first \$10 million of capital gains tax for these purchases.

However, if we look at jurisdictions like the United Kingdom, where there is no capital gains tax, only 10% to 15% of these transactions go into an employee ownership model. So we have to ask ourselves, as a province, how can we support businesses? How can we support employees that are hoping to purchase those businesses, keep those businesses local, keep them proud and keep them thriving for years to come?

I want to thank all of the small business owners who have risked life, who have risked limb, who have risked relationships and who have really contributed to a thriving province of Ontario. We would not be here without you. Keep doing what you're doing. Please know you have the support of the official opposition.

With that, Speaker, I'd like to share my time with the independent members.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to my colleagues who are sharing time with me today. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Small Business Week. Just last night, I had the opportunity to host a number of small businesses and other constituents from Don Valley West in my riding. We had a fantastic presentation from Digital Main Street and from the Toronto Association of BIAs talking about, again, the services that are available to support small businesses. Certainly, they are grateful for all the supports they can get.

Small businesses make up two thirds of all private sector jobs in Ontario, and so they are a very important part of our economy. The small businesses I talked to last night talked about the rising costs of doing business. We know that's a challenge. It has been a challenge since COVID, in particular. We know that they face lower consumer spending and, therefore, demand for their products, because of those inflationary pressures that consumers are feeling. They are struggling just to keep their doors open and they're working very hard to keep their doors open. We really thank them for their contribution to our communities.

We know that when you see boards up on stores—in my riding, whether it's on Bayview Avenue or Mount

Pleasant Avenue or Yonge Street, some of the main business areas—it detracts from the quality of life for our residents. We really want to see those businesses be open and thriving and contributing to their communities and to their own families' success.

I was interested to hear the minister talk about tax cuts because, as far as I know, there has been only a very, very minor—I think 0.1% or 0.2%—tax cut for small businesses. But this government has the opportunity, in a couple of weeks, to pass my bill, Bill 195, the Cutting Taxes on Small Businesses Act. That act would cut taxes on small businesses by 50%. The last time that was done was under a Liberal government. It was also cut 50%.

We're also proposing increasing the income threshold for which that lower tax rate would be eligible, from \$500,000 to \$600,000. That would amount to up to an extra \$17,900 in the pockets of those small business owners. That would be something they could use to reinvest in their business, to invest in efficiency things, to invest in innovation, to hire more workers, to help pay their added costs, etc.—to help keep their doors open. That's what we really want, Speaker.

1520

So I was very proud to have the Canadian Federation of Independent Business support that bill. The BIAs in my community are also very supportive. I really would ask that the minister take a lead and support that bill to cut taxes on small businesses by 50%.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I certainly want to thank the Porzuczek family who is here today, but I also want to thank the people of Minden, Chelsea, Clinton, Durham, south Muskoka, Almonte, Arnprior, Campbellford, Carleton Place, Glengarry, Hamilton, Hawkesbury, Kemptville, Lakeridge, Listowel, Marshall, Mount Forest, Norfolk, Palmerston, Port Colborne, Red Lake, Seaforth, South Huron, St. Marys, Thessalon, Walkerton, Wilson, Marathon, Wingham and many more.

What do all of those communities have in common? They have all seen—for Minden, the closing of their emergency room permanently; the rest of them have seen temporary closures, except for Fort Erie and Port Colborne that have seen reduced hours.

They have collected 4,619 names on that petition. Basically, what they want is to make sure that rural hospitals are properly funded so that they can keep their hospitals open, they can keep their emergency rooms open and improve the quality of life and prevent the loss of life in rural areas.

They would like full transparency from the Ministry of Health as to when those decisions are made, why it is that we're not able to gain access to this. They would like public awareness. It's really hard for a family to come to an emergency room with a sick baby, only to realize that the emergency room is closed and you will have to drive

another hour—hour and a half in my neck of the woods—when the emergency room was closed but nobody knew. They would like the Legislative Assembly to take this issue seriously and to make sure that every rural hospital emergency room stays open.

I fully support their petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my good page, Jakob, to bring it to the Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll remind members that the standing orders are fairly explicit about this: There has to be a summary of the petition but not reading the petition verbatim. I would ask once again and implore members not to add additional political commentary to express support for the context of the petition or explain it in greater detail. We've got to try to do better and keep the petitions brief to respect the standing order.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Chris Glover: I am also reading the petition for rural Ontario emergency health care. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This petition is about the importance of access to emergency care services and what happens to communities when they lose those emergency care services.

There's a long list of communities that have been impacted by closures or partial closures of their emergency rooms. This list includes Minden, Chelsea, Clinton, Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Durham, south Muskoka, Almonte, Arnprior, Campbellford, Carleton Place, Glengarry, Hamilton, Hawkesbury, Kemptville, Lakeridge, Listowel—let's see—Mount Forest, Norfolk, Palmerston, Port Colborne, Red Lake, Seaforth and South Huron. All of these communities have been impacted by closures or partial closures of the emergency rooms, and this has led to, in some cases, more severe illness and potential loss of life.

They're asking for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to properly fund rural hospitals to improve the quality of care and prevent the loss of life. They want to ensure transparency and accountability in all decisions that are impacting their communities. Really, what they want to see more than anything else is to take our Legislature, all of us in here—to take emergency actions on these matters to protect the health and well-being of rural Ontarians, and to reopen the emergency department in Minden and save the Durham hospital, and restore the operating hours of all of the other hospitals in the communities that I mentioned at the beginning of this summary.

This is a very, very important petition for the community and for health care in the province. I fully support this petition. I'll affix my—

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

Once again, I'll ask members to keep their explanation of their petition brief.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Jessica Bell: This petition is called "Harm Reduction Saves Lives." It's a petition that was gathered

by residents in the Kensington area. There is a supervised consumption site in the Kensington area which is slated to close. People gathered these petitions because we know that in 2023 alone, more than 3,800 people in Ontario died due to overdoses.

This government is looking at closing consumption sites, which will increase the number of people who die of overdose deaths in my riding, so we're very concerned about it, as are the people who signed this petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have a petition entitled "Petition to Improve Safety on Highway 17." It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it's on behalf of the Amish families—Stotzman, Miller, Yodder, Zook and Hostetler. The petition is comprised of them raising concerns in regard to the experiences that they've felt as road users and the dangerous accidents while travelling on Highway 17—this petition could definitely go towards all the travellers who are on the North Shore and on Manitoulin as well. They wanted to highlight that a collision on Highway 17 led to the fatality of one of their community members in the Amish community, his name being Eli Yodder.

They're looking for highway improvements to take along the routes of Highway 17, but they're also looking to ensure that the engineering and the contracting of future improvements for the Highway 17 corridor and on Manitoulin Island include improvements to the shoulders that will accommodate all of the public users who use the road.

Also, after the construction is done, they want to make sure that the road users and the contractors who are on the roads conduct regular routine maintenance on the highway and they undertake expediently when washouts happen—that they are cleared so that we have proper shoulders for them to travel on those roads.

I fully endorse this petition, and I present it on behalf of the families in Iron Bridge, Thessalon and along the North Shore.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to be back at Queen's Park.

I want to thank the Waterloo Region Alliance to End Homelessness, who helped me design this petition. They are coming at the housing crisis from a very good and healthy place and, of course, want this Legislature to declare the housing crisis as a humanitarian crisis. The reason they feel so strongly about this is that in Waterloo region, homelessness has increased by 129% since January 2020, and the average annual rate of homelessness continues to grow—around 28%—since 2020. These are alarming statistics. Things are not getting better in the province of Ontario. These are grassroots citizens in Waterloo region who are really appealing to this government to take the housing crisis seriously. And they've

actually taken it one step further. They want the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to designating homelessness as a humanitarian crisis, making it a health care priority.

Housing is health care in the province of Ontario. We know this, and we need to do something about it.

They also want this government to dedicate resources and support partnerships with the not-for-profit sector to address the need for community housing. The not-for-profit sector knows their communities best. They have the solutions. They just need the resources.

It's my pleasure to table this petition for the first time and support the Waterloo Region Alliance to End Homelessness.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Petitions? I recognize the member for Don Valley East.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Adil Shamji: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good afternoon. It's good to see you in the chair again.

I'm pleased to present a petition entitled "Rural Ontario Emergency Healthcare Petition," addressed to the Legislative of Assembly of Ontario on behalf of rural Ontarians.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are they rural?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'm sorry? Okay. I've got to learn to ignore that guy.

Anyway, it is on behalf of rural Ontarians, and it is in response to the catastrophic service reductions unleashed by this government in the form of permanent ER closures, temporary ER closures, reduced ER hours and future projected service disruptions under this government. The petition is targeted towards the underlying causes and actions that this government refuses to take, notably properly funding rural hospitals; returning transparency and accountability to the Ministry of Health; ensuring that there is public awareness and consultation as well as participation; and restoring a bit of sanity through due diligence through all possible alternatives and options, ensuring that they have been implemented before adopting any changes in ER. Finally, it calls for a re-opening of important hospitals and emergency departments such as the one in Minden, the one in Durham, and restoring operating hours.

I fully support this petition, as I hope the government will as well, and I'm pleased to present it to page Sophie.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to—
Interjection.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I think the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke seems to have something to say, but perhaps if I'm allowed to read, I would like to present a petition, "Rural Ontario Emergency Healthcare Petition"—

Interjection.

MPP Lise Vaugois: He really does have a lot to say—unfortunate.

We have 29 rural hospitals that have been pushed either closed completely or are on the verge of closing, all with reduced service for their communities. In addition to those 29, there's also Rainy River, so we're definitely up to 30.

We know how important it is that rural medicine is properly funded. We've heard the petitions [*inaudible*] signatures on this petition. I want to thank the people from Minden for coming here and bringing this message which is loud and clear to all members of this assembly that funding rural medicine is essential. Thank you. I fully support this petition, and I will give it to Kellen. Thank you.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to present the following petitions on behalf of the Save the Minden ER group. The petition is entitled "Rural Ontario Emergency Healthcare Petition."

It seems that this Conservative government has taken rural Ontario for granted, because publicly funded and publicly delivered health care is a quintessential Canada value. This petition outlines emergency departments that have undergone a permanent closure, such as the Minden ER, or those that have had a temporary closure and reduced hours, emergency departments in which we'll have future service decreases and so many more.

It's incumbent upon this government to recognize our Canadian value of publicly funded and publicly delivered health care, save the Minden ER, make sure that rural Ontario is not given short shrift, and make sure that everyone has access to health care when and where they need it.

I fully support this petition, will sign it and present it to the Clerks with page Blythe.

ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition entitled "Save our Science Centre." People who signed this petition are very concerned the Ontario government is shutting down the Ontario Science Centre, which is a world-class science and cultural institution. It's very concerning also because the science centre is near Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park, and many residents in that area want to keep the science centre. Residents are also very concerned about the lack of a business case to move the science centre from the place it is now to downtown.

I support this petition. I'll be affixing my signature to it and bringing it to page Keerthana.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to present this petition on behalf of residents in Minden and across the province, actually, who live in rural Ontario and are facing drastic cuts to emergency health care services. They're looking at

permanent closures, temporary closures, reduced hours, service decreases.

I'm MPP for London West, but many of these closures are happening in southwestern Ontario, just outside the city of London. That has an impact on health care not only for the residents of those communities, who are facing the loss of emergency health care services, but also increases the pressure on the city services that would be most proximate.

This petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to increase the funding, to enable these emergency health care services in rural communities to remain open and available and accessible to the citizens who rely on them. It calls for the government to act immediately to protect the health and well-being of rural Ontarians and reopen the emergency department in Minden.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING CYBER SECURITY AND BUILDING TRUST IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR ACT, 2024 LOI DE 2024 VISANT À RENFORCER LA CYBERSÉCURITÉ ET LA CONFIANCE DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 22, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 194, An Act to enact the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act, 2024 and to make amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act respecting privacy protection measures / Projet de loi 194, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 visant à renforcer la sécurité et la confiance en matière de numérique et modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui concerne les mesures de protection de la vie privée.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I understand that the member from Nickel Belt has the floor.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I got to start my few words about Bill 194, An Act to enact the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act, 2024 and to make amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act respecting privacy protection measures, last night. It is my pleasure to finish those comments.

Just to quickly review: You will note, Speaker, that the bill has basically two parts. In a bill, they're called "schedules." In schedule 1, it's called the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act. The act addresses cyber security and artificial intelligence systems at public sector entities. Public sector entities are institutions like hospitals, like school boards, like children's aid etc. It says, "Regulations may be made respecting cyber security at public sector entities, including regulations requiring them

to develop and implement programs. Regulations may also set technical standards respecting cyber security.”

I won’t read the whole thing, but you get the sense from the bill that there is very little in the bill. It’s a bill that will enable the government to make, basically, regulations down the road. It’s always a bit difficult to deal with those bills. It would be easier to say the law will require you to set cyber security, to set different things. You set the standard, and then you know that those standards are going to be there and you make regulations. But that’s not what the bill says. The bill says, “Regulations may be made respecting cyber security....”

Do we agree that there is a threat to cyber security? Yes, absolutely. We don’t have to look very far to know that the Toronto Public Library faced a ransomware attack that shut down the library website for months and disrupted systems and technology across more than 100 library branches. The library previously said the attack is believed to have exposed the names, social insurance numbers, government identification and addresses of employees dating back to 1998. Users were unable to place holds on books, access their account or use computers on-site for months following the attack. There has been ongoing forensic analysis to discover whether consumer, donor or volunteer data had been taken from the affected servers.

I also talked about the 325,000 patients’ files that had been stolen from five hospitals in southwestern Ontario. Those included letters to patients and roughly 20,000 social insurance numbers. Those five hospitals were unable to access critical information. Thousands of patients’ appointments had to be cancelled. It created a huge backlog in a health care system that is already in crisis and where the wait times are already way too long. This added a lot of hardship on a lot of people. They said that some of the data stolen was published online. The hospital and their IT provider were subsequently served with a class action lawsuit following the breach, so there will be money to pay.

1540

I also wanted to talk about the second part of the bill, which is called schedule 2. Schedule 2 of the bill deals with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I can tell you that the freedom of access to information is something that needs some review. I will give you an example, Speaker. Back in 2019, the then Minister of Health, Christine Elliott, asked for a report to be done for diseases that are linked to the environment, so think about myalgic encephalomyelitis, think about chronic fatigue, think about—those kinds of diseases. I would link in some of the COVID—long-term COVID—in this; it didn’t exist at the time, so they focused on diseases that are linked to the environment. The minister paid to have this report done. They hired some top-notch, knowledgeable—mainly physicians and experts in the field of chronic diseases linked to the environment. They did a report. That was coming from what was then called MEAO, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario. They’re now called CareNow. They’ve changed their name.

Anyway, it was that group who asked the minister to do this. The minister agreed, hired the right people, did the report. The report was tabled with the minister in 2021, and there has been silence ever since. We know that the report has been done. We know that important recommendations have been done for the Ministry of Health and the Minister of Health in that report. So I filed a freedom-of-access-of-information—that has been 31 months ago that I have filed this freedom-of-access-of-information that has been back and forth. Yes, absolutely, this report has to be made public. This report falls within the freedom of access of information, yet there is all sorts of red tape. It means that two and a half years later, we still haven’t got the report. So the commissioner said, “Yes, your freedom-of-access-of-information has been received. This report has to be made available,” and 31 months later, a report that was commissioned by the government, paid for, tabled—we all know it exists, and we don’t have access to it. Meanwhile, people with often very severe diseases linked to the environment who would like to gain access to treatment don’t have access to treatment. We have this centre at Women’s College Hospital, just down the road from here, that has a centre of excellence to deal with this. We are getting knowledge and skills. We have recommendations to the minister, and all of this stays behind closed walls.

I would certainly love for a freedom-of-information law to get rid of some of the red tape so that a report that everybody agrees should be made public—31 months after I paid my money to gain access to that report—would be made available, but it is not.

I could go on, but I realize that there’s only a little bit of time left.

The bill goes in the right direction. We want to have cyber security, we want to have rules about the use of AI and all of this, but the bill cannot just say what it says: basically, that regulation “may” be made. It has to be regulations “will” be made regarding cyber security, “will” have to be in place regarding AI, the act “will” address technology affecting individuals under the age of 18—not just a “may” happen. It would have been a whole lot better.

I’m out of time. Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: My question is for the member opposite. The news is full of stories about organizations like hospitals and schools, as well as municipal governments, having their data on hold in trust for the people of Ontario and held in ransom for millions of dollars. This is unacceptable in the province of Ontario, which is why our government is providing our vulnerable broader public sector with the tools they need to prevent cyber incidents.

Can the member opposite please explain if they support giving our partners the tools they need to prevent cyber incidents?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would love nothing more than for the government to give our hospitals, to give our daycare centres, to give our schools the tools to do this,

but that's not what the bill does. The bill says—and I'm reading the bill—"regulations may be made respecting cyber security," and the little bit of consultation that has been done about this bill all came back to the same: Every single little hospital, every single school board does not have the resources to do that on their own.

Why doesn't the government make it clear that they will have the resources to make sure that it gets done? A bill that starts with "regulation may be made respecting cyber security" is not the same thing as making sure that it gets done.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I know when it comes to climate, I worry that we're not prepared and it costs us a lot. I think we see a bill in front of us that is aimed at saving money by putting protections in place, but we don't always see that in other parts of government.

Can you speak to what you'd like to see in terms of guardrails to make sure that this preparation and protection actually happens?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to see that, on all sides of the House, we all agree that we need to bolster up our cyber security. We need to be ready for AI and how it will influence our kids, our schools, our hospitals, our care, our lives. We need all of this. The government of Ontario could play a leadership role in doing this. We could get them together. We could get the experts and make sure that it gets done, but it costs money. We have 142 hospital corporations in Ontario; all of them are in deficit and most of them have more patients than they have beds to care for them. Same thing with our schools.

So the aim is really good. It has to be done. We all agree to this. It's how will we get there? Who will pay for it? To leave the little hospitals in Hearst, Matheson, Iroquois Falls and Cochrane up to themselves to figure that out is not a good strategy. The government has to play a leadership role in this.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The word "regulation" comes up in the bill 52 times, so does the word "transparency," but one contradicts the other because regulations are behind closed doors. My concern, first of all, is that there won't be sufficient consultation to make a really good bill, because it's incredibly important to have cyber security, but also that it will undermine the trust in government when we're dealing with such a massive thing as cyber security.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Those are two excellent points. People need to trust public services. We need to trust our hospitals. We need to trust our hospitals. We need to trust our schools. When you go see a health care provider, there's a good chance that you may share with him or her information that you haven't told anybody else. Because you've shared that information, it will influence your plan of care to get back to health faster. But if you start to have doubts—if you have doubts that now that it's on the Internet, it could be circulating on the Web; it could be

posted on Instagram or anywhere else—then people won't be as forthcoming in their relationship and that will have an effect.

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So you're absolutely right: It is directly linked to people's trust in the public system that we have, whether in education, in health care, in work protection etc. It is very important. It needs to be done and we certainly hope that the bill will go from saying, "regulations may be made" to "regulations will be made." It will be a step in the right direction, but to have it in the law would be even better.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I really appreciate this. I understand that the opposition doesn't like the fact that most of this is going to be done in regulation, so I want to lay out a timeline on that, on how we do our legislation.

We introduce it at first reading. Then we do second reading on it. We're going to have eight hours of debate on it, then we're going to send it to committee. Committee is usually two days. After committee, it comes back. We're going to have another six and a half hours of debate on it. That's going to take us an entire week. We have a cyber attack that has happened and we need to make adjustments to it.

Is it reasonable, from the member's perspective, to say that that whole system should be shut down for more than a week so that we can introduce legislation to make the change? Or does it make sense that this is done in the regulatory regime, so that we can make the adjustments, as needed, immediately, so that those systems get back up and running and we don't find ourselves in this position where a hospital can't do an MRI because their system has been compromised, or a school can't have any students log in because their system has been compromised? Would the member opposite agree that this makes sense to do in regulation, and not in legislation, because of the timelines?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We all agree that when we have seen ransom attacks, whether it be in our hospitals, whether it be in our schools, whether it be in a library—it doesn't matter where it happens; it has a real effect. It has to be prevented. How do you prevent this? By enhancing digital security, by doing what the bill is set to do. You can do this in a bill. You can mandate things in a bill. You don't have to wait for regulations to say, "You will have a security plan"; you can put those words in a bill.

How will it be done? Certainly we get regulations. But when a bill says "regulations may be made" regarding cyber security, I would much rather have a bill that says "regulations will be made regarding cyber security." Make it that it will happen.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague for her comments on this bill. I'm interested in her opinion about how effective a framework can be if there are no resources attached to implement the framework. I know in my community, the children's aid society, which will be

covered by this bill, is looking at a \$9.1-million deficit. The hospital, London Health Sciences Centre, looking at a \$78-million deficit. The Thames Valley District School Board is looking at a \$7.6-million deficit. The city of London is looking at a \$100-million loss, related to changes to development charges that this government made.

When these public sector institutions are under such financial pressure, what does that mean for their ability to implement a cyber security framework?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I fully agree with what the member has said. I'm from northern Ontario. We have 50 small rural hospitals in northern Ontario and in rural Ontario. None of them have the resources to put a cyber security system in place. Do they want it? Yes, absolutely. Should they have it? Yes, absolutely. Are they afraid of what would happen? I'll let you guess. It needs to happen, but when all you have is a framework, when all you have is a bill that says "regulations may be made," it's really different. A framework is really different from an action plan and it's really different from a well-funded action plan, where you see where the money is going to come from, what is the budget to do this, how can we work together. As I said, the government has to play a leadership role and say, "Here are the people who are going to help us develop this," and make sure that we do better than now to protect all of our public institutions against cyber attacks.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): And that is all the time we have for questions.

It's now time for further debate.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'm delighted to rise today to debate Bill 194, Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024.

I recently had the chance to hear from the head of the Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute, Amii, where he said that Canada has been a leader in the AI field. Just this month, Geoffrey Hinton, a Canadian who is considered the father of AI and who works just across the street at the University of Toronto, was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics for his work in this space—what a wonderful accomplishment. The federal government is also to be credited with making Canada the first country in the world to have a national AI strategy, developed in 2017, seven years ago.

But Ontario, instead of being a leader in this space, has been a laggard. Quebec signed a comprehensive plan under the 2018 Montreal Declaration for a Responsible Development of Artificial Intelligence and they're an acknowledged leader in this field. They've got principles around diversity, equity and inclusion, and they consider human rights as well. British Columbia passed a bill and has already made modifications around privacy and data protection; they first passed that in 2021. So while this government takes a big interest in gambling—and spending millions on ads that promote it, too—they're just now getting into the game on cyber security.

Speaker, we know from the private sector that AI can be a huge driver of productivity and therefore economic

growth. Industries across Canada are looking to AI to improve their processes, whether it's in customer service or compliance, research etc. It's driving efficiencies.

Yet under this government, our economy has been stagnant. Real GDP has been contracting in per capita terms since the beginning of the year, and according to forecasters such as the FAO, growth will average little more than 1% in 2024, keeping it below the long-term average of 2.5% for a second year in a row.

We know that data breaches are costing the economy. The average cost of a data breach here in Canada is \$5.64 million. We also know that they're costing our public sector entities, like those covered by this bill. According to a recent CBC news story, "A ransomware attack that forced critical systems at five southwestern Ontario hospitals offline for weeks last year has cost those organizations upwards of \$7.5 million." Speaker, that comes right out of our health care budget.

Organizations like regional innovation centres that contribute to Ontario's economic development and that work in this space also know the importance of cyber security and AI, but what has this government done? The government reduced funding to one of those centres, Communitech, by 30%, resulting in the loss of 15 full-time jobs, limiting their ability to advance work in this space.

So, Speaker, while the government is finally catching on to the importance of cyber security, their delay has left our public sector agencies—including the ones covered by this bill, like school boards—vulnerable.

Our public sector entities have actually been asking for help around cyber security for years from this government. The London Public Library requested money to address the needs of their IT infrastructure in guarding against cyber attacks. The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries told SCOFEA during pre-budget consultations that the cyber attack of the Toronto Public Library and London Public Library severely impacted the Ontarians who rely on the library every single day, as they were not able to use computers in the library, check out books or use the Internet at all.

So investing in things like the Ontario digital public library, which this government has decided not to do in every single one of their budgets—despite being asked year after year—would also help minimize the risk of cyber attacks since many of their services would be subscription-based on third-party platforms.

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Let's talk about our schools, where data on some of our most vulnerable is stored. And to the government's credit, they are covered under this bill. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board requested funding to help with cyber security, as the number of malicious attacks is on the rise and school boards are struggling to keep up. The TDSB requested increased funding for cyber security to assist in improving cyber security and privacy measures, as outlined in recent audit findings of the Auditor General.

All of these organizations have been asking for money and help in the area of cyber security for years, and what has this government done? They have repeatedly said no.

If they're serious now about this topic, I hope there will be money set aside in the upcoming fall economic statement.

Let me turn to another concern that stakeholders have expressed about this bill: ministerial overreach. Giving the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery—although he's a fine man—the power of oversight risks politicizing this bill's outcomes and its effectiveness. We need experts in this field to be providing this oversight.

The law firm McCarthy Tétrault did an analysis of the bill and suggested that the delegation of power to the cabinet as a political body with no expertise over cyber security would weaken its effectiveness. The power to make operational decisions should be given to specialized regulators who are already familiar with the vital services and systems they already oversee.

Is this another instance of the government centralizing power in its ministries, and if so, I would ask why. What is the rationale for putting oversight for this with the minister?

Then there are the human rights concerns raised by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Will the government do anything to address the risk that AI poses in potentially exacerbating the prevalence of systemic racism in Ontario's childhood welfare system?

Just this week, I met with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, and I asked them as a follow-up question about this bill. While they commend the government for taking steps to strengthen cyber security and protect data, in particular for vulnerable children and youth, they also say that how the privacy will be protected remains to be seen through yet-to-be-released regulations. And as that work is done, they hope the government will remain mindful of Indigenous data sovereignty. They also ask that the government work closely with agencies to ensure regulations resonate and that resource needs, i.e. money, are considered to ensure smooth implementation of this bill.

The use of AI in education is another concern, especially when it comes to diversity and ensuring representation of minority groups in education. Experts acknowledge that AI in health care is also still a work in progress. For example, AI used for diagnostics has been proven to be unreliable when it comes to under-represented communities. AI is still learning, and it learns what we put into the data. It's still a work in progress when it comes to distinguishing between malignant and benign tumours in racialized people and in detecting cardiovascular disease in women. These are all areas where we need to be careful. We need to watch what's going on and make sure that the outcomes are effective.

Other experts are weighing in as well with the recommendations, which I hope the government will consider. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has made several recommendations, including that Bill 194 identify the importance of human rights in the preamble of the bill. They also recommend that the legislation should be amended to provide for regulations that include explainability requirements before AI systems can be used, and that they identify the responsibilities and powers of the

government where public sector entities cannot prevent violations of legal rights and protections. This is a new field, Speaker, and we need to make sure we have experts and clear accountability for the powers over these systems.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner also provided some recommendations around themes. He asked that we take a principles-based approach to governance and look at the high-risk areas of activity, such as how Ontarians will live, work and interact with their public institutions using these AI tools.

We need to ensure greater transparency around how the government proposes to regulate cyber security with the regulations, as discussed around artificial intelligence and digital technologies available to children and youth under 18. We need to strengthen the accountability and independent oversight of public sector entities to ensure compliance with these proposed new rules.

A system of oversight and enforcement that is coherent, streamlined and independent of government is what will build trust. That word is right in the title of the bill. How do we build trust in public institutions? That means that the power cannot lie with the ministry. It needs to be placed with regulators who have experience in this field, because they know how to use these technologies responsibly. That will help ensure the economic and social prosperity for all Ontarians.

We've seen this government ignore experts when it comes to housing and health care. Just today, they voted down the bill tabled by my colleague from Kanata—Carleton that would have removed red tape around height restrictions in converting commercial buildings to residential buildings, something recommended by OREA and their own housing task force.

I just want to encourage the government to listen to the experts in this field and to listen to the experts in cyber security and AI, to make sure that Bill 194 gets done right. Thank you.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I agree with the member opposite: It's all about transparency. Currently, there are no legislation provisions under FIPPA that protect individuals who report privacy wrongdoing. This legislation would provide protections to individuals who report institutions that have violated privacy requirements. Our government wants to protect people who do the right thing.

We're hoping that the member opposite and the opposition will be in support of this, because we want to create a situation where Ontarians feel supported and protected, and continue to do the right thing and not cause harm across Ontario with this transparency and with the protection of the violated privacy requirements.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'm not sure I fully understood the question, but yes, of course, we need to make sure people's data is protected. I understand that that's the intent of the bill.

We want to make sure that people who might call out bad actors—whistle-blowers and other things—are pro-

tected as well, so that they are not at risk of losing their jobs. Again, those kinds of details and important things are an essential part of making sure that people feel safe.

Again, we know that the regulations are yet to come. We will need to see how that is actually rolled out. Is it going to be rolled out effectively, so that those people are protected and that we can make sure that, again, we do build trust in our public institutions?

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member for Don Valley West on Bill 194. This is a flawed piece of legislation. It feels like a better-than-nothing kind of piece of legislation. The public sector does not have the capacity to create in-house artificial intelligence. What measures will be in place to ensure Ontarians' data is safe with third-party and foreign corporations, for instance? School boards, post-secondary institutions and municipalities are all reporting deficits.

How actionable do you believe this piece of legislation is? And does it meet the moment and the crisis around cyber security? Thank you.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member for Waterloo for her question. I like her phrase, "better than nothing." Again, I think it's a step. It's maybe not the best step, but it's a step in the right direction. I think that the implementation of this bill, as indicated by the Ontario association of child welfare societies, is really in the funding and putting their money where their mouth is around the implementation.

Enacting this kind of legislation actually will be a huge amount of effort. We know that cyber security in the private sector is costing billions and billions of dollars. Organizations are actually struggling to keep up with the cost. They're struggling to find resources in that space. It's a highly in-demand expertise. To say that all of these organizations will be able to quickly implement this, I think, will be a real challenge, and I know that the government will need to make sure that there's money to make that happen.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: Under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, our tech sector did not receive the support it needed. Our government recognizes the value of continued advancements in artificial intelligence technology, especially those made right here in Ontario, North America's second-largest technological corridor. We are building long-term supports to help grow the tech industry in Ontario and ensure that government uses AI responsibly. In order to create an adaptable AI regulation framework, our government is taking the time to ensure that we will consult with partners in order to develop a framework that can evolve with that technology.

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So, through the Speaker, I would like to ask the member opposite why they are saying no to the government's initiative that will take the necessary steps to ensure AI is developed responsibly.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, I have not said no.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you to my colleague for shedding some light on the real value of this bill. I have to agree that, while this bill is a show of intentions—maybe to try to convince Ontarians that the government is on the ball and they understand the importance of addressing cyber security—I think this bill really lacks some meaningful measures and some real support for the public institutions that will be required to implement those measures of protection.

I'm particularly concerned with school boards, which are already underfunded to address and to be able to meet all their administrative obligations. I would like to hear from you what you think the impact of this underfunding and lack of support will mean for those institutions.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa–Vanier for the question. It's a very important question. Again, as I highlighted, school boards specifically have been asking the government for a number of years for funding to help them prevent cyber security attacks. The government said no. The government, again, is taking a step now to recognize the importance of cyber security—as I said, we have been a laggard; we have a lot of catching up to do. This bill, without the "will"—"will enact" regulations—just "may," is not strong enough.

Health information systems alone cost this province \$14.4 billion a year—just health systems. If you were to look at education systems, look at the libraries, look at the children's aid societies, look at the school boards, take a fraction of that and multiply it by all of those public sector entities, the cost of this will be in the billions—billions—of dollars. The government, if they are serious about cyber security, needs to get serious about putting some money behind it.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I thank the member from Don Valley West for their comments today. I heard you say that one of the principles of good AI and cyber security policy development is transparency. It's actually built right in the bill; it says that in the bill, but this government's process has been anything but transparent. They conducted secret consultations throughout the summer instead of having an all-party committee conduct those consultations on this bill. They use the word "regulation" in this bill 52 times because there's nothing of real substance in the bill; everything's going to be done behind closed doors through regulation.

What would you say to the government about following their own principle of transparency, and transparency in the development of AI and cyber security policy?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member from Spadina–Fort York. It's an excellent question. I think transparency has been a challenge with this government. We know that things like the 95-year deal with Therme only came out because there was a freedom-of-information request and it was going to come out anyway.

Transparency around cyber and data is very, very important. Institutions and our government ministries will be collecting and are collecting data. In fact, there was an article just today, I think, or yesterday, that said that the government's about to hand out cheques to Ontarians; they can't even figure out how they're going to get the names and addresses for all those people. Once they do figure that out, how are they going to keep them stored securely and safely? They don't have that framework yet. They simply have this bill, as you said.

I think they need to do some serious pen to paper in open sessions to get experts, experts, experts, and they need to listen to them and make sure that the oversight is done by people with experience, not the minister.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): One last question?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: We know that the people who have spent the most money on developing AI, like Meta and YouTube, have some of the most racist and misogynistic content out there. What has Quebec done to ensure that there are some guardrails to protect BIPOC people, gender-diverse, women etc., vulnerable, other people and marginalized folks from having this perpetuate systemic issues that already exist?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre for the question. It's again a very important and tricky topic. Even the experts recognize that AI learns from existing data, so if our existing data has biases in it—which we know that it does—there are lots of researchers in this field both here in Canada and abroad who are looking at that topic. They know it has biases. We actually need to teach the “machines” to not have those biases. That will take a significant amount of work.

Again, the government needs to listen to the experts. There are actually a number of experts in Canada, including here in Ontario and across the country, who work in this field. They acknowledge themselves that how you do that is a work in progress. Every day, they are getting better and better at it, but identifying that that is an issue, including language on that in the bill around how to make sure human rights are protected, to make sure diversity and inclusion is respected and acknowledged—including that language will be an important part of achieving it.

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

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to start off my time today by acknowledging that I'll be sharing my time with my colleague the Honourable Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

I am pleased to rise today to speak about Bill 194, Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act. I am proud to lend my voice to this debate on a matter that affects the security and the privacy of all Ontarians, including children who are among our province's most vulnerable in this rapidly evolving digital age.

It has been clear for some time now that governments at all levels cannot afford to ignore the benefits of digital

tools such as AI for enhancing the public sector and improving the outcomes of the communities that we serve. In essence, AI works by applying algorithms and data to mimic human intelligence. As AI relies on data to create the models it uses to function, enhanced cyber security to safeguard this data is essential. It goes without saying that stronger cyber security and privacy measures are a critical part of the ongoing work to implement new and improved digital public sector tools and services.

I'd like to thank my colleague the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement for his leadership that has brought us to this second reading of this important piece of legislation. This legislation, if passed, will enhance Ontario's ability to defend against cyber attacks and ensure the responsible use of AI in public sector operations.

AI has become a transformative force across sectors, from health care to education, yet, with this promise comes responsibility. Ontario, as a leader in AI innovation, must set the standard for transparent, accountable and safe use of these technologies. Bill 194 offers the framework for just that.

Through this robust legislation, our government is taking decisive action to protect data and privacy. This includes enhancing cyber security, safeguarding children's data, improving digital services and ensuring the responsible use of AI, all aimed at swiftly countering cyber threats and fostering a secure, thriving digital economy.

As President of the Treasury Board, I have the responsibility of ensuring our government delivers value to taxpayers through prudent fiscal management and investments in critical infrastructure.

To illustrate the potential of AI to result in measurable and tangible benefits to Ontarians, I'd like to share the example of Humber River Health and their use of AI to improve patient outcomes. Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of visiting this NASA-styled “mission control” or command centre at the heart of core functions at Humber River Health. The command centre is a centralized operating system that applies state-of-the-art technology, including AI, to deliver highly reliable care. Humber was the second place in North America to implement the use of AI in this way, along with Johns Hopkins in the United States. Comprised of fully customizable analytic tiles, the command centre takes previously fragmented information and it transforms it into actual data to inform the decisions that are made by clinicians and front-line staff.

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In the first 11 months alone, impacts on enhanced patient flow increased internal capacity to the equivalent of an additional 35 hospital beds. Since its implementation, harm cases at Humber River Health have reduced by 29%, medication errors have dropped to virtually zero, and a 30% to 50% decrease in time has been observed across key target areas. So in addition to saving lives, the data collected by the command centre using AI is making

tax dollars go even further. This is just one example of what is possible with the implementation of AI.

As AI technology becomes more powerful and integrated in our daily lives, our government is responsibly leveraging its potential to boost productivity and enhance decision-making. This effort is an essential part of our ongoing mission to build a better Ontario. In support of these efforts, our government is leading the province's first AI strategy, which will support our work towards cutting red tape, bolstering government efficiency and fiscal responsibility. Through this AI strategy, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement, TBS is leveraging AI to better deliver services to Ontarians. This strategy contains policies, principles and guidance to promote the transparent, responsible and accountable use of AI across Ontario's public sector.

As you know, my ministry assumes the role of employer for the Ontario public service. With more than 60,000 employees, this is a substantial responsibility and an important area of focus for the Treasury Board Secretariat. We are ensuring that the OPS workforce remains at the forefront of current technology by modernizing internal communication software to increase efficiency and deliver a self-service, context-aware AI chat bot. The OPS workforce is also continuing to adapt and implement Microsoft Copilot to increase productivity. As a central agency, the benefits of AI will support the sustainability of Ontario's public services while our government focuses on promoting human resources and strong fiscal management.

However, we recognize the risks, including bias and the misuse of data, which is why this legislation's focus on responsible AI use is so important. By establishing strong governance and human oversight of AI decision-making, Bill 194 ensures that AI systems used by public sector organizations are aligned with Ontario's trustworthy AI framework. This will safeguard against unintended harms and bolster public trust. With the backing of this new legislation, we can take these efforts further, ensuring that the digital transformation benefits everyone in Ontario.

In my role as Minister of Francophone Affairs, I am proud to advocate on behalf of Ontario's rapidly growing francophone communities. With Franco-Ontarians making up almost 5% of our population and French speakers over 11% of the province's population, our government is dedicated to addressing the unique needs of Ontario's francophone community and ensuring their active participation in all facets of our province's cultural and economic life.

Since 2018, our government has acted to ensure the prosperity of our francophone community in a number of key ways, including expanding access to high-quality French language services and education, as well as strengthening our bilingual workforce. AI holds significant potential to support the expansion of bilingualism in our province. By facilitating delivery of French-language services, improving document translation and supporting communication in both official languages, the responsible

use of AI can enhance Ontario's public sector service delivery and provide a more level playing field for all Ontarians.

Speaker, one of the most critical components of this bill is the protection that it affords to children. As more of our youth engage with online education tools and social platforms, it is imperative that we safeguard their privacy and their data. As a mother to four young adults, I have seen first-hand the importance of protecting children's data. Whether it's through school laptops or social media use, we must ensure that their digital footprints are secure and that they are protected from malicious use.

This bill will implement stronger regulations to prevent the exploitation of children's data in educational settings, and both as a legislator and as a parent, I fully support these necessary protections. I look forward to seeing these provisions developed through consultations with schools, parents and tech experts.

In conclusion, Bill 194 is a forward-looking and comprehensive approach to some of the most pressing challenges that we face in this digital age. From enhancing cyber security to ensuring the responsible use of AI, this legislation is a critical step toward building trust in our public sector and protecting Ontarians.

I urge all members of this House to support Bill 194. By doing so, we are not only protecting the personal data of every Ontarian, but we are also laying the groundwork for a safer and more prosperous digital future.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to this important debate today. I look forward to continuing our discussion and to the insights of my esteemed colleagues as we shape the future of Ontario's digital landscape.

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

Hon. Michael Parsa: I want to thank my colleague the President of the Treasury Board, the Honourable Caroline Mulroney, for sharing her time with me this afternoon.

Our government takes the privacy and safety of young Ontarians very seriously, so I'm very pleased to be here today to speak in support of Bill 194, the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024.

I'm grateful to my cabinet colleague the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement—as well as his amazing parliamentary assistant—for his comprehensive approach to Bill 194 that works towards making the digital world safer for children, our province's future. The proposed legislation would help strengthen privacy protections, including those for children whose personal information is being held in children's aid societies. Speaker, as you may recall, the House has already passed into law complementary legislation in Bill 188, the Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024, with the support of all my colleagues here in the chamber. The work in both pieces of legislation is a result of collaboration and the valued input of children, youth and families with lived experience in the child and youth protection sector, and it's also done in collaboration with partners

like children's aid societies and service providers, as well as First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous communities from across our province. I want to acknowledge and express my deepest thanks for the important work that all these partners do. Their tireless efforts have a profound and lifelong impact on the outcomes of vulnerable children and youth as they transition from care into adulthood.

Speaker, we're here today because our government will simply not leave anyone behind. And it's especially important that no child or no youth is ever left behind, so that they can have every chance to thrive and succeed, regardless of their circumstances or their history. We've heard from sector partners and communities about the need to implement measures that will better protect the rights of children and youth, that will enhance the quality of out-of-home care services and improve the accountability of service providers. That's why we introduced a broad range of legislative proposals and a suite of regulatory and policy changes in both Bill 188 and Bill 194 that will support the futures of some of the most vulnerable children in our province.

Today, I want to outline for the House how Bill 194, if passed, would complement efforts taken in Bill 188 and, as a result, a safer online space for Ontario's young people. The children and youth services sector supports a wide range of individuals with diverse needs, as well as their families and caregivers right across our province. For example, the sector supports those in need of protection who have experienced or may be at risk of abuse or neglect. It also supports youth who are involved in the youth justice system, including those admitted into custody or detention, to help them find their way and engage their community responsibly. The sector empowers children to overcome barriers and reach all their goals.

1630

Our ministry's legislation, Bill 188, is already being implemented and will modernize and standardize important safeguards throughout the child and youth services sector. This includes stronger enforcement tools to hold licensed out-of-home care operators accountable to keep children and youth safe and healthy. It would create a framework that would enhance privacy protections of those who were formerly involved in the child welfare system. This will be done by further restricting access to records comprised of their personal childhood histories once regulations are developed. The proposal would also enable individuals to be able to speak freely about their lived experience and give them more control over what they want to share publicly. These circumstances will be outlined following further consultations with the sector.

They would also provide authority to expand the information that individuals working with vulnerable children and youth can be required to provide. This would go beyond formal police record checks and it would include offence declarations. The proposal would reinforce the requirement for children's aid societies and out-of-home care licensees to explain the role of the

Ombudsman and how to contact our office to children and youth.

Finally, they would clarify that early childhood educators could be subject to an offence for failing to report child protection concerns to a children's aid society. This would be similar to other professionals, such as teachers, as well as social workers.

This bill is just another step forward in the work of child welfare, and not the final step. We'll continue to engage and learn from stakeholders, including youth with lived experience and many others, as we work to improve safety, supports and access to resources for children and youth who are served by the child protection system.

Our government wants every child to have a healthy, safe, age-appropriate digital experience when engaging with public sector organizations, like schools or children's aid societies. The proposed amendments in Bill 194 would enable the creation of protections that could help prevent inappropriate data practices that affect children and ensure that software applications support the health and well-being of all students. For example, future regulations under this legislation could include age-appropriate standards for software programs on devices like laptops that are used by students every day at school. These initiatives better protect how children's personal information is collected and used, and they align with proposed measures that we unanimously passed in the Legislature last session.

Taken together, Bill 188 and Bill 194 will strengthen digital and privacy protections for children and youth across our province. As you can see, this bill is an important element of the government's ongoing work to strengthen the child welfare system. I would like to speak to the connection with the proposed work and the broader actions that we have taken to strengthen child welfare, as it's key to understanding the context in which Bill 194's reforms are being proposed.

Members of this House will recall that in July 2020, the ministry announced a review of the child welfare in our province. Our government wants children and youth in care and other out-of-home-care settings to feel supported and to be set up for success in life. As I've said many, many times, children and youth deserve a safe, loving and stable home, regardless of their circumstances. Through our ongoing work, our government is introducing new initiatives to improve the quality of care in out-of-home care. We commend the many service providers who are devoting their lives to support vulnerable children and youth. However, sometimes there are gaps, and our proposed changes seek to close these gaps.

Some of these changes have included:

—developing a new framework for what out-of-home care looks like;

—increasing and enhancing oversight and accountability for out-of-home care;

—supporting that oversight by adding 20 new positions across the province to support the management, inspection and oversight of out-of-home care for children and youth;

—launching the Ready, Set, Go Program, which provides youth in care of children's aid societies with the life

skills they need, starting at 13, and financial support when they leave care, up to the age of 23, so that they can focus on post-secondary, including the skilled trades, or pursuing employment.

Speaker, every child and youth deserves a fair starting point in life and our government is delivering that. We hit the ground running by consulting widely in the community and with service providers to better serve children and youth; by increasing the number of responsive inspections; bolstering the customary care arrangements to focus on family-based options like kinship and foster care to ensure that children, youth and families have a strong voice in their decisions about their care; improving the quality of child welfare data to establish a baseline of common measures across the children's aid societies that can be reported publicly, as well as developing an outcome-based performance measurement framework; and finally, releasing the children and young persons' rights resource to help children and youth understand their rights and use their voices.

Speaker, we've backed this very important work with significant investments of over \$1.7 billion into the child welfare system to support Ontario's 50 children's aid societies, including the 13 Indigenous societies.

Bill 194 is an important step towards achieving stronger data protection for all children. Together, we'll continue to strengthen families and communities right across our province. I thank my colleagues for listening.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: It is clear that all sides of the House understand that public sector organizations need to be prepared for cyber attacks and to have an appropriate response to artificial intelligence. We've also heard that the organizations that need to implement these practices are in deficit: 142 hospitals are in deficit. Most school boards are in deficit. Children's aid societies are in deficit. My question is this: How are we going to get there and who is going to pay for it?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Francophone Affairs and the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you very much for the question. One of the tremendous strengths or powers associated with this digital technology is the innovation that it will bring to the public sector in the delivery of public services. As I referenced in my remarks, Humber River Health tested out and developed the use of technology in its emergency room to better manage the intake of patients to ensure that they were delivering better services, better care and better outcomes for patients.

That kind of work is something that can be leveraged across all other hospitals, and by registering that information with the ministry, with the government in a centralized way, by taking in that information, the government can then share it with other agencies, with other players within the public sector, so not each hospital has to make their own individual investment. It allows for economies of scale and true innovation to be rolled out

across the entire public sector. That's just one example within the hospital sector.

Another one would be the scheduling of nurses. Down at St. Mike's, they've been able to rationalize and implement economies of scale that we can then roll out across other hospitals. So I think there's great potential and opportunities to save money. Thank you.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: My question is for the minister. This government has made a commitment to improve the way government services are delivered. As our economy transitions further into the digital realm, there's a growing expectation that government services will follow suit and evolve to meet the demands of the modern world. Our government must recognize these trends and ensure government services are accessible and secure across a variety of delivery options.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how the proposed legislation will enhance the delivery of government services in a manner that is both responsive and reliable?

1640

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I would like to thank the member for that excellent question.

Our government and the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery make decisions with the understanding that ServiceOntario is the front door of government, so Ontarians deserve and must be able to receive government services that are safe, that are reliable and that are efficient.

We are always looking at ways to develop new service solutions that can ensure customer service excellence. We're trying to strengthen our community presence and always—and this is important as President of the Treasury Board—to respect hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Time and again, Ontarians have told us they want more options, and they want new and innovative solutions in ways to access government services. Recently, we responded to these calls in innovative ways, but governments should not rely on a one-size-fits-all approach. That's why this proposed legislation would allow ServiceOntario to provide people with personalized digital service for users who create an online account and choose to opt in to share their personal information. There's so much more that's possible as well, but this is just one example.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Je vais adresser ma question à la présidente du Conseil du Trésor. Je veux faire suite, aussi, à la question que ma collègue a posée concernant les obligations financières qui vont venir avec les nouvelles obligations qui sont contenues dans la loi.

On parle de beaucoup d'obligations : d'établir des normes techniques, d'établir et mettre en oeuvre des cadres de responsabilité, de prendre des mesures en matière de gestion des risques. Ce sont toutes des actions que des entités publiques qui sont en déficit, comme on l'a

mentionné, comme les conseils scolaires, vont devoir assumer sans appui financier.

Est-ce que je comprends, de la réponse que vous avez donnée? Puis même s'il existe des meilleures pratiques qui existent déjà, qu'ils pourraient s'approprier, ils vont quand même avoir besoin d'avoir des ressources additionnelles, soit financières ou soit des nouveaux employés, pour pouvoir se conformer aux exigences du projet de loi.

Alors, ma question, encore une fois : comment est-ce que le gouvernement prévoit appuyer ces entités-là, que ce soit les sociétés d'aide à l'enfance ou les conseils scolaires, pour qu'ils puissent être en mesure de remplir les exigences sans nuire à leur premier mandat, qui est de livrer une qualité d'éducation à tous les Ontariens?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Alors, en tant que présidente du Conseil du Trésor, je suis responsable de la fonction publique de l'Ontario, et comme j'ai décrit dans mon discours, nous sommes en train de piloter différents projets au sein de la fonction publique. Si nous avons du succès avec ces projets, ce sont des exemples de projets que nous pourrions partager avec les entités de secteur public, comme les conseils scolaires, comme les hôpitaux, etc.

L'exemple que j'ai donné précédemment concernant Humber River Health et leur salle d'urgence, c'est juste un exemple, mais c'est un projet qui a été financé. À ce que je comprends, ça n'a pas eu un coût très élevé, mais ça a été financé par cet hôpital. Mais le gouvernement, en centralisant ces informations, sera en mesure de pouvoir partager ces meilleurs pratiques et essayer d'aider les hôpitaux, de travailler ensemble pour que l'investissement qui a été fait par un hôpital puisse bénéficier à d'autres, à des coûts moins élevés.

Alors, ça, c'est juste un exemple dans le secteur de la santé. Il y en existe peut-être dans le secteur de l'éducation. Je ne suis pas au courant, mais je pourrais parier qu'il y a certains conseils scolaires qui sont en train de faire des innovations dans ce secteur aussi.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I'll address my questions to the President of the Treasury Board. I want to thank you for your remarks today.

This government is on a campaign to privatize our public health care and public education systems. Almost every public hospital, public college, university and school board in this province are deep in debt right now, they're have funding shortfalls. Many of them are on the verge of bankruptcy. One of things—and I did a lot of research on this bill—is people in the cyber security world have said that when a government agency is underfunded, it makes them more vulnerable to cyber security attacks. As far as our colleges and universities and hospitals go, it means they don't have the funding to pay for the research to actually seize the opportunities of artificial intelligence.

My question is, will this government abandon its campaign to privatize our public colleges, our public universities, our public education system and our public hospital system, or will it allow us to continue to be at risk

of cyber security attacks and prevent our province from seizing the opportunities of artificial intelligence?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Do you know what's great about this bill? It gives us a chance to address one of the greatest threats we're facing right now, which is the threat of cyber security attacks, and of innovation going too quickly and us being unable to manage the risks that are associated with them.

I heard the members opposite complain about the fact that this gives us regulation-making authority. What that does is gives us the chance to be flexible. AI is moving faster than anyone in this room can even imagine. The technology is changing, and so we need to be nimble so that we can respond to those threats as they emerge and also respond in an innovative way, so we can also take advantage of the technologies that are coming.

Currently, within our public sector and our broader public sector, the use of AI and the protection against the uses of AI are fragmented. What's great about this bill is that it's going to help us end the fragmentation and centralize this information, so that we can be more secure and ensure a more responsible use of AI within the OPS, but also the broader public service, including hospitals, schools, child care centres and children's aid societies. This is an important bill that's going to help us address those risks, but also help us leverage this great technology.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to be back in the House after 19 weeks. Was it 19 weeks that we were shut out of this place? It is a very big responsibility, I think; we have a deep responsibility as the official opposition to hold the government to account. I know you love it—just love it. So we're happy to be back.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You know, it's okay. There's nothing going on in the province at all. Don't worry about it. Everything's under control. There's nothing on fire.

I bring that sort of energy, though, to Bill 194, Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024. I'll get to the "trust" part of this title in a few minutes. I do want to say that there obviously have been a number of examples to respond to the urgency of cyber security breaches and attacks on our public institutions across this great province.

I will say that based on the notes and based on the legislation, which I have reviewed, the goal of this particular piece of legislation is to improve privacy around AI usage and protect against cybercrime attacks in the public sector by creating a regulatory framework for the public sector to use when handling or storing Ontario's personal information, especially when vulnerable communities, such as kids or patients, are involved. The goals of the legislation are good and sound.

The explanatory note goes on to say that this will be done by increasing government regulations that will make public institutions have cybercrime and reporting infrastructure—in an ill-defined manner, though. I think that this is the major lesson of this government that they clearly

have not absorbed fully: that when you are crafting a piece of legislation, when you are designing the laws and the regs to respond to a crisis, the process in developing that legislation actually matters a lot.

I think that our critic, the member from Spadina–Fort York, has clearly articulated this, and raised it as a significant issue that this legislation unfortunately is deeply flawed because there was a lack of consultation. It was not open to all information and knowledge, and if the government was truly concerned about addressing cyber security threats, then you should have thrown that net farther. It should've been open. It shouldn't have happened behind closed doors.

We do have some concerns around the regulatory framework of Bill 194, ironically, because there are some serious trust issues here. And I want to say, the privacy commissioner of Ontario has also validated some of these concerns. I hope that the government is open to listening to some of her recommendations.

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How we got here, though, is we're standing in a place and chasing the issue, I think. This is not a new issue. The Waterloo Region District School Board had a cyber security attack six years ago, in 2018, when this government was first elected. Our critic on this issue has raised the lack of a strong fabric to address this—a social safety net, if you will—but also having the needed infrastructure and resources to ensure that our public institutions have the ability to respond to what is now a very aggressive and growing problem across this country and across this province.

There have been repeated cyber attacks against public institutions in Ontario such as hospitals, schools, children's aid and municipalities. These cyber attacks threaten both the privacy of Ontarians and the ability for these public institutions to function. There needs to be legislation creating a structure to prevent and protect Ontarians' private data in public institutions.

Some of the examples that obviously make the front page: The city of Hamilton experienced a ransomware attack, where the data was stolen and they were told to pay to get it back or prevent it from getting published—untenable position. This also compromises, obviously, trust in government, because this is personal information which, when it falls into the wrong hands, has the ability, quite honestly, to create stress and tension and financial worries as well for individual citizens in that sector.

The Toronto Public Library experienced the same thing, collapsing their IT infrastructure. And five south-western Ontario hospitals had over 325,000 patient files stolen. There are a number of examples, and I'm going to cite some of them during this short 20 minutes.

It's early days here at Queen's Park. The critic has said, "Listen, we want to get this right. We want to work with the government. We have some good suggestions to add to the debate and the discourse on Bill 194, strengthening cyber security and building trust." We hope that the government is amenable to working with us on this because we need to get this right. Lives get destroyed

sometimes when your personal financial information falls into the wrong hands. We work too hard as Ontarians to be compromised in this way.

It is important to acknowledge and to document here in this setting the issues that we have with the bill. The bill does not have concerted directives and relies on regulation from the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery to manage the bill. I've heard that the government has said, "Well, this will provide some flexibility. This means that the minister can respond and adapt." The privacy commissioner also has some concerns around this as well. Tech experts are concerned with the lack of specificity, and the sector wants to be part of the solution here.

There are also a large amount of privacy and government transparency issues with the bill, which you have to admit is a little ironic. The bill does not have an effective funding structure, as it would add new administrative requirements but does not fund them, partially as a result of the lack of the specificity, which is missing in the legislation. Finally, it does not cover privacy requirements of the private sector and thus leaves a large portion of Ontarians' private information vulnerable.

The funding and the resource piece, though, is key. This is not something that school boards or hospitals can do off the side of their desks. This is not something that is an add-on that you'll have to get to if you have the time and the resources. There is an urgency to this issue.

Now, I want to get to the privacy commissioner, because the PCO, an independent officer of the Legislature—this is free from partisanship. The mandate of the PCO is very clear around guarding and protecting privacy issues. This office has made 28 recommendations to fix the bill as it currently stands—28 recommendations—again, hoping the government is amenable to this.

These recommendations are categorized in four different areas: protecting whistle-blowers better—a very important piece to this legislation; codifying basic principles of the law instead of relying on regulation—this is again from the PCO; make the regulatory and enforcement process more transparent with the public. The public has a right to fully understand where the government is going and where you are driving this around cyber security policy; and finally, from the PCO: make sure the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery is mandated—to inform and include the PCO in regulation and enforcement. This is a key piece.

The privacy commissioner of Ontario is asking to be able to be fully engaged in developing legislation to strengthen cyber security and building trust. These recommendations are based on the precept that as the bill covers the right of privacy, it is the utmost importance that the public be heavily involved, or at least involved, in the process of creating the legislation and regulations.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know. I'm getting heckled a little bit over there, but I have to say, the public still matter in our democracy. They still want to be engaged and they want to be involved, and I have always argued on this side of the House, when they are engaged and involved, you'll

get a better piece of legislation and perhaps you'll also get better buy-in. I think this is a key thing in a democracy. I know it's not high on the agenda of this particular government.

So, the legislation and regulations—and it should not be up to the minister to unilaterally create regulations regarding privacy.

Here you have an independent officer of the Legislature catching up essentially to this piece of legislation because there wasn't an active public consultation process. This is very problematic.

These are some direct quotes from—and this is actually a CBC article and it's from a year ago. It says, "More People at Risk as Ontario Public Bodies Face Growing Wave of Cyber Attacks, Experts Say."

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's why we're bringing in the legislation.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Really?

"Experts say that that wave is putting a greater number of individuals at risk. One particularly concerning emerging trend, according to the Information and Privacy Commissioner Patricia Kosseim, is cyber attacks against municipalities, universities, school boards and hospitals."

This is a quote: "Cyber thieves have gotten onto the fact that these are large-scale institutions that house huge volumes of very sensitive personal information...."

It goes on to say that, last January, even the LCBO—I hardly ever go there, but you know—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, I will support the LCBO. I know that you're very fond of liberalizing alcohol and booze in the province of Ontario. Somehow this is the priority of your government. Now you can actually go to an ONroute and pick up a bottle of wine as you head home, but honest to God—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You're really applauding that? For the love of humanity, I just can't even believe that this is where we are and that these are the priorities of this government.

Anyway, "the LCBO had 'malicious code' embedded on their website that compromised customer data, leading some to monitor their transactions for suspicious activity. In the fall, the Toronto Public Library was hit by a cyber attack that saw data from their current and past employees stolen"—so, really, it comes down to the actual value of this data. Does the government understand the importance of guarding it, safeguarding it, protecting it, making sure it doesn't get into the wrong hands and that it's not used against the very people we are elected to serve?

"As worrying as it, experts say that the trend in Canada and around the world suggests that more of these attacks are on their way in 2024."

Now, this speaks to the urgency: "Derek Manky, chief security strategist and global vice-president of threat intelligence of cyber security firm Fortinet, points to the firm's latest research that suggests cyber criminals have largely exhausted phishing and other lower-level attempts

at breaching an organization's security, and are becoming more aggressive in their targets."

1700

Essentially, the cyber thieves have already got all the low-hanging fruit, if you will. Now, they're being more aggressive, more assertive, more ambitious, to actually gain access to personal privacy information at municipalities, at school boards, at hospitals, and they are using that information in ways that we are literally chasing after.

"In the next year, Fortinet predicts criminals will turn toward artificial intelligence to help refine their tactics, recruit insiders from organizations to help breach defences, and take advantage of large geopolitical events like elections and the 2024 Paris Olympic Games." Fortunately, that did not happen.

"'We're really dealing with true cybercriminal enterprise,' said Manky, meaning it's never been more important to learn how to properly fight back." That's the sense of urgency that we should be bringing to this issue. Does this bill meet the moment of this urgency? No, it does not.

But do you know what? There's still time to fix it. There's still time to get it right. I think that you should be looking to the privacy commissioner for that sort of expertise, and I think that the government should seriously be looking at these 28 recommendations to address some of these issues.

Let's look at some of those, because I've already said that they're pretty important. A major reason for this, of course, is defining the problem. In order to address a problem, you actually have to acknowledge it first—which has taken you some time to do so, but here we are—and then properly define what that problem is. The privacy commissioner of Ontario has made a number of recommendations that could improve on the issue of the vagueness of this legislation, like changing our preamble to a purpose clause, which will make sure that the legislation has a clearly defined purpose that can be used to help guide and inform regulation and the courts. That's the other part of this conversation that is not part of the legislation.

Now, for some legislation, it could be perfectly fine to leave it up to a minister to come up with regulations, but we are talking about people's privacy. This is one of our fundamental rights in Canada. Compromising that privacy has a great negative—the potential for the negative impacts on our personal lives, on our economy, on the health and well-being of the people that we're elected to serve should not be understated. There is a need to get this right.

Then, we also need to focus on the democracy issue that this bill represents. The bill covers how our public institutions are going to handle and protect the personal information of Ontarians. We know we need it, seeing the cyber attacks that have happened to our schools and our municipalities. The public needs to be fully informed of the regulations being created around this, and we need to have that information be mandated to be automatically made public. This legislation is supposed to serve the

public. The cyber security policy should have the public involved—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know the member from Peterborough–Kawartha is not really big on consultation and public engagement, and I know he’s really deeply offended when people criticize the legislation, but this is the privacy commissioner of Ontario. This is an independent officer of the Legislature.

Finally—the 20 minutes went so fast and I was having so much fun—I will say that if we do not properly fund this program or supply them with the right resources, they’re going to have to outsource to private companies. We need to make sure that municipalities, school boards, hospitals have the resources to do the work and to get it right—ironically, because the warning is that they may have to outsource the work of protecting the privacy of their employees and the people that they serve. I must say, we really have to be cautious about this, because we have no guarantees in this legislation that the companies are not controlled by a foreign entity. This is a big issue in this country.

As a recent example, the federal Conservative Party leader refuses to get security clearance to see how foreign interference is affecting his own party. What is the guy thinking? Maybe it’s better just to stay behind that curtain and not know what’s going on, because then you can actually declare your ignorance. This is a very problematic state of affairs. I know that the Premier’s friend, Mr. Poilievre—I know that they don’t always agree on everything, but surely we can get this right, and surely the leader of a federal national party should not have any issues with getting security clearance. Surely we can agree on this. Why would a leader of a national party not want to have access to all that information? I see my colleague over there for Cambridge really agreeing with me. It does speak to the importance of ensuring that we are protecting our democracy by protecting the information that we hold in trust. We do have guidelines, as MPPs, for instance, of how we deal with information, who we share that information with, who we get consent to share that information with.

As I said at the beginning, I think Bill 194—it’s good that it’s before us; don’t get me wrong. These are early days in this particular session. But the government seems to have lost the very definition of what it means to be transparent.

You have a very different definition of being transparent, and this is concerning not just for us, as His Majesty’s official opposition; it’s certainly concerning for me, as the finance critic for the Treasury Board, as well.

This is something that we need to get right. It isn’t a thing that you do off the side of your desk. It needs to be resourced. So let’s make sure that this bill can actually meet that moment.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: Speaker, since our government was first elected, Ontario turned from losing jobs to huge job increases because of our government’s focus on

ensuring the next generations of Ontarians have the skills and tools they need for the careers of tomorrow.

Just as this government has prioritized building infrastructure by investing in our automotive and transportation network, it is critical that we support Ontario companies by building the digital infrastructure so they can safely grow to be leaders in artificial intelligence. Ontario deserves the additional supports to remain a global leader in tech.

Will the member opposite stand with our tech sector and ensure Ontario remains globally competitive in the safe and reliable development of AI?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I have to say, the tech sector would really like to be more engaged in this conversation. They know the risks first-hand. They know the complexity first-hand as well.

It’s interesting that the member from Cambridge has gone down this line. I will say that the—John Wunderlich, who said, “While Bill 194 introduces some welcome upgrades to Ontario’s cyber security and privacy legislation, it falls short of delivering in several key areas, particularly protecting employees’ privacy.” That’s a voice from the tech sector. The tech sector wants the government to get this right—because it compromises trust in this institution, but trust in the overall economy as well.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Waterloo for your presentation—very informative.

I was quite distressed and surprised to hear that the privacy commissioner has come in after the fact of this bill, after the bill has been constructed, to say, “I haven’t been consulted. I need to be part of this process.” Can you please explain why that’s such a significant gap in preparing this bill and making sure that there is transparency and that all those issues are actually addressed so that we can protect our privacy?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I appreciate the question.

I do have to say, when I was doing the research around Bill 194, I was surprised that the privacy commissioner of Ontario has had to make 28 recommendations to fix this bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She didn’t have to.

Ms. Catherine Fife: If this is news to you, then that’s also very concerning, quite honestly. Particularly, the issue around protecting whistle-blowers, so these are individuals in these organizations who, perhaps, are seeing a contravention of Bill 194, and they come forward. They’re brave enough, they’re courageous enough to challenge the system. We have a duty to protect those people, right? Otherwise, we won’t learn what’s actually really going on. So the fact that the privacy commissioner has had to remind the government that protecting whistle-blowers who are speaking the truth and sharing key information about breaches—let’s get this right at the very least.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize, I have to make this announcement: Pursuant to

standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will, therefore, be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, please adjourn the debate.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Orders of the day?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find that there is unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Is there unanimous consent to see the clock at 6? Agreed.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt
Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of 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	