

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

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Jeudi  
21 novembre 2024

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 November 2024

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 novembre 2024

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prières / Prayers.*

### MOUNT PLEASANT GROUP OF CEMETERIES ACT, 2024

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 93(a), I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received a notice related to Bill Pr55, An Act respecting Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries.

### COMMITTEE SITTINGS

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order: I recognize the government House leader.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding the orders of the House dated October 29 and November 6, 2024, the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, and the Standing Committee on the Interior be authorized to commence the afternoon segments of their meetings on November 21, 2024, at 1:20 p.m. instead of 1 p.m.

This is for the purposes of estimates reporting.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding the orders of the House dated October 29 and November 6, 2024, the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, and the Standing Committee on the Interior be authorized to commence the afternoon segments of their meetings on November 21, 2024, at 1:20 p.m. instead of 1 p.m. Agreed? Agreed.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### CUTTING RED TAPE, BUILDING ONTARIO ACT, 2024 LOI DE 2024 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES ET À FAVORISER L'ESSOR DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Harris moved second reading of the following bill:  
Bill 227, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 227, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

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

**Hon. Mike Harris:** I would. Thank you very much.

Colleagues, we've got an hour, so strap in. It's going to be fun. I'm going to talk a lot about the good things that this government is doing and the good things that we're doing to cut red tape here in the province.

Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

I am honoured to lead off debate today, of course, as Ontario's Minister of Red Tape Reduction and to chat a little bit about the proposed Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024, that we are here debating today.

As I said, I will be sharing my time, and I want to thank the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her assistance in supporting us and helping develop this latest burden-reduction package, a key milestone in our government's mission to make life more affordable for individuals and ease the burdens placed on businesses across Ontario.

I'd also like to take a moment to thank our partner ministries for their ongoing support in helping us drive Ontario forward. Together, we are building a modern, efficient province—one that is ready to meet the realities of today and opportunities of tomorrow. Today, they have come together to make a meaningful difference for all Ontarians.

I'm proud to say that this bill is part of our largest red tape reduction package to date and has been made possible by the contributions from a total—Speaker, are you ready for it?—of 20 different ministries.

**Hon. Graham McGregor:** Wow.

**Hon. Mike Harris:** Yes.

I didn't mean to slip a Taylor Swift reference in there. I think my wife might be watching, actually.

Hi, Kim. That one was for you. No pun intended.

Let me repeat that: Twenty ministries across our government came together to make life easier and more affordable for individuals, families and businesses. It does truly show the power of teamwork. It proves that under the leadership of this Premier, government isn't the problem; it's part of the solution.

Ontario is one of the top three provinces leading the nation in red tape reduction. The government should not be an obstacle or a hindrance for the people; it should be working for them. This is the message that we are sending with this bill. We are not just cutting red tape; we are getting it done.

This is the 13th red tape reduction bill brought forward by this government since 2018. I'm proud to say we have made great progress. Our government is already saving

people and businesses in Ontario over \$1 billion in red tape compliance costs and over 1.5 million hours. And we're not stopping.

If this legislation passes, this latest red tape reduction bill would build on our progress by adding an additional \$20 million in cost savings for businesses and individuals across Ontario. On top of this, it would also save the people of this province 56,000 hours—56,000 hours—annually in compliance work. This is time that can now be spent on growth, innovation and productivity instead of unnecessary paperwork.

This bill shows our government's strong commitment to removing barriers that have held back Ontario. We are eliminating red tape to unlock Ontario's full potential, right here at home and globally.

The former Liberal government made Ontario one of the most heavily regulated provinces in Canada. Quite frankly, when they sat on this side of the House, the Liberals—propped up by their friends, of course, the NDP, from 2011 to 2014—worked against the people of Ontario. They would not hesitate to undo the progress again, if they were elected government.

Package after package, we're making life more affordable and opening up opportunities across Ontario.

And thanks to the efforts of Ontario's workers and businesses, helped by real leadership from our government, Ontario is in better shape today than it has been in decades.

Under the leadership of this Premier, we are working to continue to build up Ontario, ensuring it remains the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family.

When this Premier took office, he sent a clear message: Enough is enough. The buck stops here. It's time for change, and it's time for change for the better. We launched a determined effort to eliminate outdated regulations, streamline processes and cut through unnecessary red tape that was holding our province back. It was time to unlock Ontario's full potential, giving individuals more opportunities and giving businesses the freedom they need to grow and succeed.

This government was elected with a clear mandate to make Ontario open for business and open for everyone. We are building a province where individuals and businesses are encouraged to take risks, innovate and grow—a place where anyone can dare to succeed, and a place where government is not a hindrance, but a true partner in economic progress and prosperity.

Speaker, red tape has weighed down the people of Ontario for far too long. Under the previous Liberal government, Ontario became known as Canada's red tape capital, with more than 386,000 regulations—the highest in Canada and twice as many as the next closest province. These weren't just numbers on a page. These regulations affected everyday life. They weighed down businesses and drove up costs for individuals. They created a culture of overregulation that held back growth, opportunity and innovation.

The cost of the Liberals' red tape was staggering. Compliance costs soared to \$33,000 per business annually, the

highest in Canada. These costs were ultimately passed down to consumers, making life more expensive for all Ontarians. This is money that could have been used to invest in new equipment, hire more staff or make life more affordable. Instead, it went into compliance costs, wasted on endless paperwork, fees and approvals.

Let's not forget the impact the Liberals had on employment. Under the Liberals, 300,000 manufacturing jobs left Ontario—almost 20,000 alone just in my area, in Waterloo region. That's not just a number. That's 300,000 families who lost stable, well-paying jobs. That's thousands of communities that saw factories close and opportunities vanish. And these jobs didn't leave Ontario by accident. They left because the Liberal policies made it nearly impossible to do business here in Ontario. Their overregulation sent a message that the province of Ontario was closed for business. And it was families right here in Ontario who ultimately paid the price.

#### 0910

Instead of fostering opportunity, the Liberals piled on costs and delays that stifled growth. Rather than creating pathways for success, they put up roadblocks, making Ontario one of the most expensive and challenging places to live, work and start a business. That's the legacy the Liberals left behind—a legacy of high costs, fewer job opportunities, and a province where families were left to struggle under the weight of endless bureaucratic red tape. Let me reiterate: The Liberals chose a path that burdened individuals, drove away jobs and sent a clear message that Ontario was indeed closed for business.

That's not the Ontario that this PC government believes in. We believe in an Ontario where the government supports families, where businesses are free to grow, and where the people of Ontario can keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets instead of watching it disappear into compliance costs and under bureaucratic red tape. This is the Ontario we are building—where services are continually improving, where the cost of business is staying low, and where working with government is a positive experience.

But, Speaker, as we all know, there is always more work to be done. The key to reducing burdens is unwavering vigilance, actively listening to the people in businesses impacted by red tape, and taking decisive action to modernize regulations and break down barriers. We are a government of action, and we don't just listen; we respond. We recognize the struggles faced by those burdened by unnecessary regulations, and we are committed to delivering impactful results that make a difference.

Our ministry continues to assess regulations through the lens of seven regulatory modernization principles enshrined in the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act, the legislation which was established to increase transparency and contain the cost of doing business in Ontario. Some of those principles include recognizing standards of international best practices, applying less onerous compliance requirements to small businesses than to larger enterprises, and reducing unnecessary reporting to ensure that stakeholders don't have to repeatedly provide the same information.



But make no mistake, reducing red tape is not just a numbers game of cutting regulations. It's so much more than that. It's about the real-world impact those changes are having on real people, businesses across our province and Ontario's economy—changes like speeding up operations at the Landlord and Tenant Board so we can deliver quicker resolutions and reduce wait times; changes like making it easier for building officials to work across provincial boundaries to accelerate new home construction in northern Ontario; and changes like digital tools to help deliver key infrastructure projects such as hospitals, highways and transit on time and on budget, so we can continue to build a stronger, more efficient Ontario for everyone.

As always, this package reflects our commitment to listening and acting. Through ongoing collaboration across the province with our ministry partners and consultations with a range of stakeholders and people across the province, we are delivering practical solutions that drive real change.

These principles are at the heart of our mission to keep Ontario competitive globally and here at home, affordable, and open for business.

Under Premier Ford's leadership, we are building a stronger Ontario—one where red tape is cut, opportunities are multiplied, and the people of Ontario are empowered to succeed.

The bill we are debating today includes 27 different schedules. Our complete fall red tape reduction package has 64 individual items, including regulatory and policy changes that complement the legislative changes that are found in the bill. I'm going to spend some time highlighting a few of those items that I believe will have the most important impact for Ontarians.

When it comes to providing better services for people, Speaker, I'd like to highlight a few initiatives, starting with my own ministry, the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction.

In line with our government's commitment to making life easier and more affordable for Ontarians, we are proposing key amendments to the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act, better known as MOPBA. These changes, led by the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, are focused on reducing the burden on individuals, just as we have done for businesses. The amendments would mean ministries could consider individuals when reflecting on the principles of the regulatory modernization. Formalizing this work on burden reduction for individuals in legislation is unparalleled, positioning Ontario as a leader in this area.

This is another step we are taking to offer better services and make interacting with government more convenient for the people of Ontario. By simplifying these processes, we're making it easier for individuals and businesses to get what they need, saving valuable time and reducing frustration.

Ultimately, these legislative changes are about making Ontario more efficient, responsive and accountable to the people. By focusing on high-quality service delivery, we are fulfilling our commitment to reduce the burden on

individuals. This is another step in building a modern Ontario that works for everyone.

At the end of the day, the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act is about reversing the legacy of costly regulation created by previous governments and making life easier and more affordable for all of Ontario. This package is filled with practical, impactful measures that will help ease the burden on families and improve quality of life across the province.

Speaker, part of this vision includes making the dream of home ownership a reality, so let's talk about that dream. One of our top priorities is addressing the red tape that holds back housing development. That is why we are building off of our spring red tape reduction package, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, and bringing forward regulatory changes to the Planning Act to support the building of additional residential units, such as garden suites, laneway homes and basement apartments. These regulatory changes would reduce or eliminate the need for landowners to obtain a rezoning order or a minor variance before starting construction. This means cutting costs and saving time on each project for homeowners and builders, which will directly boost the supply of homes across this province.

Additional residential units are a tremendous opportunity for homeowners. They can rent them, help pay off their mortgages, and keep more of their own money in their pockets. This is real financial relief. It is also about supporting multi-generational living—whether it's young adults starting their lives, or maybe aging parents. By making this change, we can not only expand housing options but cut financial stress for families.

We are building strong, adaptable communities to tackle the housing affordability crisis. We are listening, we are addressing it, and we are getting it done.

We're also addressing illegal selling of new homes, which is a critical component of protecting homeowners. The Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement's amendments to the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act will help to clarify Tarion's regulation-making authority so they can crack down on illegal new home builders and sellers who are exploiting the system and putting a strain on Tarion's guarantee fund. These illegally sold and built homes are an unfair burden on legal home builders and honest buyers. With this amendment, we're giving Tarion the tools it needs to go after these bad actors and make it clear that they can't take advantage of the guarantee fund anymore. This will also allow Tarion to make future changes to better manage its deposit protection liability and keep the fund sustainable for years to come. This proposal will help identify illegal builders early on, protecting those who are purchasing new homes. Buyers will have more confidence knowing they're covered by a fair and secure system.

As you can see, our proposed amendments aim to streamline processes, enhance efficiency and protect the rights of the people of Ontario. By listening to stakeholders and using the power of digital technology, we're making services more accessible, faster and more efficient.

We're also taking bold steps to safely revitalize brown-field sites across Ontario. With changes to the Environmental Protection Act and associated regulations, we're making it easier to redevelop low-risk sites, known as brownfields. We're talking about turning unused land into homes and businesses. These changes will save municipalities and builders time and money by cutting down paperwork and red tape for redeveloping these lower-risk sites, while protecting human health and the environment. Redeveloping brownfields is environmentally responsible, protecting natural landscapes, and it promotes sustainable land use. By streamlining the redevelopment process where safe to do so, we're turning abandoned properties into vibrant communities, creating more housing options and contributing to a cleaner environment.

Speaker, brownfield redevelopment is a win for everyone involved. Beyond the environmental benefits, revitalizing these areas improves quality of life by addressing safety concerns and turning neglected spaces into thriving communities where people can live, work and play.

**0920**

The economic benefits of brownfield redevelopment are undeniable. Reclaimed land increases property values, expands the tax base and provides critical funding for local services like schools, infrastructure and public safety. This approach supports job creation, boosts the economy and makes Ontario a better place to live and invest.

By redeveloping brownfields, we're showing that our commitment to addressing the housing crisis and to protecting the environment go hand in hand.

Freezing fees for driver's knowledge and road tests is a crucial part of our commitment to making life more affordable for Ontarians. This is big; it makes it more affordable for Ontario drivers and trainees to complete their testing. Freezing the driving test fees means more people can get licensed without breaking the bank. This supports safer roads and opens more opportunities for all. In today's economic climate, every cost-saving measure matters, especially as families face rising costs across the board.

Speaker, our government is committed to a different path—one that keeps costs in check and puts families first. Our government is determined to take meaningful steps to lower costs and not raise them.

One of the ways we're achieving this is by ensuring key sectors, like the architecture sector, are supported with modern, efficient regulations.

Architects play a crucial role in keeping our buildings safe and functional across Ontario. As new building codes are introduced, it's essential that the regulatory framework for architects evolves to keep pace. Our government is focused on keeping Ontario's regulations up to date, particularly with new building codes coming into effect. This is why we are proposing amendments to the Architects Act. These updates will align with the latest building code regulations, including important provisions for large farm buildings. Under the new regulations, architects and engineers will be responsible for reviewing the construction of these buildings, ensuring they meet rigorous safety

and compliance standards. By implementing these updates, architects will have the clarity and flexibility they need to adapt to new regulations, and Ontarians will benefit from a more efficient system.

Speaking of thriving sectors, Madam Speaker, let's turn our attention to agriculture.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Mike Harris:** I'm just making sure everybody is still awake.

The Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission is proposing regulatory amendments to the Farm Products Marketing Act to remove obsolete requirements on farm marketing boards. The commission is proposing further reforms to make processor and dealer licences indefinite, rather than expiring every five years. This means less bureaucracy, less administrative burden and more efficiency, all while preserving consumer confidence. The Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission is a central figure in Ontario's regulated marketing system and holds an important public trust in the exercise of its duties. By reducing red tape and increasing flexibility, we can help it exercise these important duties. These proposed changes are a testament to the importance of collaborating closely with stakeholders.

Speaker, when we listen, we can act and we can make real improvements that matter. It is practical, it is effective, and it's exactly what this government stands for. When it comes to reducing red tape, the best ideas come from collaborating closely with stakeholders. By working together, we can identify practical solutions and find efficiencies that address real change that is needed by the people on the ground.

One such challenge is the significant delays in Ontario's civil and Family Court systems, which are affecting individuals across the province—and this includes my own riding. These delays cause immense stress for people dealing with sensitive issues like family disputes or civil claims. Our government understands the serious impact of these delays and is committed to making the court system more efficient and responsive.

That's why we're introducing amendments to the Courts of Justice Act. These changes will empower the Attorney General to directly establish rule regulations for civil and Family Courts in consultation with the judiciary. By streamlining this process, we can reduce delays and implement necessary reforms more swiftly. This means a more timely and efficient court system for those with ongoing legal matters, helping them resolve their issues and move forward with their lives.

That's why our commitment to cutting red tape extends across all sectors.

We're especially focused on supporting health care and easing burdens on our front-line workers. We know that reducing red tape plays a critical role in strengthening health care.

This package represents a strong commitment to further strengthen Ontario's long-term-care system, directly addressing the challenges that so many families face when seeking care for their loved ones.

We listened to families who have struggled with complex applications and long wait times, and we're taking action. Streamlining the health assessment form required for long-term-care admission processes will help reduce delays for applicants and their families and ease the administrative load on health care workers. This streamlined form will reduce the time clinicians spend on paperwork, allowing them to focus more on patient care. It's a common-sense change that still gathers the necessary information to safely admit individuals into long-term care.

These changes demonstrate our commitment to reducing red tape in ways that make a tangible difference for Ontario's health care system. By making these processes smoother and more efficient, we're helping families navigate the system more easily and allowing health care workers to concentrate on what truly matters: caring for the people they serve.

These measures are just a few examples of what is included in our fall red tape reduction package. The Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act is a bill designed to rebuild Ontario's economy, keep costs down and provide better services for people and businesses across Ontario.

As you can see, our proposed amendments aim to streamline processes, enhance efficiencies and make everyday life better. By listening to stakeholders and using the power of digital technology, we're making services more accessible, faster and more efficient. Whether it's speeding up approvals for additional residential units, freezing testing fees or streamlining health assessments, these changes are designed to benefit everyone involved. Additionally, we are ensuring consumer protections are stronger than ever and that our systems maintain their integrity. This is about smart, innovative governance that makes life easier and more secure for everyone across this province.

Speaker, I am pleased to report that since 2018, our government has saved individuals, businesses, not-for-profits and the broader public sector over \$1 billion in regulatory compliance costs that they would have otherwise faced. That is proof that, under Premier Ford's leadership, we are truly getting it done.

And that's not all: The changes we have put in place have also freed up, as I mentioned before, over 1.5 million hours for individuals, businesses and organizations across the public sector. We have successfully reduced the regulatory burden by approximately 6%—a significant step forward that is making life and work easier and more affordable for Ontarians.

That includes the 12 impactful red tape reduction bills passed by this Legislature since 2018, along with more than 550 individual burden-reducing actions implemented by our government.

These are real, tangible results delivered by a government that prioritizes the people of Ontario.

But we know there is always more work to be done. Our government remains focused on ensuring Ontario stays competitive and resilient in the face of future challenges. We are committing to building on our progress by continu-

ing to streamline regulations, attract more investments and support job creation in every corner of the province. We will work tirelessly to ensure Ontario remains an economic powerhouse, prioritizing policies that benefit hard-working families, strengthen public services and maintain fiscal responsibility. Every step we take is geared toward making life better and more affordable for all Ontarians, and we are determined to keep moving forward.

Speaker, the results of our efforts are undeniable. Ontario is now one of the fastest-growing regions in North America, with billions of dollars in new investment and hundreds of thousands of new jobs. We have slashed red tape, and we have slashed our deficits, so Ontario's finances are in better shape today than they have been in decades, reversing a trend of mismanagement from the previous Liberal government.

And we're not stopping there. Our efforts have earned Ontario an A- grade from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. That's the highest mark that Ontario has ever received.

**0930**

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Mike Harris:** Yes. Thank you.

We are no longer trapped in the cycle of high costs and endless delays. Instead, we're seeing historic levels of investment and job creation, billions in new auto and manufacturing investments, an influx of high-paying jobs, and a growing economy that is keeping more money in the pockets of the people across this province.

Speaker, let me be clear: Our government is committed to a common-sense approach to eliminating red tape. We are making sure that every regulation we cut or streamline translates to real benefits for the people of Ontario. We're not just making promises; we're delivering real results for families, businesses and communities across the province.

With this bill, and through the ongoing work of red tape reduction, we are putting Ontario on a path to long-term prosperity, creating a province where costs are lower, opportunities are growing and families can build a brighter future. Under the leadership of this Premier, we're not just cutting red tape; we're building an Ontario where opportunity and affordability go together. Through this legislation, we're putting people first, making life easier and building a province where opportunity and prosperity are within reach for all.

I ask all members here in this House to support this bill.

With the couple of seconds I have remaining before I turn it over to my parliamentary assistant, I want to give a sincere thank you to my team at the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction and to the team that is led by our deputy minister, Maud Murray. They have done a phenomenal job in working together across ministries, putting this bill together and truly making a difference in the lives of Ontarians.

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

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I want to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

I am honoured to stand here and speak in support of the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act for the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction.

I want to offer my congratulations to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction on his first bill as minister. I also want to thank his dedicated team at the ministry for their tireless work and dedication. It's not easy to work with all the ministries, to get together and put together such a large document. It's so important. So thank you to his team for all their work.

Having the privilege of not only working with the minister, but being his former desk mate, I can personally attest to his dedication, his diligence and his commitment to serving the people of Kitchener–Conestoga and the people of Ontario.

Thank you, Minister, for your hard work for the people of Ontario.

It has been a pleasure collaborating with him and his team.

Today marks a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to reduce unnecessary burdens on businesses and families. What we're doing today is not only about regulatory reform; it's about ensuring that our government works for the people and not against them. We are continuing to build an Ontario that fosters growth, innovation and prosperity for everyone, and this bill is a vehicle that allows us to do just that.

As the Minister of Red Tape Reduction has highlighted, our government's red tape reduction efforts have already delivered over \$1 billion in annual compliance cost savings. That's \$1 billion that translates into real benefits for the hard-working people of Ontario, including those in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. Whether it's reducing costs for small business owners or making everyday life more affordable for families, the impacts of the measures are profound. These numbers tell us that we are delivering results. The savings in compliance costs mean more money in the pockets of everyday people—money that can be used to pay for groceries, child care, housing, or saving for the future. This is not just about data; it's about making a meaningful difference in the lives of millions of people across the province.

Today, I am proud to say that with the latest red tape reduction package, which this bill is an important part of, we are continuing to build on that progress. If this legislation passes, it would provide an additional \$20 million in cost savings and free up 56,000 hours. That is money and time that will remain with the people of Ontario rather than being lost to outdated, cumbersome regulations. We are proud of how far we've come.

Red tape has tied down the people of Ontario for far too long. The previous Liberal government entangled this province with endless red tape. With more than 386,000 regulations on the books, Ontario led the country in overregulation. As a result of the Liberals' failed policies, over 300,000 manufacturing jobs left Ontario, along with the prosperity and the hope that once defined this great province.

I also recall a previous Premier, who may be familiar with our current Minister of Red Tape Reduction, who created the Red Tape Commission. It was a dedicated body that focused on reducing excessive bureaucracy and regulations, especially for small businesses.

Speaker, do you know what the Liberals did when they came to power in 2003? They dismantled that commission. They halted its vital work, and that's an absolute shame.

But under the leadership of this current Premier, things are changing for the better. We are undoing the damage done by the previous Liberal government. Those dark years of regulatory overreach are behind us, thanks to the bold steps we are taking to ensure Ontario remains an affordable and accessible place under our government—an Ontario that is the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Since taking office, we have reduced Ontario's regulatory burden by nearly 6%, saving individuals, families and businesses over \$1 billion every year. This isn't just money saved. It is money that can now be reinvested into our economy. It is money that families can use to cover their expenses or save. And it is money businesses can reinvest in growth, innovation and job creation.

We have also given back something more valuable than money: time. Through our red tape reduction efforts, we have freed up 1.5 million hours every year. That is 1.5 million hours that families, workers and businesses can spend on what truly matters to them, rather than being bogged down by unnecessary and outdated regulations. Time is a priceless resource, and we are giving it back to the people of Ontario.

Our Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024, is the latest step in our mission to make Ontario a place where people and businesses can thrive without unnecessary barriers. This legislation is about cutting the chains that have held back growth and opportunity in our province for far too long. It's about building an Ontario where businesses can thrive, where families can succeed, and where our communities can prosper.

Let me highlight some of the key measures in this fall's package.

We are proposing legislative amendments to the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act to make it mandatory for all ministries to measure and report on activities aimed at reducing administrative burden on individuals. This will ensure clear accountability and highlight this government's efforts to reduce burdens on individuals, making life easier and more affordable for everyone.

Ontario will also be establishing the Ontario payroll burden reduction consultative forum, with key stakeholders and payroll experts such as the National Payroll Institute, also known as NPI, to facilitate discussions and generate recommendations aimed at reducing payroll burdens for business owners across Ontario.

The Attorney General is proposing changes to the Residential Tenancies Act and statutory procedure act to help speed up operations at the Landlord and Tenant Board by increasing tribunal efficiencies. Additionally, Ontario

will explore the feasibility of partnering with third-party organizations to improve access to Landlord and Tenant Board orders for credit reporting and enhance public transparency. The government will also update existing information on Ontario.ca to better inform landlords, tenants and the public about their rights, responsibilities, and consumer reporting.

At its core, this bill is about making life easier and more affordable for everyone in the province of Ontario. One way we are achieving this is by accelerating housing and infrastructure development through targeted measures. We are proposing regulatory changes that will make it a bit easier for building officials to work across provincial boundaries, addressing a key issue in northern Ontario communities like Kenora, where there is a critical shortage of municipal building officials. This shortage has contributed to delays in construction projects, especially in the housing sector, which impacts not only local development but also affordability and accessibility for families across the region.

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By allowing qualified building officials from Manitoba to practise in Ontario, we are streamlining the qualification process, ensuring that local communities can meet their building code enforcement needs more efficiently. Through a pilot program, Ontario will assess the qualifications of Manitoba building officials, allowing them to contribute to our province's growth. This approach will prevent unnecessary delays in construction, and it will ensure that new homes and infrastructure can be built on time and to code.

In addition, the government will clarify that building officials from other provinces can participate in Ontario's building inspector internship program, helping municipalities fill staffing gaps and meet immediate recruitment needs. These steps will ensure that municipalities, particularly in northern Ontario, have the personnel required to maintain a steady flow of construction and development. This regulatory change is expected to receive widespread support from stakeholders, especially those in the municipal sector who have long called for measures to address staffing shortages.

By removing barriers and easing credential recognition, municipalities will no longer need to rely on costly external consultants—which can cost up to three times more than directly hiring a building official—which saves our municipalities money. This alone is a significant cost savings that will benefit taxpayers and our local governments, especially in the north.

Additionally, we are reducing the time and costs associated with qualifying as a building official in Ontario. It currently takes at least six months to pass all required building code exams, with costs exceeding \$750 per official.

By recognizing out-of-province credentials, we are shortening the process and saving both time and money—critical resources that can instead be directed towards accelerating housing and infrastructure development.

The benefits of this initiative are clear: By easing credential recognition, especially in northern Ontario, we are

fast-tracking essential housing and infrastructure projects that are vital to the growth of our communities. This means more homes will be built faster, infrastructure improvements will be made, and municipalities will have the support that they need to thrive. In turn, this will make Ontario a more affordable, accessible place to live, work and, of course, raise your family.

Our government remains committed to reducing burdensome compliance requirements for small businesses, allowing them to grow, succeed and continue driving our economy forward. Whether it's housing development or business growth, this government is making real progress in removing barriers and delivering results for the people of Ontario.

In line with this, we are proposing amendments in this bill that would eliminate the annual registration renewal fees for rural Ontario farm-product dealers, saving them both time and money. These important legislative and regulatory amendments to the Farm Implements Act, also known as the FIA, will deliver significant benefits for farm equipment dealers, distributors and, ultimately, the farmers who rely on them. These changes are designed to reduce administrative burdens, streamline dispute resolution and lower costs for Ontario's farm implement industry, providing a much-needed boost for rural communities and businesses across the province.

One of the key provisions of this bill will prohibit dealership agreements from restricting the application of Ontario law or Ontario jurisdiction over disputes. This change will ensure that disputes involving Ontario dealers and distributors are governed by Ontario's legal framework, providing fairness and transparency for all parties.

We are also proposing to make AFRAAT, which is the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal, the final decision-maker in the dispute resolution process under the FIA. This change simplifies the appeals process and reduces administrative pressure on the Divisional Court. While stakeholders can still seek judicial review, if necessary, this amendment will provide faster resolutions and ensure more efficient handling of disputes.

Another key aspect of the bill is requiring dealership agreements to remain in place during the appeal process. This is a critical protection for dealers, ensuring that their businesses aren't unjustly terminated while a dispute is under review.

The bill also introduces a change that will be widely welcomed by both dealers and distributors: requiring one-time registrations with no annual renewals and eliminating associated fees. This is a straightforward, cost-saving measure that will significantly reduce the administrative load and ongoing expenses for businesses. By removing the current \$200 registration fee for dealers and the \$300 fee for distributors, we are making it easier for these businesses to focus on what matters: serving farmers and supporting rural communities.

These amendments are the result of ongoing consultations with stakeholders, including the Canadian Equipment Dealers Association, CEDA, which has been a strong advocate for many of these changes. These updates reflect

the evolving needs of Ontario's agricultural sector and our commitment to fostering a fair, efficient and competitive marketplace for farm equipment.

Together, these updates to the Farm Implements Act will enhance business operations, reduce costs and ensure that Ontario's farming sector remains competitive and sustainable for the years to come.

Furthermore, we are proposing to make it easier and more convenient for people with vision loss to receive more support closer to home. We know that accessing essential supports like white canes and cane tips can be challenging, and that's why we're taking action by proposing to pilot a service delivery model that will bring these supports closer to home and help people access what they need.

The first step in our plan is to issue a request for bids to find a supplier of white canes and tips. Once we secure that supplier, Ontario will provide full coverage for two white canes and two cane tips each year. This means no more waiting, no more stress—just the reliable access that individuals with vision loss deserve.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Great job. That's really good.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Thank you.

And we're not stopping there. We're also modernizing our processes to make sure that people get the support they need when they need it. This includes offering direct shipping to clients, which will cut down on the administrative burden. And instead of having to reapply each and every year, individuals will only need to reapply once every five years.

This change is the result of extensive feedback from the vision loss community, and it is a direct response to the real needs of those individuals in Ontario who rely on these supports.

So what does this mean? It means we're making the process easier, more efficient and more accessible. We're creating opportunities for Ontario businesses by leveraging bulk purchasing, and we're helping reduce costs for the health care system, all while delivering better service for the people who need it most. This is a win-win for our province.

The Canadian Council of the Blind, along with other organizations, has long advocated for increased coverage, and we're proud to take this step to improve accessibility.

Speaker, this is just the beginning. By investing in modern solutions and responding to community feedback, we are ensuring a more efficient and accessible future for all Ontarians, especially those with vision loss.

In addition to improving health care services, we're introducing cutting-edge solutions in other key areas. Using digital twin technology helps us to deliver vital infrastructure projects such as hospitals, highways and transit on time and on budget.

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For those unfamiliar with the concept, digital twins are virtual models of physical objects—a powerful tool that allows us to simulate and predict risks and challenges before construction even begins. With digital twin technology, we can create virtual models of essential services

like electrical, water, gas, and waste water systems. This allows us to identify potential conflicts, such as utility issues, before they become costly problems. By doing this, we can save taxpayers money, improve worker safety and ensure projects are completed on schedule.

This is not just about using modern tools; it is about adopting a smart, innovative approach to problem-solving that will keep Ontario at the forefront of technological advancements. Through the use of digital twins, we are building a more connected, efficient and forward-thinking province.

These projects were selected because of their complexity, including existing and planned electrical, water, gas, and waste water systems.

By using digital twins, we can avoid delays and cost overruns. We can improve safety and enhance project delivery across the board. By adopting the digital twins, Ontario is not only improving our infrastructure delivery, but also reinforcing our commitment to building a more competitive and connected future for the province.

Speaker, these digital modelling tools are just one example of how we are using technology to enhance service delivery across Ontario. As we continue to innovate and streamline services, we will ensure that the people of Ontario have access to smarter, faster and more efficient solutions.

Today, the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, along with our partner ministries, continues to prioritize the well-being of the people of Ontario and seeks to create an environment where businesses can thrive, families can prosper, and we can ensure our communities remain vibrant and competitive. Through this proposed legislation and its regulatory reforms, we are not simply making incremental changes; we are transforming the way government interacts with people and the private sector, ensuring that it is efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of all.

As we've discussed today, the proposed amendments to the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024, are grounded in the principle of making life easier, more affordable and more accessible for everyone in the province. We are taking concrete steps to reduce red tape and create an environment in which people can succeed.

Our efforts to reduce unnecessary compliance costs have already resulted in more than \$1 billion in savings for businesses and individuals alike. These savings aren't abstract; they are real benefits that are helping to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario. It's money back in the pockets of hard-working families and reinvested in growing businesses that, in turn, create jobs and opportunities. It's about ensuring that businesses can focus on growth, not navigating unnecessary red tape, and that families can focus on what is truly important and what truly matters: spending time together.

But we're not stopping here. We will continue to introduce innovative measures aimed at enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of our government. Whether it is through simplifying the process for building officials in northern Ontario to ensure that critical infrastructure

projects continue on time or improving accessibility for people with vision loss, we are relentlessly focused on making Ontario a better place for everyone.

In fact, the integration of technology is central to our approach. With pilot projects like digital twins for infrastructure development, we are embracing cutting-edge solutions that will improve project outcomes, save taxpayers money and keep Ontario competitive in a global economy.

This is not just about cutting costs; it's about building a smarter, more connected and more resilient province. These measures represent an investment in Ontario's future, ensuring that we are prepared for tomorrow's challenges while addressing the needs of today.

We also understand the importance of working in partnership with community leaders, listening to their concerns and acting on their feedback. Through consultations with industry experts, municipalities and advocacy groups, we have crafted a set of amendments that reflect the different needs of the people of Ontario and build on the progress we have already made. These partnerships ensure that we are not just reducing red tape, but we're doing so in a way that strengthens our communities and boosts our economy.

One of the cornerstones of this bill is its ability to protect consumers and maintain the integrity of our systems. While we are reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens, we are equally committed to ensuring safety. This is about finding the right balance between encouraging growth and safeguarding the health and safety of the people of Ontario and the environment. We believe these changes will continue to foster an environment where businesses can thrive, while maintaining the high standards and protections that the people of Ontario expect.

Our commitment to reducing red tape is not a one-time effort; it's a continuous journey. We understand that as the province evolves, so too must our regulatory framework. That is why we will never stop working to improve government services, reduce unnecessary burdens and make life easier. This legislation is just another step in that ongoing journey. As the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction continues their work, we will continue to look for ways to eliminate outdated processes and create efficiencies that benefit all of Ontario.

In closing, the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024, and the proposals contained within it are a clear demonstration of this government's dedication to building a better Ontario for everyone. The savings, the improved services, the job creation, and the investment in future infrastructure are just the beginning. We are laying the groundwork for an Ontario that works smarter—a place where businesses grow, families thrive and communities prosper. We are focused on the future, and this bill is just a single chapter in that story.

I urge all members, regardless of their political affiliation, to support this bill. Let's make the lives of the constituents in your ridings easier and more affordable.

Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present these important reforms, and for your continued

support in ensuring that Ontario remains the best place to live, to work and to raise a family.

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

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** My question is to the minister.

Minister, I was recently speaking with Ben Murphy from Murphy's Law Distillery in Elmira—someone in your riding—and they were expressing how Ontario's craft distillers are being crushed under a punishing 61.5% tax. Ontario recently removed the 6.1% tax on wine vineyards, but this tax is 10 times that.

Will there be any effort from this government to provide fairness for Ontario's craft distillers?

**Hon. Mike Harris:** Actually, Ben and I talk on a pretty regular basis.

Yes, I can understand his frustration.

I've certainly had a chance to talk to some other small craft distillers—Dixon's distillery, as well, in Guelph. I'm not sure if you had an opportunity to chat with them.

These are our local companies that provide good jobs to folks locally. Trying to expand their distribution networks and looking at ways that we can reform some of the taxation pieces is definitely something that's on our radar. We've had the conversations, and we look forward to some good news to come in the future on that.

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I want to say thank you to the minister and the parliamentary assistant for bringing this important bill.

Very simple mathematics: When you're having a revenue of 10 and your expenses are 12, you have no choice to move, to close, to find efficiency. Thank you to this government—that we are looking into it and we're making sure we are helping our communities grow their revenue, reduce their expenses.

Reducing red tape is a critical measure that helps Ontario maintain its position as a key player in both North America and the global economy.

**1000**

My question is very simple. To the minister: What can we tell the business community? What is coming through this red tape bill?

**Hon. Mike Harris:** Thank you very much to the member from Mississauga—Malton.

I can tell you that this is the 14th red tape reduction package that we have put forward here in the province of Ontario since 2018. This will move the needle even further. We've already saved businesses, regulated entities, the broader public sector, over \$1 billion alone just through red tape reduction. As I highlighted earlier, that also translates into 1.5 million hours saved. They're not having to spend that time doing paperwork in the morning, when they open up their store or business—hiring more people, specifically, to do that paperwork. So they're able to reinvest that money back into their business.

As a former small business owner myself, I know that was often what my morning looked like—filling out

forms, whether it be for the government of Canada, the government of Ontario, or a local municipality.

Anything that we can do to help business is definitely something that this government needs to take very seriously. We are doing that.

I thank you for the question.

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

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** This bill codifies the rule of system principal. System principals in our education system oversee support programs and initiatives like safe schools, Indigenous education, special education. That's a role that's already taking place within our systems, but the challenge for these principals is that they do not have the resources to actually meaningfully implement the programs that they're being asked to see.

The funding for safe schools is only 14 cents per student per day.

This week, we've seen a vicious attack on an educational assistant, which has actually put them into a coma. This shouldn't be happening.

Simply having a system principal isn't going to address the challenge if they don't have the resources to meaningfully make our schools safe. I don't see the resources in the bill.

When are these resources coming to actually support our students and schools?

**Hon. Mike Harris:** I'd like to highlight that there has been no government that has made more investment into school systems than this Ontario PC government.

I think it's incumbent on the school boards to look inwards and see where they are spending their money. We have put legislation in place that will now make sure that school boards are publicly posting their expenditures. I look forward to seeing where that money is going, because I'm sure there are some areas that maybe could use some investment moved into other areas, like investing in system principals—maybe not having trustees and board directors going on trips to Europe, and instead, properly funding the programs that need to be funded.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I was listening intently, and I appreciated the minister's comments.

I know the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore is very intent, as is the member, on making sure that the businesses in her community thrive.

I was just wondering if either one wanted to comment on some of the proposed items that will really cut the red tape for these small businesses, to help lower their costs, to ease these burdens and make it a bit easier to have businesses thrive in Ontario.

**Hon. Mike Harris:** We are always consistently putting regulatory reform at the top of what we are doing.

I think one of the interesting things that our ministry has done over the last little while is implement a 10-year review process that will actually have all of our government ministries looking back to regulations that are 10 years or older, to see if they're redundant, to see if they

can be sunsetted, to see if they're duplicative. In conjunction with that, of course, we've also launched an incredible program that will be coming online very soon, using AI to go through current regulation and make sure that, again, we don't have those redundant pieces or duplications.

It's always good to see our ministry and our partner ministries putting their best foot forward to make sure that they are doing the things necessary to make sure that we are cutting red tape for our small businesses and making sure that they're able to reinvest back into what they do best.

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

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** For a government that claims to hate red tape, this government surely has added a lot of red tape; for example, requiring municipalities to apply to the province if they want to install bike lanes, and adding red tape to not-for-profit child care centres, creating barriers that prevent them from creating more spaces that parents desperately need.

My question to the minister is, on issues that really impact people's lives, why does this government add more red tape?

**Hon. Mike Harris:** Well, let's talk about bike lanes for a second. Less than 3% of Ontarians use bike lanes to commute, get to work, travel around.

Quite frankly, I live in a community that has bike lanes, but when I come here and I drive around the city of Toronto and it takes me three hours to travel 116 kilometres because of the gridlock in this city—a lot of it is contributed by the fact that the city of Toronto has decided to tear up live lanes of traffic and put bike lanes in place.

So my question back to the member is, if we had an election today, do you think your party would win on bike lanes, or would we?

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I want to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her presentation today. It was a very thoughtful presentation.

I enjoy my discussions with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore because her riding is very different from mine. Her riding is very urbanized, and mine is very rural with very small municipalities in it.

I want to ask her about the bike lane conversation that just came up a moment ago. By removing bike lanes and restoring them to the traffic lanes they originally were, how does that help small businesses in Etobicoke–Lakeshore? I would like to hear that from the member of Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Well, I'm happy to answer. I thank you very much for the question, and the member opposite for her question about small businesses and cutting red tape.

I'll tell you, those bike lanes caused a lot of red tape and caused a lot of hardship for small businesses in our



community. Speaker, 100% of the businesses along Bloor Street were hurting because of those bike lanes.

So this government is stepping up. They're bringing common sense to our community to make sure that those small businesses can survive.

We said we would do whatever we can to make sure our small businesses can survive and exceed and excel. Those are the lifeblood of our communities.

The member opposite from Parkdale knows the same thing. She has a beautiful area along Bloor Street that has businesses that are also suffering due to bike lanes.

This government is not going to let small businesses suffer. We're going to remove that red tape. We're going to remove the burden from the community. We're going to get people home to their children faster so they can get to their soccer games, their hockey games faster. We are going to remove those bike lanes off Bloor Street so our businesses can flourish.

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

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I'll be sharing my time this morning with the member for Kiiwetinoong.

I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the residents of Ottawa West-Nepean to speak to Bill 227, which is omnibus legislation—it's got 27 schedules in one bill.

This morning, I'll be speaking to schedule 5, which addresses our education system. This schedule of the bill codifies the role of system principals. This is a role that already exists within our education system. We already have system principals working across school boards in the province. So it's not a bad thing to have this codified in our Education Act, to specify what the role of a system principal is and what the criteria for being appointed to one of these roles is. As I said, we have these roles already across our education system.

A number of school boards have a system principal to address safe schools, for instance. The Thames Valley District School Board has a system principal whose title is "principal for safe schools and well-being." They also have a system principal for special education.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has a system principal for Indigenous education, and they also have a system principal for equity, who is invested in ensuring the success of our students across various barriers to educational success.

**1010**

What I don't see in this legislation is what our education system actually needs to address these areas. We have these system principals in place already, and yet our schools are suffering a crisis of violence.

Just this week, we saw an education worker suffer extreme harm in a school. They are currently in a hospital, in a coma.

That should never happen to any worker in any sector. It should certainly not be happening to educational assistants. And our students should not have to witness their beloved educators experience this kind of severe assault and this kind of serious harm.

This government is only committing 14 cents per student per day towards student safety. This is why we have a serious crisis with student violence. Our students are not properly supported. They do not have the staff and the resources to meet their needs, and a student with unmet needs is a frustrated student, who may lash out.

My colleague the MPP for Sudbury, the NDP's labour critic, and I worked with teachers and education workers to develop a plan that would address student safety—an emergency plan to end school violence in the province. We asked the government to implement this plan in September, and since then there have been crickets; there has been nothing from this government to address the issue of student safety and worker safety in our schools. Now we have this very serious incident that has occurred.

What do we need to see before this government will actually act? Does an educator need to lose their life in one of our schools before this government will take the issue seriously?

Simply having system principals in our schools to address school safety does not address the crisis if they do not have the resources they need to make meaningful change on student safety.

We also have system principals for special education. Again, the government is seriously underfunding special education in the province. School boards are spending tens of millions of dollars more on special education than what they are receiving for a system in which parents of kids with special needs and with disabilities are sending their kids off to school in the morning not even knowing if they will be safe, let alone whether or not they will learn anything at school that day.

We have educational assistants who are doing their best, who are running back and forth between students all day long—only after the crisis has already occurred.

And because school boards have had to cut to the bone because of this government's underfunding of education, and now they have to make further cuts because of the government's rules around deficits, about the fact that the government won't provide the funding to actually meet student needs, now school boards are looking to cut special education programs. So we have school boards across the province that are eliminating congregate classes for these students, which means that their safety is once again being put in jeopardy and they are not receiving the resources and supports they need to succeed in a classroom, to make integration and inclusion a reality—instead of finding a new way of excluding these students who deserve better from this government.

We've also seen with Indigenous education that the government has not been clear or transparent about where that funding is going. In fact, they have moved funding from one envelope to another that actually took resources out of the classroom for Indigenous education. So it's fantastic that the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has a system principal for Indigenous education, but if we are not properly funding Indigenous education, that system principal isn't going to be able to make a difference for our Indigenous students, and our other students aren't

going to receive the education they should receive on Indigenous culture and history, on the treaties, on our responsibilities for reconciliation.

The role of system principals in our school system is important, but if we are not going to provide the funding and the resources for them to actually be able to carry out the programs and initiatives that they are being asked to do, it doesn't make a difference for our students.

At the end of the day, what we want to see is every student in our schools being safe, coming home safely at the end of the day. We want them to be supported in their learning, to have the educators, the resources, the attention that they need and deserve to succeed at school.

Simply codifying system principals in the Education Act doesn't achieve any of that. In fact, it makes no difference at all in our education system, since these principals are already playing this crucial role.

If the government actually wanted to help our education system succeed, if they wanted to help every student in our education system succeed, they would be making the significant investments that we need—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** My apologies to the member.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** It is now time for members' statements.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### OPERATION RED NOSE

**Mr. Tyler Allsopp:** I rise today to draw attention to a great program that has been running for 20 years in my riding of Bay of Quinte, which helps to keep our community safe over the holiday season. It was an honour to be in attendance last Sunday morning for the campaign launch for this year's Operation Red Nose.

Operation Red Nose is an incredible program that prevents impaired driving by picking up clients and driving them home in their own cars, so we can all celebrate the holiday season safely. This program is available all throughout the riding, including Quinte West, Belleville and Prince Edward county.

Operation Red Nose runs on Friday and Saturday nights throughout the holiday season, as well as New Year's Eve, which is a Tuesday, from 7 p.m., with last call set at 1:30 a.m.

The program is free to use, but donations are encouraged, and all proceeds go towards great community supports, including the YMCA, to send kids to camp free of charge.

For the program to be successful, it takes over 300 volunteers, and I am excited to volunteer as a driver for the first time, this year.

If you're interested in helping out or gathering more info, please go to [rednosequinte.ca](http://rednosequinte.ca).

Thank you to Rick Watts, David Allen and the whole team at Operation Red Nose, including this year's co-

chairs, Patricia Guernsey and Michael Callaghan. Thank you for all your hard work to keep our community safe.

This holiday season, make the right call. Call Operation Red Nose at 613-962-4334 and get home safe.

### HOMELESSNESS

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Leading up to the national day of housing, we face a critical issue that demands urgent attention: homelessness in Ontario.

We've invited over 100 housing advocates from across the province to call on this government to create and fund a plan to end homelessness.

The homeless numbers are stark, but behind those numbers are real people: our neighbours, our friends, our families.

Ontario is in the throes of a homelessness crisis of staggering proportions. Recent estimates from an internal government document indicate that over 234,000 people in Ontario are homeless. This figure underscores the inadequacy of the government's existing measures. On top of that, we have over 1,400 encampments across the province in every city and town.

The gendered impacts of the housing crisis deserve special attention. For women and gender-diverse people, homelessness isn't just about lacking a roof over their heads; it's about their survival in the face of violence. Women experiencing homelessness are disproportionately victims of physical and sexual violence, both in the streets and in the shelters. Many are fleeing domestic abuse.

According to the 2019 Auditor General's report, Ontario lacks a comprehensive provincial plan to prevent and reduce homelessness.

We have asked this government many times, when will we see their plan, when will they address the issue properly—and they have failed to do so today. They must listen to the advocates who are coming in this time around.

### NEW HAVEN LEARNING CENTRE

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I rise today to highlight the incredible work of New Haven Learning Centre and the vital role they play in supporting individuals and families impacted by autism spectrum disorder in Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

For many years, New Haven has been a beacon of hope, delivering life-changing services to help individuals with autism thrive. Their tireless commitment to creating a supportive, inclusive environment has inspired not only just the families they serve, but our entire community.

Last week, New Haven hosted their annual Changing Lives Gala, where I was deeply humbled to receive the Les and Kae Martin Inspirational Leader Award. While I am deeply humbled by this recognition, it is truly a reflection of New Haven's extraordinary efforts and our shared commitment to making Ontario a place of opportunity and support for everyone.

During the challenges of COVID-19, I was proud to help New Haven by ensuring they received masks to protect their students, staff and families.

I've also had the honour of seeing and supporting their work first-hand during multiple visits, including one with our Premier and our minister, to shine a light on the invaluable work being done at their centre.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to New Haven Learning Centre's staff, clients, families and supporters for their dedication. Their work changes lives and reminds us of the importance of partnership in building stronger communities.

I look forward to continuing our partnership and supporting their efforts to expand these vital services. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive Ontario.

1020

### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Homeowners who have invested their life savings into purchasing their homes are living through a nightmare that is Tarion. Tarion is supposed to be a not-for-profit consumer protection organization established by the Ontario government to administer the province's new home warranty program. However, this government has known for years that Tarion does not operate for the protection of homebuyers. It protects home builders, time after time.

Tarion must be eliminated and replaced. Tarion's CEO and board must be removed. The Auditor General has published reports documenting massive bonuses for Tarion executives, upwards of 60%, when homeowner claims are turned down.

Wendy Wolman in my community has a message for everyone: "No one should use Tarion.... I found out after my purchase that my home had been flooded before I bought it. My builder did not disclose. He covered it up and then blamed me.... There is no one to help you in Tarion and no oversight at all.... Tarion is built on lies and is a corrupt corporation that needs a good cleanout. Send the rats scurrying." I couldn't agree more with Wendy.

Barbara Captijn, founder of reform Tarion, explains that Tarion is seeking to make it mandatory for new home purchasers to register their purchase agreements—APS—with Tarion. They also want to reduce protections for homeowners who don't do this. Nowhere under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act does it say Tarion has the right to do this.

When will this Premier take responsibility for Tarion's corruption, gut it and build a system that actually works for homebuyers?

### CHRISTMAS PARADES IN PETERBOROUGH-KAWARTHA

**Mr. Dave Smith:** We've come to that time of year when many communities start to celebrate the festive season with Christmas parades.

Just this past weekend, the Lions Clubs for Buckhorn, Havelock and Lakefield put on their yearly celebration. Individuals, organizations and businesses took the time to

decorate trailers, trucks and, quite often, ATVs and side-by-sides with lights, tinsel and Christmas decorations, and were often wearing red and white hats.

It's always a great sight to watch so many from our community come out and line the streets to watch and cheer on the efforts of their neighbours and join in the festive spirit. The excitement that you see in the faces of those kids who are watching the parade, the joy a child shows when they're given a simple piece of chocolate or a candy cane is something that's hard to explain if you haven't actually witnessed it. Even if it's just for a few minutes, we all have the opportunity to put our struggles behind us and rejoice in the fun of celebrating something.

I've been in three Santa Claus parades so far this season, and we have many more to come.

On November 30, you can join me at 11 o'clock in the morning in Cordova, at 2 o'clock that afternoon in Apsley, and 5 o'clock, later that afternoon, in Warsaw.

On December 7, we'll be in Peterborough at 4:30, for the start of the Kinsmen Santa Claus parade.

And we'll be wrapping things up on December 8, in Curve Lake, at 5:30.

Please consider coming out to your local parade and joining in the festivities.

### SENIORS' SERVICES

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** I rise today to share some reflections from a recent visit to CHATS, a remarkable community organization that is doing incredible work right here in our province. Not only is CHATS deeply committed to supporting our seniors through programs like Meals on Wheels, but they are also playing a vital role in helping integrate new immigrants. Their comprehensive approach includes English-as-a-second-language classes and mental health support, ensuring that newcomers have the tools they need to succeed and contribute to our community.

This reminds me of my own experience as a newcomer. Over 40 years ago, I was supported by a community that welcomed me with open arms, and it's heartwarming to see that same spirit of care extended to today's immigrants.

I want to thank Minister Cho for his dedication to our seniors—and a special thanks to Minister Parsa for his leadership and commitment to social services in Richmond Hill.

Organizations like CHATS embody the values of compassion and inclusion. I am proud to support their work.

### KIWANIS SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Giving back, especially micro-giving, is more than just an act of kindness. It is a powerful way to strengthen our communities and shape a brighter future.

Since 1954, every year the Kiwanis club partners with Staples for the local school supply drive, offering shoppers an opportunity to directly support students, parents and

teachers in our community. Led by dedicated members like David Bushell, with over 445,000 members in 85 nations, Kiwanis annually raises over \$390 million, dedicating more than 7.7 million hours to champion youth-focused local initiatives.

Here at home, this year, the drive raised an astounding \$300,000 in donations across Ontario, all of which will directly benefit children in need in Ontario.

I am so proud of our local champions in Mississauga–Malton, Kal and his team at Staples Heartland, for raising nearly \$8,000—placing their store among the top performers in the province—to provide backpacks and essential school supplies, ensuring that every child starts the school year ready to learn and thrive.

Thank you to the Kiwanis club of Mississauga and Staples Heartland for your act of kindness and, above all, to the kind residents of Mississauga–Malton for your unwavering dedication to giving back. You are the example of Ontario spirit.

Let's keep building a better and stronger Ontario.

#### CHRISTMAS EVENTS IN NICKEL BELT ÉVÉNEMENTS DE NOËL À NICKEL BELT

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Christmas is in the air in Nickel Belt, and I would like to remind everyone of a few of the wonderful activities organized in the coming weeks.

This Saturday, November 23, the Sudbury Santa Claus parade will start at 5:30.

Saturday, November 30, “le train des Fêtes,” the holiday express in French River, starts at 7 p.m. at the Rutter train station near Alban in my riding.

Also on November 30, Capreol's candle walk, tree lighting and Santa Claus parade will start at 4:45 at the Northern Ontario Railroad Museum.

The following weekend, on Saturday, December 7, the Christmas parade and potluck feast at Wahnapiatae First Nation starts at 5.

Le vendredi 13 décembre, ce sera l'ouverture officielle des Lumières d'hiver.

On Friday, December 13, Winter Wonderlights will start at 5:30 at Whitewater park in Azilda, organized by Café Heritage.

On Saturday, December 14, the Christmas tree lighting at Anderson Farm Museum in Lively starts at 6.

I hope to see you at those wonderful events.

In closing, I want to thank all of the volunteers who work so hard to organize these events, creating memories that will enrich children's lives.

Un gros merci à tous les bénévoles. Merci beaucoup. Thank you very much. Kitchi meegwetch.

#### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Solicitor General Michael Kerzner recently announced a vital investment of more than \$32 million to support the mental health and well-being of first responders and public safety personnel. This funding will

launch the new Mental Health Supports for Public Safety Personnel Program, which is designed to provide specialized mental health services for those who serve and protect us every day: police officers, firefighters, paramedics, correctional workers, and other front-line heroes. One of the organizations involved in this program is Wounded Warriors Canada, from my riding of Whitby.

#### 1030

Speaker, our government is committed to breaking down barriers by creating safe work environments where individuals feel confident seeking help. This strategy will eliminate harmful stigmas and foster a culture of understanding and support.

I'm proud of this government's commitment to ensuring the mental health and well-being of Ontario's first responders. Clearly, these selfless individuals dedicate their lives to keeping us safe, and we owe it to them to have their backs, just as they have ours.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce Séamus Harraher from Broadview Village Salvation Army, Maritza Sanchez from Red Door Family Shelter, Stephanie Chan from the Toronto Shelter Network, and Jiin Yiong from Nellie's Shelter.

Welcome to the Legislature.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Happy Thursday. I'd like to introduce awesome Ali Serjeant, who works at Sistering, supporting women in need.

Thank you for all you do, and welcome to your House.

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** It's always great to have friends here, and Lisa Gow, Susanna Gow, Janine White and Taylor White are here today.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, my wife, Melissa Smith, is here. I don't know where she has gone. She was here a moment ago. She's the good-looking redhead patrolling around in the minister's gallery—keeper of the red-headed flame.

Wherever you are, darling, welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I'd like to introduce Lin Sallay from Street Health Community Nursing Foundation, Tim Maxwell from the Neighbourhood Group and Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services, Chelsea Gagne from Homeless Connect Toronto, and Savannah Wilson from the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** It is my honour to welcome to the House this morning Harold Knogl, Zena Knogl, Rianna Knogl, Adam Knogl, and Zuhair Al-Haider from York region—and Harold and Zena with a particularly strong community presence in my riding of Durham.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I'm delighted to welcome a number of housing advocates who have joined us today: Steve Lurie; Nerina Chiodo from Mothercraft Breaking the Cycle; Unnati from Street Haven; and Touhida Choudhury from the Neighbourhood Group Community Services. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** I'd like to welcome the Mechanical Contractors Association of Ontario. We have Pat Cimek, Jason Campbell, Joe Givens, Frank Turano, Jeff Spitzig, John Jurcik, Charlie Webb, Terry Walker, Frank Bertuzzi, Dave Donovan, Julie Zulich and Serge Robert.

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** Today is the national day of housing, and we have many representatives from various housing advocacy organizations, including, from Parkdale–High Park, Nestor Gomez-Suarez, Kevin Thomas and Hazel Jackson from Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre, and Diana Chan McNally from the Shift. Welcome to your House.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Just adding to the list of housing advocates in the room for housing day, I want to mention a few folks from Fife House: Bradley Palmer, Casey Sabawi, Carla Sonny and Esra Yesilkaya.

Welcome to your House. Thanks for all you do to give people good homes.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I would like to join my colleagues in welcoming folks here for National Housing Day, including, from the Neighbourhood Group, Karen Hurley, Pamela Gawn and Jess Gebremedhin. Welcome.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I would also like to welcome some folks who are joining us here today for National Housing Day. We have Krishni Ganesan, Monica Amenity, Jack Greene, Maralynn Beach. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Thank you for your advocacy.

I had the honour of meeting with some amazing folks today from the Pulmonary Hypertension Association—I know they've been here for a couple of days—working really hard to get a cure. They are Joan Paulin, Brooke Paulin, Michael Mayville and Cheryl Oliver.

Good luck. Keep coming back. Welcome to your House.

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** On this national day of housing, it gives me great pleasure to welcome the following housing advocates: Andrea Hatala from the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre and the ODSP Action Coalition; Danielle Morris, Ifeanyichukwu Anih and Suchana Pandey from the Neighbourhood Group.

Housing is health care.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** If there are no objections, I'd like to continue with introduction of visitors.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I, too, would like to add a few names and welcome everyone who's here for the national day of housing: Colleen Lamond from Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes, Rebecca Norlock from Habitat Services, Carol Thames from Houselink and Mainstay Community Housing, and Dena Keates from Street Haven.

I'd also like to give a shout-out to the members of No Demovictions, as well as OVCO tenants advocacy.

I'd also like to thank delegates from Ontario Student Voices: Ajané Adams, Vivian Eke, Rofiyat Olawoyin, Kara Mei Herrera and Ganyo Soh, who I met with yesterday. They're phenomenal students raising their voices in support of our colleges and demanding help with food insecurity, amongst many other things.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** [*Inaudible*] not to engage in political points while they're introducing their guests.

The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I want to add my welcome on National Housing Day. I'm going to start with Claudia Calabro from the Income Security Advocacy Centre, Aishatu Ahmed, Elizabeth Tremblay and Rahima Mulla. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I also want to welcome so many advocates who are here today for the national day of housing. Particularly, I want to mention Maria Antonieta Marticorena from the Canadian Federation of University Women; Volletta Peters from Sistering; Alison Armstrong, also from Sistering; Ali Serjeant, also from Sistering—a wonderful organization in my riding that does incredible work—and Suzie Ibie Ogbomo from the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness. Thank you for being here.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** I'd like to welcome a great advocate for Elgin county, a councillor from Aylmer, Kathryn Desrosiers. Welcome to your House.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** On this national day of housing, I would like to welcome Wilhelmine Babua from La Maison; Peter Martin from Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness; Gabrielle Poole-Fournier from Friends of Ruby; Chama Chongo from Madison Community Services; Sienna Singh from Fife House; Simran Kaur from Fife House Foundation; Cynthia Lewis and Archee Kautia from Street Haven; Reihona Abduli, Melinda Montgomery and Rustam Khamdamov from PARC; and Ron Anicich from Raise the Rates Coalition. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'd like to welcome all of the housing advocates, including Louise Smith from Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth; Christina Van Sickle, Ande Clumpus and Ainsley Chapman from Evangel Hall Mission; Vivian Egie from Street Haven at the Crossroads, as well as Nevil Kaswala.

I also want to welcome Shakhlo Sharipova from Thorncliffe Park Autism Support Network and Vanessa Kwasowsky from Fred Victor.

**MPP Lisa Gretzky:** It's national day of housing, and it's my pleasure to welcome housing advocates from Street Haven at the Crossroads: Winnie Fung, Aishwarya Minocha, Veronica Koimburi and Nevil Kaswala. Welcome to Queen's Park. Welcome to your House.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** On National Housing Day, I'd like to welcome Sheila Lacroix, Michelle Bilek, Michael Marville, Hue Pham, Randi Luster, Melissa Bosman, Lucy Miringu and Debbie Millar. Welcome to your House on this great day.

1040

**Ms. Doly Begum:** It's the national day of housing, and I'm also delighted to welcome some wonderful housing advocates to the gallery this morning. We have Monica Aku Amenity from Ernestine's Women's Shelter; Genna Ross from the Social Assistance Coalition of Scarborough;

Aakanksha Mathur from WomanACT; and Priya Shastri from WomanACT.

I also have some wonderful, wonderful young leaders in the gallery: Maria Mahfuz, Jihan Ahmed, David Omer and Razan Akiba.

Welcome to your House.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm glad, on this national day of housing, to welcome folks to the Legislature: David Reycraft from Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth; Deborah Jules of the Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre; Belinda Marchese from the Jean Tweed Centre; and Roberta Taylor, who is a member of the advocacy committee. Thank you for the work you do, and welcome to your House.

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** I'm going to do this again because I've tracked them down up there. My friends Lisa Gow and Susanna Gow are here; Janine White and Taylor White; and of course my lovely wife, Melissa Smith, is here today. It's always a special day when my wife is here.

It's good to see you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I'm also going to lend my voice to the chorus of welcomes. We have over a hundred housing advocates who are in the building today, including some of the organizers.

I want to recognize Dr. Siu Mee Cheng, Andrea Paszti, Alex Welsh and Laura Paley, all from Street Haven.

I also want to recognize Reihona Abduli and Melinda Montgomery from PARC, as well as Ron Anicich from Raise the Rates Coalition.

We also have in this House Randi Luster from PARC; Melissa Bosman from Progress Place; and, also from Street Haven, Lucy Miringu and Debbie Millar.

From Fife House, we have Sienna Singh, as well as Simran Kaur, Cynthia Lewis and Archee Kautia.

We also have Vivian Egie and Nevil Kaswala from Street Haven.

From the Thorncliffe Park Autism Support Network, we have Shakhlo Sharipova.

From Fred Victor, we have Vanessa Kwasowsky.

And finally, last but not least, I have four additional names to be read into the record. I want to welcome David Turnbull from Addictions and Mental Health Ontario; Narmatha Vannarajah from Fred Victor; and Taryn Harle and Dayna Moreash from Street Haven.

Welcome to your House.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** On National Housing Day, it is my pleasure to welcome to the House Cory Roslyn, Sheila Cranmer-Byng, Bella Roden and Janet Rodriguez. Welcome to Queen's Park on National Housing Day.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** With us in the the members' gallery is another special guest: my sister Debbie Jackson of Barrie.

Welcome. It's great to have you here.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will take their seats because we're about to commence question period.

It is now time for oral questions.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

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

Yesterday we learned that a lobby group, the Ontario Trucking Association, implored their members to buy at least 50 to 60 tickets to the Premier and the Minister of Transportation's upcoming fundraiser so that the government would listen to their concerns, they said. They said that they're going to "tally up what our association has raised and present to the minister. This is the only way to win this battle." That's pretty explicit. The government has created a cash-for-access culture that is sending Ontarians a clear message that if they want to be heard, they need to pay up.

My question is to the minister and the Premier. Will you cancel the fundraiser, give the truckers their money back, and simply do your job and meet them?

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

**Hon. Doug Downey:** The Ontario regulations set a level playing field for all of us. There are rules the parties have to follow. There are processes. Whether you're in power or you're in opposition or you aspire to be in this Legislature, there is an ability to raise money with rules. The process is open and very fair. Every donation is publicly posted. People can look at who donates and to whom they donate. It's legal, it's transparent, it's accountable. Political fundraising makes sure that all parties have the same possibility to attract donors.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Well, Speaker, I guess that's a no.

This is not the first time that we have seen a culture of cash for access from this government. I was thinking about the former Minister of Colleges and Universities, when she hosted a fundraiser where a third of the attendees were private career colleges, those diploma mills. The minister accepted \$24,000 from private career college executives at that event. And then that same minister opened the floodgates so those colleges could exploit international students.

Did this government allow these private colleges to exploit international students because the college operators made donations to that minister?

**Hon. Doug Downey:** This is a perfect example of how the open regulations and the level playing field for all parties, whether they're in the House or they aspire to be in the House, for all candidates—this is a great example of transparency so that everybody can see who donates to whom. There's a great accountability that way.

Ontario is a leading jurisdiction in terms of openness and transparency. I take great pride in our democratic process and our ability to have spirited debate and openness.

People can speculate, if they wish, about a number of things, but the most important thing is that they actually

have information to speculate about. So we will continue to be open and fair, and we'll continue to be accountable.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** We fought against the Liberals' cash-for-access deals, and we're going to do the same thing with the Conservatives here.

Democracy should not have a price tag. Hard-working people in Ontario deserve a government that's in it for them, not for the backroom deals.

With this government, it is always the same thing, right? They cut deals, insiders cash in, and it's the people of Ontario who pay the price every single time.

So, very simply, to the Premier: Are people and organizations with business before this government being pressured to buy tickets to cabinet ministers' fundraisers? Yes or no?

*Interjections.*

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

The Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** The Leader of the Opposition's question is about the openness of government. Each day this week, I've mentioned that the Premier gives out his phone number, he texts people back, he responds to emails—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** No, he doesn't. That's a lie.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** —he phones people back. He's very open—and we all do. He sets the model for us—that we are very responsive.

So this is, quite frankly, the third day in a row that I'm asking if the Leader of the Opposition will give her—

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

The member for Toronto–St. Paul's will rise in her place and withdraw her unparliamentary comment.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Attorney General can conclude his answer.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order. The member for Waterloo will come to order. The Minister of Red Tape Reduction will come to order. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order. The member for Essex will come to order.

The Attorney General has a few seconds left. I'd ask him to conclude his response.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** On this national day of housing, I hope the NDP turns its next question to something more important.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Very disappointing there, Speaker.

We remember, all of us here, I think, that Friday afternoon this past summer when the government decided to shut down and fence off the science centre. Kids were

still there on their field trips. Internal emails that have been obtained by Global News show that the Premier's office and Infrastructure Ontario were crafting a narrative to justify this so-called sudden closure, long before the report was ever brought to light—a report that did not even call for an immediate closure.

**1050**

My question to the Premier is, what role did the Premier's office and Infrastructure Ontario play in justifying closing the science centre and shaping the independent engineering report?

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

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I want to make it very clear to the Leader of the Opposition, through you, Speaker, that the Rimkus Consulting Group is a professional engineering company, and they identified three buildings at the Ontario Science Centre that contained reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, or RAAC, roof panels, making up significant portions of each roof. In all three buildings, there were a number of panels distressed, in a high-risk condition—very clear.

The report found that the building, which is over 50 years old, is at potential roof failure due to snow load as of the winter. This is one report of three reports that identified deficiencies at the Ontario Science Centre that resulted in its closure. These were commissioned by Infrastructure Ontario, reviewed by the board, and the board made the decision exactly—

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

The supplementary question.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Well, Speaker, I've got to tell you, I would like to hear from the Premier on this.

I'm going to go back to the Premier.

The government's announcement to shut down the Ontario Science Centre, to lay off the staff, is so deeply unpopular to everyone I speak with, but especially for those in Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Park.

Yesterday, the government stood here and tried to pass this off as a decision by the board, but we know that the decision was made by the Premier long before the board ever received the engineering report. The Premier's office was all over this, trying to shape the message.

Did the Premier manufacture a crisis at the science centre to sweeten the deal for his luxury spa down at Ontario Place?

**Mr. Steve Clark:** The message that I want to convey to members of this House and to Ontarians is a direct quote from the Rimkus report: "A significant snow or rain loading occurrence could exceed the reduced load-carrying capacity of the distress panels, placing them at an increased risk of sudden collapse." That is one report of three reports.

In the next question, I will outline measures in the peer review and also the third-party assessment that was, again, all part of the decision-making process by Infrastructure Ontario, by the Ontario Science Centre board and, ultimately, by the government of Ontario. These are reports from reputable firms that identified serious risks at the

Ontario Science Centre. All of us acted upon professional reports. This isn't something, as the Leader of Opposition tried to characterize, that the government shaped the narrative—the narrative were professional reports that were given to us, and we acted upon them.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Yes, well, we don't forget all those expert reports and all that stuff that you told us about the greenbelt either, Minister. I mean, really.

I've got to tell you, yesterday, right here in this building, I spoke with dozens of families who were here at Queen's Park—people who can't find a family doctor for their kids, people who can't afford groceries, who can't afford child care, who cannot even save for a family vacation, and now they can't even take their kids to the science centre because it's boarded up. What these families see every single day is a government that just doesn't care—a government that is so focused on its own vanity projects that they're leaving those families behind.

Is this really the province and the future that the Premier of this province is building? Honestly.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll remind the Leader of the Opposition to make her comments through the Chair.

I'll ask the members to take their seats.

I'll remind the government House leader that interjections are out of order.

The parliamentary assistant to the Premier and government House leader can reply.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Ontarians deserve a modern, state-of-the-art Ontario Science Centre. My grandchildren deserve a science centre that is bigger and better than the one that I went to when it was brand new, when I was in public school. Let's face it, right? When I went there, it was a brand new facility. I want my grandkids to go to a state-of-the-art facility.

I also believe Ontarians deserve to know the facts. The facts are that the 2023 business case identified almost half a billion dollars of spending that's needed to address the failing infrastructure. Even the third-party assessment of the building identified other deficiencies in the building—wall systems, elevator systems, escalator systems, interior finishes, site features, fire safety issues, heating, cooling, electrical infrastructure, pedestrian bridge structural integrity, heating system failure. All of these are identified in the three reports.

I'll tell you something: The government of Ontario wants Ontarians to have a bigger, better Ontario Science Centre that's state-of-the-art—

*Interjections.*

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

The next question.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is to the Premier. Lin Sallay is the executive director of Street Health. She is

here in the gallery today. Every day, Street Health supports 100 to 150 people who are homeless, living in poverty and struggling with addiction. Most of the people who use Street Health services will never find permanent housing, because the wait-list to find a permanent home is eight to 10 years long. They're stuck.

Lin wants to know when this government is going to take the issue of homelessness seriously and properly invest in supportive housing and affordable housing.

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member opposite will know, of course, that we are investing over \$1.2 billion in the Homelessness Prevention Program across the province of Ontario. We made significant resources available to our community partners. The Minister of Health, of course, along with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, is putting immense resources behind that strategy as well.

But I agree with the member opposite; with these big investments, we need to see results. So we will continue to make these investments, but we will monitor the results closer than we ever have before, because clearly what we have been doing has not been making the difference that I think all Ontarians expect to see from such a large investment. And we will be taking whatever measures need to be taken to ensure that people who are suffering from mental health and addictions issues have the help they need and the wraparound services they need, and that we are building the homes that are required for the people of the province of Ontario at all levels.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The supplementary question. The member for Scarborough Southwest.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Speaker, in my community of Scarborough Southwest, tenants in three buildings—buildings 263, 273 and 283—are facing an above-guideline rent increase of up to 5.5%, forcing them to choose between paying their rent or putting food on the table, or paying their bills or paying for their medication. Many of these families are worried sick about how they are going to keep a roof over their heads.

Meanwhile, this government, we just learned, has spent \$8 million on self-congratulatory ads.

So, Speaker, on behalf of those tenants in those buildings and the hard-working people of this province, I ask the Premier: Will his government commit to banning above-guideline rent increases, stop the wastage that this government is doing and actually make life affordable for Ontarians across this province?

*Interjections.*

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

*Interjection.*

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, it speaks to the challenge that we've been having across the province of Ontario. For



15 years, a government was in place that made it extremely hard to get shovels in the ground. They made building very, very difficult. Obstacle after obstacle after obstacle was put in place, and it is taking us many years to unravel the challenges that they put in place.

**1100**

But we are seeing, on purpose-built rentals, we are hitting numbers that we have never hit before in the province of Ontario. The highest amount of purpose-built rentals in the province's history is happening under this government.

We will not put more obstacles in the way of those who want to bring more homes to the market; in fact, just the opposite. We're going to encourage more homes of all levels and of all types to be built, because the only way we will meet the challenges is by making more homes of all types available for the people of the province of Ontario. And we'll get it done.

### TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Ontario's population is rapidly growing, and we need to ensure that Ontario has the infrastructure needed to keep people moving.

But the NDP and the Liberals are saying no to critical infrastructure. They are saying no to Highway 413. They are saying no to building the Bradford Bypass. In fact, some members of the NDP want to tear down the Gardiner Expressway. That's not what their constituents elected them to do.

My constituents in Scarborough–Agincourt want to see action. They want solutions that will make their lives easier.

After years of inaction by the previous Liberal government, can the minister please explain what steps our government is taking to build highways faster?

*Interjection.*

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

The parliamentary assistant and the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for the great question.

Speaker, the member is absolutely correct; under the previous Liberal government, they said no to building critical infrastructure projects like the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413. Communities in the GTA were left to deal with worsening congestion and simply no solutions in sight.

With our Building Highways Faster Act, this government is committed to action. We're cutting through the unnecessary delays and red tape that the Liberals and the NDP allowed to hold back projects like the Bradford Bypass for decades. This vital corridor will connect the 400 and the 404, significantly reducing congestion, improving commute times and supporting growth in this fast-expanding region.

Under the leadership of the Premier and the highly effective Minister of Transportation, we're delivering real solutions, putting shovels in the ground and getting Ontario moving faster, ensuring that hard-working families spend less time stuck in traffic and more time where it matters most.

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

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Families and workers in my community tell me how gridlock impacts every part of their lives. Gridlock is causing longer commutes, leading to less time with loved ones and even lost opportunities for local businesses.

Reports indicate that Toronto commuters face the longest travel times in North America, spending an average of 98 hours each year in rush-hour traffic. That needs to be changed.

We know that the Liberals and the NDP do not support common-sense solutions to tackle gridlock. That's why Ontarians are looking to our government to implement measures that will help keep them out of traffic.

Can the minister please explain how the Building Highways Faster Act will help Ontario keep our province moving?

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** Thank you again to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for raising this very important issue.

Families in the GTA deserve better. I've spoken to parents all across this province who just want to make it to their kids' soccer games on time and business owners who need reliable routes to deliver their goods.

Through the Building Highways Faster Act, we're taking action to make life easier for everyone by fast-tracking the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413. This will cut commute times, reduce traffic on local roads and support one of the fastest-growing regions in Ontario. Beyond that, it means good jobs during construction, a boost for local businesses and a more connected, prosperous future for those communities.

Speaker, this government is here to deliver real solutions for the people who count on us the most. And that is exactly what we're doing.

### LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Ma question est pour le premier ministre. La stratégie du gouvernement pour le logement ne fonctionne pas dans le Sud, mais c'est encore pire dans le Nord. Nous n'avons pas la population nécessaire pour attirer les développeurs à qui le gouvernement met toute sa confiance pour nous sortir de cette pénurie de logement. Les maires et les communautés autochtones demandent au gouvernement d'investir dans des coopératives, des logements subventionnés et des logements abordables—des solutions qui fonctionnent.

Alors, pourquoi ce gouvernement continue de faire l'oreille sourde aux besoins du nord de l'Ontario?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I met with the Rural Ontario Municipal Association not long ago, which has, of course, representatives of northern Ontario, and I met with the northern Ontario municipal association. One of the number one challenges they talked to me about was the ability to get infrastructure in the ground, and they were very grateful for the fact the government made an infrastructure commitment for small and rural communities, which they had never seen before. Of course, we're delivering that infrastructure right now with the Minister of Infrastructure.

One of the things they did raise was the fact that there is so much economic activity now that is coming to northern Ontario because of the changes and the investments not only that we are making but we're allowing to happen in northern Ontario. Northern roads, of course, the Ring of Fire—all of the things that we are doing are attracting so many people to northern Ontario that they want to be a part of helping to build a bigger, better, stronger Ontario, and that means infrastructure so that they can get more homes built. We're working with the service boards up there, working with mayors, and we'll get the job done for them, as well.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch, Speaker. Northern municipalities deserve to have their housing needs met, but they aren't funded as well as urban centres.

In Sioux Lookout, the lack of housing increases the labour shortage and the high rates of homelessness, while they accommodate over 25,000 people each year who travel from First Nations to access services.

Will the minister join me in Sioux Lookout to see the housing crisis for himself?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Infrastructure.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** I want to thank the Minister of Housing for addressing the question in the first round.

I want to make clear to all the members in the House that we have had two streams made available to municipalities: \$250 million for additional water infrastructure projects, as well as \$400 million for core servicing—anything to unlock lands for redevelopment, to build more homes. Staff are evaluating the applications that come in. I know that there will be many communities in northern Ontario that have made submissions. We will share the news of the winners of those two streams very shortly.

#### NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Mr. Speaker, today is a northern Ontario day. It looks like my question is also to the Minister of Northern Development.

Northern Ontario is vital to our province.

Thanks to my son, ever since he moved to northern Ontario, we've enjoyed the beauty of the north.

The north is home to diverse communities, rich cultures and endless potential.

Indigenous communities in northern Ontario have long served a vital role in preserving the strength and the beauty of the north while driving regional economic growth, but for far too long, they have faced barriers to economic and social development.

We know the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. is crucial in building up the north. It creates jobs, spurs growth and supports community infrastructure. Their work is especially important for Indigenous communities, where every investment can make new opportunities, stronger connections and a brighter future.

Speaker, my question to the minister: Please share how our government is supporting Indigenous communities in northern Ontario through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp.—

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

The parliamentary assistant, the member for Brantford—Brant.

1110

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you to the member for the question.

I'd like to highlight a recent investment made through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. Our government has invested \$1 million through the NOHFC to help the Antoine Algonquin Community Services Corp. construct a new community capacity building centre in Antoine Nation, near Mattawa. This facility, designed as a 5,000-square-foot, octagonal, open concept building, will serve as a gathering space to promote cultural, social and economic development for Antoine Nation. The centre will offer year-round programs and events to strengthen community ties and foster Indigenous identity, traditions and economic opportunities. This investment aligns with Ontario's commitment to reconciliation and economic development in Indigenous communities. The province has also provided \$675,000 from the Indigenous Community Capital Grants Program to support the centre's construction.

This is just one way that our government is carrying out our commitment to economic reconciliation with—

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

Supplementary question.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for his response.

Housing is a challenge across Ontario. When our son was looking for a house, we faced this challenge the same way.

As we build a better, stronger, more prosperous Ontario, communities are growing, and families need safe, affordable homes.

Indigenous communities, in particular, face unique challenges when it comes housing. They need solutions that work for their communities.

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has a track record of supporting projects that make life better in the north.

To the people of northern Ontario: Our government is stepping up to help. As northern Ontario prospers, the whole of Ontario prospers with it.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please explain how NOHFC is helping to address the housing needs of Indigenous and rural communities in northern Ontario?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you so much for that very important question.

Our government recognizes the need for new housing across the province, including in northern Ontario. This is why our government has invested \$400,000 in Smart Modular Canada, located in Oliver Paipoonge, to purchase equipment and renovate its facility to increase the production capacity of its residential and commercial modular buildings for rural and First Nations communities.

I'd like to quote Bill Boulton, the CEO of Smart Modular Canada, who had this to say about our government's recognition of the need to build more housing: "The NOHFC's recognition of this need is clear, and we are thankful for its investment in our manufacturing process and automation upgrade initiative. With its support, we can expand into this region, offering excellent opportunities for our employees now and into future, and making quality, affordable homes more accessible to more people."

Speaker, we're getting it done for the people of Ontario. It's unfortunate that the opposition continues to vote no on these important initiatives.

#### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé.

The last mile delivery of medical supplies to home care patients is a critical part of home care.

The minister's decision to centralize home care supply and hand it over to her donors at Bayshore has hurt a lot of patients and threatened the survival of small businesses across Ontario, like Boggio pharmacy in Niagara.

Can the minister tell the House what she has learned from this centralization fiasco and what she will do to make sure that no one is left waiting for critical supplies?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** We've been very clear that as these vendors roll out and ensure that critical medical supplies get into the hands of our patients and our families in their homes, we are absolutely focused on ensuring that that supply continues in a seamless manner.

In fact, the member opposite will know that any individuals who went out and proactively purchased those supplies had the opportunity very quickly to get reimbursed. Because of the Canada Post strike, we've actually now transitioned and directed to ensure that they get those paycheques paid through means other than through the mail.

I don't think there's any question in this House that people understand the need to ensure those medical supplies get into the hands of the practitioners and the patients. And we are doing everything to ensure that that stabilization continues.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It seems that the Conservatives are more focused on fundraising directives from Conservative Party headquarters than ensuring that the patients of Ontario receive quality care.

The home care supply delivery system we had before worked well and met the home care patients' needs, but this government decided to centralize home care supplies with their friends at Bayshore. This decision hurt many patients, some of them severely.

What does the minister have to say to those patients and families who were hurt by her decision?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** The Premier has always been very, very clear that every process has an opportunity for improvement. We are doing that in the Ministry of Health. We are doing that in every ministry.

I will say to the member opposite: Since we came to office, we have doubled the annual investments to home care. Our record investments in home care have increased service volumes by 10% this year alone. What does that mean? It means over 700,000 families are now accessing and taking the home care system and bringing it into their homes, allowing family members to be in their homes while they continue their medical and treatment pathways. Those are successes that we need to do.

We also need to ensure, as we transition, that the patients continue to be our focus, which is what we have been doing with these modernizations.

#### HEALTH CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, I asked the Minister of Health about improving access to primary care in my riding of Ottawa–Vanier.

In response, the parliamentary assistant highlighted the Ottawa Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic as an example of how this government is increasing access to care. What he failed to mention is that the government only provided a fraction of the requested funding, forcing the clinic to dramatically downsize its services.

Over 2.5 million Ontarians, including 22,000 in my riding, lack access to primary care.

Why did this government choose not to fully fund the Ottawa Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic, which could have provided 10,000 residents with the care they need in my riding?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I want to be clear here. What the member opposite is asking is: "Of the 78 new and expanded interprofessional teams, primary care expansions that we have been able to do since February of this year, why didn't I get more?" Honest to God, Speaker. We have 78 that we have been able to ramp up.

Last week alone, I was able to be with the MPP from Innisfil, and we announced a brand new nurse practitioner-led team in the community of Innisfil. That is nine—soon to be 10—nurse practitioners who are taking on patients, who are serving clients and patients in the Innisfil area.

As we continue to roll out the primary care expansion, we have now called on the expertise of Dr. Jane Philpott. Starting in December, she will continue this excellent work to ensure that we have primary care expansion and opportunities for every single Ontarian.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Don Valley East will come to order. The member for Scarborough–Guildwood will come to order. The member for Orléans will come to order.

Supplementary.

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Nurse practitioners are essential to increasing access to primary care in Ontario, but to do so, they need adequate and sufficient funding. Nurse practitioners cannot bill OHIP directly. Without funding to join family health teams or to open publicly funded clinics, many will either be unemployed or forced to open for-profit clinics.

The College of Nurses of Ontario reports that only 84% of registered nurses are practising, and between 2020 and 2023, there was a 29% increase in nurse practitioners working outside of Ontario.

Why is the government not funding nurse practitioners to provide accessible, publicly funded primary care to the residents of Ottawa–Vanier and across Ontario?

1120

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Almost 300 interprofessional primary care teams, including nurse practitioners, are operating in the province of Ontario, serving four million patients.

We have not only increased the compensation for nurse practitioners; we have increased the opportunities for nurse practitioners by increasing the number of nurse practitioner-led clinics. We have expanded the number of seats so that more nurse practitioners can train and learn in the province of Ontario.

I will put our record on supporting and increasing investments in nurse practitioners against the former Liberal government's record any day of the week.

#### AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. Ontario's agri-food sector is a cornerstone of our economy. It feeds millions, creates jobs and drives innovation. It connects rural communities with urban centres, showing how vital agriculture is to our daily lives. Events like the royal agricultural fair are critical to this connection.

This year, the Royal celebrated its 102nd year, bringing together farmers, businesses and families from across Ontario. It showcases our province's agricultural strength and serves as a platform for innovation and growth. The

royal fair inspires the next generation and highlights exciting opportunities in our agri-food industry.

Can the minister please share more about the success of this year's royal agricultural fair and its importance to Ontario's economy and the agri-food sector?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Thank you to the member for Oxford for his great question.

By all accounts, the 102nd Royal Agricultural Winter Fair was a resounding success. Over 300,000 people came to see the fair, up a significant percentage over the year before. It truly is the country coming to the city to teach and learn, and teach everybody about our great industry.

There are many highlights to review, but three in particular—first of all, I want to thank the OMAFA team for their wonderful booth helping educate city folks about our food system, about where it comes from and the great promise and potential. Second, I want to thank the University of Guelph for their future of food exhibit teaching us about the technologies that will go into the future of making food in Ontario and Canada. And finally, the RBC growth hub is helping kids understand the promise and potential, again, of getting jobs in this province.

I want to thank, in conclusion, the board, the directors and all the volunteers for making the 2024 fair a resounding success.

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

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** The royal agricultural fair isn't just a place to celebrate Ontario's agricultural success. It's also where important conversations happen. This year, it brought together leaders from across the agri-food industry. They sat down with the Premier to talk about the future of farming in our province. Over 30 organizations, from small family farms to large agribusinesses, shared their views. They discussed what's working and what needs fixing.

Whether cutting red tape, improving risk management or boosting exports, farmers need our government's continued support. With over \$26 billion in agri-food exports last year, the potential for greater economic success is possible with the continued support from this minister.

Can the minister please explain how our government will continue to support Ontario's farmers and grow our agri-food industry?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Again, another great highlight of this year's Royal: We were able to bring the stakeholders—again, over 30—to Exhibition Place to have a listening and learning session. We sat down—again, primary producers, further processors, agribusiness—all sectors of agri-food sat down for a great session, a cross-pollination, if you will, of ideas. We are very thankful the Premier was able to join us to listen and learn as well and share his ideas.

Bottom line, Speaker: Under this Premier, under this government, agri-food has never been in better shape. We continue to grow our exports, 30,000 more people are employed in the sector and, importantly, we now contrib-

ute \$51 billion to our total economy. We are getting it done for the people of Ontario.

We will always have the backs of our farmers and our food processors and the agri-food system in Ontario.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** My question is to the Premier. London currently has 90 shelter beds in limbo at Ark Aid Mission, as our municipal government waits to see if the province will finally partner with the federal government to match up to \$250 million in funding for homelessness initiatives, and if London will get their fair share of that funding. London can't wait any longer.

Can the Premier confirm whether the provincial government is in negotiations with the federal government to secure these funds, so Ark Aid Mission will not lose the 90 vital beds before cold winter months?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** In fact, we've been negotiating with the federal government and have said yes five times to the federal government. I've accepted the terms of the federal government on one occasion, on a second occasion, on a third occasion, on a fourth occasion and on a fifth occasion, and on each occasion the federal government said, "Thanks for accepting, but we don't accept your acceptance."

I am unable to provide the funding because the federal government won't accept my acceptance of the project. If the federal government will accept my acceptance, then I'd be happy to provide the funding that is required.

Of course, we did increase funding by over 28% to the member's riding. We've increased the Homelessness Prevention Program to the highest level in history.

But again, I have accepted the acceptance of the acceptance of the acceptance for the fifth time and will do it again for the sixth time.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House Leader will come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order.

Supplementary question. The member for London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Many vulnerable Londoners are living in deplorable conditions because community housing does not have the funding needed to deal with maintenance and manage pests.

Brittany lives in a London West townhouse where the cockroaches are so bad that sometimes they're crawling on her when she goes out, and her community support worker can't let her travel in her car anymore.

Anne told us that some of the residents in her building sleep in the lobby to escape infestations in their units.

Speaker, municipalities are calling for provincial help. When will this government start working with municipalities and invest in fixing dangerous, unhealthy community housing?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** In fact, we did that. We increased funding to the highest level that it has ever been in the province of Ontario, and we've said to the service managers that we want to see better outcomes with the investments that we're making across the province of Ontario.

There are a lot of housing providers. I look at the Kenora services board and what they're doing. They're leveraging the funding that we have given them to take out of commission some of their older properties and build newer, more modern facilities that offer wraparound services. The Kenora services board can do it, and I expect and I insist that other parts of the province take the example of what Kenora has done: Make those investments so that we can provide new, modern facilities for people to have wraparound services where they are required.

We are partnering with our municipalities. We are trying to partner with the federal government. As you know, the federal government underfunds us to the tune of \$400 million a year.

Despite that, we've increased our funding, and we want our municipal partners, our service managers, to show us that the funding that we are making and the investments that we are making are having the results that we expect. If they don't, we'll get the job done on our own.

#### PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Through you, Speaker: My question is to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

First of all, I wish to commend the minister and all of his ministry staff, who are working diligently to protect Ontarians day in and day out when it comes to the ever-evolving digital world.

Bill 194, the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024, recently went through committee review.

Could the minister elaborate on how this bill, if passed, will impact the average Ontarian and, more specifically, how it will benefit residents of my riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I thank the dedicated member for Mississauga East-Cooksville.

**1130**

That member, no doubt, is well aware, given his experience in the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, that we have an excellent team at the ministry. That team developed Bill 194 even under his watch, and I was proud to table it for first reading and to participate in the debate at second reading. The bill is now at committee. Not only will it benefit the people of Mississauga East-Cooksville; it will benefit all Ontarians.

We are leading the country with Bill 194—the enterprise-wide definition of artificial intelligence for the public sector; the centralized reporting requirement for cyber security incidents. We're all in this together, and leading with the protection of our children, because

children's data and privacy have to be protected. We are leading, and we are getting it done for our children across Ontario.

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

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** I thank the minister for his response.

Speaker, with rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and recent cyber security incidents that have impacted municipalities and health systems within Ontario, can the minister explain how this bill will address emerging AI-driven cyber threats and ensure that public sector organizations are prepared to prevent and respond to such threats, safeguarding critical services and maintaining public trust?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Again to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville: Artificial intelligence is enabling even more severe cyber attacks and the risks of cyber attacks. Our very society, our way of life, is at risk, so we must stand on guard.

I learned, from joining my colleagues across the country—ministers responsible for AI and cyber security from every province and territory and from the federal government—how they are looking to us in Ontario to lead on a way forward to make sure that we have the fortifications in place to protect against cyber attacks and to ensure cyber security.

I must say that I'm very proud of this bill. It's at committee today. I urge the members opposite to support the bill when it comes forward for a vote, and hopefully, if it reaches the House for third reading, to unanimously support Bill 194 and cyber security protections for our province.

#### WOMEN'S SERVICES

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** My question today is for the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Sadly, women in Ontario still face many roadblocks on the path to financial stability. Whether it's finding affordable training, accessing good jobs or starting their own business, the challenges are real. For women in low-income households, new Canadians or those escaping violent situations, these barriers can feel even bigger. Without the right support, it's hard for them to get ahead and build a suitable life.

Helping women succeed isn't just the right thing to do; it's the smart thing to do. When women do well, our economy grows and our communities thrive.

Speaker, can the associate minister please tell us what steps our government is taking to help more women gain the skills and support they need to succeed?

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** I appreciate the words in the question from the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who is a major advocate in her community to see women succeed.

Speaker, our government is 100% committed to empowering women through economic opportunity and

laying out achievable pathways to success, because we know that when women are financially independent, they are safer.

That's why we have introduced targeted initiatives like the Women's Economic Security Program and the Investing in Women's Futures Program, which equip women with the tools, the training and the support they need to achieve financial independence.

Through our Ministry of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, we are focusing on programs that break down barriers to economic participation, particularly for women in low-income situations, women escaping violence, and new Canadians. These programs provide career training, entrepreneurship support and pathways to skilled trades, helping women build stable, secure futures for themselves and their families.

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

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I want to thank the minister for all the work she's doing on this file.

We all know that economic security is the foundation of a stable life. For women, it means having the power to make their own choices, provide for their families and plan for their futures. It's not just about earning a paycheque. It's about independence, it's about safety and, most importantly, it's about dignity.

Sadly, many women in Ontario still face barriers. Women are still under-represented in well-paying industries, like the skilled trades and technology. Without access to good jobs and training, women can't fully participate in our economy. And when women can't thrive, it hurts their families, their communities and our province as a whole.

Speaker, can the associate minister please tell us what our government is doing to help women gain economic security and succeed in high-demand fields?

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** Financial independence is fundamental to women's ability to thrive, as it directly impacts their autonomy, stability and overall well-being.

Just this past August, I announced a \$26.7-million investment through the Women's Economic Security Program, helping women gain the training they need to enter the skilled trades, IT professions, or entrepreneurship. This is in addition to the \$15 million invested in the Investing in Women's Futures Program, which offers employment-readiness training and personal development support. Now we have 58 locations and organizations across Ontario funded to help women rebuild their lives.

Speaker, I had the opportunity to tour our province this summer and witness first-hand the life-changing impact these programs are having on women's lives.

I can assure everyone in this House that our government will never waver in its commitment to creating a province where every woman is given a chance to succeed economically and build a better future for themselves and their families. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because when women succeed, Ontario succeeds.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Under this government's watch, encampments and homelessness are on the rise in every town, every community, every city.

Five years ago, the Auditor General reported that this government had no plan to end homelessness.

A few days ago, Ontario's Financial Accountability Office reported that Ontario is experiencing the lowest housing starts in 69 years.

We have over 100 housing advocates in the building today looking to this government for a plan to end homelessness, including women's homelessness.

On the national day of housing, is the Premier content with his own failed housing policies, or is he finally ready to commit to building and creating a housing plan to end homelessness?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** In fact, since we've come to office, we've been seized with trying to untangle the mess that was put in place by the previous Liberal government.

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** After 15 very, very long years, the previous government—supported by the Liberals—put in place process after process after process that made it literally impossible to get shovels in the ground, and we have been untangling that. The results of that, before interest rate increases, were that we were building more purpose-built rentals—and still are—than we ever were before, and we were getting more shovels in the ground of homes of all types than ever before.

At the same time, we knew we had to do more on the affordable housing side. That's why we exempted development charges for that type of housing. That's why we allowed third units. And that's why we increased funding to the highest levels in Ontario's history for the Homelessness Prevention Program. But as I've said and will continue to say, with that large investment, we are expecting to see results, and if our municipal partners and our partners in the field aren't able to show us the results that Ontarians deserve, then we will move further to ensure that Ontarians have the results they deserve.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary. The member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** This Premier is failing at his own housing targets. He has no plan to create real affordable housing, let alone supportive or transitional housing for women who are trying to escape violence.

We gave him a solution: Homes Ontario, which would double the supply of permanently affordable homes—including creating homes for survivors. This government said no to that solution.

While this government fails at housing starts, they're also failing to protect tenants like Laura, Wesley, Roni, Lynne, Katrina, Carol, Maddy, Sandra on Redpath and

Sandra on Bathurst, and countless others in my community.

This government has let vacancy decontrol run amok, incentivizing predatory landlords to not complete necessary repairs in hopes that tenants will get tired of living in crappy conditions, leave, and then the landlords can jack up the rent two and three times.

**1140**

My question is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier. When will this government eliminate vacancy decontrol, establish real rent control on all buildings, ban those bloody AGIs that are gouging my tenants, and penalize corporate billion-dollar landlords who refuse to maintain their properties?

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, because that will solve the crisis that we're having. The vast majority—this is the difference between them and us, right? The vast majority of the people who own properties, who make properties available, are mom and pops—people like my parents, who came here and worked seven days a week, put all that they had into owning rental properties so that they could make that available for people. We never went on vacations. We went to our small buildings, and we worked on Saturdays, and we worked on Sundays. Our March breaks were spent cleaning our apartments.

It is those very same people that she calls crooks. I call them heroes. I call them people who help build a bigger, better, stronger Ontario. And I will stand up for them every—

*Interjections.*

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

Start the clock.

The next question.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** My question is for the Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform. Every day, we hear more stories about crime in our communities, apropos the minister's comments. Families are worried. Parents fear for their children's safety. Small business owners are struggling with break-ins and thefts. People want to feel safe in their homes and on the streets.

The truth is, violent crime is on the rise. Our communities deserve better, and they deserve action. It's not just about numbers or statistics; it's about real people whose lives are being shattered by crime. Victims are left to pick up the pieces while repeat offenders continue to walk free.

Can the associate minister please tell us what the government is doing to protect our communities and ensure violent criminals face real consequences for their actions?

**Hon. Graham McGregor:** I want to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for raising this concern and being a steadfast voice for public safety, law and order,

and the rights of hard-working Ontario residents over the rights of criminals.

Public safety is my top priority, and under this Premier's leadership, we are working diligently to keep our streets safe. We are focused on closing the revolving door for violent and repeat offenders. We are continuing to work to make investments in hiring more judges, building more jails, hiring more police officers—more boots on the ground in our neighbourhoods to keep Ontario residents safe—as well as justice resources like crown prosecutors and support staff to make sure that our justice system is getting justice for the victims.

Despite these investments, we can't ignore the reality of how our federal laws are failing victims every day. Too often, the Criminal Code lacks the strength needed to deliver the justice we expect, which is why we're calling on the federal Liberal government to implement mandatory minimum sentences, restore judges' ability to impose meaningful consequences and deny bail to those who commit serious and violent crimes.

Enough is enough. It's time to prioritize the rights of victims over the rights of criminals. Our government will not rest until violent criminals face the full consequences of their actions. We hope the members opposite will join us. Call for meaningful Criminal Code reform and bail reform now.

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

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you to the minister for that answer and for all you're doing.

It's not just the rise in violent crime that worries people; it's how these crimes are being committed time and time again.

We hear about illegal guns being used to hurt and kill innocent people. These are not firearms from hunters or sports shooters. These are illegal weapons smuggled across our border. Criminal gangs are bringing them in. These weapons are being used to terrorize our communities. This is a problem we can't ignore. It's a problem that needs action, because the federal government is not showing leadership on this issue.

Families in Ontario want to know what can be done to stop these guns and keep them out of our neighbourhoods.

Can the associate minister please explain what our government is doing to advocate against these illegal guns crossing our border and landing in the hands of criminals?

**Hon. Graham McGregor:** Thank you to the member for the follow-up question.

Our government recognizes that the real issue isn't law-abiding gun owners in Canada, but rather illegal firearms that are smuggled across the border from the United States. Approximately 90% of handguns used in crime in Ontario are unlawfully smuggled in from the border and must be stopped. The federal government must step up and restore law and order to our border.

While we urge the federal government to take stronger action to secure our borders, our government is also intensifying efforts to curb the flow of illegal firearms into Ontario. We're enhancing firearms analysis and tracing

enforcement, and we're collaborating through the Canada-US Border Enforcement Security Task Force to intercept guns before they reach communities.

Foreign-sourced guns are fuelling local crime. We're doing everything in our power to restore safe streets.

I thank that member for investing in police, investing in law and order. We just saw, last week, 14 crime guns seized by Toronto police officers. I salute them not just when they're here, but even when they're not.

We've got to stand up for our police, for keeping our communities safe.

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

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the government House leader under standing order 59.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Under standing order 59, I'd like to inform the House of our schedule next week.

On Monday, November 25, during afternoon routine proceedings, a government bill will be introduced. In the afternoon, we'll have second reading of Bill 227, the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, followed by third reading of Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, followed by third reading of Bill 194, the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act.

On Tuesday, November 26, in the morning; to be announced. In the afternoon, we'll have opposition day number 4. At 6 p.m., we'll have a private member's bill in the name of the member for Richmond Hill.

On Wednesday, November 27, both in the morning and in the afternoon, we'll have second reading of a government bill to be introduced. During afternoon routine proceedings, a government bill will be introduced. At 6 p.m., there will be a private member's bill in the name of the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

On Thursday, November 28, both in the morning and in the afternoon, it will be second reading of a government bill to be introduced. At 6 p.m., it will be a private member's bill in the name of the member for Kiiwetinoong.

That is my report to members of the House.

## CORRECTION OF RECORD

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I understand the member for Scarborough Southwest has a point of order.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Earlier, during my question, I said that the government had spent \$8 million on ads. I would like to correct my record. It is actually until January 31, 2024, that the government spent \$8 million on ads. Until now, some reports indicate that it is actually over \$32 million that the government spent on ads—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. That's not a valid point of order.



## MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

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

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** I just found out that someone is celebrating a special birthday today. I want to wish my parliamentary assistant, Natalie Pierre, a very happy birthday.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development on a point of order.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I just saw them come in midway through question period, but I want to welcome the Mechanical Contractors Association of Ontario here to Queen's Park today. I'm looking forward to seeing them over lunch.

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

*The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.*

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Interior.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas):** Mr. Babikian from the Standing Committee on the Interior reports the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to His Majesty for the fiscal—

**Interjection:** Dispense.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Dispense? Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the Standing Committee on the Interior will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

*Report deemed received.*

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas):** Mr. Coe from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy reports the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts—

**Interjection:** Dispense.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Dispense? Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the

Standing Committee on Justice Policy will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

*Report deemed received.*

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas):** Ms. Hogarth from the Standing Committee on Social Policy reports the following resolutions—

**Interjection:** Dispense.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Dispense? Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the Standing Committee on Social Policy will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

*Report deemed received.*

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas):** Mr. Hardeman from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs reports the following resolutions—

**Interjection:** Dispense.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Dispense? Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

*Report deemed received.*

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** The best for last. I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas):** Mr. Rae from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy reports the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray—

**Interjection:** Dispense.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Dispense? Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

*Report deemed received.*

## PETITIONS

### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

**MPP Lisa Gretzky:** I have a petition here signed by folks from around the province pertaining to my colleague from Waterloo's bill, Lydia's Law, Bill 189. This petition highlights that there were 1,326 cases of sexual assault in 2022 that were withdrawn or stayed before trial, that there were more than 12,000 cases of sexual assault that were reported in Ontario in 2022 and that there are actually more than 80% of sexual assault cases that actually go unreported.

We know that between 2022 and 2023, there were nearly 3,000 cases of sexual assault that were withdrawn or stayed because the government is grossly underfunding and under-resourcing the court system. So, in many cases we have courtrooms that are sitting empty and dark because there are no judges or staff to be running these court cases. Meanwhile, victims of sexual assault—and I will point out that is largely women in the province of Ontario—are going without justice. So while they have to live with the fact that they have been assaulted for the rest of their lives, the perpetrator of that violence is walking free because the court system is grossly under-resourced.

So, it is my pleasure to support this petition, which, again, is calling on the government to pass my colleague from Waterloo's bill, Bill 189, Lydia's Law, which was named after a sexual assault survivor who was failed by the current court system that the Conservative government has in place.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll remind members to briefly summarize the petition that they wish to inform the House about and not engage in additional political commentary.

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Bhutila Karpoche:** I want to, first, thank Dr. Sally Palmer for sending these petitions.

This petition is calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.

The rates of ODSP and OW are far below the poverty line. It's legislated poverty, and people are not able to survive. It's no wonder that 3.5 million people in Ontario accessed a food bank last year. Food is getting expensive, housing is far too expensive and the social assistance rates are not enough.

I fully support this petition and I join the call in doubling social assistance rates immediately.

### CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I have a petition that's signed by hundreds of members from the riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. It's about removing bike lanes on Bloor Street West.

It agrees with the government on Bill 212. It talks about the loss of income for small business owners, how people are having a tough time getting home to their families on time because of the excessive congestion along Bloor Street.

This is a great petition, and I appreciate the advocacy from the members of my community to bring this forward to our government. We are going to get it done.

I'm happy to sign it and give it to Kamila to bring it to the front desk.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Once again, I'll remind the House not to engage in additional political comments with respect to the introduction of their petition or an explanation of it.

### ADDICTION SERVICES

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Speaker, I thought I'd just learned a new trick when to talk about petitions, but I got corrected there before I even had a chance.

This petition is to discuss supervised consumption sites. It talks about the fact that a person in Ontario dies every two and a half hours from toxic drug supplies and how important those supervised consumption sites are to saving lives, as I was able to say in my debate yesterday; I said quite a bit about it.

This is RNAO, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, that have put together this petition, asking for the government to reverse the decision of closing it, increase the funding to ensure that they work well and it does fix the problems that I believe are the government's concerns about it—investing in it would make it better—and then have access to publicly funded, not-for-profit, evidence-based treatment.

**1310**

I wholeheartedly agree with the nurses who have worked hard to ensure this petition is factual, calling on the government to do the right thing. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Ekam to bring to the Clerk.

### CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** I also have a petition about bike lanes in Toronto, requesting the removal of the bike lanes and supporting the legislation, Bill 212, that the government has brought forward, signed by hundreds of people interested in getting around the city faster.

### HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I have a petition entitled "Health Care: Not for Sale."

This petition is particularly concerned with the privatization agenda of this government and the cuts that we are seeing as a result. We know that home care patients are not getting life-saving supplies because of the privatization. We know that hospitals are carrying huge deficits and are underfunded. We know emergency rooms are closing—planned and unplanned. We know that two and a half

million people in Ontario can't get a family doctor. And we know that when people can't get a family doctor, they go to emerg and they wait 24 hours. If they get admitted, they're in hallways. Hallway medicine is as bad as it's ever been.

So this petition signals that people are very concerned about the direction that our health care system is going in. They want to stop the privatization. They want to stop people having to pay for services that they already pay for through their tax dollars.

I wholly support this. It's a crisis, and I want the government to understand that people have signed this across Ontario. I'm going to affix my name to join those from across Ontario that are concerned, and then I'm going to hand it to Macarius—what a cool, wonderful name—to take to the table.

#### CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms. Laura Smith:** My petition calls on the government to also remove the bike lanes on Bloor Street. This will help traffic, and this will also help the businesses in that area.

I fully support this. It aligns with Bill 212. I affix my name, and I will give it to page Maadhav to put on the table.

#### CAREGIVERS

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** This petition is titled “Create a Caregiver Support Benefit.”

There are 3.3 million Ontarians who have been an unpaid caregiver. A vast majority of caregivers feel overwhelmed with their responsibilities and have had to dip into savings. Many have had to give up jobs or drop out of school or reduce hours of work simply to take care of their children or family members, especially elderly parents.

Speaker, this benefit is supported by many advocacy organizations, including Canadian Cancer Society, MS Canada, Community Living Ontario and Alzheimer Society of Ontario.

This would go a very, very long way in helping make sure that caregivers have some kind of financial support and that people who are being taken care of receive the proper care from their loved ones.

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

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Don Valley West.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Speaker, I have a point of order. I see my friend and former colleague Gregory Smith has just arrived in the gallery today. It's his first time at Queen's Park, so it's very exciting.

I would also like to just acknowledge Shakhlo Sharipova from the riding of Don Valley West, who is here, as well as Northlea elementary school, who I had a great visit with yesterday.

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

#### CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Billy Pang:** This petition is regarding the removal of bike lanes on Bloor Street.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has proposed legislation to pause the installation of new bike lanes where they take away a lane of traffic in Ontario....”

When I'm driving in Ontario, on the main streets, there are a lot of bike lanes there that keep the traffic not moving.

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario government immediately remove existing bike lanes on Bloor Street West and Etobicoke–Lakeshore.”

I affix my name to this petition and give it to page Ryan.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I will remind the members that the standing order prohibits the reading verbatim of petitions. We're asked to summarize the petition and not engage in additional political commentary, and keep it as brief as possible.

#### ADDICTION SERVICES

**MPP Lisa Gretzky:** It's funny listening to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence chirping over there, talking about how they're better at skirting their own rules that they made—interesting.

*Interjection.*

**MPP Lisa Gretzky:** Anyway, Speaker, perhaps the member opposite could stop talking and allow me to do my petition instead.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I would ask the member to summarize her petition. She has the floor.

**MPP Lisa Gretzky:** Thank you, Speaker—

*Interjection.*

**MPP Lisa Gretzky:** Apparently that member on the government side can dish it, but he can't take it.

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

**MPP Lisa Gretzky:** I have a petition here for the continued operation of supervised consumption services and associated harm-reduction programs. It points out that a person, a human being, dies every two and a half hours from the toxic drug supply in Ontario; that the government is moving in the wrong direction by closing consumption and treatment services; that these services actually keep needles and other drug paraphernalia off our streets, out of our parks, out of our community. It gives people a safe space to be able to use drugs, but also to access health care supports, because harm reduction is health care. It's calling on the government to reverse course and ensure that every person in this province has access to the health care that they need, and to do everything possible to ensure that we are saving lives and keeping people in our community safe.

I fully support this petition for the government to reverse course when it comes to consumption and



same time, he cannot keep working while providing full-time home care.

Speaker, this is just a small part of Howard and Jeannie's story. But again, the policies, the rules, the legislation of home care—this is red tape. This is excessive bureaucracy. And with Howard's advocacy for a new approach called Jeannie's Way, he is showing you a path to reduce red tape.

Last fall, Howard told Tim Brody from the Sioux Lookout Bulletin that "'Jeannie's Way' represents a hope for a future system that is patient and family centred."

Jeannie is a member of Lac Seul First Nation and has a treaty right to health, to receive health care that respects and allows her to practise her ways of life, on- and off-reserve, and that's why I'm talking about red tape.

But now I want to look at some of the schedules in this bill, Bill 227. As we know, schedule 18 would amend the Northern Services Boards Act. One of these amendments would allow local services boards to go outside of their geographical boundaries and provide fire protection services. It is an important change, but I don't want to not acknowledge it's a good thing. Bureaucratic and administrative orders should not be a factor that impacts whether someone receives fire protection services.

That said, there is so much that we need to do. We need to invest more to ensure that fire services are more adequately funded and that firefighters are well paid.

Schedule 19 would give Ontario's Ombudsman the power to do investigations when there are complaints about how a local services board is complying with the act's subsections on closed meetings. This is important. This is important because transparency and accountability must be maintained, especially as the subsections regarding closed meetings are changing.

Going back to schedule 16, which would amend the Mining Act and give the Minister of Mines new regulation-making authority: The bill's compendium states that "Section 176 is amended by adding subsection (2.1.2), to allow the minister to make regulations respecting service standards for the processing of any application, submission or filing under the Mining Act or its regulations, including establishing standard time periods for procedural steps to be taken by the Minister or Ministry of Mines."

Speaker, in this House, the Minister of Mines has been not respecting the treaty rights of First Nations in Ontario, nor the right to free, prior and informed consent, which is set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Chiefs of Ontario have called on this government to declare a 365-day moratorium on mine claims staking. But the call has gone unanswered, again, violating their rights, violating our rights.

1330

The Minister of Mines must stop prioritizing the convenience of mining companies over the rights of the First Nations whose lands these companies want to mine on. The Ministry of Mines should ensure that any changes to

regulations are made in dialogue and in consultation with and with the consent of First Nations leadership.

Speaker, I want to urge this government to take a hard look at their priorities. The current approach that they're taking on the rights of First Nations, on fast-track mining, is not the right approach, and they will be the ones who will have themselves to blame when things will not go their way. Because the more oppressed we are, the more we come together as nations. Things will not happen in the way you want as a government, because that's how oppression works. That's how colonialism works. That's how racism works. We live it on a daily basis. I see it every day.

Speaker, that concludes my remarks for the day. Meegwetch.

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

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Sorry, he didn't share his time, so we go on to questions. Questions?

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** We all know that red tape is a hindrance. It hurts our province's ability to grow and create jobs and to provide people with prosperous lives and livelihoods. We know that, under previous governments, there was a lot of red tape created in the form of new forms of regulation. I can tell you that I experienced that myself first-hand, trying to run a law office for 24 years, which was continuously hindered by red tape. It became increasingly more difficult to serve my clients, increasingly more difficult to give people good service, increasingly more difficult to create jobs, all because of red tape.

I would like to know what the member opposite has to say to the hundreds and thousands of hard-working individuals in the province of Ontario who, despite their best efforts, are losing their jobs and other opportunities as a result of red tape.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** I think red tape can mean that we want access to mental health. The government is red tape on accessing mental health. There are just far too many times where I go to funerals of 11-year-old girls who died by suicide. There are just too many times when you go to a community where 11-, 12-year-old boys and girls—there are 24 of them that have a suicide pact. I know we lost three already in that particular community.

Where is the red tape to access mental health services? I think that's really important. You cannot use jurisdiction as an excuse to be able not to do anything. I think that is exactly what happens in the community, the inter-generational trauma that we continue to see. The red tape is taking no action.

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

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** I want to thank the member from Kiiwetinoong for his presentation. One of the things that is a pattern with the Conservative government is that they claim they hate red tape, but then they introduce a whole lot of red tape on various programs and through various legislation on things that actually impact people.

We've seen that with the bike lanes. We've seen that with the not-for-profit child care expansion. We've seen that with ODSP, in terms of accessing the program and all the paperwork that participants have to prove constantly to the government. It's not like their disability vanishes after a certain period of time.

My question to the member is: In what areas might you actually, in your communities, need the red tape to be removed, and the government has refused to do so?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** One of the things that happens is—again, I have 31 First Nations in my riding; 24 of them are fly-in First Nations. Every time I travel up north, I have to use a plane. I have to use a plane to be able to go visit my constituents, visit leadership, visit youth, visit the elders.

One of the things that the government of Ontario runs is airports. We have government-run airports that are run by the Ontario government. These are gravel runways, with not the best infrastructure in the waiting rooms. I think we need to be able to improve the infrastructure at the airports. That, in itself, is red tape, where you do not provide the best infrastructure, the good infrastructure, when you have that one point of access to leave the community or get into the community.

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

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you to the member opposite for his comments on this. I understand your obvious concern with justice, especially justice in the north, as you're talking about that.

But in this piece of legislation, people across Ontario are getting some relief: some movement for the courts, some improvement in the court system to make sure that we get them to court and get action on their hearings faster, so they get justice faster. That can help people during what are very stressful times, and you've talked a little bit about some of those stressful times as well and how people have a need to have justice. This is a way to make our court-rooms more responsive and efficient.

I wanted to ask the member if he would support these necessary improvements to aid Ontarians in resolving their legal matters more swiftly.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Again, I spoke about the airports in First Nations, the 24 First Nations I talked about. We have fly-in courts. I don't know how to improve the court service, where on a quarterly basis, for this particular community, they come in—planeloads of the clerks, the lawyers, the people who have to meet with the JP or the judge or whatever.

I've seen fly-in courts. I think it was maybe about a month ago, I saw a fly-in court in Deer Lake. I walked in and there was a court. I don't know how that can be improved, where we have a better court system in northern Ontario. I don't know if this bill does it. I doubt it, because most times, the government, the people who make the decisions with the legislation, don't consider those things. People have to wait every four months to go to court in the north, and that's red tape for you. Meegwetch.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** To the member: I hear what you're saying. This is a bill that has 26 schedules, and I am sure what you're trying to say to us is that in this bill, none of these schedules are addressing the inequities that you have been sharing in this House time and time again. I don't think people are hearing you when you say that these are fly-in communities and that they are operating on gravel runways. That's infrastructure that's being overlooked. I don't think people understand that when you talk about when families are lost in fires, what's really lacking there is our fire equipment and fire equipment buildings. When you talk about the generations and generations of families at Grassy Narrows who continue to suffer from mercury poisoning—do all of these injustices and inequities have to be labeled as red tape before this government can get up to address them?

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**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch for the question. Certainly, I described a little bit about what red tape is to me, how sometimes government can be red tape to First Nations on access to rights, access to health care, access to services closer to home.

And then I think it's important to be able to—like access to clean drinking water—I have 14 First Nations that have long-term boil advisories. What describes a long-term boil-water advisory is something longer than one year.

I have one First Nation in Neskantaga; about 300, 400 people live in the community. Come February 1, 2025, which is only about two or three months away, they will have reached their 30th year of long-term boil advisory. So I think those are the issues that we need to be able to cut the red tape on, but not just people that—easy access to things. But I think we need easy access to clean drinking water. Meegwetch.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I recognize the Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Hon. Mike Harris:** I hear the member talk about and other members across the way say that there aren't things in this bill that are going to address the needs of Indigenous people. The member from Kiiwetinoong and I have a great relationship—certainly no animosity between each other.

But I just want to highlight that all of the measures we have done in the 13 red tape reduction packages that have passed through this House have saved individuals across the province over a billion dollars and over 1.5 million hours in time saved. These are also businesses in northern communities. These are also Indigenous-led businesses that get to take benefit of the work that this government has done. So I just wanted to frame that for him and just see if he has any comments in the last 15 seconds.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Thank you to the minister for the question, but I think that the biggest room in the world is the room for improvement.

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Mike Harris:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Point of order.

**Hon. Mike Harris:** The member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas has just made a very unparliamentary remark, and I would ask that she withdraws.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** My apologies; I did not hear the remark.

Did the Clerk?

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** My apologies to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction. We did not hear, and the Clerk did not hear.

I'll caution the members in the House to maintain a civil parliamentary—

**Hon. Mike Harris:** If I can hear it from here, how can she not?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I did not hear it, sir.

I recognize the Minister of Agribusiness.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** I rise today to speak on our government's fall red tape package. I want to thank the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for tabling this bill, as I am confident it will create the environment for further economic growth in this province, and for his rabbit ears of hearing in this chamber. Well done.

This is the 14th red tape reduction package delivered by this government since 2018. Some of the highlights of this round will include:

- freezing fees for knowledge and road tests for Ontario drivers;

- making the admission process easier for people seeking long-term care;

- reducing unnecessary administrative requirements for brownfield redevelopment to help accelerate home construction—much needed in this province;

- speeding up operations at the Landlord and Tenant Board—badly needed, I might add;

- making it easier for building officials to work across provincial barriers and boundaries to accelerate new home construction in northern Ontario; and

- finally, employing digital tools to help deliver key infrastructure projects, including hospitals, highways and transit, on time and on budget.

Since 2018, our government has taken over 550 actions to reduce regulatory burdens. That is unprecedented in Ontario history. These 550 actions have saved people, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector over \$1 billion dollars annually and 1.5 million hours in time savings. If passed, this bill will save the people and businesses of Ontario an additional \$20 million.

Let me take this opportunity to outline the Ontario Liberal Party's disastrous legacy on agri-food as it relates to this bill. On energy alone, Speaker, Ontario agribusiness manufacturers were paying three times—I repeat, three times—what their competitors in Montreal and Calgary were paying.

But on the agri-food red tape and regulatory burden side, our government inherited an absolute disaster. To

quote the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, this 2016 report stated that members of the agri-food sector have “long felt overwhelmed and inhibited by a regulatory framework that is overly prescriptive....”

The two-hit punch of a 400% increase to hydro rates and a radical red tape regime left us with an agri-food sector that was underperforming and overburdened. That same OCC report emphasized that 60 food processing plants in Ontario had closed because of those higher costs, representing almost 13,000 jobs. That is their legacy. When you look to our industry today, which I will a little bit later on, we'll explain how we've turned that around.

They've doubled down on that legacy, as I just spoke. Today, hydro costs and more red tape just isn't enough to get it done. They remain committed to a compounding carbon tax.

As part of this red tape reduction round, Speaker, my ministry has put forward two amendments. In total we have delivered 25 red tape reduction measures for the agri-food sector since 2018. Those measures have saved the ag industry \$2.6 million since 2018. That's \$2.6 million that can be reinvested into their businesses or farms to grow and compete, not only in the province but throughout Canada and North America.

From apple growers to beef farmers we are freeing up time and capital for everyone in the agri-food sector. In this round alone, we have amendments that are saving time for marketing boards by allowing for more flexibility in their operations regarding corporate seals, treasury bonds and board minutes and agendas.

We're also making it easier for rural Ontario ag equipment dealers and distributors by making legislative amendments to the Farm Implements Act. This is an important initiative indeed. These changes would ease administrative burdens, streamline dispute resolution processes and reduce fees for those dealers and those contributors.

We've made it easier for rural communities to resolve fencing and property disputes efficiently to save time and reduce stress on all.

We've cut red tape to save horticulture organizations money and to provide clarity on the payment of services.

We delivered the first reform to the framework of our ag financial protection program, the first in over four decades.

We've updated our dairy cleaning and sanitation requirements to the latest and most modern standards.

The list goes on and on, Speaker. These are all sophisticated, fine-tuned and complex regulations. They required updating and proper regulatory overhaul by a government that cared and was focused. Again, we got it done. This was a commitment we made to the agri-food sector and this is a commitment we've delivered on. We are proud of these accomplishments.

These may seem like small changes, but they will have a large impact in delivering more efficiency over the long term permanently. All of the amendments we have passed since 2018 are critical, as it is a time where farms and

agribusiness are facing higher costs due to inflation and that punitive, punitive carbon tax.

Yet the Liberals will vote against our support for reducing red tape for farmers and agribusiness. They support the carbon tax. They do not support reducing red tape. They do not support farmers.

I want to use a few examples here as to how this bill will continue to complement our industry and the stakeholders in it. As I've said many times in this House—and I believe in this—a rising tide lifts all boats.

### 1350

Our government has created a robust economy—again, we've not created the economy; we've created the conditions, the environment for our economy to flourish. And I'll say it again a little later on: When we came here, the treasury was about \$150 billion. In perspective, when Bill Davis was Premier, it was about \$35 billion. The government has grown, the treasury has grown, but in six short years, we're now at \$212.6 billion in the recent FES. We've not raised a tax. Again, we've not raised a tax; we lowered taxes. We've created an environment for the economy to grow. A rising tide lifts all boats.

Creating that environment is important, because that's how we've seen success, but part of that success is cutting the regulatory burden of all stakeholders and—I'll speak specifically in my ministry—cut regulatory burden, cut red tape, to take advantage of a growing agri-food industry.

I want to use a couple of success stories to prove how it works, and how we've seen success in our sector. Just earlier this week, the Chicken Farmers of Ontario were here—a robust industry, and in my career, I will say I've seen an exponential growth not only in chicken production, but in chicken consumption as a choice protein as part of the nutrition package of most Canadians and Ontarians, for sure. Let me give you an example how we created confidence in the economy, complemented by red tape reduction. At the farm level, we're seeing 77 brand new chicken production barns being built in this province, a massive infrastructure investment.

To complement that, when you go to the processing sector and hatcheries and feed mills, you're seeing continued investment. And in my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London alone, or in the London area, I'll give you two examples: Maple Leaf Foods just built the largest, most innovative, most automated, most efficient chicken processing plant in Canada. It's up and running. It employs thousands of people, and look at the confidence Maple Leaf Foods had to invest in this province, at this time, led by this government—massive investment.

Go up the road. It's an older plant; it was built originally by Cuddy Farms, Cuddy Foods, the Cuddy family. It's now owned by Cargill. They invested in hundreds of thousand dollars in that plant. They are the sole supplier of McDonald's in Canada, and I just had a tour of that plant. I can tell you, Speaker—I was in it when it was first built; I was in it about 15 years later—how impressed I was with the efficiency, the modernization, the investment, the focus, the success they're experiencing. For example, and it's a cute little point, an important point: Everyone here,

I'm assuming, at some point has had a McDonald's McNugget along the way—and some of us maybe have had a few too many, right, Minister?

**Hon. Mike Harris:** A couple too many.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** A couple too many. But there's over a billion McNuggets made out of that plant, and that plant feeds all of Canada, not just Ontario. That plant produces all the chicken McDonald's sells throughout Canada. They chose Ontario. They continued to choose Ontario to make these types of investments. So I'm very proud that we had our chicken farmers here and very proud of the fact that they continue to have the confidence to invest in this province day in and day out.

Another example I want to give recently that I believe red tape reduction has helped us succeed with is in the vet modernization act that we brought forward last year. I think everybody knows that we have a vet shortage in this province and in this country. Attracting young minds to come and study here, stay here and practice here is important. And again, we're creating the environment for that to take place.

The other thing that I like is that in modernizing this act, we were able to reduce—I wouldn't call it the regulatory burden, but the legislative changes needed to allow veterinary technicians to have a bigger role on-farm and in practicing veterinary medicine. Why is this important? Because we reduce the overall structure, reduce burden and help our farmers help those in need. And these technicians are well trained, well capable; think of them as nurse practitioners. They have great skill. They have a great ability to add to veterinary care in this province, and I know everybody in this House appreciated that legislation and it was supported as such.

As you know, Speaker, I've spent a career in business, involved in agriculture, agri-business, leading a national animal nutrition company, and I will say this as a leader of a company and knowing that businesses get this: Managing costs is imperative in a business. Whether you're a farm, a business, a processing plant—whatever it is—you have to manage your costs. That being said, you learn pretty early on that you cannot cut your way to prosperity. Cutting costs alone does not bring you success. You have to grow the top line. You have to build something, sell something, create that energy.

That is what this government has done, Speaker. We have cut costs, yes, but we have also invested, and we've grown that top line: \$150 billion of a treasury in 2018, when we came to power, to \$212.6 billion, I believe is what the fall economic statement states. I like it very much. While it's important to keep that top line growing, we have a responsibility to look after the shareholders, or look after our public's—our constituents'—money and spend it wisely, invest it wisely. That's what this bill absolutely complements and achieves.

And it's why we're creating that environment: more investment. We're seeing that throughout the province, whether it's the EV sector—I'll even take my ministry; we're seeing exponential growth in agri-food. We're seeing more trade across the border. In our ministry, \$26.2



billion leaves this province, 80% of which goes to the United States.

I was just in Chicago earlier this week at the Private Label Manufacturers Association. Get this, Speaker: I talked to over 30 agri-food processors, marketers and companies in the province at the trade display of Ontario, and I added up that by the end of the day of all the people I talked to—over 30,000 jobs. And I love the EV sector; we've got a big one coming to my riding and it's great to talk about. But when you think of what we really do in agri-food, from the farm gate to the consumer's plate, you can't help but be impressed when you see that type of success and enthusiasm in investment, especially to attract those markets. So I was very pleased to see.

More trade, more revenue—again, people have more jobs, and good-paying jobs, Speaker: not part-time jobs; jobs with benefits, jobs with pensions. They're coming our way. And when they have those jobs and those businesses succeed, they pay taxes, they pay their fair share and we invest it back into the economy, which leads to more money for health care—\$25 billion more, I believe, in the last number of years—and more for education, universities and colleges.

And importantly, I want to emphasize that this is important to our industry. I think this is across party lines. Our insatiable need for infrastructure investment is paramount in the coming weeks, months and years ahead. Infrastructure such as water, waste water—when we look at the processing sector in this province, growing as it is, one of the big things processing plants need is access to good water. We need to manage that effectively and that is exactly what we're doing in this province.

We have a duty to be good stewards of taxpayers' money, and over \$1 billion saved for the people of Ontario may seem small in the big point part of the treasury, but it's still a billion dollars that really isn't our money. It should belong to the people of Ontario. Give it back to the people, where it can be best invested.

All of the schedules in this bill are helping create the right conditions for growth, momentum and dynamism across Ontario's \$51-billion agri-food sector. By the way, that is up \$3 billion, the GDP of our industry since 2018. We're not without our challenges—always there. As the member opposite will know, we always have some challenge—that's the nature of agriculture and food—but we continue to see this growth.

The proof of all of these efforts is always in the pudding, Speaker. Since 2018, we've increased agri-food employment by almost 30,000 jobs of over 871,000 men and women across Ontario. That is an amazing achievement: 30,000 jobs. Think of the EV sector, and Volkswagen are going to create 3,000 direct jobs, which is fantastic. We hear the number 30,000 tertiary jobs or secondary jobs. That's going to take place. We've seen that 30,000 take place alone from the farm gate to the consumer's plate since 2018. That represents one in nine jobs of all Ontario jobs, and we've increased, as I said earlier, the GDP of \$51 billion, up \$3 billion since 2018.

And we've massively increased agri-food exports. Again, I mentioned the number \$26.2 billion. How much

is it up since 2018? Sixty-five per cent. Think of that. I'm not sure there's another industry—I may be bragging and proud of agri-food, but I'm not sure anyone else has seen that type of growth since 2018. Ontario's agri-food sector has grown tremendously and is part of our red tape reduction plan, which we're very pleased to help contribute to this minister's great work.

**1400**

Unfortunately, Speaker, this is in despite of a federal government that has done nothing but tax our farmers with a carbon tax and capital gains tax and a carbon tax coalition here at Queen's Park that can't wait to bury Ontario agri-food under a burdensome carbon tax, higher hydro rates and more red tape.

The Grain Farmers of Ontario alone say that by 2030 the accumulated cost of the federal carbon tax, supported by Bonnie Crombie and her Liberal friends, will cost that industry \$2.7 billion. They will not get to pass this through. This puts them at a competitive disadvantage with our competitors south of the border. It's unfair; again, it's punitive.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks also assisted in our agri-food sector with proposed red tape reduction measures. Their changes alter the classification of vegetable wash water from "industrial waste water" to "vegetable wash water." These initiatives will help reduce burdens while protecting the Great Lakes and other waterways. This will eliminate wasted time explaining that they are not washing vegetables with sewage—a very important initiative. It will also reduce public concerns about spills if these sites are reporting a spill of vegetable wash water instead of sewage. I support these changes as they help our fruit and vegetable growers as another example, Speaker, of why this bill makes sense.

In conclusion, I'd like to make three points: I'm happy to see this government actually introduce continued legislation—13 pieces since we've been elected. This is the 14th reduction package since 2018. As the minister of agri-food and agribusiness, I appreciate this bill's support in reducing the regulatory burden as we unleash the full promise and potential of agri-food in Ontario.

Finally, this bill is simply common sense. We don't have enough common sense at times. I look to the minister beside me, and I think of the term "common sense" from a number of years ago, when I think the word "revolution" was part of it. I'm not so sure this is a revolution, Speaker, but it just makes good common sense to continue to represent our taxpayers, represent our stakeholders and our various industries.

Again, I want to emphasize that I think this bill is getting the job done for the people of Ontario. I'm very proud to support our Premier and this minister and this government in getting this done. At the end of the day, I'm hoping that as we continue to grow the agri-food sector—and I'll end on this—that we continue to have the ability to grow our economy and invest in the infrastructure needed to get that done.

We're seeing results. They're getting done in a very positive and effective way. I would just conclude by

saying thank you for this bill, Minister, and thank you, Speaker, for this time. I stand down and thank you for your time and attention this afternoon.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I listened intently to the remarks from the minister of agri-food and agri-business—I'll always say agriculture and food. I agreed with a lot of the things he said. I know he's a passionate promoter of agriculture.

I don't ask this question to be critical, but there is a change made to the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal that the decisions from the appeal tribunal, with the passing of this bill, if it is passed, won't be appealable to the Divisional Court. I'm just looking for why that is. It seems fairly serious to stop an appeal process.

Again, I'm not being critical. I'd just like to know what the rationale is.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Simply put, Speaker, I think it's about streamlining and speed. When I talk to the minister, we talk about these things as trying to speed up the entire process. Everything we do—and I know the member will agree with me on this. Coming from the private sector, the one thing you learn pretty quickly here is, this place, this government, any government works on glacial speed. It just is slow. When I take a look at some of the small—and they may be small amendments, changes—

**Hon. Mike Harris:** They add up.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** But they add up.

I think the purpose, in terms of your question, was it adds speed and gets tribunal decisions made in a much more timely fashion.

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I want to touch on something that you brought up in your speech because I think it's something that gets lost on most people if they don't understand agriculture at all, and that is the waste water from processing vegetables, cleaning vegetables and so on. Previously it was considered toxic waste and had to be treated that way. In this bill, we're making what is truly a logical change so that it's not being treated that way. Effectively, what the province was saying was when you clean vegetables, it's toxic and can never be used again, and yet we're promoting that people should be eating vegetables.

Could you expand on why that actually makes common sense to make this change and what that will mean for not only agriculture and industry but for people in general?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** It's a very easy question to answer, and I'll preface it at the beginning by saying, when you look at our horticulture, our greenhouse industry in this province that produces so much of our fruit, our vegetables, and including the flour industry as well, over 80% of what they produce is consumed in the United States—80%. Yes, we still import our fair share of fruits and vegetables throughout the year depending on timing and season, but 80% of what they do—we're creating jobs and

an economy here in the province. To treat that water like it's toxic was just simply wrong. It did not make sense. So making this change, obviously, allows that industry to continue to now flourish and grow.

But importantly, let's come back to the word "infrastructure." We need to continue to help all these farmers and these businesses get the investments municipally, provincially and federally to get the infrastructure in the ground so we can continue to use water in an effective way to help them grow their business.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I'm not trying to belabour the point, but with the agriculture, food and rural affairs tribunal, to make a change that, on a matter of law, you can't appeal the decision—again, I'm just looking for justification why. I get that you want to make the process streamlined. I come from a farm. I'm a farmer. I get it. I just want to know, what was the justification to do that?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Thank you for the question. At your indulgence, Speaker, I will get back to the member with a more thorough answer. I want to make sure I have every fact and figure corrected before I make a statement.

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Our government understands the vital role farmers play in feeding Ontarians and driving our economy—and I love the sign which says, "Farmers Feed Cities."

We also know the importance to reduce the red tape so that farmers can focus on what they do best. As you know, Madam Speaker, our government has been getting it done by saving the people of Ontario over \$1 billion and 1.5 million hours.

So my question to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is: What are you proposing in terms of changes to the Farm Implements Act, and how will these changes help streamline processes for farmers and dealers and the people who feed us?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** I think everyone knows, or those involved in rural Ontario know, that the farm equipment, farm implement industry is consolidating quickly, and we want to make sure that the smaller dealers or distributors also have the chance to compete effectively in the time that they serve their particular regions. Again, this regulatory change helps foster that entire notion and, most importantly, allows these small businesses in rural communities to continue to flourish.

We often forget in small-town Ontario, in rural Ontario, a lot of these small businesses that support our growing farm sector need that support. Obviously, farm machinery implementation is crucial to their success, and we'll continue to support that small business sector as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Question?  
1410

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you to the minister. You talked about, "A rising tide lifts all boats," but in this case, there is a huge anchor for most people in the province of Ontario. By your government's own numbers, you are

currently \$400 billion in debt. That's the highest debt in the history of Ontario. It's the largest subnational debt in North America. Every man, woman and child owes \$26,000 towards that debt. We know—the Canadian Taxpayers Federation did a study, and it says that 81% of Ontarians are concerned about the debt, and so they should be. You are funding the least per person in hospitals, in health care. We have hospitals—\$21 billion short in hospitals in Hamilton. We have a \$136-million deficit.

How is this rising all boats when people can't get ahead, they can't get a doctor, they can't get health care?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Simply put, Speaker—a couple of points: It's a little bit rich, I would say, respectfully submitted, that, on the one hand, we've grown the treasury from \$150 billion to \$212 billion—we didn't do it, the people of Ontario did it. We didn't raise a tax. We've invested virtually every one of those \$212 billion back into health care—\$25 billion more. If the NDP were in power, I can tell you what would happen: That \$150 billion would have gone down, we'd have seen jobs, we'd have seen industry, we'd have seen that flushing sound to the United States or Mexico.

Without this government, we would be in peril. We are investing every dollar we create in this province back into the people of this province, whether it's health care, education, infrastructure—add up the numbers; your numbers are wrong.

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

**Hon. Mike Harris:** Let's talk about the economy for a second. Let's talk about how under the one time that we've had an NDP government here in this province, they had to ask public sector employees to take a day off because they couldn't afford to pay them. When the Conservative government had to come in and clean up the mess, at the time they had an \$11-billion deficit that they had to deal with.

I will say, if we're going to talk about red tape and we're going to talk about what it does to contribute to the economy, our red tape reduction packages have put over \$1 billion back into the pockets of business owners, non-profits and the people of this province.

My question to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness is, why do you think it is so important for red tape reduction to actually make a tangible difference to the people of this province?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** The last time I checked, everybody in this province loves to eat, they like three good meals a day, and everyone gets their meals differently at different times, different ways. When you take a look at how we're feeding Ontario today, reducing the regulatory burden to get our farmers to be more productive, which they are—by the way, they are the most innovative, productive farmers in the world. Get out of their way and let them do what they do best. That's the environment we're creating in this bill and with this government.

I would end by simply saying to the member beside me that it's important to note that our food capacity—we feed all of Ontario and it continues to grow—

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

Further debate?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to be able to get up and speak on behalf of the good people of Timiskaming-Cochrane and the official opposition today on An Act to amend various Acts, Bill 227. Basically, it's a red tape bill.

Usually when I look at a bill the first time, believe it or not, I like comparing things to cartoon characters. The minister will enjoy this. I'm of an age where—some of you might not remember the Wizard of Id. The Wizard of Id has a little despotic king, and everything was a bit—there were some questionable happenings in the kingdom. The sheriff was dragging someone into the castle—the king was on his throne—and he said, “Sire, this charlatan has been practising medicine without a licence.” And the king said, “Why are you bothering me? Just sell him a licence.” Now, that's an example of a bad way to get rid of red tape.

There's a difference between regulation and red tape, and I think we all understand that. There are parts of this bill—and I asked the Minister of Agriculture a question before, a legitimate question, because that is what this House is for. We have our moments and our disagreements philosophically.

I'm going to continue on the red tape theme. When I was first elected, I had to speak to the society of professional engineers. They were having a meeting in North Bay in a place that the minister of red tape knows very well. Their MPP, the Minister of Economic Development, and I had to speak. His focus was also on red tape, which I understand.

I was second to speak. It was an introduction to a meeting. It wasn't debate. We've all been to this, right? And it was a really cold morning: It was 35 below, 40 below when I drove down to North Bay. You know when the tires are square? You know when it takes the first 10 kilometres for the tires to warm up?

You can tell I don't have a lot of notes on this bill—

**Hon. Mike Harris:** You're doing great.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Call me to order at your peril.

Anyway, the Minister of Economic Development talked about the focus on getting rid of red tape, and I started by saying that before I was elected, I was a farmer—still a farmer. And I said—I've never told this story before in the House—“There's three types of people that farmers just instinctively don't like.” The room got quiet, and I said—

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Don't say, “Feed salesmen.”

**Mr. John Vanthof:** No, no, but you're coming up in the list.

The first that farmers instinctively don't like—and I said, “The first one is politicians.” They kind of looked at me. I said, “No, because when we watch, they yell at each other, and they're always saying that the other one's totally wrong.” And I looked at the Minister of Economic Development and I said, “That's actually not the case, because when we can, we try to work together for the betterment of everyone.”

And I said, “The second”—and I hope I don’t insult too many more people here—“type of people that we farmers instinctively don’t like: lawyers. We don’t even need a reason for that.” Now, all due respect to my own family: I have a daughter who’s a lawyer.

So I’m speaking to Professional Engineers Ontario, and I said, “The third type of people that farmers instinctively don’t like are engineers.” And the minister gasped and said, “John, do you know where you are?” I said, “Give me a second.” The Minister of Agriculture will perfectly understand what I’m about to say.

I said, “The reason we don’t like engineers is, on a morning like this, it’s 35 below”—and at that time, I still used upright silos. You pushed the button for the silo unloader. That’s a machine; it’s up in the air, and it’s been designed by an engineer to work efficiently for 10 years under optimal maintenance. That one I’ve got in silo number 2 has been clanking up there for 15 years with subprime—my kind of—maintenance. And it’s 35 below, and the main structural beam will crack from stress, and I’ll blame it on the engineer.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** And then they laugh, just like you did, Minister.

And I said, “But why I’m saying this is engineers design equipment, roads—all kinds of things—to be safe and to be affordable.” Right? We could design a silo that’s going to last a hundred years, but I’d never be able to buy it.

1420

It’s incumbent on engineers, if the government goes too far and regulations actually impact safety, to let the government know and to let the opposition know. That’s why I asked the question about—not particularly a safety question. It’s incumbent on us to know what’s going on.

That’s why I’m a little bit concerned—I’m going to be upfront—at the way these bills are presented and put through so quickly. It’s hard to do due diligence when a bill is dropped one day. I don’t claim to be an expert; obviously, judging by my speech you’ll know this. And the government has much more time to do this because they have been working on this bill for a lot longer, hopefully, but the idea of the Legislature is that the bill comes and then we talk to stakeholders, we talk to experts as well and we look for faults in the bill. There may be things that we philosophically disagree with, but we look for things that could be done better.

When bills go through this quickly, realistically—and I’m not whining about this. I’m paid by the people of Ontario to do as good a job as I’m allowed to, and so are we all, to comment on our residents’ behalf to make sure that we’re doing what we can. And quite frankly, the way this works, that’s not possible. That isn’t possible. I just want to get that on the record.

I’ll go through some of the schedules of this bill, and because it’s a, what’s the—there’s a special word for these kinds of bills.

**Interjection:** Omnibus.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Oh, omnibus. “Omnibus” always sounds very ominous. Although it’s close and although this government is fairly ominous, not everything in an omnibus bill is ominous.

Basically, in my layman farmer’s terms, this is kind of a cleanup bill. Red tape reduction, in a way, is kind of cleanup. There was a question and answer about vegetable waste water. There are things where regulations don’t seem to make sense. What I have found about the regulatory process—and I, as a farmer, have been as frustrated as anyone by regulation. But usually a regulation has been put there to solve a problem. Sometimes it’s a patchwork, and then you get a mess of regulations, right? But usually, at least in my way of thinking, there’s not a big office tower somewhere of a hundred people trying to come up with ridiculous regulations. I really don’t think that’s the case. Usually, something goes wrong and somebody reacts to it by imposing a regulation to stop a problem. They just don’t realize that perhaps that regulation and another regulation cause a bigger problem. Then, when you put three regulations on top and four regulations, all of a sudden the two or three regulations are trying to do the same thing two different ways, and people like me who are just trying to run a business look at this and go, “Nah. That’s just ridiculous.” That’s how regulations come to be.

We actually don’t really make regulations in this House. Most of the time the government of the day passes—sometimes we vote with the government. We actually do sometimes. And then sometimes we vote against the government. Usually, it’s enabling legislation that gives power for the government to make regulations basically behind the scenes. All governments make regulations, even governments that take away regulations make regulations.

Anyway, that’s the way government, in my humble opinion, gets regulations, how successive governments put in regulations to solve what they perceive as problems. And you get too many regulations, and another government will come and clean some of those regulations up. And the trick is that, if the pendulum swings too far to too many regulations, you’re trying to get it right—that the pendulum doesn’t swing back too far the other way that you get the Wild West. Hopefully everybody out there understands what I’m talking about by the Wild West, right? That’s what we’re going for. As much as I disagree philosophically about many of the directions of the government, I don’t believe that the members across the way or the members on this side—none of us want the Wild West. None of us want regulations that don’t make sense. We can do our political thing and blame each party for whatever, but deep down, I think all of us and most of us have had former occupations. Some of us have two occupations; we all get this.

We’ll take one that wasn’t mentioned—I don’t think; I haven’t heard it. There have been changes to the Architects Act to cover buildings with agricultural occupants—farm buildings. I’m going to stick mostly to agriculture—I’m a farmer. The Minister of Agriculture can challenge me on farm stuff but not too many other people are

confident to challenge me on farm stuff. Correct me if I'm wrong, but agriculture buildings are becoming much bigger, much more complicated, much more complex. If something fails in an agricultural business, a structure, it's a big project. So hence, you actually need stronger regulations to make sure. There are things on my farm—10 by 10, you can build without a building permit. And, honestly, I've built a few things bigger than that without a building permit.

**Hon. Mike Harris:** You might need a lawyer.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Yes, I might need a lawyer. He doesn't—I don't know if I need him to represent me.

But anyway, most farmers—of my life—have the ability and just the natural engineering knowledge to build a machine shed. But the structures of today? You need more qualifications to make sure that when you're—and a modern dairy structure? You're talking \$5 million, \$10 million, right? That's different than—so I don't see a problem having architectural knowledge and having the architecture act cover those buildings, because they are major pieces of architecture.

Okay, the Combative Sports Act. I don't think I'm—that's us, I don't think I'm going to touch that.

**MPP Lisa Gretzky:** Some might say this is—

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Yes, other people can take the Combative Sports Act. I asked a question regarding the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal. I'm looking forward to the answer and again, I wasn't trying to be combative.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** We got it.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Yes, I'm good. Regarding changes to the Farm Implements Act, we haven't had time to fully study this, but the way I read it, it is providing more protection for dealers and for regions served by dealers, right? I think that's a step in the right direction, because anyone, if you—we'll take an example where I live—and the Minister of Agriculture knows our area very well, but a lot of people would think that northern Ontario doesn't have—we have a lot of dealers where we have lot of dealer support, because we have support and we attract business from a wide variety.

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But our dealers, some of them aren't as big a volume as some of the big chains here. As a result, they're threatened. But if we lose a dealer, we have to go like 500 miles. It's a whole different concept. I'm looking forward, and hopefully, we actually have some time in committee with this bill, because it hasn't been the case lately. But just on the face of it, I think that's a good idea.

It's also our job to talk about things the bill could have, should have, you know? What we would have. One thing that we put forward that this bill doesn't include—and again, not criticizing, but just putting it on the record—is the right to repair. In places where we are more isolated, that's even more important, right? Because that's the issue with some major manufacturers: You buy the equipment, but you don't buy the technology. You do not have the right to repair that technology. That, in some cases, is a problem. It really is. It's been the issue of major law-

suits—those lawyers sucking up all the money, you know? But it is an issue. That is not going to define whether we vote for or against this bill. I, quite frankly, haven't decided yet, but that's something.

There are some changes—time is flying; I should tell less stories and talk about more of the bill more. I don't know what schedule it is—the Northern Services Boards Act. There's a lot of that in my area. Most of the province doesn't really have any municipal government at all, to tell you the truth—like, geographically—but where most of us live, you have towns, cities, townships. If they're a township, they have a municipal government, a council, right? Service boards, northern service boards, they're unorganized. So they have a service board. But now, the service boards are having to deal with many things that municipalities, larger municipalities, have to deal with. That is a step forward. I truly believe that.

I'm not saying that there aren't things that we wouldn't like to be doing a little bit differently, but we do need to look at it. As we get more population in unorganized areas, that they actually have access to some of the same protections as organized areas. I think this is a step in the right direction.

I see my time is running out. I look forward to the questions. I left a wide variety of question material. So with that, thank you very much, Speaker.

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

**Mr. Rick Byers:** I thank the member for his comments. I always respect the member's discussion on agricultural issues with his great experience.

I do not have a similar experience. The closest link I have to agriculture is really my name of Scottish heritage, Byers. A "byer" is a cow barn. So, you know, I figure there's some real link there, as well as all the agriculture businesses in my riding.

I'm just curious: with respect to agriculture—and you heard the minister earlier talking on this bill, and the member for Peterborough–Kawartha referenced a specific example of cleaning vegetables and the minister gave some other examples.

My question to the member is: Don't you think there are enough tangible examples of efficiencies that can benefit the agricultural industry that would cause the member to support the bill?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Thank you for that question. If we're going into heritage—so my name is Vanthof, but actually, in Dutch, it's "van het Hof," and that's "from the farmyard." So, yes, I haven't moved far in my family's history.

Again, I wasn't critical, I don't think, of the bill. We need to look at the bill. Some of the things that were mentioned aren't actually in the bill. They could be regulations that result from the bill in the future, and I always look at that. Sometimes what I read in the bill is not what I hear in the debate, so that's why I ask questions.

But I listened intently to the minister. I listened intently to the minister of red tape. And again, we haven't had time to actually make that decision.

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

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to the member for his debate on this. I can feel kind of what you're going through on this. I saw the bill this morning. I didn't print it all, because I don't have enough paper in my printer—the full bill is 140 pages, tabled yesterday, debating today. It is difficult to give a fulsome debate on something like this. I appreciate you speaking to what you could. You've been elected more terms than I have.

What does it mean when you have enough time to consult with people, to review the bill, to have a decent debate, as compared to just having something show up on your doorstep that's 140 pages and then asked in a short amount of time to give your opinion?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Thank you very much for that question. As an example—and it's not that this is the only thing; we all have other jobs to do. I'm the opposition House leader. I have other problems going on. So, this bill comes, what we do is we search for the parts that are the most—anything agricultural ends up on my desk. What I wish I had the time to do before I had to do this debate was call up my local dealers, call up the Ontario farm implements group that—right? And I'm sure the government has done this, but we have a different perspective.

Just the speed at which—the way it used to be done when I got here, 13 long years ago, a bill could be in this House for a month. I'm not saying that's a good—but not to waste time, but so you would actually sort out if there were any mistakes.

I'm going to be a bit partisan in my last couple of minutes. In my first few years, we never had whole bills rescinded, and that's been because of this quick passage of bills.

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

**Hon. Mike Harris:** To the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, I have an answer for you on your question, sir. The Canadian Equipment Dealers Association are the folks who had brought this forward and asked for it very specifically, because what was happening is things were going from tribunal to the Ontario courts, and it was very costly for their members. You would have your favourite people, the lawyers, involved, of course, and ultimately it almost mirrored what the tribunals were going to request.

If something can't be reached through mediation, it goes to the tribunal, and then the tribunal is the be-all, end-all and the judgment on it. So then they don't have to go then take it to the courts and go through that more time-consuming, costly process.

So there's the answer for you, sir. It is from consultation with the folks that you reference. So, this is a great piece of the bill.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I didn't hear a question, but I get to answer it. I very much appreciate the answer from the minister of red tape. I'd just like to put on the record that

dealers have also contacted me beforehand, specifically the one dealer that I did business with a lot, Ebert Welding in New Liskeard. Ian Auger contacted me about the changes that needed to be made. I'm hoping that these changes reflect accurately the issues they were having.

This is an example. I really respect it. I got the answer today. It was lucky that I happened to be here when they were here. If the minister hadn't been here, I wouldn't have gotten that answer. But if we would have had a little bit longer—I'm just saying, in the future, if you actually use the Legislature the way it should be used, you will have better results.

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

**Miss Monique Taylor:** It's always enjoyable to listen to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane tell his stories of his history as a farmer and ways that he went through his community and different things that he's done throughout his life.

But it's absolutely true to the fact that he really just got up to be able to kill some time and to be able to keep debate going without having the proper tools that he needed to be able to debate properly 27 schedules in a 140-page bill that we just received late yesterday afternoon. I myself have also not had the opportunity because we've been pretty busy around this place, trying to keep up with all of our different ministries.

Maybe our House leader can talk about how many times bills in this Legislature have had to be rescinded because of the government's quick push-through of several pieces of legislation.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I could do the whole list—Bill 124. And we could—there has been a lot. And not little tweaks; major, major legislation has had to be taken off the books.

But there's something else that the member alluded to. It's one thing that we don't get the time to look at stuff, but lately, the government has also been eliminating committee. Committee is where people who know their—we know some stuff, but people who actually are experts in their fields. We know a little about a lot of things, but some people know a lot about their field of expertise.

When you eliminate committee, you take out that step. Again, that's a risk for Ontarians, and long-term, it's a risk for the government.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Quick question, quick debate?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** I appreciate the sharing of the member opposite. I obviously like his story—and, yes, as he mentioned earlier, we are different. If I don't know a thing, I go to learn. If they don't know a thing, they put in the regulations.

So with them and with the previous government, there were over 386-plus regulatory requirements on Ontario businesses and individuals, the highest in Canada. The question: What does the member opposite have to say to the hundreds of thousands of hard-working individuals who do not know everything—and their families—that lost their jobs because of too much regulation?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** That's a very good question. I respect the member on the government side as well—very much.

Like I said during my speech, we have to hit the balance where regulation is there to protect people—safety regulations—but not overregulate so that businesses can't run. That's a fine balance and we have to be really careful with that, because again, people get hurt if we take away too much regulation; businesses get hurt if we put in too much. It's a fine balance and we're all working toward—

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

Further debate?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** It's great to be here on this Thursday afternoon and it's an honour to represent my riding of Oakville and to be able to debate the ministry of red tape's fall reduction bill. Bill 227, the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act reflects our government's commitment to improving lives of the people of Ontario.

Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to recognize the Minister of Red Tape Reduction and thank him for bringing this legislation forward today. I'd also like to thank him for sharing his vision, which is helping make Ontario the economic leader in Canada that we once were. I'd also like to thank the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for her significant contributions to this bill.

It's true that our government has brought out 550 red tape reduction measures since 2018. We've saved the people, the businesses and the non-profit organizations in the province of Ontario \$1 billion every single year, and 1.5 million hours in time savings every single year with previous red tape reduction legislation. As the member from Markham–Unionville mentioned, Ontario, when we came into power in 2018, had the most regulations of any jurisdiction in the world—386,000 regulations—so we are on a mission to improve productivity, efficiency and help the people of Ontario save time.

With this bill, over 20 ministries came together to reduce unnecessary burdens on families and businesses. Over 27 legislative schedules were developed, each addressing areas such as mining, infrastructure, environmental protections, housing and industry competitiveness. Every schedule reflects targeted reforms to reduce administrative barriers, improve transparency and create a more efficient regulatory framework for the people of Ontario.

I want to thank the stakeholders, the businesses and the individual Ontarians who engaged through our consultations and submissions via the red tape portal. Your feedback provided us with a clearer understanding of the challenges you face and helped shape this legislation as forward-thinking and an impactful initiative.

Since 2018, our government has been very focused on cutting through the unnecessary bureaucracy. Red tape has for too long stalled progress and weighed down the people of Ontario. The results speak for themselves: Over the past six years, we have reduced regulatory burdens across industries. We have saved Ontarians 1.5 million hours of

compliance work annually and \$1 billion in regulatory costs. This cuts down on tedious paperwork and allows more time and resources for businesses to grow, innovate and create jobs. That also means that families and individuals have more time and money to focus on what truly matters to them.

The Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024, marks the peak of our efforts, containing over 60 initiatives to modernize and simplify how government interacts with the public and businesses. This bill alone, if passed, will save an additional \$20 million annually and reduce compliance time by over 56,000 hours each and every single year. These savings are not just numbers on paper; they reflect real, tangible benefits for the people and businesses of Ontario.

Bill 227 encompasses numerous schedules that introduce pivotal amendments across multiple sectors, and I'd like to highlight some of those, Speaker:

- the mining sector modernization, with the goal of unlocking the potential of Ontario's mineral resources to meet global demands for critical minerals is essential for electric vehicles and renewable energy technologies;

- enhanced transparency in governance, so stakeholders can now expect enhanced accountability and streamlined processes that reduce costs and create consistency across regulatory entities;

- environmental efficiency measures, to ensure environmental stewardship remains balanced with practical developmental progress;

- affordable housing reforms, tailored to Ontario's growing housing needs and the diverse challenges in our urban and rural areas;

- commitment to rural communities and industries, to ensure fairness for Ontario's agricultural stakeholders; and

- we're also modernizing the judiciary process so that government can continue to provide timely access to justice for all Ontarians.

So let me guide you through the game-changing initiatives that this legislation brings. These measures span various sectors and have been thoughtfully designed to address existing barriers. Tackling current obstacles will ensure that Ontario remains a leader in regulatory modernization.

One of the stand-out measures is the freezing of knowledge and road test fees for drivers in Ontario. This initiative directly benefits young drivers, newcomers and job seekers who rely on affordable access to licensing processes to pursue their ambitions. It's a step forward that will alleviate the financial pressures that Ontarians face.

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We are also streamlining the admissions process for long-term-care facilities, making it easier for families to secure care for their loved ones. This change reflects our government's commitment to supporting Ontario's aging population while reducing unnecessary delays.

On housing, we're addressing the critical need for affordable homes by reducing the administrative requirements for brownfield redevelopment projects. By cutting red tape in this area, we are accelerating housing construc-

tion, ensuring more families can access safe and affordable housing options.

Our legislation also proposes significant improvements to the Landlord and Tenant Board. For years, Ontarians have faced delays in resolving disputes, contributing to a frustrating backlog. By enhancing tribunal efficiency and introducing measures like streamlining the application process, this legislation will allow for faster resolutions and better service and delivery for landlords and tenants alike.

We're also exploring partnerships with consumer reporting agencies to facilitate credit score integration, creating more transparency in tenant histories while maintaining privacy.

Infrastructure is another area of focus. With the use of digital tools, we are ensuring that critical projects such as highways, hospitals and transit systems are delivered on time and within budget. This not only improves service delivery but also ensures that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently. Ontario's economy thrives when our industries thrive. This legislation reinforces our government's commitment to making Ontario one of the most attractive places in the world to live, work and raise a family.

Ontario's mining sector has long been a cornerstone of our provincial economy, supporting thousands of jobs and driving investments in resource-rich regions. This industry is not only a vital contributor to Ontario's GDP, it's also an integral part of our strategy to remain competitive on a global scale. Recognizing this, the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024, introduces transformative amendments to the Mining Act that will enhance transparency, efficiency and predictability for businesses operating in this critical sector.

One of the key changes in the legislation is the introduction of service standards for mining permits. By empowering the Ministry of Mines to establish clear and transparent service standards, we are ensuring that mining can have predictable timelines. This change will reduce administrative burdens, cut costs and provide much-needed certainty to companies seeking to explore and develop Ontario's rich mineral resources.

The amendments also recognize the critical importance of reducing administrative fatigue. Mining is inherently a high-stakes, high-investment sector, and ensuring regulatory predictability gives businesses the confidence to move forward with large-scale projects. This supports our broader efforts to enhance investor confidence and position Ontario as the global leader in sustainable mineral development.

Moreover, Speaker, this legislation aligns with our government's broader commitment to enhancing Ontario's global reputation as a premier jurisdiction for mineral exploration and development. With the growing demand for critical minerals, such as those needed for electric vehicles and renewable energy technologies, Ontario is uniquely positioned to become a global leader in sustainable mining. By cutting red tape, we are accelerating the development of these resources while

maintaining our commitment to environmental stewardship and Indigenous consultation.

The proposed changes address concerns from industry stakeholders who have long advocated for a more streamlined process. By consolidating existing service standards and introducing a regulatory framework that adapts to industry needs, this legislation will bolster investor confidence. Businesses can focus on innovation and growth, knowing they have a partner in government that supports their success. Again, I must stress that all mining approvals will ensure the duty to consult is carried out—as it is now.

In addition to these regulatory updates, this initiative recognizes the importance of reducing administrative fatigue while ensuring that the mining activities comply with Ontario's strong environmental and safety standards. Our approach strikes a balance between facilitating development and protecting the natural resources that make Ontario a global leader in mining. By implementing these forward-thinking amendments, we are positioning Ontario as the destination of choice for mining investment. Our efforts will support job creation, drive economic growth and solidify our place on the world stage as a competitive and innovative leader in resource development.

The contrast between our approach and the legacy of the previous government could not be more striking. Under their administration, Ontario earned the title of "Canada's red tape capital," burdened with over 386,000 regulations—the highest in Canada. Compliance costs soared to \$33,000 per business annually, making it nearly impossible for businesses to compete and thrive. This stifled economic growth, drove away investments and cost Ontario over 300,000 manufacturing jobs. We have learned from these mistakes from the previous government and taken decisive action to turn the tide. Through bold measures and legislative innovation, we have reduced regulations by nearly 6%, positioning Ontario as one of the top-three provinces in Canada for regulatory efficiency. Today, businesses are empowered to grow, individuals are spending less time navigating bureaucracy and Ontario is regaining its competitive edge, and once again has become the economic engine of Canada.

Our success in reducing red tape is not the result of isolated efforts. It is the product of meaningful collaboration with the people and businesses of Ontario. Through the red tape portal, businesses and individuals have been able to share their challenges and propose solutions. These submissions have directly informed our policies, ensuring that our actions are grounded in the realities faced by Ontarians. We've heard from farmers who needed simpler processes for licensing and dispute resolution. As a result, we've updated the Farm Implements Act to streamline these steps. We've also listened to business owners frustrated by inconsistent timelines which led to the new service standards in mining and other sectors. Every voice matters in shaping an Ontario that works for all.

A key feature of the proposed legislation is the amendment to the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act. This change will enhance the government's



ability to measure and report on the impact of its actions on individuals. By formalizing burden reduction metrics, we are setting a new standard for transparency and accountability in the public service—imagine that, Speaker, accountability and transparency in the public service. The Ministry of Red Tape reduction will now track savings in time and money for individuals reporting these figures publicly to ensure continued progress and trust in our government's efforts. This ensures that government processes remain accessible, efficient and responsive to the needs of the people.

The Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024, is not merely a set of legislative amendments; it's a leap forward in building a modern, efficient and competitive Ontario. It's a continuation of the legacy of this government in reducing regulations and creating a positive business climate, which has attracted record investment in this province. By reducing red tape and streamlining processes, we are empowering individuals, supporting businesses and creating an environment where innovation and growth can flourish. We can witness that just by the amount of investments that have come into the province, by the renaissance in manufacturing in this province. The previous government gave up on manufacturing. They said everything was going to go service and they focused on a service economy. And where are we in 2024, all these years later? Some 300,000 new manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario, 800,000 new people working who didn't have jobs when we took office six years ago—

*Interjections.*

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**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):** Stop the clock, please.

Members, please come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):** Minister of Labour, please come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):** Oh, my goodness. Member for Windsor West, please come to order.

Please start the clock. The Associate Minister of Mines.

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you, Speaker, for taking that opportunity to call out the member opposite who is upset by all the jobs being created in this province, including in her area of southwestern Ontario. People working, jobs coming back, foreign direct investment: Ontario is rebuilding itself from the hole it was in under a decade ago.

By reducing red tape and streamlining processes, we are empowering individuals, supporting those individuals and, again, creating that environment for business to flourish. That's why people are coming to the province. That's why governors are talking to our Premier about what's going on in Ontario. There's a miracle going on in Ontario right now. There's new investment, new jobs—critical minerals, manufacturing. There's a level of excitement we haven't seen in decades in this province, and that's not by accident. That's by innovation and creating

the right policies, creating the right environment for business to flourish, and creating that environment includes red tape reduction.

This legislation specifically from the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction reflects the principles that drive our government: a commitment to reducing unnecessary burdens, creating new opportunities for Ontarians and ensuring that every action we take delivers measurable benefits. Imagine that, Speaker: measuring the policies that you put into place, something that, unfortunately, is not very frequent in government. But those of us who were in the private sector would understand that's how the real world works. We're bringing that common sense to government with this legislation.

We have 27 schedules addressing diverse sectors, as mentioned, including mining, housing, justice and governance. This act is a comprehensive blueprint for modernizing how Ontario will work in the 21st century. It's also a testament to the power of collaboration. This bill would not have been possible without the input of Ontarians across industries and communities, and the tireless work of ministries and legislative partners. Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient province, one that leads in efficiency, innovation and sustainability.

This legislation is not just about today. We're looking backwards and making some changes that should have been there in the first place, but, more importantly, it's about the future. It's setting the foundation for the future for our children and our grandchildren so we can ensure that they want to stay in Ontario, that they want to work here, that they want to raise a family here, that they want to create a business here; a future where businesses thrive in this great province, where individuals feel supported, and where government is a true partner in progress and doesn't get in the way of people wanting to create businesses and help our province.

Again, I want to congratulate the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, I'd like to congratulate the parliamentary assistant to the minister and I'd like to congratulate all the ministries that had a part in this, because this is really bringing together a lot of different ministries under one umbrella to improve efficiency, productivity and make life better for the people of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):** It's time for oral questions.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you to the member across for his presentation today. I'm very curious in knowing—there are many schedules before us; the bill was only dropped yesterday, so I'm still reading. Schedule 14, with respect to the Law Society Act—I know that we've all been speaking about the challenges that we've seen in the legal system, the delays that are existing, not having in-person hearings when it comes to the tribunals, or just the lack of legal aid funding, which means that a lot more people, especially vulnerable people, are self-representing. We know that self-representation can often times lead to further delays.

I'm curious to know: Is there any intention from the government to amend their bill to fix the legal aid funding

that they slashed from 2019 and the fact that they're continuing to underspend in the justice file?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member opposite. Look, there's no doubt that, after COVID, there has been some delays in the legal system. Our government has made a concerted effort recognizing that, to be able to speed up the judicial system, because it is of paramount importance. It's critically important that we have a speedy judicial system. That's why we've hired dozens of new crown prosecutors. We've hired dozens of staff members to be able to work with those crown prosecutors so we're able to put people on trial as soon as possible.

Notwithstanding that, we've also invested in courthouses and we will continue to invest in courthouses so that we can get people through the system quicker. Finally, we've also invested in the digital justice system as well, to be able to go through the digital process as much as possible.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):** Next question?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** A couple of weeks ago, I hosted a round table in Markham–Unionville to bring in those who have a lot of concerns with the landlord and tenant tribunal.

Speaker, our government understands the frustration that comes with delays, especially when you are already in a stressful situation. Our government has continually worked to streamline processes and reduce administrative burden when it comes to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Can the associate minister let us know how the proposed changes in this bill will reduce the frustration and help speed up this process—we don't need to wait forever, but making it easier for landlords and tenants to resolve their issues?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member from Markham–Unionville. He is correct. Again, unfortunately, as a result of COVID, there was a backlog of people going through the Landlord and Tenant Board. We recognize that. Again, that's why we've put the investments into that. We've hired more adjudicators. We want to get the process moving on a quicker basis.

Also, we're proposing in this legislation to be able to pass on information—still maintaining privacy, but passing on credit information, so people are able to see the credit history of potential tenants. This will hopefully avoid a lot of potential problems, and it will actually help a lot of tenants that have a great credit record, I think, by having that transparency. That's something that's critically important to be able to speed up the process here, which as the member rightly pointed out, is something we need to focus on.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):** Further questions?

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** I thank the member from Oakville for his presentation.

My question is related to process. This bill that is being debated—it's an omnibus bill—was tabled yesterday. It has over 140 pages, 27 schedules; schedules that amend many different acts.

My question to the member is: Do you think that by not giving enough time to all members of this House to study the bill, that he thinks that it would lead to a productive, constructive debate? Or is this another one of those bills that government just wants to rush through, as we have seen that this is a pattern that this government continues to engage in?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** That question really signifies the difference between the people in the official opposition, on that side of the House and our side.

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** We're here to work. The government is here to work. We're a government that is getting things done for the province. All the legislation we've put through—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):** Members, please allow the minister to respond.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):** Members, please allow the minister to respond.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** You're not doing your work. You've got your staffers doing it.

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** My staffers aren't doing this. I'm doing this myself because I believe in this bill.

1510

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):** Ladies and gentlemen, there's a Speaker. Please respond through the Speaker. At this moment, I would request everybody to respond through the Speaker.

The minister to respond.

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** I'd love to answer the question, if the opposition would give me the opportunity.

At the end of the day, the people on this side of the House, the government members, are willing to work hard. We are putting through legislation which is going to get this province on track. Speaker, this is exactly why that party will never be in power again. All they want to do is spend time writing papers, passing them back and forth. We're a government that gets it done.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand):** The member from Toronto Centre.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I must admit, this was a very fast read, because, obviously, we just got the bill. But my wife challenges me in a reading contest because she reads about a book a day, and I can maybe get through a half a book a day. She's definitely the faster reader.

However, I want to get back to the bill. In schedule 11, the government has put forward a motion that I think is largely housekeeping in nature. It's asking the jury sheriff to list more details about the juries who are coming on to the roll. But in my meeting with the Canadian Juries Commission, what they tell me is that jury pay hasn't changed since the 1990s. If you're a jury member between day 1 and 10, you don't get paid anything. If you're a jury member between day 11 and 49, you get \$40 per day. If you happen to serve on day 50 to the last day of trial, then it's \$100 a day, but there's no provision for parking or

child care. How can you make the jury system part of the legal system work when you're not compensating the jurists in a fair manner?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** I think everything has a time for review. What's part of this specific legislation? We are freezing the fees—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Order. The opposition will come to order.

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** We are freezing the fees for knowledge and road tests for Ontario drivers. We have been focused on affordability for the people of Ontario. All the legislation we've put through, they have opposed. Whether it's a gas tax cut, whether it's freezing the fees, whether it's eliminating the licence plate sticker fees, we're a government that's been focused on affordability, keeping the costs down for the people of Ontario, and we will continue to be. We're proud of that.

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I want to bring it back to red tape reduction on this. I know that the opposition have thrown out a few other things.

But I was at a conference just this past week on critical minerals. One of the things that I found very, very interesting is that there are eight billion cellphones currently in the world. There are more cellphones in use than there actually are people in the world. And in each individual cellphone is about 1.2 ounces of critical minerals. Apple, last year, in the iPhone alone, used 385,000 tonnes of critical minerals in the Apple iPhone. When you think about that, 1.2 ounces per cellphone, you can do the math to figure out how many cellphones.

Why is it so important to reduce the length of time it takes to have a functioning mine in Ontario from 30 years down to something more reasonable so that the critical minerals that everyone in the world needs can come from a clean, environmentally sensitive and socially responsible jurisdiction like Ontario?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member from Peterborough-Kawartha. What a great question. Speaker, he is absolutely right on. I didn't know that statistic about the eight billion phones. I'm not surprised, given the number of phones I'm sure many of us have within our families and with our kids. But it is critically important that we build mines in the province of Ontario quicker.

We have mines in Indonesia which are financed by the Chinese, which are environmental disasters. The tailings go right into the ocean. The nickel there is being put into electric vehicle batteries, into cellphones, yet right in our own backyard, right here in Ontario, we have some of the best critical minerals in the world and we are a leader in world environmental standards. Our objective is to get them out cleanly and quickly and bring prosperity to the north.

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

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** It's always a pleasure to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the good people of Toronto Centre, and I'm happy to speak to most legislation.

This bill has been dropped last night, as you all know—introduced very, very quickly. It's got 27 schedules, over 100 pages and it's dense. Some of it, of course, is housekeeping, of which I don't need to speak to all the schedules, but others are less so.

I can tell you that the title of the bill, once again, Speaker, is about cutting red tape and building Ontario. I feel like the government probably believes in their own mind that if they say these words enough times, it will be absolutely true, but in some ways, the most substantial part of the bill might be just the title. It's a good talking point, and I give them that. They're very clear and strong on their messaging.

So let me speak to the bill itself because I think that's important and that's why we're here. All joking aside, we're serious lawmakers—I'd like to think that we are. I'd like to think that the business of this House is to take care of the people's business. I worry that when it comes to bills like this, that are dropped the night before and then sort of foisted upon members to have a substantive debate, it really is to create a "gotcha" moment, and that's not really how House courtesy and parliamentary courtesy should be carried out. Nevertheless, it's here, and we have to tackle it.

There are 27 schedules, as noted by a number of MPPs, and I'm going to pull out the ones that I think are actually deserving of conversation, deserving of debate. A number of them are simply procedural and, of course, housekeeping. They're not poison, so we'll go with it.

I'm going to start with schedule 25, and I want to talk about this schedule because I am, after all, the official opposition critic for the Ministry of the Attorney General. The issue around justice and access to justice is important to me, as it is important to many of the members here. I know that's why we became lawmakers. When it comes to Ontario's justice system, it has been brought up on numerous occasions that we have serious, chronic backlogs in our courts and tribunal system.

This schedule sets out what a chair can do if a hearing or decision has not happened within a reasonable period of time, and that tribunal chair—and I want to note, Speaker, that the language, I would say, allows for interpretation:

"If the chair of the tribunal is of the opinion that a panel has failed to complete a hearing or make a decision within a reasonable time, the chair may specify a deadline by which the panel must complete the hearing or make a decision."

The chair "shall consider...

"the guidelines established by the tribunal...,

"the service standard policy developed by the tribunal..."

The chair "may consider any other matter that, in the chair's opinion, is relevant to the circumstances....

"If a panel fails to meet a deadline specified under subsection (3), the chair of the tribunal may, on a party's motion to the tribunal or on the chair's own initiative,

assign another panel to complete the hearing or make a decision in the first panel's place."

Well, at quick reading, that sounds okay, but it's not because it really doesn't fully recognize how bad the system is when the justice wheels are not turning at full speed. So clearly, the government does not understand the crisis that our tribunals or the courts are in right now. I remind them that Ontario has the very worst wait times when it comes to trials. I remind them that Tribunals Ontario is significantly clogged up. The Landlord and Tenant Board alone has 53,000 cases sitting in backlog. The Human Rights Tribunal has practically ground to a halt with 95,000 cases, many of them now years in the pipeline waiting for their hearing.

I want this government to actually fix the problem. I want them to understand that this problem is not going to be fixed by itself by simply introducing a bill that's calling itself "cutting red tape" when you're actually not addressing the problem.

This government would be wise if they were to pick up my own bill, which I tabled last week, which is Bill 226, Fixing Tribunals Ontario Backlogs Act. It requires the government to address a backlog reductions panel to clear those 53,000 cases, to work in a manner that is efficient and expedited so therefore those landlords and tenants who are waiting for access to justice can actually get it. So there is no fixing the tribunal system unless you are going to address the backlog, just as simple as that.

**1520**

Let me go further. My bill would have made amendments to the Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act. It would have also amended the Human Rights Code and the Residential Tenancies Act. My bill would have given the government a pathway to increase legal aid funding, which I noted they have already slashed. Every year they continue to underfund the justice budget, and in the fall economic statement they forecast that they will underfund it by another half a billion dollars.

My bill would have also increased in-person hearings. It would have expanded duty counsel. It would have also removed the political interference where we have seen this government making political appointees based on political connections to the PC Party, not necessarily on their qualifications. They have made those adjudicative appointments based on whether or not they are donors, and quite honestly, this is part of the problem, is that you have adjudicators that are making mistakes.

All of this said, we have a bill entitled Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario that is actually not building Ontario, and it's certainly not cutting red tape. So unless you plan to clear the tribunal backlog one at a time, all 53,000 cases, in the LTB, you're not going to make a dent. Which is why the backlog reduction panel, which is what I recommended, which is something that has happened before—with the introduction of the Human Rights Tribunal, there were a number of backlogs. It has happened before. It worked, and it can work again.

I want to thank Tribunal Watch Ontario for their support of my bill. Their expertise in helping create it, in

helping me draft the legislation, making sure that it was going to be effective, impartial, but also, more importantly than anything else, it was going to get us the results.

I welcome this government to steal my homework. It took me months to draft that bill to make sure we got it right, and they can take it and just plug it into this bill, and it would significantly strengthen it.

Schedule 2 speaks about the Architects Act. It is a supportable clause; I want to highlight that. And as someone who has actually spent a great deal of time—especially during my time in municipal council, I've had the privilege and honour of working with some of the finest architects in the country. My God, it has been the privilege of a lifetime to work with these great, creative engineering minds. And so I have a lot of respect for the industry.

But where this government could have truly cut red tape is by making sure that the OAA and the AATO, when they were here before us, were to be brought together to work together. That would have been a significant and constructive way for the government to bring a resolution to what was a long-standing conflict between the architectural technologists and the architects association. That would have brought us to a mutually beneficial conclusion to their dispute. But instead, the government did not play that role. You came down very heavy-handed on one side and you didn't certainly leave everyone happy.

When I talk about architects, it makes me think about building bridges. Recently, no one is building bridges better than Taylor Swift, and I just want to say thank you, Taylor, for all the work that she did in bringing our city together. I'm wearing a few of my friendship bracelets just in fondness. I had the opportunity to see her last week. But if there was a way for this government to also cut some additional red tape—it could have been in this bill—why not introduce legislation, or amend legislation, to stop predatory and dynamic pricing? All those Swifties who were unable to get tickets because auto-bots and ticket frauds beat them to it—we have lots of disappointed fans. You could've helped them. But clearly this bill doesn't go anywhere in addressing that type of unfair monopoly that we see in that sector.

Schedule 4—I'm going to hop all over the place, because, well, I had to read the bill backwards and forwards.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** And the bill is all over the place.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** And the bill is over the place; that is correct.

Schedule 4, Courts of the Justice Act: It's a bit sketchy, to be quite honest, that this bill would allow the Attorney General to make rules that, until recently, were made by a large group of legal experts, including 15 judges from various courts, one law officer of the crown, two court administrative workers, nine lawyers and the Attorney General or their designate. But that is now all going to be the way of the dodo bird because the Attorney General doesn't want it that way. He doesn't seem to need input from anyone else.

This schedule, schedule 4, eliminates the Ontario Courts Management Advisory Committee and the Region-

al Courts Management Advisory Committee. These committees are important because they're responsible for considering and recommending policies and procedures to promote better administration of justice and the effective use of human and other resources in the public interest. Therefore, it is concerning that the advisory committees on the administration of justice in Ontario are being eliminated in the midst of a court crisis.

It would be reasonable for the government to make changes to how these committees are run to make them more effective, more transparent, more accountable. I think that would have been a good use of ink on paper. But instead, the government says, "We're going to do away with it altogether." This is not necessarily just a small tweak in the justice system that will save us from any crisis in our courts.

Despite this very significant problem, we see that the government is cutting 9% of the justice budget in the future year. This will not save us any money because we know that when you starve the courts, you don't get to trial. That means that human traffickers, rapists, impaired drivers, carjackers are not going to get to trial, and we know this because our jails are full. As this government continues to boast about building more jails—that may suit you fine, but it's at a great cost to the Ontario taxpayer. When you think about how many people are in government custody that are sitting in pre-detention, 81% of those people in those detention centres are just waiting for a trial. So you can continue to build jails—if it suits you, you can do that. But you're not making the streets safer and you're not making our communities stronger, despite what you try to name another bill.

Keeping someone in jail is going to cost a lot more; we've seen that time and time again. Holding someone in detention before trial is also very expensive. And, of course, we then run into the Jordan principle, where you know, because of unconstitutional delays in your broken justice system, you are letting those violent repeat offenders walk free. So you can point your finger to the federal government all you want, but we all know, and every legal observer in this province knows, that this government is responsible for the manufactured crisis in the courts.

Overcrowding is expensive. It causes violence and causes staff turnover. It is inhumane. So while you continue to grow that budget when it comes to correctional services, where seniors have died because they're being triple-bunked with other inmates who are truly violent, who have fallen into the system of corrections, you're not going to make it safer for them or the corrections officers or any of the communities. All of the concurrent underfunding this government is perpetuating across every sector of justice is compounding.

I do not understand—and no one does, who is a legal observer—why this government would look at the justice system that is severely in crisis and on fire and think that that is a good place to cut. I don't know what to tell my community, and I certainly don't know what to tell your community, when they complain about safe streets not

being in place. None of what you are doing is going to enhance public safety. Speaker, this government has been really—I want to say "stupid," but I won't—but they've been really dumb on crime.

Education Act, which is schedule 5: Adding the role of a system principal to the education system makes sense, of course, but we also know that appointing a teacher in the place of a principal to do the work of a principal doesn't make them a principal in the long run. But if you're not going to fix the education system, I guess this is just another band-aid moving forward.

I can tell you that I actually know teachers who are in acting principal or vice-principal positions, and they'll tell you that they're doing just about everything under the sun to keep the school running. It has become too bad because they're really good teachers and they want to be in front of the students. They want to be with the children. They want to be teaching. But because there's been such chronic mismanagement—and it's not because of the school boards. This government would like to think that everything is the responsibility of the school board, but this government, the provincial government, must be a partner with all the school boards. You must sit down with them and work with them. You should not be attacking them at every chance that you can because all you're doing is scapegoating them for your problem, and the problem of this government has been chronic underfunding.

#### 1530

They are not pursuing smaller class sizes. There is an infrastructure deficit in schools. We are seeing repeatedly the problem of what happens when we have schools in disrepair. Schools like Jarvis Collegiate—which I'm going to be visiting this evening—is one of those schools in disrepair. We have \$16 billion of capital backlog in schools that could use government support.

I'm asked by my school, where my child attends—a public school—to constantly be giving them money and donations so that I can feed them for breakfast programs and snack programs and pizza parties. I mean, quite honestly, we have children who haven't eaten all day, and if parents didn't dig into their pockets to donate to those school programs, what happens to those nutrition programs?

So this is a significant problem that this government has a responsibility in uptaking. I've seen municipalities step up to feed children. I've seen farmers step up to provide nutrition programs. I have seen all sorts of corporations step up. You know who hasn't stepped up, Speaker? It's this government. This government has not stepped up to support students.

They haven't stepped up to introduce and properly fund ECE support. They haven't funded them and provided them a fair wage. We are not seeing special educators. We are not seeing anti-violence initiatives. I could go on, but quite honestly, Speaker, I don't have enough time.

I'm going to move on to schedule 7, Speaker. Schedule 7 deals with the Environmental Protection Act. If this regulation does what it purports to do, then it will speed up development on brownfields by eliminating the ability

to file the unnecessary paperwork. If that's all it does, then that is fine, but I would like to know who asked for this change. Like everything else with this government, I kind of feel like we need to follow the trail money. Who got to you? Who got to this government, Speaker, and who asked for this? Because at the surface, I think it's okay, but if I scratch a little bit further, I wonder what nefarious promises were made and who was asking for it, and I'd be interested in knowing.

This government made it clear that they didn't care about environmental protections. They're building Highway 413 right through the greenbelt. They're building the Bradford Bypass—

*Interjections.*

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** —clap for this—right through prime farmland. They're taking away safe transportation lanes. They are not pursuing a climate action plan. They are not pursuing carbon-free forms of transportation. Give yourselves a round of applause. They're bulldozing and clear-cutting Ontario Place. They've tried to sell off the greenbelt to the highest bidder. They tried to decimate environmental assessments. So, yes, I am cautious when you ask me to support something that is going to remove “unnecessary paperwork”—I put that in shudder quotes for you—just so you can expediate development on a brownfield, because of what we've seen this government try to do in the past.

Speaker, this is a 27-schedule bill. I'm trying to go as fast as I can. I want to get to juries. Why don't I go to juries, Speaker, because I'm going to talk about the Family Law Act and I'm going to talk about juries. You know what, I'm going to go straight to juries.

I think it's really important, Speaker, that our jury system work in Ontario. We want to have trials that work, where people can be tried by a jury of their peers. We believe in that. And jurors do very difficult work. They're forced to see graphic images. They're forced to review evidence, videos. They're immersed in a horrific narrative for sometimes a very long and suspended period of time.

And I know, Speaker, that the jury pay hasn't changed since the 1990s. I know that there's no fee for a jury if they're working between day 1 and 10. I know that juries who work between day 11 and day 49, they only get \$40 a day, and we know that successive AGs, Attorneys General, in this province have not fixed it. So it's not just this government, but it has been previous governments, and it is time to get it done. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I have maybe a bit of a technical question about schedule 4, and I'll put it to the member. Since she spoke about schedule 4, I will invite her to answer this question about schedule 4.

There are committees in place to make rules. There's a civil rules committee for the civil law rules, there's a family rules committee for the family law rules, and those committees remain in place. No one is taking away those committees.

What this schedule does is, in addition to that, it powers the Attorney General of the province of Ontario to, in addition to the committees, make rules as well, after the Attorney General consults. I think that's a very practical development. I think that's super-practical. It reminds me of a discussion I had with one of the best lawyers in Ontario; his name was Luigi Di Pierdomenico.

I think this is a very practical move. I invite the member to share her observations.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you to the wonderful member from Essex. I thank you for that question.

When the member tells me that he thinks it's a really wonderful rule and that there is a wonderful amendment and it is a great schedule—well, it's a government bill.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I said it's practical.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Well, you did say “wonderful.” Let's say “practical.” But it's your bill. What else are you going to say about it? That it's not practical? That it's not wonderful? Of course, you're going to say it's wonderful and practical. You drafted it.

But what I was saying is that this schedule now allows the Attorney General to make rules that, until this schedule is placed forward, were made by a larger group of legal experts, including 15 judges from various courts, one law officer of the crown, two court administrators, nine lawyers and the Attorney General. Are you saying that the Attorney General can actually replace all those individuals, and we still get practical, more wonderful laws?

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

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to the member from Toronto Centre. They did an amazing job debating this huge bill with very short notice.

One of the things the member talked about was the backlog in the courts, and for a lot of people, they think, “Well, I don't have any legal issues. It's not going to affect me.” But the thing that caught my ear was the people who were being released without trial. If you could expand on that, what it means to the safety of the citizens—because our government is talking about how important law and order and safety is, and how important it is that we're arresting people, but they're bypassing the sort of ugly secret in the room that some people are walking free, not having a trial. So if you could expand on that, I would love it.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much to the member from Sudbury for that important question. The simple answer is that unless you can get a guilty verdict and truly keep someone who is a violent repeat offender behind bars, they're back out on the street. That's it. It's as simple as that. So if you can't get to trial, then you can't get a verdict; if you can't get a verdict, then you can't keep someone in jail. Any other time that is spent in pretrial detention is simply that.

And so it boggles me that this government continues to take pictures with police officers, pretending that that's going to make our community safer, when you actually

have a dysfunctional court system in crisis, and that's what's going to keep us safe.

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Mining is a critical activity in Ontario right now, and I talked in another question about the amount of critical minerals that are needed in electronics today.

Would the member agree that having a jurisdiction like Ontario, which has a grid that is 92% greenhouse-gas-emissions-free and the ethical laws that we have in Ontario around labour, would mean that Ontario would be a good jurisdiction to provide the world with those critical minerals that are needed, rather than jurisdictions like the Congo or China?

1540

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much to my friend across from Peterborough–Kawartha—a beautiful, beautiful region of Ontario. Thank you for that question.

Absolutely, we want to make sure that Ontario has a set of standards, rules, regulations—a legislative framework that actually governs the mines in a way that is going to be sustainable. We do need to extract critical minerals; I think we all recognize that. But we want to do it in a responsible way. We want to do it in consultation with the first stewards of our land, which, of course, are the Indigenous community, and anything outside of that just falls short.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I went through the bill as well, and I picked up some of the schedules that were kind of ambiguous, when we're talking about red tape. One of them is schedule 15; it states: "The schedule repeals section 108.1 of the Legislative Assembly Act." Then I went to the actual schedule in the bill, and it still says the same thing. So it's kind of leaving a lot of curiosity as to what this is about.

I checked our notes here, and it basically is saying that it's repealing the appointed government House leader as the minister for the purposes of the Queen's Park Restoration Secretariat Act. Can you comment on why it's been left so blank in the bill?

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Yes. Thank you very much to my friend and to the member from London–Fanshawe. That is a very peculiar schedule, I must admit. It repeals the section appointing the government House leader as the minister for the purposes of the Queen's Park Restoration Secretariat. We know that that was last inserted in other bills specifically to pick one government minister, who had a very keen interest in seeing the restoration of this building, put him in place, and now that he's no longer House leader, you've decided to take it out.

You should have left him there, in my opinion. You should have left that particular House leader in place, because he was actually really good at his job. But more importantly, it's because I also knew that he deeply cared about the state of this building and what it represented. I

was fully in support of keeping that member in that position.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** My question is—there's a lot that you didn't get to say. I'm going to give you an opportunity. When you were talking about juries, you said, "I'm going to skip to this." Would you like an opportunity to cover some of the stuff that you talked about, the failures in our court system that you didn't get a chance to say?

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much. That is incredibly generous of you.

We can get pretty heated in this House around a debate, but I really want to point out a flaw in the justice system right now. This is a very serious one because it actually helps uphold the justice system.

We've seen that the jury system is not working the way it was intended to, and that's because if you are chosen as a jurist, you'll do everything you can to try to get out of it. Because we know that jurists are not getting paid any type of living wage, let alone any type of incentive to sit through those very difficult trials. Without a properly functioning, well-resourced jury system, you're not going to have excellent jury trials.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** With respect to the Education Act, from time to time, it becomes necessary to appoint a system principal. The system principal is not a principal in the traditional sense of the word. The system principal does not have responsibility directly for a school, but for a system, which might actually be a system like, for example, an information system, a financial system, something very non-attached to pedagogy. I suggest this is a very excellent development to allow us to appoint system principals that are actually qualified in the specific area for which they're appointed. I would suggest that anybody who suggests otherwise does not want the system to work. I put that to the member.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much to the member from Essex. Adding the role of system principal to the education system does make some sense. There is more coordination on special topics, which I think is good, and this is able to be done across the school, which is commendable. We want to thank all principals and vice-principals and assistant principals for doing that.

But it doesn't address the problem in the education system, which is really the big elephant in the room: What is this government going to do about the \$16-billion capital backlog in the schools in Ontario and how are you going to get—

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

Further debate?

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** It is a pleasure to rise in the House today for the second reading of our government's fall 2024 red tape reduction bill. My understanding is this has been a biannual event since this government was first elected in 2018. It's been a priority of this government to

reduce red tape and pave the way for efficient government, while keeping in place regulations and standards that are critical to the process and eliminating those that are not.

In this bill, the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, is a critical part of that process and that evolution. Before I get into my comments, I want to advise the House that I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with my colleague the MPP from Mississauga–Malton.

I'd like to take a moment to start off my comments by acknowledging the hard work of my colleague the Honourable Mike Harris, Minister of Red Tape Reduction, his staff and ministry staff for the great work they have done in getting this bill ready to be on the floor today. I also want to thank the related ministries, because this is a whole-of-government effort, as well as the staff of the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Attorney General himself, who have all helped put the elements of this important bill together.

Speaker, this legislation reflects and responds to concerns that affect all sorts of people living across this great province, in a variety of sectors. If passed, it will help pave the way for better services, cut red tape for businesses and save Ontarians time, paperwork, and money.

In the past, the Ministry of the Attorney General has implemented changes that helped people and businesses across Ontario thrive, and we're continuing that pattern with this legislation. The ministry has supported much-needed modernization of our courts, and we saw it during the pandemic. With the inability to gather and hold live hearings, this government pivoted and developed a whole system for hybrid hearings, virtual hearings to allow our court processes and our tribunal processes to proceed during that time. We are now carrying those forward and refining those amendments and changes, understanding how the world continues to change in the post-pandemic world.

In this legislation, we're amending the Juries Act to make jury questionnaires available online, thus reducing costs and making it easier for prospective jurors to participate in the court system. We have put forward amendments to the cannabis licensing act to reduce costs and red tape for retailers and to enable regulations that will allow retailers to transfer their store authorization and inventory to other retail licence holders as of January 1, 2025. That is a result of the decriminalization at the federal level—downloaded huge pressures on provinces to introduce regulatory regimes. We have certainly seen, in the time that cannabis has been legalized, big changes in the retail world, in terms of issuing licences and then as stores evolve. We need to be nimble in addressing that.

The Ministry of the Attorney General has amended the Courts of Justice Act to remove the requirement that the Auditor General audit the Office of the Children's Lawyer. This prevents the Children's Lawyer from having their finances unnecessarily scrutinized twice; it was a redundancy. We've done that to save the Children's Lawyer and the Auditor General time and resources in making sure that it is done once and done properly.

The Office of the Attorney General has also supported changes to the Substitute Decisions Act. These changes

have helped to clarify that an attorney under a power of attorney is able to access personal information about an incapable person while in that role to enable the substitute decision-maker to spend less time on paperwork and more time on making the appropriate decision for the person in their care, understanding and having access to all their relevant information. This is all about ensuring that the individual is being cared for in the best possible way by their substitute decision-maker, which is the thrust of that legislation.

And each year, Speaker, our ministry continues to build on this government's successful track record of reducing red tape and supporting the businesses and people of Ontario. In this legislation, the Ministry of the Attorney General is busy looking at smart solutions to improve the way we do our work in this province and in this ministry. If passed, this bill will continue the process of simplifying operations in the justice sector, eliminating regulatory burdens and needless paperwork to make sure that we are focusing on the task at hand to make our system more accessible and easier to use for those involved.

#### 1550

One of the big changes that we're proposing in this legislation is two changes to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and those are contained in schedules 24 and 25 of the legislation. We have seen since the pandemic that making sure that that tribunal is focused on its job and addressing cases as quickly as possible has become a challenge.

Before I get into the changes being proposed, I do want to discuss briefly the changes that we have made since 2021 in investing in the LTB to ensure that it is able to keep pace with the demand. This past year, in 2023-24, we invested \$6.5 million to appoint 40 new adjudicators and five new staff at the LTB. Since this government has been in office, we have doubled the number of full-time adjudicators, as well as increased the number of part-time adjudicators. Currently, there are 82 full-time adjudicators and 56 part-time adjudicators to help ensure that those files move forward in a timely fashion. We also will be investing \$12 million in the next three years, as announced in the 2023 budget, to help reduce the backlog of cases by hiring more support staff and expanding hearing hours. In 2022, we announced a \$4.5-million investment as well to hire staff and, during the pandemic, we invested \$28.5 million in a new case management system as we transitioned those hearings from live to virtual to ensure that the system could move forward during the pandemic.

It is a priority for this government as we work to make sure that we have sufficient rental housing stock to help house Ontario residents. We know there's a housing shortage. We know that shortage applies not only to single-family detached homes but also to the spectrum of homes from rental properties right up to single-family detached homes. Making sure that we have an efficient dispute resolution mechanism for both landlords and tenants is a commitment of this government.

As set out in schedule 24, we are looking at changing provisions in the Residential Tenancies Act, particularly



section 212, so that where there's an error in a form that is submitted, the adjudicator has the discretion to cure that error as long as there's no prejudice to the parties involved. So if in filling out a form to initiate a Landlord and Tenant Board hearing, whether it be a landlord or a tenant—if there's an incorrect or bureaucratic error in how that is filled out, under the current iteration of the Residential Tenancies Act, the adjudicator must bump the hearing and it must be refiled with the correction. This is now giving the adjudicator the discretion to cure that error as long as no parties are prejudiced by that cure and so that the matter can proceed on that date and on that time as opposed to being restarted and refiled by the applicant.

The second change that we're making is an amendment set out in schedule 25. It's an amendment to the Statutory Powers Procedure Act that talks about where there's an incapacity or inability of the adjudicator to fulfill the role after hearing the case and they're not able to write the decision for whatever reason. Currently that case would also have to go back for a complete rehearing. What we're giving to the vice-chair of the landlord and tenant tribunal is the ability—because these hearings are now recorded—to appoint a new adjudicator who can then review the transcript or the video or audio recording of the hearing, and allow that adjudicator to then write the decision so that again we're getting rid of delays. We're accommodating the parties because, as it stands now, that would have to be sent for an entirely new hearing with all the delays. And we know, with what we're hearing from both landlords and tenants, that the longer these delays go on, the more prejudice there is to the parties involved, and we're very much committed to making sure that these matters get resolved in a timely fashion so that the parties can have their matter addressed and then moved on from that.

As well, Madam Speaker, we are looking at making a change to the Family Law Act, again, to make sure that there's a smooth and expeditious process for participants, or family law parties, who have gone through an arbitration or a mediation process to have the resolution that they've achieved through the non-court process. In other words, they have gone outside the court process to try to do this on an efficient, time-effective and cost-effective basis. Were they to come to a resolution, whether it be for family property division, child support or spousal support, they can then have that resolution turned into a court order as expeditiously as possible.

Right now, it requires them to file that with the court to have that turned into an order, and if there's no court file, they have to commence a court proceeding. What we're doing through this amendment will be to change the efficiency of that process so that the resolution can be made into a court order that is enforceable by both parties as quickly as possible without additional cost and delay.

In this package, we are also proposing changes to the Election Finances Act, particularly going back to expenses or claims that were denied prior to January 1, 2017. These are expenses that are well over seven years old. Under the current system, the Chief Electoral Officer will now have the discretion to forgive long-standing amounts owing to

the CEO by any registered political party, constituency association, nomination contestant, candidate or leadership contestant in Ontario.

Under the current scenario, where there has been a contribution that's been disallowed, it's currently on the books as an amount owing to the CEO. These are historical amounts. There are guidelines currently in place to allow the CEO to review those and, on certain bases outlined in there, to forgive them. We're enhancing that discretion so that we can clear up these amounts that are historical. The new Chief Electoral Officer was not involved in any of those orders, as they go back seven years, prior to January 1, 2017.

In addition, we are looking at making changes to the Justices of the Peace Act to ensure that there's uninterrupted operation by the Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee, known as the JPAAC. We know the critical role that the justices of the peace play in our bail system. We now have a new Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform. This is a critical part of the bail system, so we need to make sure that we have sufficient numbers of incoming qualified candidates to be justices of the peace. This change is intended to enhance the efficiency by enabling the JPAAC to effectively classify applicants for justice of the peace appointments and report these classifications to the Attorney General.

When the JPAAC advertises vacancies, it reviews applications, conducts interviews and classifies applicants as highly recommended, recommended or not recommended. It then provides the Attorney General with a list of the highly recommended candidates and the recommended candidates, including any brief supporting reasons.

In this proposal, we can make changes that allow the Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee to continue smoothly, without delay, and to carry forward a number of appropriate appointments so that as appointments become necessary, there is a list from which the Attorney General can make those selections in order to ensure that we have qualified justices of the peace that are trained and prepared to hear the hearings that they conduct on a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, these are just some of the changes. It's not exhaustive. We're making changes in other areas that affect the Ministry of the Attorney General, but these are the critical changes that I think are going to have a real and immediate impact, if this legislation is passed, for the residents of Ontario, parties to tribunals and parties to proceedings before the family law courts.

It is important that we get these matters addressed. These changes are a part of the ongoing work that the Ministry of the Attorney General has been doing to make sure that our justice system is accessible, nimble and available to all that need it. We will continue to do that work, and we look forward to continuing that work in the years to come.

And with that being said, I will now cede the remainder of my time to my colleague from Mississauga–Malton. Thank you very much.

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

1600

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I want to start by saying thank you to the member for Simcoe–Grey on highlighting many of the things which we are doing through this bill with 27 schedules, working with 20 ministries. Why are we doing this? It is very simple. For anyone to grow—I always take the numbers, and I always start by saying that when we had the previous government and we saw the numbers of legislative burden going up, with over 380,000 pieces of red tape, what we saw was that if you have a company and your revenue is \$10 and your cost is \$12, what choices do you have? Well, you have many choices. You can close it. You can reduce the expense. Or you can move to another place.

This government, in contrast, believes in helping and supporting those businesses. We're making sure by reducing red tape and making it a critical measure to help Ontario maintain its position as a key player in both the North American and global economy. What are we doing? We're reducing the red tape. We're reducing the burden on these businesses. We're reducing the expenses of those businesses. Why? We want to make sure that if your revenue is \$10, your expenses are \$8 so that you can take that extra \$2 and go back and invest it in the business and increase your revenue to \$12. As you're increasing your revenue and reducing your expenses, you're building the prosperity of Ontario. As we are building the prosperity of Ontario, the world is watching. They want to come; they want to invest. That is the reason we've seen the growth of investment coming to Ontario in the last six years, because of those efforts.

The Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024, is not the first one. It is the 14th red tape reduction package introduced by this government. Since 2018, our government has passed 12 high-impact red tape reduction bills, implementing over 550 burden-reducing actions, delivering tangible results for Ontario.

I want to take a moment not just—typically when I start the conversation, I also start by saying, “Thank you, God, for giving me an opportunity to stand up and speak in this House. Thank you to my family for supporting me. Thank you to the residents of Mississauga–Malton for supporting me; I am here because of you.” I want to add to this: Thank you to all the colleagues that I have here, all the ministries—20 ministries—for your effort that we see a bill, a legacy Minister Mike Harris is going to build for the first time as his first red tape bill. Thank you for doing this—big round of applause to you.

Through this bill, we are making sure that we save people and businesses \$20 million, save 56,000 hours. You know, when you add all these bills together, the number is astounding. It is over \$1 billion in savings and 1.5 million hours saved annually. When you take this money and put it back into the businesses—again, we're talking about reducing the cost, increasing the revenue and bringing the prosperity together. The time saved, 1.5 million hours—you can spend that money, again,

investing into progress or for your family or on yourself. Madam Speaker, our approach focuses on ensuring that individuals can spend less time navigating bureaucracy and more time on what matters most: building their future and supporting their families.

Whenever I go out and talk about the red tape bill, most of the residents and the businesses ask a simple question. They always ask me, “How does this work? How is the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction gathering input from a wide range of stakeholders?” I want to share that information through you, Madam Speaker. The Ministry of Red Tape Reduction invites individuals, businesses and all our colleagues as well to submit red tape reduction ideas through the red tape portal on ontario.ca. If you have a great idea, if something is bothering you, troubling you as a business owner or as an individual and you think that we can reduce the red tape, we can serve the community better, go to ontario.ca and give your idea through the red tape portal. The ministry reviews all the submissions and works with the appropriate ministry partners to address the issues raised. By creating this direct channel, the ministry will ensure that businesses and individuals can share their experiences and concerns and, by doing this, we're improving the regulatory environment.

Madam Speaker, this is the bill which has come forward through conversation, something which our government is proud of. We are proud of listening to the people. We're not only listening, but we are taking action. Through this bill, we are making sure that we are working with 20 ministries, 27 schedules, improving further again, as I said earlier—through this bill, we are making sure we're improving people and businesses; \$20 million and 50,000 hours. And as we are doing this, we are building a better, a stronger Ontario.

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

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I want to congratulate the two members that have shared their time for the speech. I also want to congratulate the Minister of Red Tape Reduction on his first bill. The bill is very highly technical in nature; there's a lot of changes to regulations. But when I speak later this afternoon, I'm going to be focusing on schedule 21.

I think there is something contained here that, inadvertently perhaps, will in fact reduce consumer protection in Ontario. The fact is, if you proceed with the bill as is, without changes to it, consumers that buy from illegal builders will not have their deposits protected under this new regime. The people that will need it the most will be those individuals.

I wanted to know if the member has had time to review that, and, whether he has or not, would he be willing to talk to his side to make these necessary changes to enhance consumer protection and not remove it?

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** Thank you to the member opposite for his questions. I look forward to hearing your perspective on this legislation, but I can say that consumer protection is very much a priority of this government. You've seen the recent legislation with respect to notices

of security interest, which has a huge impact on property owners, and in the construction world we've developed a construction regulation agency. Being a former real estate lawyer, I know the importance of that regulation to registered builders and the new home warranty program.

These are all issues that this government is very much aware of, given that homes are now probably the biggest investment that any Ontarian is going to make in their lifetime. We are very much focused on making sure there are proper protections there to ensure that their investments are protected, and that if there are any issues, they get their money back where appropriate.

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

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** I also want to congratulate the Minister of Red Tape Reduction for your first bill and especially for covering 20 different ministries. And thank you to the two members for their presentations.

The main concern that I have on behalf of my constituents in Richmond Hill is that they really feel the pinch of the rising cost of living. I just want to see: How does this bill cover and help that? Even though we have already introduced—like providing the \$200 rebate to each eligible taxpayer and child, but how would this bill support that, that my constituents are so concerned about, the cost of living?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Again, I want to say thank you to the member for Richmond Hill for that very important question that people are asking. They're going through a troubled time and they're looking for affordability. Thanks to this government, which is always thinking about affordability for the people of Ontario, through this bill, Madam Speaker, we are making sure, especially for newcomers, especially for somebody who's going to get a new licence—we are going to freeze the fee for every driver who's going to take their licence.

Madam Speaker, this is the government who believes in supporting our residents, and that is why, through the budget, we have introduced that every member of the family is going to get \$200 to pay for their affordability crisis.

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

**MPP Jamie West:** My first question is for the member for Simcoe–Grey. This was tabled yesterday, so I've got to reading schedule 16 right now. This is the Mining Act, and what came to me was the MLAS, the mining lands administration system. This came out in 2018, and it allows you to digitally stake mines. However, this year, starting in January, Ontario Chiefs were asking for a pause because they couldn't keep up with all these stakes that are happening. The Conservative government has ignored them.

So August this year, Canada's First Nations are suing Ontario over the Mining Act allegations—they're alleging treaty right violations, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There's a precedent already in BC. I'm not a lawyer, but I feel like when there's precedent, it's hard to fight against that. How will we cut red tape, how will we make

mining more efficient when we're having First Nations in Ontario suing the provincial government over ignoring them instead of consulting them?

1610

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** I want to thank the member opposite for that question and congratulate you for moving into the second row there.

But I can tell the member this, that this is a government that is committed to moving forward in conjunction with our Indigenous bands. I think our Indigenous population is very similar to our own. There is not consensus across the board, there are differing opinions, and we're working with all of those groups to try and find consensus. But we are looking to make sure that we expand the north in collaboration with our Indigenous population.

This legislation is looking at giving the Ministry of Mines new regulation-making authority so that we can update and expand service standards to align with the At Your Service Act, 2022, and this will allow the ministry to set clear and transparent standards, providing greater certainty for mining proponents. We heard from the minister, when he was bringing forward this legislation, that the average time to get a mine from beginning to production is at least 15 years. That's not acceptable. We have the resources to be from in-the-ground to on-the-road for electric vehicles, and we're going to make sure that we get there.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** My question is to the member from Mississauga–Malton.

We have been very much a government that's been focused on reducing costs for the people of this province but also for businesses. As a small business owner prior to coming to politics, I have to say, I recall the days of the previous Liberal government, who had excessive regulations and were costing businesses in Ontario thousands of dollars annually. Now, I'd have to say that it's no wonder that the CFIB, Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, gave them a C grade when it came to reducing red tape, and I know our government has made great strides in reducing the red tape.

So my question to the member is, what are some of the proposed items in this Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act that will help lower costs and ease the burden for both people and businesses in this province?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you to the member for that question. Thank you for your advocacy for your residents. I know you're working on this sports facility and thank you for doing that.

Your question is very simple. You're saying, "Why and how are we getting a better grade from the CFIB?" Well, the reason is simple. When you reduce the costs, you help and support businesses. Through this bill, again, what we're trying to do is we're trying to help support businesses and people by reducing the costs from unnecessary burdens, and we're making sure that we're freezing fees. Again, when we say we're freezing the fees, technically speaking, saying in the future if the fees were supposed to

increase and you have to pay more, you actually don't have to pay more and you save that money.

This is the government who believes in supporting our people in tough times, and that is exactly through this bill. I want to say thank you to the minister for bringing forward a bill that correlates to the heart of the people.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Quick question, quick response.

**MPP Jamie West:** Very quickly, schedule 5 of the Education Act allows a teacher to act—I forget the exact wording—as a system principal. I met with the Ontario principals' association. I'm sure all of us did when they were here at Queen's Park. They begged me to find more teachers to come into the role, because there's such a shortage of teachers, they're doing that job and their jobs. I can't imagine a teacher wanting to be a principal because the principals can't find anyone to be teachers. How is this going to work, and how are we going to address this?

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** Listen, I've got a number of friends that are both teachers and some are in the administration. They love teaching. That is why they got into teaching in the first place. They tell me that they love the ability to be both an administrator but also be on the front line to continue to be in connection with the kids. That is why they took the job in the first place.

So I think having this flexibility built in to allow administrators to be active teachers as well is a good thing. We are working very hard with our education sector to get teachers out and in business. My niece is actually finishing up this year. She just finished her practicum in Kitchener, and I know she's looking forward to a long career. Her first love is being in front of the kids and teaching.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Good afternoon, Speaker. It's always nice to see you in the chair. I know you listen intently to our debate here.

I want to start by saying that this Bill 227—I think the people at home need to understand, really, how this place used to work and how it works now under this government. These bills are important business. It's government business, but it is important that the government gives a fair and equitable chance for the opposition to weigh in on these bills.

It doesn't just do us a disservice in opposition; it's a disservice to all of our constituents. We represent many constituents and we represent a point of view that you should be listening to, because no government has all the answers. I can assure you, this government does not have all the answers because we have seen time and time again how often you have had to walk back, repeal entire bills, and that's simply because you didn't follow what we call standing orders.

Standing orders are the rules of how this place operates. This government has been tweaking and tweaking and changing those rules, greasing the wheels so that their legislation can slide through without the kinds of

consideration, the kinds of input from opposition and from experts that makes good legislation.

It's so obvious that you are using the rules of this place to benefit yourselves, the government, benefit your insiders, and not benefit the vast majority of Ontarians who expect this place to operate in a way that is thoughtful, that is fair and that is good governance. Right here on the wall, this says here, in Latin, "Good government bears fruit." I can see the table is not—that's new. But in Latin, that means, "Good government bears fruit." That means good government is important to a province.

As I have sat here for about seven years, I have just seen time and time again how we have short-circuited the things that people expect us to do here. It's a bad look on this government and it's not helpful for the people of the province of Ontario.

So again, I want people to understand that this bill that we have here is 140 pages. It touches 27 schedules—schedules are changes to laws in the province of Ontario—in 20 different ministries. We call this an omnibus bill. There is probably nothing in this bill that won't impact people in Ontario. For anyone that's listening, there is something in this bill that will impact you.

But what you need to know is that this bill was dumped yesterday, and we are debating it less than 24 hours later. I can guarantee you that when the members of this House stood up and read their speeches, they didn't write those. They didn't stay up to the wee hours of the morning to study this bill. They were handed to them by staffers. But I can assure you that we, on this side of the House, were up late pouring over this bill, doing the best that we could do to reach out to our stakeholders, to understand the implications of this bill, the intended consequences and, perhaps, the government's unintended consequences of how this legislation will govern 15 million people. So 15 million people are counting on this place to get it right.

You have given the opposition, which serves as a primary piece of our Westminster democracy—you have given us less than 24 hours. I can only assume that the members on the government side think that they have all the answers and that they speak for 15 million Ontarians, even though they don't want to listen to them or hear from their other elected representatives. I think that that is a true shame, and it is a black mark on what was a very effective, respected, functioning democracy in Ontario.

**1620**

I also want to say that a bill that impacts 27 schedules—it's pretty hard in a 20-minute speech to narrow down on the pieces of this, for all of us to focus on, but I'm going to just talk about two areas, and one, because I am the official opposition critic for the environment, conservation and parks. I take my role as critic very seriously.

I have to say, this government has given me a lot of grief and time to consider why this government doesn't care about the environment, why this government has spent six years systematically attacking and dismantling any environmental laws that we have in the province. I mean, these laws, you may consider them red tape, you may not like them and they may not work in the favour of

your developer buds, but let me tell you, these laws were designed by a series of governments that came before you that were actually thoughtful governments, that wanted to make sure we were protecting what matters in this province—as I heard the member from Oakville say—for future generations, our kids and our grandchildren. I can't imagine anything that is a responsibility of this Parliament than to protect Ontario's farms, our forests and our wetlands.

How is it that we are going to sell that legacy away to the highest bidder or the highest donor? It's hard for me to sit here and say that you are working for future generations when you are selling off their legacy of clean water, clean air, access to green space, farmland.

I mean, let's just talk about farmland very briefly. We are losing how many acres of farmland a day? I'm sure the number is outdated with this government, but at one point it was like 327 acres of farmland a day, class 1 farmland. There is very limited class 1 farmland in Canada—in fact, in North America. Ontario has a richness of class 1 farmland, but it appears to me that this government sees class 1 farmland that is the most fertile, valuable resource. They see it as an opportunity to pour cement foundations or to build a road on top of it.

In the township of Wilmot, near Kitchener—we have heard time and time again from the MPP from Waterloo, Catherine Fife, talking about what is happening in Wilmot. Currently, 770 acres of class 1 farmland is being expropriated in that area for an unknown purpose. It seems that it will be an industrial purpose. The farmers only found out about this because developers, who clearly had had the heads-up, knocked on the doors of these farmers, multi-generational farmers, and said, “Hey, do you want to sell your land?” And they're saying, “No. We've been here for generations. We want to be here for generations.”

So they are in a position that now, if they don't sell their land, it's going to be expropriated. What world is this, where farmers, who worked to produce the food that we all need, are being forced off their land? They are not willing hosts.

If the government hasn't already changed environmental laws, wants to build on wetlands, attack conservation authorities—I can't even begin to talk about how you dismantle the role of conservation authorities who have been in place since Hurricane Hazel, when we saw loss of life and loss of property. This is a system that runs—it's multi-jurisdictional, so it's an interconnected network of conservation authorities that actually understands how wetlands work. Clearly this government doesn't. These are wetlands that protect us from flooding, that clean our water. They host all kinds of natural habitat and protected endangered species. This government found that inconvenient—red tape—so they kneecapped conservation authorities so that they can't do their job, and in fact, conservation authorities are forced to issue building permits on conservation land whether they agree or not. The Toronto regional conservation authority was forced to issue a building permit, and they said, “We have done this under duress.” “Under duress” is a standing in law which

means that under any normal circumstance, “as governors and folks that are in a position of authority, we're doing this because we've been forced to do this, and being forced to do this by this government.”

Make no mistake: This government is no friend of the environment, no friend of farmland, no friend of wetlands—no friend.

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** Point of order, Speaker. Conservation authorities are not part of this bill. With all due respect to the member, she is badly—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I will caution the member to stick to the contents of the bill.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I am pretty sure that the Minister of Natural Resources doesn't want to hear this, but when you put the Environmental Protection Act in an omnibus bill, I don't understand why you wouldn't expect us to talk about the environment. I know you never want us to talk about the environment.

Maybe, perhaps, in schedule 7, that talks about environmental protection, the conservation authorities play a critical role in environmental protection, unless the Minister of Natural Resources doesn't think that the conservation authorities play a role in the environment.

Is that what you are saying, that the Environmental Protection Act, which has been opened under this act, which impacts the environment—are you saying that the conservation authorities have no impact on protecting the environment? Because with your point of order, that's what I understand you to mean.

If you would like to stand up and make another point of order—I was talking about the Environmental Protection Act. It's not connected to conservation authorities? I welcome you to do that again.

Let us also talk about the government, a government who has absolutely no sense of how to protect people.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Order, order. The member has the floor. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** This is a government that allowed a town to blow up because of all of the unregulated mines in the province of Ontario and has still not come to the table in a sufficient way to address those problems, and that is on you, Minister of Natural Resources.

Let me move on because this government is also creating chaos in municipalities all across Ontario when it comes to their pro-sprawl, pro-developer agenda. We know that that is a direct impact on environmental protection, as it says in schedule 7.

We see a government that broke all the rules and changed all the rules and tried to steal the greenbelt to build in places that planners said would impact the environment, but they didn't listen to that. In fact, when it comes to environmental protection, the evidence that they put forward as to why they were building on the greenbelt clearly said environmental considerations weren't part of this. So you're going to take away the greenbelt, which is wetlands—and people farm on the greenbelt too—but you did not take environmental protection into consideration.

I believe that I am proving my point and I am showing to you how most of Ontario feels. When you talk about this government and environmental protection, people laugh. It's a joke. You can stand up and say all you want that you're protecting the environment; nobody believes you, because your action proves otherwise. We see the Premier cutting deals. We see insiders profiting, and we see people paying the price time and time and time again, to the point that now, for the first time in the history of Ontario, this government is under RCMP criminal investigation.

So they can howl all they want about me not sticking to the bill, but I will tell you: Your attack on the environment, your disregard for environmental protection is directly related to the bill and to the fact that you are all—well, maybe not all of you because some of you are in nowhere land. But we are going to be hearing the RCMP knock on the door to ask questions about what happened in that case, so if the government wants to build a highway, Highway 413, through the greenbelt again—

*Interjections.*

1630

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Honestly, Speaker, it's like daycare here. Do you know what I mean? Maybe it might be naptime. You might want to go get your little mats out and have a nap, because you're a little cranky over there in the daycare section.

You are taking bike lanes away. Is there any evidence for why you're taking bike lanes away?

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** You guys are honestly so transparent, it's ridiculous.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Decorum in the House, please.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Shall we talk about minister Therme? I would like to talk about minister Therme for a minute, shall we? Let's talk about the very fact that we see, now, evidence that the Ontario Science Centre closure was completely cooked up. There is no evidence for that, but it was for a justification to build a luxury spa at Ontario Place, which resulted in—how many trees?—850 trees cut down. You don't even know how many species at risk or endangered were there.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** One hundred and ninety species.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** How many?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** One hundred and ninety species.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** One hundred and ninety species, and we only know that because other people did that check. You didn't do that because you wouldn't even allow there to be an environmental assessment.

So now we clearly know that this was a deal that minister Therme cooked up with the Ontario Science Centre and the insider that is now going to run a spa at Ontario Place that nobody wants. As I said before, the Premier cuts deals, insiders profit and people are paying the price.

Let me talk about how people are paying the price. You want to cut red tape? We have a bill here—140 pages, 27 schedules, 20 ministries—and this bill ignores entirely the

crisis in health care that you're ignoring. I have some commentary here from the Canadian Medical Association that talked about a suggestion for cutting red tape, and I will read from this. It says, "Cold and flu season might not be the only reason you're finding it hard to see your family doctor, assuming you have one in the first place. It may be because your physician is bogged down with endless paperwork, dealing with cumbersome billing procedures...."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business did a study, Patients before Paperwork, and "found that Canadian physicians spend 18.5 million hours each year on unnecessary administrative work," and that "the administrative strain on health care providers, notably physicians, has reached an unsustainable level, jeopardizing their well-being and patient care" in our health system. It's a system that's stretched thin. This is from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

We know that right now, there are 2.2 million people in Ontario without a family doctor. We also know that the excessive burden that we're talking about here not only hampers our health care system, but is contributing to physician burnout. Again, one of the Canadian Medical Association's latest surveys said that "75% of physicians said unnecessary administrative tasks negatively affect their job satisfaction and nearly 60% said these issues contribute directly to their"—their own; the physicians'—"worsening ... health."

In CFIB's latest report, released during its annual Red Tape Awareness Week, it says that some governments are actually making progress in reducing paperwork. Ontario is not one of them.

We put forward an opposition day motion that called on this government to address the issue of red tape, essentially, or paperwork when it comes to physicians in Ontario. We asked the government to do what they could to assist physicians who are trying to keep this system afloat. We urgently asked the government to implement a strategy to increase the number of support staff for primary care providers so that they can spend their time treating patients instead of doing paperwork. So there was an obvious red tape solution to a very dangerous problem in the province and this government did what, folks? They voted it down. In fact, the Minister of Red Tape Reduction himself voted down a measure that would have reduced red tape for our most struggling front-line primary health care workers.

My question is, why in a red tape bill that goes on and on forever, have you completely ignored our health care system?

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Thank you to the member opposite. There is a question I do have for you and I do realize it's a big bill, but I do find that one of the components in there is very important to constituents in my riding and I'm sure in ridings across the province. It has to do with the challenges that people are experiencing with our civil and family courts. Obviously, this leads to undue stress for a lot of family members.

What we're proposing in this bill are some amendments to the Courts of Justice Act. What these amendments would do would address the delays by granting the Attorney General the authority to expedite reform after a judicial consultation.

Given these types of benefits to make our court system more responsive and efficient, my question to the member is, would you support these necessary improvements to help Ontarians in resolving their—

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Absolutely. Any measure that this government could take to improve your court system is welcome because it is a mess. We currently have a court system that is so backlogged that sexual predators and rapists are walking free because the time in which they should be tried has lapsed. In fact, a member of your own caucus, Randy Hillier, who was charged, walked free also—it was stayed because the time passed.

I do support any measure that your government can take to make sure that when police do the work to investigate and apprehend criminals, that your court system finishes the job and makes sure that they don't walk free, which is happening in this province. You know, right now, there are almost well over 2,000 sexual assault predators that have walked in this province because of the backlog in the court system.

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

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to my seatmate for an excellent debate. She started off by talking about the length of this: 140 pages, 20 ministries, 27 schedules—I thought there were 28 but I haven't gotten to the end of the bill yet because we just got it yesterday.

The Conservative government, since I've been here, are always convinced that they're right—all the time. But in bills like this, they're amending legislation that they got wrong, on a regular basis. It's two steps forward, one step back. Something overlooked is they said, "We did consult. We did talk to..." The reality though—and I know this from being a worker safety rep—sometimes people will say things to other people that they won't say to the people in power. Sometimes they'll be more frank and more blunt, and that allows the opportunity—it's not that they shouldn't be sharing with the government the ways life would be better for them, but sometimes they may feel like, "Well, maybe the purse strings will be cut. Maybe there will be less funding. Maybe they won't look favourably on me." That opportunity to have the opposition—our role is to make bills even better.

I wonder if the member could expand on how it doesn't help provide strong legislation to have 140-page bill tabled one day and debated the next morning.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** It really is a travesty of justice. It really, absolutely is. We meet with our stakeholders all the time who tell us things, but they do not want to be on the record because they know that this is a punitive government. They don't want to bite the hand that feeds them. We hear it all the time. We know that this govern-

ment will cut them off if they are not on the same side as them. We also see what we've been hearing today about a culture of cash for access where if people want to actually have the ear of a cabinet minister, they're being encouraged to buy \$1,000 tickets to fundraisers.

Are we doing business as we are expected through effective legislation that follows the rules of a parliamentary democracy or are we continuing to make this just a formality and the real business happens in the backrooms and at expensive fundraisers where cabinet ministers then will make sure that they're listened to and that they act on that, rather than doing it in the most democratic way possible?

1640

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Something I think we can all agree upon is that, when anybody buys a new home, it is definitely a landmark event in their life. Yet unfortunately, there are illegal builders who continue to exploit this process. Of course, what it does is compromise the security of such a significant investment.

Now, what this legislation proposes is it proposes to require homebuyers to report their purchase agreements to Tarion, which will effectively identify these rogue operators, which will allow Tarion to guarantee fund supports only to legally built homes. I think the member opposite would agree that this is a critical measure to protect homebuyers.

My question to the member is, can we count on you to vote in favour of safeguarding Ontario's homebuyers? Please say that you will side with us on that.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Tarion has been failing, and continues to fail, consumers. I agree with you—we all would agree—that this is a huge and the biggest purchase for families, especially now when people can't get housing. The government's housing starts have dropped. Your housing plan is not working and people are desperate for housing. So it's quite possible that they are buying homes from illegal builders.

This will transfer the responsibility to the homeowner, not Tarion. I don't understand why this government would give a regulatory body like Tarion—people continue to be skeptical, continue to hear horror stories about Tarion. Why would you give them more power when they have such a poor record to protect consumers?

I agree; we need to protect consumers. This schedule doesn't go nearly far enough.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to thank the member from Hamilton for her comments today.

She mentioned the cash-for-access scandal that's before the House right now, and how the Premier will be attending a \$1,000-a-plate fundraiser and lobby groups and different groups are going to be going there. I got a copy of the menu, and the menu said that it's \$1,000: \$50 for the dinner and \$950 of gravy will be provided. Does that sound about right?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Well, that does sound about right for this government. I heard that, before, we had a member saying that “a rising tide floats all boats.” But I guess he was talking about a gravy boat. I didn’t realize that at the time.

Come on. People see through all of this. People know that they have been shut out from the democratic process. People know that if they don’t have \$1,000 to go to a zhuzhy event where they can sidle up to a cabinet minister to make their wishes known—because they see what is happening here. They know that insiders got cushy deals. The people in Clarington—that council knew that the only way that they could get anything to happen—and right now in the Minister of Labour’s riding, this happened.

So people know that this government is all about the money and a cash-for-access culture like we saw with the Liberals. It’s alive and well in the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Further question, quick response?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Madam Speaker, through you, I want to ask the member a question. I want to share the information that, in the summertime, we actually had a community barbecue. Some 752 people showed up and the Premier was there for over an hour getting a picture with each one of them. They were coming to him, telling him about the issues, suggesting to him what to do on how we can reduce the red tape.

Member, I want to ask you a very simple question: We know that when we reduce the cost, we will support the businesses, we support the individuals. That is why the CFIB has given us a better rating. We’re bringing this prosperity. What do you think, is it a good thing—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Quick response, please.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I love to see the minions here give the Premier a standing ovation for doing his job and meeting with constituents—

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Point of order. One second, please.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** —not in the bill, and that Ontario knows what you are all about—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** The member—

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Oh, sorry.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Point of order.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** On rule 25(k), I believe the member has violated the rules.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I will ask the member to withdraw.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Yes. I withdraw.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** We will now go on to further debate.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I am very honoured to participate in the debate today on Bill 227, the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024. I think it is important to put this bill in a historical context to begin, if I may, Madam Speaker.

What is red tape? We’ve heard the phrase, it’s in the bill and in the bill’s title. Red tape: Now, there are different interpretations or perspectives on where this phrase came from. There are some who say that red tape was used in the 17th century to bind official documents, and then there’s the legend that a king of Spain several hundred years ago would be given priority government documents that were bound in red tape and the king would have to cut the red tape to get to the priority documents that he wanted to read, so that idea of cutting red tape to get to the point.

It’s evolved over time, but what it effectively means in common parlance today, as I understand it, is the notion of excessive bureaucracy, or process triumphing over substance, or excessive use and application of formalities.

Think about what that means for a minute. We all believe and must believe in the rule of law, that we are governed not by people but by laws and we are all equal before the law. There is the concept of due process. If one is accused of an offence and comes before a court in this country, one is entitled to due process, the presumption of innocence. One cannot simply be convicted because that person is merely accused. There is a process.

Is that excessive bureaucracy? Is that unnecessary red tape and regulation? I think not. The rule of law is such that we believe in due process. We wouldn’t refer to that as red tape or excessive bureaucracy or application of unnecessary formalities. In fact, it’s the essence of a free and democratic society to have an independent court process that is subject to rules that we all must respect and live by.

When we think about checks and balances, when we think about the separation of powers, we sit here or stand here in the Legislative Assembly—in this case, Ontario’s 43rd parliament. We are legislators. We are one of three branches of government, and we have the executive—unlike our American cousins, we do not have a governor or president and cabinet that sits in the legislative branch of government.

But here, in accordance with our tradition of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy and responsible government, which is less than two centuries old, we have the first minister and the ministers of the crown who have to be elected in the House where they sit, to be responsible to the people’s House. And yet, parliamentarians who are both ministers and parliamentarians or legislators have to recognize that they wear two hats at the same time, and they must not blur that division of responsibilities.

**1650**

And then, of course, there’s the other branch of government, the judicial branch. We have under rule 25 of our standing orders the fact that we in this House cannot comment on a matter pending before a court or tribunal, that independent branch of government, that third branch of government—not executive; not legislative. We do not comment on those matters before courts and tribunals that are pending to the extent that it might prejudice those proceedings. So that’s a form of deference to another branch of government.



And then the courts can comment on and rule upon legislation passed by this House. That's a check on the authority of the legislative branch of government. We don't call that red tape or excessive bureaucracy. It's checks and balances. It's a respect for the constitutional principle of the separation of powers.

So I'm not here to say that there's good red tape and bad red tape, but red tape as we know it and understand it is the negative, unnecessary use of formalities and processes and procedures, or the excessive reach of bureaucracy. And it can exist in the public sector, as it often does; that's what we're regulating here. But it can exist even in the private sector. How often have we dealt with a big company like a bank, and found that we start with the teller—that's your front face of the bank to the customer—and that teller's got to go to the bank manager, who then might have to go to the regional manager about something to do with providing you with a basic service that you're paying for. So even a private sector organization can have unnecessary bureaucracy, red tape, imposed upon customers.

Now, the good news is, in the private sector, if we're fed up with the red tape and the regulation, in the private sector we say, "Well, I'm not going to shop there anymore. I'm not going to do business with that bank anymore. I'm not going to do business with that company, big or small, anymore. I'm going to take my business elsewhere, where the customer service is put first and foremost, where there isn't the red tape that I had to put up with at the other company."

But when it comes to government—the people who the government is here to serve, whether the executive branch, the legislative branch or the judicial branch—the government is the only one. The people of this province, the people of this country, can't go and pick another government. Now, they can kick a governing party out of office every four years or so, when they vote in the ballot box, or when they cast their ballot and put it into the ballot box. They can make that choice. But government as an institution—and the three branches are there. We can't say, "Well, I want to go to another type of court, or I want to get another type of parliamentary system." We can't do that.

And so it is incumbent upon government, then, to remember that it is we who serve the people. And in serving the people, we respect the rule of law. We respect that there must be processes in place to achieve balance in terms of thoughtful laws that regulate behaviour, regulate processes, but don't get in the way of private sector initiative.

Now, let's talk about water quality for a minute, in terms of history. Back in 1837, the year of the Upper Canada Rebellion, the first mayor of Toronto, William Lyon Mackenzie—his portrait is right here outside the legislative doors. He was the first mayor of Toronto in 1834 and he led the Rebellion of 1837, when we didn't have responsible government; that was very much what the rebellion was about. I think that's why his portrait hangs here: because he stood for something that came to

be and now continues to exist because of what we have here, responsible government, parliamentary democracy. The elected branch of government is the only place that the crown or the crown's representative can look to for ministers of the crown to serve. They have to be elected officials. But he fought for that. He wrote about it, he advocated for it and he rebelled for it.

But back in 1837, we had the first water being drawn from Lake Ontario, completely untreated. It was a private company that, through pipes, were able to serve certain customers who were willing to pay for it, untreated. I guess Lake Ontario didn't need the treatment it would need today if you were drawing from Lake Ontario, for obvious reasons. What came from that was some half a century later, 1882, the first act of this Legislative Assembly. One of the early acts, I should say, of this Legislative Assembly, some 15 years after Confederation, was the first act regulating the municipal water utilities. So, now it's moved beyond private sector and into a degree of public sector regulation of water, the drawing of water and the application of water systems.

That was the first foray into it. And then of course that evolves, 90 years later, into a Progressive Conservative government led by the Honourable William Davis, creating the first Ministry of the Environment, which we have today and I happen to be, as I think every member now knows, the Acting Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, filling in for the minister who's on maternity leave, the member for Barrie—Innisfil. But that ministry has evolved over the years.

Today, within that ministry, under the rubric of that ministry, funded through the allocations and the estimates granted to the Ministry of the Environment, is OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency. So we are at a far more advanced stage in regulating water quality and putting controls on the water we drink in Ontario—far removed from that first water pipeline in 1837 that was totally unregulated.

This is to say that regulation is necessary. Government plays a role in passing laws implementing regulations, effectively what one might call good red tape because, as I've said before in this House and elsewhere, we can and must be good stewards of the environment while building the Ontario of tomorrow. So, regulations that make sure we have quality drinking water, that make sure we treat our waste water responsibly, the evolution of that process, the evolution of the laws and regulations associated with it is a good thing, and we would never change it.

The regulation of the treatment of consumers—very important. The first Consumer Protection Act in Ontario—again a Progressive Conservative government, at that time under Premier John Robarts, when we called him Prime Minister of Ontario. That particular piece of legislation has evolved into what we have today, Bill 142, Better for Consumers, Better for Businesses Act, consumer protection in a digital age.

This was really about making a big change to the typical contract that would be subject to caveat emptor—buyer beware; right? It's a free market; the government has no

role to play. Well, no: In 1966, a Progressive Conservative government entered the process of regulating consumer contracts, and that was designed to protect consumers and check businesses that were engaging in unfair practices, and that tradition continues today as we've updated consumer protection legislation that this House passed unanimously in the House last year. I'm very proud of that and thankful to the members of the House—even members opposite—for supporting it.

But my point is this: Regulation and achieving balance while making sure we do not crush initiative or entrepreneurial activities or crush inventions that allow us to move forward as a great civil society—it's important to achieve the balance. But what this bill recognizes—and let's talk about the history of red tape regulation. A Progressive Conservative government, under the leadership of Premier Mike Harris, had a red tape commission to address all the red tape that had been created by previous governments—the NDP and Liberal among those governments.

But also in the current government, the Progressive Conservative government under the leadership of Premier Ford, for the first time we created an Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction in the 42nd Parliament and now in this 43rd Parliament we have a full-time Minister of Red Tape Reduction. That is the commitment to reducing that red tape and it's a never-ending battle. This is the latest iteration of our fight against red tape and regulation that's unnecessary. But again, let me be clear, not all regulation is for a nefarious purpose and much of the regulation that we've seen has been well-intentioned. But what happens is, it piles up and piles up to the point where bureaucracy is excessive, where form triumphs over substance, where we have excessive application of formality. We can't have that. We've got to achieve a balance, and that is what all schedules of this bill do, I submit, Madam Speaker.

**1700**

I want to address two aspects of it in my comments now, if I may—one from the perspective of the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement, which is the ministry that I am honoured to be minister for, and the other where I am the acting minister, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

First of all, we are proposing, with respect to public and business service delivery and procurement in this mandate, amendments to the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to clarify Tarion's regulation-making authority. This, I submit, will help address new home builders who are taking advantage of Tarion's guaranteed fund. This is important. Thousands of law-abiding and community-focused legal builders will face less unfair competition from the few bad actors. Imagine a young couple buying their first home—and with these changes, I submit, they can be more confident that their investment is protected from those few unscrupulous builders. By enabling Tarion to make future regulatory changes, we can better identify illegal builders, manage deposit protection liability and ensure—and this is important—the sustainability of the guaranteed fund.

We're also proposing to update the Land Titles Act, Speaker. We will remove a frequently misunderstood consumer-initiated application to withdraw land from the act, while maintaining the director's ability to withdraw land, if necessary. This, I submit, will reduce costs, effort, legal fees and time for Ontarians. It will also decrease the frequency of unnecessary tribunal hearings. That is a good and proper reduction of unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape.

In addition, my ministry is proposing an amendment to the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012. Bill 153, the Building Infrastructure Safety Act, was unanimously passed by this House—again, I thank all members on the government side and the opposition side. This is a further proposal which I urge all to support, and that would be changes that will offer infrastructure project owners and underground infrastructure owner-operators more flexibility and will support the government's broadband commitment. By better enabling projects to proceed in a timely manner, we can safeguard public safety while advancing our broadband expansion goals. I am specifically pleased about this change, for rural communities, not only in my riding of Durham but across Ontario, are still waiting for high-speed Internet access. They will have it faster with these changes.

And now the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, where I am acting as alternate or interim minister: I want to speak to several burden reduction measures that are offered in the schedules to this bill. I am proud to serve as the acting minister while Minister Khanjin is on parental leave, and there are five items in this fall's package that originate from that ministry. Each proposal has been carefully developed and reviewed to ensure there will be no negative implications for health, safety or the natural environment. We are in common cause on that.

The first proposal we are bringing forward is to reduce record of site condition, or RSC, requirements for brown-field redevelopment. Ontario's population is expected to grow by more than 43%, or almost 6.6 million people, in just 22 years, by 2046. With that comes a need to redevelop underutilized or vacant lands to meet the needs of the people, like housing and schools. We recognize there are several low-risk activities where requirements can be streamlined or eliminated, such as converting some commercial office space to residential housing. We will be consulting on options to limit the filing of RSCs in situations where the ministry would not normally require one to be submitted. This will ensure we focus our resources on processing applications in situations where an RSC is otherwise mandatory.

We are also bringing forward, in regard to excess soil, additional measures to help ensure excess soils are properly reused and do not end up in landfills. These measures will offer added flexibility and soil management options, and reduce costs for businesses, making it easier for industry to reuse more excess soil locally.

Also, I submit, is the proposal under MECP, provisions for streamlining environmental approvals for Ontario's fruit and vegetable growers. This includes updating the terminology used in environmental compliance approvals and how spills are reported to the ministry. I submit these proposals will make it easier for the sector to demonstrate compliance while continuing our efforts to protect the Great Lakes and other waterways.

Streamlining sewage and water distribution works for transit projects is also important. We can and must build our public transit system and expand it faster because of our growing population and the need to make sure our public transit system is second to none. The proposed change, in short, means that if a municipality would not require additional approvals to undertake transit works, neither would a designated transit agency.

What this means is that operating under the terms and conditions of existing municipal approvals eliminates the need for separate applications to the ministry, saving time, money and resources by reducing delays for routine, low-risk activities, such as building and altering sewage and water distribution works for transit projects.

Finally, the permit-by-rule for residential geothermal systems, on-site sewer works and aggregate washing systems—we are making proposals there. Again, a positive balance.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I do appreciate the minister bringing in historical facts that have impact to us in this House. I know that you and I have nerded out in the past on history. I really appreciate you bringing up some Scotsmen. William Lyon Mackenzie, as you know, fought against the corrupt Family Compact because he was fighting against what he considered was a power that was unequal.

I also want to talk about my great-great-grandfather, who also a Scottish immigrant. His name was James McFarlane, and he was the first chief engineer for the Hamilton Waterworks, which was in the early 1800s. In fact, it was before Toronto. It was the first of its kind in North America.

So I appreciate any time we want to talk about history when it comes to Scotsmen and when it comes to water.

My question, though, is about—you talked about Mike Harris and the Red Tape Commission, but we know that we had the tragedy of Walkerton, where many people died and suffered for years. Was that the cutting of regulations as to Walkerton—was that before, or after or during this Red Tape Commission of Mike Harris?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I think why we have a shared love of history is that we can learn from history.

Sir Winston Churchill, as I've said before, always was fond of the saying that "those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it." A country that forgets its history has no future. We will not be such a country because we remember our history, good and bad, and we learn from it.

What I want to talk about is the present tense. If this bill is passed, Bill 227, this bill would save an additional \$20

million and 56,000 hours on top of the already saved \$1 billion and over 1.5 million hours every year. That is the practical impact of the proposals and the combined effect of these schedules within Bill 227.

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

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** On this side of the House, we are concerned about businesses. We are trying to help the small businesses as much as we can, and we sometimes get accused by the opposition about caring about the business. The fact is, businesses are the backbone of the economy here in Ontario—small and medium-sized businesses—and we do all that we can do to help those businesses.

Under the previous Liberal government, excessive regulations were costing businesses in Ontario an average of \$33,000 annually. No wonder the Canadian Federation of Independent Business gave them a C grade when it came to reducing red tape.

Every single red tape bill, we come with a bunch of procedures removing and simplifying the process of that. We can save businesses. We saved more than \$1 billion for businesses annually. Can the minister tell me—

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

1710

The Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I thank the member for the question. This is very much about what the Premier talks about often: creating the conditions for prosperity, creating the conditions for job creation. And this is what, beginning in 2018 and continuing now in 2024, this government is about, because when we took office in 2018, there were well over 386,000 regulatory requirements on Ontario businesses and individuals.

I was part of the private sector at that time, and I was proud to join this government in 2022 and be part of the solution that creates the conditions. Those conditions include massive reductions in unnecessary red tape and regulation. As I said in my opening remarks in the debate when I joined it, there is a balance to this. There is a requirement for regulation, but unnecessary red tape, excessive bureaucracy, is wrong. We've been cutting it, and we will continue to cut it so that the conditions are there for jobs and prosperity.

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

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I want to give my respect and congratulate the minister for his speech. Every time he gets up, I'm reminded of something, and that is that if I ever make to Who Wants to be a Millionaire?, and I'm ever hit with an obscure historical fact or the etymology of some word, I'm calling him.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: A lot of the consumer protection bills that have come through the chamber have passed unanimously, and we've been able to work together on different bills, like Bill 200. Many scammers and those out there who have taken advantage of people are still suffering because we took that money, those liens out of their pockets, because they were scamming our seniors.

On schedule 21, I'm asking the minister: Will you commit to revisiting or at least looking at this? Because I believe that it is actually going against the intent of what this government is hoping to do here in protecting people.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I thank the very thoughtful member for the question. I again want to say publicly that I am grateful and thankful for the fact that Bill 200, among other things, eliminated those notices of security interest, which were really part of a terrible fraud scheme against our elderly and the vulnerable. We eliminated them, and in the process, what we did was we expedited the bill through the House. It was one of those rare sittings of Committee of the Whole House, so in that sense we removed unnecessary red tape from the legislative process for a good cause, and that is what this bill is about.

Yes, I've looked at schedule 21, among the other schedules. I'm happy to continue to debate it, and I'm happy to continue to talk to the member, in this House or off-line. But I'm confident that we can, with schedule 21 and the other schedules, find that right balance. We have to make sure that those few illegal builders are checked and stopped, and we have to protect our consumers for the biggest purchases of their lives.

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

**Mr. Rick Byers:** I appreciate the minister's comments this afternoon on a very important bill, in particular, how he related it to the historical achievements of this government in taking on the red tape challenge, which is not always the most politically visible, but, frankly, is such an important factor for our businesses and for the economy in Ontario. I appreciate the member commenting on that.

I want to ask the member: Given your extensive legal and commercial experience, reflecting on that as you focus on this bill, can you give a sense of some of the most important elements and how this will make important changes to the legal process? Including that you commented on Tarion, any thoughts on the practical implications of the impact of this legislation would be appreciated.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I thank the member for the question, and I appreciate the compliment. It is important to understand this bill in the context of history.

But Tarion and HCRA are very important administrative authorities within my ministry. Tarion's protections were increased under our government, and we're empowering further consumer protection by virtue of schedule 21 with respect to Tarion. It was our government that increased the deposit protection from \$40,000 to \$100,000—very, very important as the price of freehold homes has risen and, obviously, the deposits go up, so we needed that protection.

We need to make sure that there is registration of the homes and that we can check that to make sure that we don't have unregistered homes or unlicensed builders selling illegally. There's only a few out there, but the few cause massive damage, so we've got to make sure those additional regulatory powers are there for Tarion to protect consumers.

We remove the bad red tape, but we bring in regulation where it's appropriate for consumer protection.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** When I was elected six years ago, Gilles Bisson was serving in this House. He'd been serving for, at that time, 28 years. One of the lessons he passed on, he said, "Whatever legislation gets passed in this House, the most important thing is that we leave our democracy just as strong or stronger."

One of my great concerns about the direction of this government is that the Premier has said that he wants to appoint Conservative judges. He doesn't want to appoint NDP or Liberal judges. Those were his exact words.

The government has made a number of moves that give the Attorney General much greater power over the appointment of judges. In fact, the Attorney General was caught interviewing candidates for the Chief Justice. This bill takes it one step further. This bill changes the structure of the committee that appoints—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Oh, 20 minutes?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Share your time. You've got to share your time with Tom.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Okay. Just to let you know, Madam Speaker, I'm sharing my time with MPP Rakocovic, the MPP for Humber River-Black Creek.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you.

One of my great concerns is that this bill actually extends the power of the Attorney General to appoint members to the justice of the peace advisory committee. The justice of the peace advisory committee currently consists of three members. It's going to be extended to four members. Two of those members will be appointed by the Attorney General. One will be the chair, and the other one will be the vice-chair.

The Attorney General pretty much has a lock on this committee that will be appointing justices of the peace. This is a real threat to us, because what we've seen with this government is continued attacks on our democratic rights and our right under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to a fair and impartial tribunal.

And one of the examples of the outcomes of these appointments that this government has been making—and I also sit on the appointments committee. One of the things that we've seen on the appointments committee is that only a small portion of the appointments are actually reviewed by the committee. In order to review the appointments, the committee has to have unanimous consent to have those appointments heard by the committee. Without unanimous consent—and I know that my NDP colleagues and I are always asking for the appointments to be reviewed by the committee, but what ends up happening is, they're not reviewed by the committee. This government is making hundreds of appointments to public sector agencies and tribunals without a public review by the committee.

The result of this is that, particularly in the land appeals tribunal and the Landlord and Tenant Board, more than 90% of the findings are in favour of, in the case of the Landlord and Tenant Board, landlords, and more than 90% of the land appeal tribunal hearings are found in favour of developers. So, unless the developers are right 90% of the time and the municipalities and the residents are right only 10% of the time, what we have are tribunals that are not providing a fair and impartial judgment. That is really an attack on our democratic rights. I can speak to some of the impacts that this is having. Tonight, there is a meeting in my riding on what was going to be the Rail Deck Park.

1720

I live in Spadina–Fort York. That's the riding that I have the honour of serving. One of the things that the community was really looking forward to was the Rail Deck Park. It was going to be this massive park over the railroad lands, just to the west of Union Station. It would provide green space for a community that is a high-rise community, where the majority of people live in condominiums.

And the condominiums—the Well was just opened; CityPlace is across on the other side of the tracks. But what happened is a developer got hold of the air rights over those railroad tracks. With those air rights, they are now building a number of condominium towers over the tracks just to the west of Union Station. These condo towers are going to be sandwiched between the Well, which is one of the largest developments in Toronto's history, and CityPlace, which has 18,000 people in condominiums.

The green space that's been allocated is very small relative to the number of people. The city appealed that development proposal to the land appeal tribunal. They were arguing that this is not the proper scale of development for that community. This community is already overcrowded. Adding another 7,000 units and an estimated 12,000 residents to that area is going to make a situation where people do not have a full community.

I live in a high-rise. Most of the people in my community live in high-rises. We like what we're doing. We love our community. But a high-rise community cannot just be a forest of condominium towers. It needs to have affordable housing, it needs to have park space, it needs to have schools and daycares—all of the things that make a well-rounded community.

That's what we have been asking for and that's what the city was asking for, that the development be scaled down so that there would be enough space to provide proper park space, that there would be schools built, that there would be other community amenities built—a community centre—because what's there now is crowded.

What the land appeal tribunal has done is impose this oversized development on our community. My fear is that in 10 years or 20 years, when there's another 12,000 people in a very small space without adequate green space, it will not be as healthy a community as it could have been.

I compare it to CityPlace across the street. CityPlace was built and designed, in part, with Dan Leckie and Jack Layton when they were city councillors. What they asked

the developer to do was—they said, “Look, we will let you develop all the way from Bathurst to Spadina, from Lake Shore north to the railroad tracks. But we want a 12-acre park, we want a public school, a Catholic school, a community centre, a daycare. We want a tower of social housing so that there would be social housing built into it.”

What they've built is, I think, one of the most successful communities in Toronto: a condominium community that is surrounding a 12-acre park that is incredibly well-used, and a public school and a Catholic school and a community centre. That's the kind of community design that we need and that politicians, government officials, can leverage developers to building if they have the tools available.

But what this government has done is taken the tools away from government officials to negotiate the building of well-rounded communities and complete communities, and instead, just allowed developers to build pretty much what they want that will maximize their profit, no matter what the impact will be on the future of that community. So I would ask that schedule 12 of this bill be revised because giving the Attorney General greater powers over the appointment of justices of the peace or tribunals has incredibly negative impacts on our democratic rights and on the future development of our communities.

I'll pass it to my colleague from Humber River–Black Creek.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** I recognize the member for Humber River–Black Creek.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** Thank you to my friend and colleague. I want to help the government today, I really do. Schedule 21 in this bill needs to be revised.

A dear friend of mine, Marcel Bellefeuille, from Ottawa, is someone who home ownership became a nightmare for—him and his wife, Julie. He said to me once that sometimes, removing red tape leads to more yellow tape. Sometimes, when we talk about what something is as red tape, we're actually wrong; we may be mislabeling the tape colour.

What I'd like to talk about is how schedule 21 will actually reduce consumer protection, and it does the exact opposite of what it intends to do. I'm not going to skewer the government because I believe this is simply an error, and I am hoping that the minister or the ministry will revisit this because it is going to lead to unintended consequences. As I've heard some of the submissions and the speeches, they said that this will actually harm illegal builders; the only people it's going to harm are the actual consumers that purchase from them.

So let me begin. The government says they want to reduce the administrative burden on individuals, but how does the new requirement that homebuyers need to register their purchase with Tarion potentially lose out on deposit protection, make life easier for them or actually enhance their protection? It doesn't. In an already complicated system that is hard to navigate, instead of requiring new homebuyers to have their deposits placed in a trust like it is for condo buyers, this government is adding more red tape and, ultimately, headaches, putting out more barriers

to home ownership at the expense of buyers, and not on the developers or regulators.

As Bob Aaron, real estate lawyer and former member of Tarion's board of directors, said in the *Star* last week, "The proposal"—which is schedule 21—"is fatally flawed and a breach of the regulator's obligation to protect the public. Consumers should not be forced to become the police for the industry regulators, and should not be penalized for failing to register their agreements." I agree.

This government also talked about fast-tracking and easing credentials recognition for building officials who inspect our homes to make sure they are safe and built to code. But this is a clear example of how reducing red tape can result in more yellow caution tape, because of course, you would expect inspectors that are coming out to inspect a home that is being built to have the highest level of credentials. But this is actually moving us towards the opposite. When corners are cut, real families are impacted. And of course, we've all heard horror stories about homes filled with mould, recurrent flooding and roofs being caved in, and we're talking about newly purchased homes.

As consumer protection advocate Barbara Captijn puts it, "To require new freehold homebuyers to register their sales contracts with Tarion or face a penalty is shifting the problem of rogue builders from Tarion and HCRA to the consumer." It is exactly doing this.

Speaker, shifting responsibility onto the public doesn't solve the root of the problem: bad builders. It's not the public's job to stop illegal building and illegal deposit-taking fraud and scams—that's the role of regulators: Tarion and the HCRA.

It has never been, in many cases, a worse time to buy a new home when you see the protections being eroded from home purchasers. Again, as home prices approach and are now averaging \$1 million, imagine what happens when you purchase a home and it's not in good shape.

The HCRA's builder directory is, as many critics say, a glorified phone book. You can find out more about a builder's track record than you will ever find on your regulator's builder directory by simply going in the media. When you actually go to this book that's supposed to give the consumers the protection they need, there are holes in information that put consumers at risk.

There are countless articles about developers who have gone bankrupt, yet when you look them up—imagine, on the builder's directory, builders that failed to build what they had promised have gone bankrupt—you don't even see this in the builder directory in some cases. There is a clean record there. How are we doing the public a service when this exists? We have the opportunity to change this.

Buying a home is the single largest purchase a person will make in their life. All homebuyers sign an addendum when buying a new home; this document is complicated and could use revision. One idea is requiring the HCRA builder licence to appear on the addendum, or a large box on the addendum, in bold print telling purchasers to register with Tarion at the very, very, very least.

1730

We all talk about plain contract, plain language. When the CPA, the Consumer Protection Act, was being

reviewed by the government, we ultimately all supported it, but one thing I was calling for was the use of plain language because people are often left to their own discretion and are very easy to be taken advantage of because of the fact that you've got the fine print and how complicated things continue to get, and it only gets worse.

To assume a new homebuyer—imagine—would know, now, under this new schedule, that they would have to register a warranty—and I am going to read an article by Barbara Captijn that gets into this, and this was an editorial in the newspaper, but I'll get to that. To assume a new homebuyer would know they have to register their purchase to be protected by the law is absurd. We don't think that we need to register somehow to receive rights under any other kind of law in Ontario—why this? Shouldn't the law be applied equally and fairly to everyone?

We all know about the precedent-setting \$90 million dollar payout by Tarion, caused by a developer who was selling homes—get this—on land they didn't even own. So a developer goes out there and is selling homes on land they don't even own, and, hi, guess what? They went insolvent. It didn't work out. So of course, Tarion, the home warranty provider, had to pay. So this is the climate that home purchasers are buying into right now. This is the significant risk. By maintaining schedule 21 as it exists right now, it is going to continue to keep—it's actually going to worsen the situation because you'll be taking away protection from people who buy from illegal builders.

Again, earlier this year, the CBC reported that more than 100 people are out tens of thousands of dollars each after the developer of a pre-construction home project in Clearview, Ontario, entered receivership. Court documents show that 117 buyers stand to lose about \$4 million in deposits paid to a developer who didn't even put a shovel in the ground. What makes matters worse is that the developer admitted to the CBC that this wasn't the first time they've been selling homes without getting legal approvals. In fact, they admit to doing it for the past 15 to 20 years. This begs the question of how many other builders are taking this calculated risk.

Faran Haq was quoted in the CBC article as a homebuyer who said he "spent \$100,000 since 2022 as a downpayment toward a home in the Clearview project." As reported, "He says he was shocked to learn that the company he paid a deposit to had gone into receivership under a different name in the past. He said he hoped there would have been better regulatory oversight to protect buyers like him."

These projects aren't a secret. As Bob Aaron, a real estate lawyer and former member, again, of Tarion's board of directors, stated, the sale of these homes was "not exactly a secret. It was advertised, it was promoted. It was promoted in print, it was promoted online.... Why wasn't Tarion protecting the public by putting a stop to marketing homes that didn't have approvals?"

A builder must be licensed from the HCRA before it can sell a single home in Ontario. It must also be approved by Tarion. It's a provincial offence to sell a home without

both authorizations. This is the root of the problem. The public expects the regulators to be doing their job and ensuring that developments have been authorized. Why shouldn't they have that expectation? If someone is seeing ads in their newspaper or in billboards for a new development, surely the regulator whose job it is to regulate developments must be aware as well. The government should be going after its own regulator, the HCRA, and asking it what they are doing to stop and report illegal builders when they see a new billboard go up.

I won't have time to read it now but there's a Toronto Sun editorial on October 22, 2024, by Barbara Captijn and it is entitled, "Illegal Building Problematic in Ontario for Decades, Must Be Stopped." Ultimately, what she is saying is she is pointing out many things, including the issues of schedule 21.

I've heard from Dr. Karen Somerville from CPBH as well. They are all speaking with one voice. Ultimately if the government maintains schedule 21 as it is listed right now, why, at the behest of Tarion, who want to protect their reserve fund—if they want to do that, they are going to be harming the people that need the payout the most.

We cannot expect consumers to know that they are going to have to register to get their deposit protection ultimately from Tarion. It is not going to happen. They're not going to know this. What's going to happen is, Tarion will save money because the people that have purchased from illegal builders will now be exempt to be protected. It is the worst possible solution.

I don't believe that the government has thought this through. People will be harmed as a result of this. Now, as a result of this, it is shifting the burden from bad builders, people who are breaking laws, onto consumers who will not know about it, and they will be harmed. It could ruin some people financially. It could ruin lives.

Why is this happening? Because it is being sold to the government under the guise that it is going to disadvantage illegal builders, bad builders. It is not going to do that; it is going to do the absolute opposite. Bad builders will continue to build badly without licences, and consumers will continue to be taken advantage of. Again, under laws that we have in Ontario, some may be purchasing from builders that don't even own the land that they're selling off.

So I'm asking this government, on behalf of Ontarians, future home purchasers, the incredible advocates who are volunteering to put in their time to protect people: Reverse course on the schedule. Get back to the drawing board. This is not going to help consumers.

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

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I was going over some comments that had previously been made by the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane when he was reflecting on the differences of northern and southern Ontario and reflecting on the fact that, geographically speaking, northern Ontario is much larger than southern Ontario and doesn't have as many organizations put in place for municipalities. As a result, much of northern Ontario is what we call

unorganized territory, which means that some of it has to be governed by local boards which are not fully municipalities and don't have the full powers of municipalities. These local boards govern these particular geographic areas.

I was wondering if the member might want to comment on the benefits that this act does to expand the power of local boards in northern Ontario.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I appreciate the question.

As the member knows, I've spent the time that I've had with regard to this bill in sounding the alarm on a schedule that's within it. I appreciate that a lot of thought has gone into this; a lot is going to be changed. This bill has 27 schedules, a lot of pages, and a lot of changes that are going to be made.

But I'd like to continue to focus on the fact that what they are doing—notwithstanding everything else in this bill—is going to put more new home purchasers at risk, if they continue forward on this plan to exempt some who purchase from an illegal builder from getting protection that they need and deserve from the warranty providers in Ontario.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I want to return to what you are bringing here to the House. You have been talking about Tarion. I know you brought up the issue of NOSIs.

You have been working, since you've been in this House, to protect people who have been unprotected.

I honestly have to tell you that until I listened to you today, I really wasn't aware of the issue of illegal builders. And it surprises me that we've been saying to the government, "You've rushed this bill," and that you are bringing important information that, if they'd listen, would protect people. And it even surprises me that the member from Essex didn't want to ask a question about this, because I can't imagine that this is something that he either knows about or is not concerned with.

So can you add some more information, point-blank, to explain how illegal builders in this province are going to put at risk the life savings of people in the province of Ontario?

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I'm going to state that I hope that this was not intentional. I do believe that this is an oversight and they are not seeing the consequences of what may happen.

Under this schedule, if an Ontarian purchases a home from an illegal builder, this government is putting the onus on them to reach out to Tarion. So many of them will not know to do this, and if that project doesn't follow through, they will be on the hook. This is a huge hole in consumer protection. This is a step back.

1740

We, on this side, the NDP, have worked with the government on consumer protection and there have been times, to their benefit, that they have listened and we've seen some improvements. Here, they are taking a major step backwards.

Listen to us. Listen to the experts. If you want consumer protections, revisit schedule 21. Pull it.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** My question is to the member from Spadina–Fort York. In this bill, there's a certain piece about combative sports. Now, we know this sport has been growing and it's been evolving very rapidly. It is important that we have regulations in place to ensure athlete safety, and I know the member will agree with me on that. It's also to ensure that we maintain fair competition.

One of the things that we're doing through this legislation is updating the Combative Sports Act, 2019. This is even before it's fully proclaimed, and this is to align it with the latest standards from the World Anti-Doping Agency and provincial sport organizations. This approach is going to obviously avoid a need to do any further amendments.

My question to the member is, do you oppose these timely and necessary updates to protect our athletes?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I thank you for the question.

One of the challenges with an omnibus bill like this, where there are 27 schedules about 27 different acts, is that we need to focus on one or the other. One in particular, and the one that is most concerning to me, is schedule 12, which changes the justices of the peace appointment process and gives the Attorney General more direct control over who will be appointed as a justice of the peace in this province.

This is part of a trend that we are seeing in this province where the Premier has said he doesn't want to appoint Liberal or NDP judges, he wants to appoint Conservative judges; where the Attorney General was caught interviewing candidates for the Chief Justice of Ontario position; where tribunal appointees are not reviewed by committee in this House, so that 90% of the land appeal tribunal hearings are found in favour of developers and more than 90% of the Landlord and Tenant Board hearings are found in the favour of landlords.

We are losing our right to a fair and impartial judicial system and this section, schedule 12, should be the focus, because that is the foundation. Our democratic rights and our right to an independent, impartial and non-partisan judge, justice of the peace or tribunal head is one of our fundamental democratic rights.

That is what I'm focusing on with this bill, and I'm hoping the government will revise that.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** To the member from Spadina–Fort York, I'm going to allow you to continue on discussing schedule 12 because it is really quite disturbing. It's also particularly disturbing that this change to our court system is in an omnibus bill that impacts not just 27 schedules but 20 different ministries.

As I said earlier, this is something that will impact 15 million Ontarians, and when it comes to access to justice, this is not something that should be buried in a bill that

gets tabled at the last minute and gives us less than 24 hours to consult with our stakeholders. So I'm particularly concerned.

When we talk about the Attorney General, Doug Downey, he said in a TV interview that he wants to see more judges that share his values. This is the exact opposite of an impartial judicial system. I want you to, again, explain how frightening this is and how people who are seeking access to justice have every right to have alarm bells ringing.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to thank the member for the question.

Right now, justices of the peace are appointed by a committee that's supposed to be independent, non-partisan and separate from this Legislature. There are three members of that committee; one is appointed by the Attorney General. What will be happening with this legislation is that two of those members will be appointed directly by the Attorney General. One will be the chair and one will be the vice-chair. This is the appointment for a justice of the peace.

What the government has already done for the appointments of judges in this province is, there's a separate committee that appoints judges, and that committee, the Attorney General, Doug Downey, appointed Doug Ford's—the Premier's—former deputy chief of staff and former director of stakeholder relations to the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee, the one that appoints judges.

So this government has blatantly said they want partisan judges, and they are stacking the committee that appoints justices of the peace and judges, and it is buried in this omnibus bill. That is a real threat to our democratic rights in this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** We'll move on to further debate. Further debate?

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Once again, it's my pleasure to be here at 5:45 in the evening and addressing this assembly of august individuals with respect to this very excellent red tape reduction bill brought by my colleague the minister, who has an illustrious and long career in the legal profession—pardon me, who commented during the debate earlier on it; that's who I was referring to, the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

I also listened to the statements made by other members of this house. I want to make sure that we're talking about the proper bill here. I heard some members refer to a bill that was 140 pages long. I have not seen such a bill. I heard some members refer to a bill that was 125 pages long. I have not seen such a bill.

The bill we're dealing with tonight is actually 38 pages long. I have an actual, official copy in front of me. The English version is 38 pages long and the French version is 38 pages long. It is exactly 38 pages long. So when there were some other people who were talking about some other bill, I don't know what bill they were referring to. But I'm going to draw my attention to the bill that's actually under debate tonight.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** That's the compendium, not the bill.



**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Notwithstanding the righteous comments of the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, I can assure every member of this house that when it comes to conservation authorities, the critical role of conservation authorities is to protect people and property from flood and erosion. Now, you'll remember, of course, that the conservation authorities in the province of Ontario were created in response to an event called Hurricane Hazel.

Hurricane Hazel happened in 1954, which was way before my time. I'm much too young to remember Hurricane Hazel, but my understanding is that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was elected in 1954. I might have gotten that date right or wrong, but maybe he will correct me if I'm wrong about that. So the critical role of conservation authorities is to protect people and property from flood and erosion. That is a very important role, and of course, when you have conservation authorities, they should stick to that role.

Sometimes, conservation authorities go way outside their mandate, right? We've already seen that. Many of us come from the municipal sphere. Many of us actually sat on conservation authorities before and saw conservation authorities go way outside their mandate. Now, they're being drawn back to their mandate, which is to protect people and property from flood and erosion, which, by the way, is sometimes ignored by some conservation authorities because they've been distracted by other things.

Regarding this 38-page bill, I want to make some general observations about how short it is. Schedule 1 is three sentences long. Schedule 3 is five sentences long. Schedule 7 is three sentences long. Schedule 14 is four sentences long. Schedule 15 is two sentences long. Schedule 16 is three sentences long. Schedule 20 is four sentences long. Schedule 24 is three sentences long, and schedule 26 is two sentences long.

I have reviewed this, in my view, very short bill, and I've heard that some MPPs have not had sufficient time to digest it. I believe that statement, based on the lack of substance that I heard in some of the opposition speeches. I truly believe they have not had sufficient time to digest this very short bill. But I've had enough time to digest it, and so I will give you my thoughts on it.

Turning now to schedule 10, which is a schedule that deals with the Farm Implements Act—we all think that farming in Ontario is extremely important.

**1750**

I believe that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness is doing a fantastic job in his role. Of course, he has a fantastic career in this field, and as I said before, a 20-minute conversation with him is worth two semesters at any university in the province of Ontario. I invite every member of this House to have a coffee with the minister and learn something from him.

Here is a schedule which deals with a tribunal, and the tribunal exists to settle disputes between dealers in farm equipment. Those disputes sometimes arise with regard to dealership agreements. So what happens is: People have a disagreement, they bring their disagreements to the

tribunal, the tribunal renders a decision, and then, at present, the disputants, or the parties to that dispute, can appeal that decision to the Divisional Court.

That's pretty standard in the province of Ontario, except that in this particular instance, as the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane observed, there are actual, very severe consequences in northern Ontario if there is a termination of such a dealership agreement. We don't want those severe consequences to happen if we can avoid them, and certainly, we don't want to have those negative consequences to northern Ontario if they can be avoided.

What this particular schedule does is, it says, "You still have the right to bring your dispute to the tribunal. The tribunal renders a decision, and that decision is final," except in certain, specific cases, and those specific cases would involve what we call an error in law. For example, if a judge fails to consider evidence that was relevant, you can still appeal that. If a tribunal here applies the wrong law, you can still appeal that.

It's still appealable, but because a tribunal is such a specialized body, which has a specialized body of knowledge, in most cases, the upper level of hearing does not have the expertise that the tribunal has. So we want to keep those decisions at the tribunal level, and that is one of the great developments about this particular schedule, that it keeps the specialized tribunal in place. It keeps the decision-making authority at the tribunal level with respect to the terms of the contract, the dealership agreement.

With respect to strictly legal matters, which are strictly technical legal, those can still be appealed to the Divisional Court. That protects a person's right to appeal—a very, very, very practical development.

Now I would like to turn my attention to schedule 4, the Courts of Justice Act. I heard members of the opposition say they wanted faster justice and they wanted things determined faster, yet at the same time, they want to preserve this very complicated, 20-plus member rule-making committee. I am familiar with that committee, because I have some experience in the past with regard to the rule-making function of the Superior Court and the Ontario Court of Justice in the province of Ontario.

I remember when they wanted to change the rules, they called all the lawyers together, and we all sat in a briefing. They gave us the briefing.

I made earlier reference to a great lawyer in the province of Ontario. His name was Luigi Di Pierdomenico. Luigi Di Pierdomenico was a lawyer in the town of Amherstburg. That's my hometown. Luigi Di Pierdomenico was somewhat unique in that when you had a problem and you brought it to one lawyer and it was outside that lawyer's experience or you brought it to a different lawyer and it was outside that lawyer's experience—when you were having difficulty finding a lawyer to help you with an extremely unique and complex problem, you could bring it to Luigi Di Pierdomenico, and Luigi would tackle that problem with zest and gusto. He would sink his teeth into it.

One day, we were at a rules meeting for the Rules of Civil Procedure—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** My apologies to the member from Essex. I'm just having a little bit of trouble hearing the member. Thank you.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** After the presentation, Luigi stood up and he said, "Do you know what we need in this province? I know what we need. But I know what we're going to get: more rules." And then he sat down.

It was very, very interesting for Luigi to say that, because Luigi knew that the system was getting more and more complex over the years. It was being layered and layered and layered with more rules. Once upon a time, the rules were this thick; then they got thicker, then they got thicker, then they got thicker. Luigi would recount to me stories about how back in the day, they would draft a will and it would be two pages long. And now wills are six and eight and 12 pages long.

This is applying to schedule 4 of the Courts of Justice Act, which maintains both committees in place. You still have the committee for the family law rules. You still have the committee for the civil law rules. Those committees still have all of the powers that they have today, and they will continue to have all of those powers. But in addition to that, we're going to empower the Attorney General, also, after consulting on any changes to the rules. We're going to empower the Attorney General, also, to simplify rules or make rules. That's important. Do you know why?

I heard members refer to the great William Lyon Mackenzie. Remember William Lyon Mackenzie from 1837? He fought a rebellion because he wanted to put democratic processes in place, democratic oversight making sure that the people of the province of Ontario had a representative to speak for them. Under the laws of the day, the Family Compact, which was a committee—remember? It was just a committee appointed by the governor of the province of Upper Canada. The committee appointed by the province of Upper Canada made all the decisions. That wasn't good enough for William Lyon Mackenzie. He wanted democratic oversight.

Well, do you know what we are going to do with this schedule 4? We're going to provide some democratic oversight. I'm not related to William Lyon Mackenzie—I thought I heard somebody say they were—but I recognize

what he was doing back in 1837. With schedule 4, we're continuing the great legacy of William Lyon Mackenzie, by providing democratic oversight over a couple of committees in the province of Ontario. Is this going to change the course of history? Maybe. Maybe not. But at least it's a good step forward.

Let's talk about the Mining Act, schedule 16. In a previous life, I had some experience in the—

**Hon. Mike Harris:** It wasn't that long ago.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Let me think about that.

**Hon. Graham McGregor:** It feels like it.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** It feels like it.

In a previous life, I had some experience in the Ministry of Mines. I thought, in the lawyers' world, a world I occupied before I got elected—I thought things moved pretty slow in that world. In fact, when you sent us a piece of correspondence, if we got back to you in 30 days or less, that was considered really prompt. We thought that was prompt. As things wound through the court system, lawyers have a way of—do you know that saying, "Work expands to fit time"? That's a saying that lawyers refer to sometimes. Maybe that also refers to schedule 16 of the Mining Act.

Schedule 16 of the Mining Act empowers the Minister of Mines to make a regulation respecting service standards. Do you know why that's great? If you're a prospector or if you're a person interested in mining and you file a certain application with the Ministry of Mines, and it's taking a very long time to wind its way through the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Mines, now we're going to have a minister who can actually impose a service—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** Thank you to the member from Essex. My apologies for interrupting you. I was actually getting very good historical information.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):** There being no private members' public business today, pursuant to standing order 100(e), this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 25 at 10:15 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*





**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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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	
<b>Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)</b>	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
<b>Barnes, Patrice (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Collard, Lucille (LIB)</b>	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
<b>Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)</b>	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	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	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
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)</b>	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
<b>Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
		Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)</b>	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
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
<b>Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)</b>	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
<b>Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)</b>	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
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Electrification / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Électrification
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	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	
<b>McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)</b>	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	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
<b>Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)</b>	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
<b>Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Skelly, Donna (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	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
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
<b>Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)</b>	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	