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Lundi
18 novembre 2024

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 November 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 novembre 2024

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

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

REPORT, FINANCIAL
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment the following document was tabled: a report entitled Ontario Economic Monitor: April to September 2024, from the Office of the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LAIRD MORE

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's my honour to rise today to recognize an exceptional citizen from Arthur, Ontario, in my riding of Perth–Wellington. Laird More was recently named citizen of the year by the Arthur Chamber of Commerce. For almost 50 years, Laird has been a cornerstone of Arthur's community through his tireless volunteerism and leadership. A dedicated member of the Arthur Lions Club since 1976, he has been involved in every aspect of the club. He has served in numerous executive roles, directed the annual craft show and contributed countless hours to the community food booth.

This past Saturday, Laird also received the prestigious Melvin Jones Fellowship award, the highest honour a Lions member can receive.

Laird's passion for mentorship and faith shines through the Arthur SU Sports Camp, a Christian-based program he founded in 2000.

Laird credits his late wife, Catherine, as the inspiration behind his work. Her unwavering support and empathy shaped Laird's community efforts. As Laird said, nothing he has accomplished was done alone, reflecting the collaborative spirit that makes Arthur a special place to live. In short, Laird's dedication to the community is unwavering.

Congratulations to Laird on a well-deserved honour. Thank you for everything you do.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Last week, I visited the Old South site of the Thames Valley Family Health Team. I want to express my huge thanks to the skilled and dedicated health care professionals who work there.

The Thames Valley Family Health Team is one of the largest in Ontario, with funding for 80 front-line clinicians from a range of disciplines. They work with 125 affiliated family physicians to provide team-based care to patients who benefit from better screening and prevention, shorter wait times and improved chronic disease management. This, of course, saves the health care system money because it reduces hospital admissions and emergency room visits.

Unfortunately, however, the Thames Valley Family Health Team faces staffing and recruitment challenges that limit its ability to support patients: 12 of its 80 front-line positions are currently vacant, including an OT posting that has been up for 18 months. Clinicians are leaving to take jobs in the hospital sector, where wages are as much as 25% higher than the wages the team is funded for.

This government's failure to close the wage gap between community and hospital health care workers means that new family health teams will struggle to attract and retain staff, just like the existing teams. New family doctors will shift to other practice areas when they can't find teams to affiliate with, and the 2.5 million Ontarians without primary care will remain unattached.

Fixing primary care means investing in community health care workers.

1020

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Brian Riddell: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Over the past few weeks, I had the privilege of attending several Remembrance Day ceremonies in my riding. I was deeply moved by the respect and appreciation shown by our community for the freedoms we enjoy in Canada.

At the Galt cenotaph, the ceremony was beautifully organized with thoughtful speeches, stirring music and a respectful crowd. It was a powerful reflection of our collective spirit of remembrance.

I also attended the North Dumfries ceremony in Ayr. Though smaller, it was equally meaningful. It's a reminder that no matter the size of the gathering, our commitment to remembering those who have served is what really matters most.

In addition, I was grateful to attend a delicious dinner hosted by Preston Legion Branch 126, where I heard heartfelt remarks from local residents and had some great food.

As I marched in both the Ayr and Galt parades, I was honoured to be surrounded by those who have served and continue to serve our country.

Mr. Speaker, Remembrance Day is a solemn reminder that the peace and prosperity we enjoy have come at a great cost. We must never forget the sacrifices made by those who gave all in the defence of our country.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WEEK

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: On March 19 of this year, over 100 Orthodox Christians joined us here in the galleries, while many more watched from afar. They were here in hopeful support of my bill to recognize an annual Orthodox Christian Week in Ontario, and they were not disappointed. Members across this House praised Orthodox Christians and recognized their contributions both here in Ontario and across the world. They acknowledged the importance of faith in the lives of those who practise it and they shone a light on the persecution some Orthodox Christian communities face in other parts of the world for simply doing so. They heard from Orthodox Christian parliamentarians here who spoke personally of what the faith means to them and their families.

When the bill passed second reading, the galleries erupted in applause and messages from across the province poured in thanking all of us here. Orthodox Christians continue to reach out. For instance, I heard from Orthodox Christians in Peel region who are disappointed that Christmas on January 7 had been recently downgraded on their public school board's day-of-significance calendar, impacting students and their families. Some said, "If our faith was better recognized here, things like that wouldn't happen," and asked hopefully when Orthodox Christian Week in Ontario would become a reality.

Speaker, on behalf of Orthodox Christians across Ontario, I once again thank the members of this House for supporting Orthodox Christian Week at second reading. The future of Orthodox Christian Week in Ontario is in the hands of this government. We eagerly await third reading of this bill so that it can be passed into law and give the Orthodox Christians within our great province the recognition they deserve.

We are hopeful and we have faith that you will support us once more.

MOVEMBER FOUNDATION

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: I rise today to highlight the incredible work of the Movember Foundation and the ongoing need to address critical health issues facing men across Canada.

Movember is dedicated to improving the lives of men by focusing on three key areas: mental health, suicide prevention and prostate and testicular cancer. Through year-round funding for services, research and health literacy

campaigns, Movember works tirelessly to raise awareness and make a difference in these areas.

The statistics surrounding men's health are both alarming and urgent. In Canada, one in eight men will develop prostate cancer, which is expected to take the lives of 5,000 men this year alone. Tragically, three out of four suicides are men, resulting in the loss of 3,000 lives every year. Furthermore, men account for three out of four opioid overdose deaths, which claims an additional 5,500 lives annually.

These numbers are a stark reminder of the need for more support, awareness and resources for men's health. That is why I call on all of us—whether as individuals or communities—to support Movember programs and initiatives, whether through donations or by simply starting those crucial conversations about health and mental well-being with the men in our lives.

Having meaningful discussions about mental health and physical health challenges can make a world of difference. I encourage everyone to reach out to their friends, families and colleagues, and ask this simple but vital question: How are you really doing?

Together, we can save lives, prevent suffering and make a lasting difference in the lives of men everywhere.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Hamilton area hospitals are projecting deficits of more than \$136 million. St. Joe's Healthcare is projecting a deficit of \$24.5 million while Hamilton Health Sciences, which serves 2.5 million people in the region, is looking at a shortfall of \$112 million. These are enormous and unprecedented deficits that are the direct result of your government's continued underfunding and privatization of health care.

This is not just happening in Hamilton but across Ontario, and experts fear lives are at risk. The Ontario Nurses' Association said, "This is yet another example of a broader problem: the continuous underfunding of public health care by the provincial government.... They are taking a wrecking ball to our health care system by not providing funding to address deficits," said Jillian Watt, president of CUPE 7800.

So my question to this government: How do you expect hospitals to solve this crisis? Are they going to have to lay off badly needed nurses, PSWs and other staff? Hospitals are already short-staffed, and the staff they have is overworked and tired of knowing they cannot meet their patients' needs no matter how hard they try. Will they be forced to cut programs like Hamilton Health Sciences recent cancellation of 20 cancer studies that are lifelines for cancer patients who have run out of other options? Our Ontario public hospitals should not have to make up your government's funding shortfalls on the backs of staff and patients.

My question: Why are you continuing to sit on your hands when our hospitals, our staff and our patients are struggling?

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Remembrance Day is a solemn day to honour and remember our veterans who served our country in perilous times to preserve our freedoms and our democratic system. They fought so we in this House can represent the hard-working people of this great province.

Remembrance Day is a busy day in my riding of Simcoe–Grey. We have 12 Legions that serve our veterans and preserve and honour their legacy in communities big and small—communities like Alliston, Angus, Beaver Valley, Beeton, Collingwood, Creemore, Everett, Lisle, New Lowell, Stayner, Tottenham and Wasaga Beach.

Speaker, I want to acknowledge the vital role that our Legions play in these communities and the incredible work of their presidents, executives, board members, ladies' auxiliary and committee members—all of whom selflessly volunteer their time and energy. Our Legions serve as community hubs, hosting wakes, weddings, christenings, community events, sporting banquets and even political debates. I'm pleased to say the Legions in Simcoe–Grey have been receiving Ontario Trillium Foundation grants to modernize their facilities and enhance their cenotaphs. Over the last 12 months, I have attended OTF announcements at Legions in Everett, Beaver Valley, Creemore and Alliston.

In closing, I want to recognize the hard work of the two zone commanders that serve the Legions in Simcoe–Grey, Chuck Arrand and Shawn McKinlay, and to specifically recognize and thank Collingwood Legion president Rob Graham who for 19 years has so capably led Branch 63 and is stepping down this spring. Thank you to all, Speaker.

STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Three weeks ago, I had the pleasure to visit Erin and her team at Nutrition for Learning. I reached out because many teachers were calling me in tears to say that the demand for school snacks has grown so much that, despite their best efforts, more and more kids were going hungry in our schools—an explosion of kids in Ontario going hungry in our schools. When kids are hungry at school, they act out more and they learn less.

They shared some staggering statistics that day. They let me know that 50% of kids in Ontario rely on school snack programs. They said that their demand alone had grown by 400% and they described it as an “absolutely out-of-control need.” And they reported that despite this growth in food insecurity, funding has not meaningfully increased since 2015. I think all of us here want the parents of Ontario to be able to feed their kids.

But I'm grateful for the folks in Waterloo region like Nutrition for Learning, Food4Kids, the Food Bank of Waterloo Region and their many partners like House of Friendship and caring education workers who are doing all they can to feed every hungry child.

I join Nutrition for Learning's call for an increase to nutrition funding to make sure that all kids in Ontario schools can eat so they can learn and thrive.

1030

Thank you to Erin and her fabulous team for their passion, dedication and determination to end childhood hunger in Ontario.

CANADIAN PEACE MUSEUM

Mr. Ric Bresee: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of my riding of Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Speaker, as has already been spoken of in the House today, last week we recognized Remembrance Day, a day of reflection on the terrible darkness of war and our promise to never forget.

Today, I'd like to turn towards and speak about a light of hope in my riding: the Canadian Peace Museum. There are peace museums all over the world, but we've never had one here in Canada. Chris Houston, the co-founder of the Canadian Peace Museum, has worked in humanitarian emergencies across three continents and feels the urgency of promoting peace in an increasingly conflicted world. He and his co-founders and the board began their fundraising efforts to build a peace museum here in Canada, and they have chosen the beautiful town of Bancroft right in my riding. They've been diligent and forward-thinking in their planning, and they look to break ground on the museum in 2025.

The Canadian Peace Museum aims to promote peace, using their exhibits to showcase the links between peace and conflict and to spark conversations on what we here in Canada and throughout the world have done right and what we can and must do better.

Speaker, I'm humbled and gratified that the founders of this important cultural asset have chosen the town of Bancroft in my riding of Hastings–Lennox and Addington as the place to build the very important Canadian Peace Museum.

EVENTS AND BUSINESSES IN LEEDS– GRENVILLE–THOUSAND ISLANDS AND RIDEAU LAKES

Mr. Steve Clark: It was a busy constituency week, beginning with five Remembrance Day ceremonies.

With the Solicitor General, we announced \$21.8 million to expand the water treatment plant in North Grenville. We also visited a police department in Brockville and the Brockville fire service to thank them for keeping our community safe.

In Gananoque, I saw an amazing project where Horizon Legacy is pioneering the use of robotics in home construction to build affordable housing faster and at less cost.

I also joined my member of Parliament, Michael Barrett, to recognize two outstanding young boys, seven-year-old Jack Burns and his four-year-old brother, Hudson. They raised \$300 for our local food bank with a lemonade stand last summer.

I also want to highlight the nine hard-working entrepreneurs I met at the Starter Company Plus launch. I was so impressed to speak with them and to learn about their skills,

determination and courage, putting together these small businesses. I'm so proud that our government and the Associate Minister of Small Business are supporting this program with a \$13-million investment over two years. It ensures that the great team at Leeds Grenville Small Business can provide entrepreneurs with very important training and mentorship.

Speaker, a little advertising never hurts. I want to talk about those nine businesses: Unique Auto Accents; Robinson Psychotherapy; CC Weddings and Events; Setanta Solutions Inc.; 1000 Islands Cyclery; DG Landscaping; Esthetics by Paige; The Crafty Potter; and Oomen's Fishing Tackle.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today the High Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus to Canada, His Excellency Stavros Hatziyiannis. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guest to the Legislative Assembly today.

Also with us in the gallery today is Canadian Armed Forces retired Master Corporal Sean Renaud. He completed three tours of duty in Afghanistan and was deployed multiple times to Iraq.

Thank you for your service and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I beg your indulgence; I'm not welcoming a visitor—but recognition, if I may. Today our granddaughter May Mundt is celebrating her 17th birthday, and on Saturday, our granddaughter Adelaide Colucci celebrated her 11th.

Happy birthday.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm delighted to welcome London West constituent Suzanne Pountney, who is the board chair of the IBAO, who is here in the building today, as well as a constituent of London West.

I also want to welcome Jaimie Mulder, Scott Sleightholm and Chuck Ellison, who met with me this morning.

Finally, I want to recognize my friend and a neighbour of London West, the warden of Oxford county, mayor of Zorra, Marcus Ryan.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: It's a pleasure to introduce Dr. David Jacobs, president of the Ontario Association of Radiologists, who joins us here today. Dr. Jacobs will be retiring from his role as president. We are incredibly grateful for his years of dedicated service as well as his leadership with the OAR, which has been impactful work, as radiologists have been instrumental in saving lives and providing essential care to patients across this province.

Additionally, I'd like to introduce Dr. Mark Baerlocher, who will be taking on the role as president of the OAR. We look forward to working with him in his new capacity, and we're excited to see how his expertise and vision will continue to advance radiology in Ontario.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I would like to give a very warm welcome to our page Ekam Dosanjh's family: mom, Margaret Dosanjh; dad, Sath Dosanjh; sister, Carys Dosanjh; and grandparents, Barbara and Richard Evans. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to welcome Charlotte Chummar who attends St. Evan Catholic Elementary School in the great riding of Dufferin-Peel and is serving as a page in this legislative session. Welcome, Charlotte.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to present representatives from the Canadian Parents for French, Ontario division. We have Myron Karpiuk, Mary Cruden, Betty Gormley and Ahdithya Visweswaran. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to extend a warm welcome to active transportation and environmental advocates. Thank you for crusading for safe roads for everyone. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: This week marks the anniversary of the war in Ukraine—1,000 days after the illegal occupation in 2022. Here in the gallery for this day are the Consul General of Ukraine, Oleh Nikolenko; the vice-president of Ontario's Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Bohdan Wynnycky; and his wife, Myroslava Nahirnyj.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to welcome members of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance: Dreyden George, Alma Mater Society at Queen's University; Kathleen Henricus, University Students' Council at Western University; Marcus Nieva, Trent Durham Student Association; and Polina Vaynshtok, Students' General Association of Laurentian University.

I look forward to meeting with you later. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Good morning. Yesterday evening, the Cypriot community and the Cypriot federation organized a very nice reception to welcome the High Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus, His Excellency Stavros Hatziyiannis. Today, His Excellency is with us.

Welcome, Your Excellency, to our House of democracy in Ontario.

1040

Also, I would like to recognize Linda Li, who is sitting there. She is the mother of our page Andrew Yang Muhlbacher.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Unless there's an objection, I'd like to continue with introduction of visitors.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Speaker, I want to take an opportunity to say thank you to Carly Jones. After 16 years, first with my predecessor MPP Cheri DiNovo and then with me, she is moving on to the Ontario public service.

Carly, you've been such an important part of our team. I want to say thank you. We will miss you dearly, and we're so excited for your next chapter.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to welcome the team from Environmental Defence. They came here today to defend against the climate disaster that is the 413 that locks us into—affecting our health and well-being. Climate change is real, it's getting worse, and thank you for keeping us safe from climate chaos.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When we do introduction of visitors, we're not going to continue with political statements associated with the introduction.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I want to introduce the great mayor of Pickering and his wonderful wife, Kevin Ashe and Karen O'Brien, right up there.

Applause.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Yes, let's hear it for that great mayor of Pickering.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, there are two more up there: Councillor Mara Nagy is there and also Teresa DeBoer. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I want to introduce former member of Parliament Bal Gosal. He was also Canada's Minister of Sport. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Everybody loves Raymond. I'm happy to announce that our minister, Minister Cho—it is his 88th birthday today.

Happy birthday, Minister.

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

Introduction of visitors?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd like to welcome to the House some folks on the municipal side who joined me this morning in a press conference: former Ottawa city councillor Catherine McKenney; mayor of Zorra township, Marcus Ryan; and Pickering councillor Mara Nagy. Thanks for coming. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Good morning, Speaker. To kick off the beginning of anti-bullying and prevention week, I would like to welcome Tom Fulga from Kids Help Phone.

Thank you for the work you do to support our students. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to introduce the members of the Métis Nation of Ontario who are here with us today: Joanne Meyer, Amy Mersereau, Cindi Rye, Matt Robertson, Brian Black, Jennifer St. Germain, Steve Callaghan, Sharon Cadeau, Kathleen Anderson, Mitch Case, Theresa Stenlund and, of course, my good friend Margaret Froh.

QUESTION PERIOD

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. This question is for the Premier. After six years of this government, the state of our health care has only gotten worse in the province of Ontario. Just ask the people of Huron-Perth, folks in towns like Stratford and Seaforth and Clinton, who have faced ongoing emergency room closures and reduced hours. Imagine showing up after an accident only to see a closed sign at your local emergency room. That is the norm in rural Ontario.

And now we've learned that the hospital group in Huron-Perth are going to have to make even deeper cuts. They face a \$3.3-million deficit.

So, Speaker, how many people facing medical emergencies in small and rural communities have to go without care before this government changes course?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm very proud of our government's record supporting our hospital partners, making sure that they have the necessary funds to ensure ongoing operations. In fact, through commitments from the Ministry of Finance and our government, we've seen 4% year-over-year budget increases for the hospital budgets.

We've always known that our hospitals are our core and our base to ensure that we have great continuing care in our communities. We'll continue to make those investments because we know, whether it is hiring and training new physicians, whether it is expanding access to critical MRI and CT scanners, whether it is in fact 50 new capital expansions, our government has always been there to support hospitals and community care in Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, this is not a record to be proud of. And it is not just rural hospitals. Hospitals in cities are facing the same pressures because of this government's underfunding.

Hamilton hospitals are now predicting a more than \$136-million deficit this fiscal year. They're going to be looking at staffing cuts at a time when emergency rooms are already overcrowded and hallway health care in Ontario is worse than ever before.

Making sure that people can get the care they need when they need it is a basic function of any provincial government and it is the right of every single Canadian. So will the Premier explain to the people of Hamilton why he cannot deliver that for them?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Health may reply.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It must be NDP math today. A 4% increase year over year for hospital operating budgets; an \$85-million increase in hospital capital and expansions—we're making the investments to not only make sure that we have primary care physicians who are training in the province of Ontario when, respectfully, the last time the NDP government were in power, they were actually cutting residency and hospital positions.

I will take no lessons from the member opposite on how to better protect and serve and prepare for an aging population and a growing population in Ontario. Whether it is new seats for nurses, for nurse practitioners, for PSWs, for physicians, we are getting the job done because we know we need to ensure our hospitals, our community care, our long-term-care facilities have those critical health human resources available to them as we continue to expand the system.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll tell you what, Speaker. I'll give her some Tory math, shall I? Some Conservative math: A thousand emergency room closures last year—a thousand.

The minister's words do not match the reality of the people of Ontario. Health care in Ontario is worse than it

has ever been under this government. In small towns, in big cities, getting the care that you need, even in an emergency, is no longer a given. That is life after six years of this Conservative government.

Every single contract for private surgery that this government gives out means less funding for our local hospitals. So why is this government underfunding our hospitals in favour of private surgical clinics that are going to always put profit ahead of patients?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Let's get some numbers on the record, shall we? In July and August, there was a 99% open rate of our emergency departments. We have seen an 85% overall improvement. Why have we seen that? Because our government has made investments with health care professionals, with hospitals. We have Ontario Health working directly if there is a hospital that is needing additional coverage to cover their emergency department.

But, Speaker, the member opposite talks about Hamilton. I don't just rip and read from the headline; I actually make calls, so I had a conversation with the Hamilton Health Sciences CEO this morning. In fact, there are no layoffs happening at Juravinski; it is quite the opposite. They want to expand the number of clinical trials by 20. Therefore, they are doing recruitment right now, today, for health human resources.

That's how we get things done.

1050

HOUSING

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is back to the Premier again.

Let's talk numbers. The Financial Accountability Office report came out last week, and it confirmed what we have been saying on this side of the House: Housing is not a priority for this government. It has never been more clear. Housing starts—down. Expert advice—ignored. Six years—wasted. The last time housing starts were this bad was 70 years ago, Speaker—70 years ago. That's this government's record.

But when we put forward a plan to build real homes, this government shut it down. They don't have solutions, and they don't want solutions.

So, back to the Premier: If you won't roll up your sleeves, put shovels in the ground and build some homes, will you at least move out of the way to let those of us with a real plan get the job done?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, as I've said on a number of occasions, we're going to continue to make sure that we remove obstacles so that we get more homes built across the province of Ontario.

I'm very happy about the fact that we are seeing more purpose-built rentals across the province of Ontario than we have ever seen before.

To be very clear, the Leader of the Opposition's plan calls for the spending of \$150 billion to build a small amount of homes across the province of Ontario. The only party that has a worse plan would be, of course—the federal Liberal plan. They spent \$1.2 billion to build 2,000 homes in the province of Ontario.

We know this: When socialists take over the building of housing, we've got a real big problem.

Instead, we're going to double down, we're going to remove the obstacles, and we are going to build 1.5 million homes for the next generations of Ontarians—despite the obstacles that they put in the way constantly.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: There you go, Speaker. This is a government that is just ideologically opposed to building affordable housing. Right there, you heard it.

I'll tell you something else that the FAO report showed us. It said we are falling farther and farther behind the target that everybody agrees on—1.5 million homes we need. We are falling farther and farther behind, at a rate of 3,700 fewer units every single month. That is shameful. To catch up, my goodness, we'd have to increase housing starts by 74%. This government has no plan to make that happen.

Look at what BC is doing. They are building at twice the rate of Ontario. So I ask this government again, why is this government doubling down on their failures instead of following a plan with a record of success?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Leader of the Opposition is absolutely correct; I am ideologically opposed to the government building homes when I know that the private sector can do it better. That is the only plan that the Leader of the Opposition has. That's the only plan that they have. They want to double down and re-create the failures of the Bob Rae government. We know what happened then. A million people were on social assistance when the Bob Rae government, the NDP government, had the opportunity to govern the province—a million people.

Contrast that to where we are today. Mr. Speaker, 800,000 people have the dignity of a job, who didn't before we came to office. We have seen massive population growth across the province of Ontario. Do you know why? Because people want to come to this province to experience the economic revival that has happened since we've been in office. Before the higher interest rates, we were building homes at a higher pace than ever. We have brought in housing action plans to ensure that we can continue that.

Let me be very clear: Every time the socialist opposition brings forward a plan that would see the government take over the construction of homes, I'll vote against it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order.

The final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: The only thing that this Premier and this government have achieved in six long years is encampments in every single community in this province. People are unable to find homes here because this government has failed. They refused to bring back real rent control. They slashed protections for renters in every corner of this province. Housing is now the most expensive item on the household budgets of so many people in this province, and yet this government refuses to address it.

They continue on this plan to create no housing. No housing is being built in this in this province right now, and this government is so ideologically opposed to actually getting anything done that this is the best we can expect. Well, Speaker, I've got to tell you, the people of this province deserve a lot better than this.

I want to ask the Premier, will he finally do the right thing? Will he bring back real rent control and stop the greed that is driving up the cost of housing all across this province?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has absolutely no idea what she is talking about. In fact, today, the mayor of Pickering is here. The city of Pickering, of course, is blowing through their housing targets. Do you know why? Because he's removing obstacles so that shovels can get in the ground.

I was in Barrie on Friday, and do you know what was happening in Barrie? They were building another 1,200 units of affordable purpose-built rentals. You know why? Because the mayor of Barrie removed obstacles so that shovels could get in the ground.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? Where mayors have done what we have asked them to do—remove obstacles, cut red tape, make it more affordable to get shovels in the ground—those mayors are meeting their targets. But when builders and home builders are faced with socialist mayors who want to stop people from getting their homes, they run into obstacles. That's where the people of Ontario have said to us, "Double down. Remove obstacles. Let people get that dream of home ownership." We won't let them down.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Can you stop the clock? Just a minute.

The vast majority of members are listening to the member who has the floor, and we are engaged in question period. Others are flouting the rules of the House and yelling across the floor. I am going to start calling you to order individually now if you persist, and then, if necessary, we'll go to warnings.

Start the clock. The next question.

HOUSING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Premier. Last week, the Financial Accountability Officer released a scathing report on Ontario's economy and housing situation. The report found that Ontario's unemployment rate rose for the sixth consecutive quarter, reaching 6.9% in 2023 Q3. This is the highest since mid-2021.

This weak pace of homebuilding has contributed to job losses in the construction sector. Ontario deserves a strong, confident construction sector that meets the housing crisis moment.

Surely, we can agree in this House that people living in tents in the province of Ontario in the winter is unacceptable. When will this government take the housing crisis seriously?

Interjections.

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

Once again, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: In the member's own riding, of course, we increased supports for homelessness by over 28%. Of course, the member will remember this because she voted against that increase in funding. But let me also be very clear: We have increased funding for the Homelessness Prevention Program to the highest level in history. Over \$1.2 billion will be spent on supporting those programs.

But let me just say this: I expect—we expect—results from that investment, and if we don't start to see the results that we are promised by the investments, we will take further action, because people demand safe streets. The people who are suffering from addiction within these encampments need more help, so we will make sure that we give them the resources and the wraparound services that are required. If we don't start seeing those results, we will do all that we can and all that we must to give people safer streets and give people the help that they need so they can get out of tents and into homes.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: No government in the history of this province has spent so much money getting so little done on housing. Ontario is actually on track for the lowest level of annual housing starts on record since 1955. Our Homes Ontario plan is part of the solution. People need homes and construction workers need jobs. The Homes Ontario plan is a plan that is committed to building and overseeing the construction of 250,000 affordable and non-market homes. Strong partnerships with the not-for-profit sector is a key part of our plan. We'll build homes for people, not for profit.

1100

Your plan is not working. You are part of the problem. You are failing the people of this province. If the private sector won't build truly attainable affordable homes, when will you? When will you actually come to the table and get

something done so that people don't have to live in tents in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order. The government House leader will come to order. The Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform will come to order.

Start the clock. To reply, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, Speaker, the reality is this: We had said right from the beginning that if interest rates were to increase at the speed at which they did, we would see significant challenges in the housing market across the province of Ontario. That is why, of course, the Premier stepped up to the mike. He was one of the first provincial leaders to say that the policies of the federal government, which were leading to high inflation and high interest rates—the fastest increase in interest rates in the history of this country—needed to come down. That is why the Premier did that.

We are doubling down and ensuring that we remove red tape and remove obstacles so that we can get more homes built. Nobody wants to see the NDP spend \$150 billion to build so few homes. Nobody wants the government building homes, because wherever that has been tried, it doesn't work.

I know the Leader of the Opposition herself, when she was asked, "How much would it cost?" couldn't even come up with the answer. We had to fill in the blanks for her. That's the NDP: blanks.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Waterloo will come to order. The member for Scarborough Centre will come to order.

Start the clock. The next question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. People in my riding of Mississauga–Erin Mills have grown increasingly frustrated with congestion and gridlock on our highways. For far too long, the previous Liberal government ignored these issues and left our communities with no solutions.

As Ontario's population continues to grow, we know that we cannot continue with the status quo. Our government must implement measures that make it easier and faster to build new roads and highways across our province. We need to take action now so that people can spend more time with their families and less under gridlock.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how our government is finally delivering the meaningful improvements Ontarians have been waiting for?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you for the question to the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills. It's no secret that

under the previous Liberal government, critical infrastructure projects simply didn't get built. They sat by as our population grew. They left our highways stuck in gridlock.

We know that gridlock is hurting our economy and taking away time from our families. That's why our government has a plan to keep our province moving. With the Building Highways Faster Act, our government is cutting through the legacy of inaction, removing unnecessary barriers and getting essential projects moving along. This legislation allows us to fast-track vital highway expansions like the 413, finally providing relief for communities and addressing congestion head-on.

We are committed to real action, putting shovels in the ground and getting Ontario moving faster.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I know that families and small businesses in my community are relieved to see common-sense solutions that will help to keep our province moving.

Speaker, the Bonnie Crombie Liberals do not want to see major infrastructure projects like Highway 413 built in Ontario. Instead, they are offering zero solutions to help get drivers out of gridlock.

In contrast, our government understands that without new infrastructure, gridlock will only get worse. That's why it is critical that we streamline the building process so that we can have a strong transportation network now and into the future.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how the Building Highways Faster Act ensures our highway infrastructure meets the demands of our growing population?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Once again, thank you to the fantastic member from Mississauga–Erin Mills.

Our government is laser-focused on getting Ontario moving and making life easier for the hard-working families all across this province. It's actually quite disappointing to see the NDP and the Liberals try to stand in the way of critical projects like the 413 without offering any practical solutions. Their opposition means more traffic, more gridlock and a real hit to Ontario's potential for growth, all at the expense of everyday Ontarians.

Our Building Highways Faster Act is about taking action. It's about cutting through red tape that has held Ontario back for too long. We're streamlining approvals and fast-tracking infrastructure. We're putting shovels in the ground faster, creating jobs, reducing commute times and making sure that Ontario remains a place where people and businesses can thrive. With this legislation, we're standing up for Ontarians—

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

The next question.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier. Conservatives have really shown their hand. The chair of the Ontario PC Party fund emailed ministers' offices, dictating minimum fundraising targets and directing

them to organize two to five fundraisers each by the end of the year.

Everyone remembers the Liberal-era cash-for-access regime, when in 2016, their party set fundraising quotas for ministers. Conservatives had a lot to say about that at that time.

My question is going to be the exact same question that Conservatives asked the former Liberal government: “Does the Premier acknowledge that setting fundraising targets for cabinet ministers forces them to fundraise from stakeholders with active files within their respective ministries?”

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

Hon. Doug Downey: I’ll begin with very clear—we do not have targets, we have not been given targets and we are not following targets, Mr. Speaker. But let me tell you this: I actually learned about the alleged email through the newspaper—that’s how tight it was—because it was a mistake when it was sent out—it was recalled immediately—apparently, to some individuals. Now, this is not comparable to the Liberal scandal that put these guys in this corner to think about what they’ve done for some time.

Now, according to the website, it says we need some help. All you have to do is google the Liberal scandals; Wikipedia has a whole page on Patti Starr. The headlines are “Ontario’s Cash-For-Access Scandal and Big Pharma”—I’ll get to the NDP in my supplementary—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Oh, Speaker, another day for this government and another FOI. These Conservatives are always contrite when they’re caught, but they’re not contrite when they’re in the backrooms or communicating via back channels.

Let’s be clear: Conservatives were righteously outraged when the Liberal government did it, but now they’re drawing from the same playbook that got the Liberals reduced to non-party status in 2018. Liberal, Tory, same old story.

I want to ask the same question to the Premier that the Conservatives asked the Liberals during their cash-for-access scandal. Again, I quote: Do they “believe that it is appropriate for a minister of the crown to raise large sums of money from stakeholders bidding on projects that are worth hundreds of millions of dollars, where he has the power to give a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down?”

Interjections.

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

The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: Everybody knows the Premier gives his phone number out to every Ontarian. Nobody could be more accessible. I bet he gets more phone calls and texts than the entire NDP combined.

Let me be clear: When the NDP have recently advertised for a fundraising director, what they’ve asked for is somebody with experience in networks, in labour, in other

progressive organizations, either on staff or as a volunteer. Now, let me be clear: I know they probably know that you can’t raise money from labour; it has to be from individuals. But even if you could access those networks, they’re going to be surprised when they find out that LIUNA, IBEW, the operating engineers of Ontario are all supporting the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

1110

MINERAL EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Mines. Ontario is known for its rich natural resources. From our northern forests to the mineral-rich lands, our province has always been a leader in resource development. Mining has been the backbone of many communities, providing jobs and driving economic growth.

Now, as the world shifts towards green technologies, critical minerals are more important than ever. These minerals are used in everything from electric cars to advanced batteries. The global demand is skyrocketing, and Ontario is perfectly positioned to meet it. Our government needs to continue to show leadership in not only supporting the mining sector, but also helping Ontario compete on the world stage.

Can the minister please share how the Critical Minerals Strategy, including programs like the Ontario Junior Exploration Program, is creating economic opportunities for our great province?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you for the question from our member from Whitby. We have rare earths 20 miles west of Otter Rapids. We have cesium west of Lake Abitibi. We have phosphates east of Hearst. We have graphite west of Hearst. We have lithium deposits throughout northwestern Ontario. And we have abundant critical minerals in the Ring of Fire.

But it all starts with exploration. That’s why, last week, it was my pleasure to announce the fifth round of the Ontario Junior Exploration Program that has contributed \$35 million in investments in the early-stage exploration projects, like the \$13-million investment last week in Timmins. Ontario announced and funded 84 projects, and 62 projects that were focused entirely on critical minerals. That’s why, right now, in Ontario, we are the number one jurisdiction for exploration.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Minister, for your leadership. Ontario has always been a leader in mining. From gold to nickel, our natural resources have helped fuel economies here at home and around the world. But today, the game is changing. Critical minerals are the future. They’re key to green technologies, batteries and advanced manufacturing. The demand is growing fast, and Ontario has what the world needs.

But to stay competitive, we must act quickly. New mines can’t wait decades to open. We need a strong plan

to get these minerals out of the ground and into the hands of the industries that need them.

Can the minister please explain how our government's Critical Minerals Strategy and recent legislative changes are speeding up the opening of new mines while keeping environmental protections in place?

Hon. George Pirie: The member from Whitby is entirely correct: It is critical that we get these minerals out of the ground. We have what the world needs now in northern Ontario as we wean ourselves off of fossil fuels and we get into the electric vehicle revolution. We also need these minerals as well to ensure national security. We have the minerals. We have the mines. We have the ability to ensure our future.

It is critical that we continue to develop the advances that we're doing in legislation and regulations to ensure that we get these minerals out of the ground. It's important as we wean ourselves off fossil fuels and secure our national security.

MAKING GROUND RIVER BRIDGE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: My question is to the Premier. Ginoogaming First Nation is in a state of emergency. The bridge that is the main access into their community can no longer be used for vehicles. It's been known since 2002 that the bridge was not safe. Ontario did its own study in 2017 that came to the same conclusion, yet no action was taken.

The Premier and the Minister of Indigenous Affairs did a photo op just outside Ginoogaming last Wednesday. Why did the Premier and minister not reach out to Chief Taylor and visit the community knowing it's in a state of emergency?

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. On behalf of the minister and the Premier, the safety and well-being of that community when they're in an emergency is of great concern to the government. We understand the challenges facing that community, and the government is committed to continuing to work with the federal, provincial and Indigenous partners to develop a long-term solution on that bridge. I know that ministry officials continue to meet with the community and their leadership for terms of reference on the bridge. I look forward to the follow-up question from the member.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: In my conversation with the chief this morning, those long-term solutions do not address the immediate needs. In the 1960s, federal and provincial governments expropriated Indigenous lands and water rights at will and gave them to industry. Eagle lumber's current ownership of the bridge is a problem that Ontario helped to create. As of this morning, neither the Premier nor the Minister of Indigenous Affairs has reached out to speak with Chief Taylor. It's winter up there right now,

and an elder with pneumonia had to walk across this bridge to get an ambulance.

Premier, will you immediately purchase the land, fix the bridge and work with the federal government to pay for permanent solutions?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: On behalf of the Premier and the minister, I want to make it very clear that we are committed to playing a key part in the tripartite working group with the community and the federal government. Timelines and steps have been laid out to repair or replace the Making Ground River Bridge. I know that the working group continues to meet on a monthly basis as this project moves forward and, again, the ministry has said to me quite clearly that they will continue to play an important coordinating role to ensure that all of the partner ministries are providing insight into this project.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. I watched the Grey Cup game last night, and it was a great game. We watch a lot of football in the Fraser household, and this season there's one thing that stands out above everything else: the millions and millions and millions of dollars that the Premier is spending on ads to convince us that everything is just rosy here in Ontario.

The truth is that's not the experience of families. Some six years later, it's harder for them to put food on the table, to buy clothes for their kids, to pay their rent, to pay the bills, just to find a family doctor.

Speaker, through you: When 2.5 million Ontarians don't have a family doctor, how does the Premier justify spending millions and millions and millions of dollars on ads to tell everyone in Ontario, as he would say, that everything is just peachy-keen?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, thank you, through you, to the member opposite for that question. We're very aware, and have been for some time, that the cost of living is impacting many families in Ontario. That's why we moved so early in 2022 to cap the gas tax, to take the tolls off the 412 and the 418, to take off the driver's licence fees. We acted very early.

1120

Just a couple of weeks ago, we tabled the fall economic statement. What was in there? There was another gas tax cut. There were taxpayer rebates, so that people who are struggling today will get the relief they deserve today.

Which way did the Liberal Party vote? They voted against it. They voted against helping struggling families in this province. They voted against the gas tax cut. They voted against providing relief to the struggling families of Ontario. This is a party that will never relent helping put more money back in the pockets of—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. John Fraser: Maybe if the finance minister spent a fraction of the money spent on these ads on finding, for the 13,000 people in his riding who don't have a family doctor, a family doctor, we would all be better off. So these ads—they're putting gambling ads to shame—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, here, let's do this. What if I told you there was a place where families are just struggling to keep their heads above water?

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Where 2.5 million people didn't have a family doctor, where twice as many people were being treated in hallways in hospitals, and where 11,000 people died on a wait-list last year? So maybe a little closer to home.

What if I told you there was a place where almost 100,000 people didn't have a family doctor, and that 15,000 of those people were children? Well, Premier, it's where you live: Etobicoke.

So how can the Premier justify wasting millions of dollars on his orgy of feel-good ads while so many children in his own backyard don't have a family doctor?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the member on his choice of words, and also remind him to make his comments through the Chair.

The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know, with the greatest of respect, Speaker, and I hope you agree with me, there's a way to have a debate without using inappropriate words in this chamber—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Stop the clock. The House will come to order.

I need to be able to hear the Minister of Health. She has the floor. The question was posed to her. I think the House wants to hear her response.

Start the clock. The Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, imagine a place in 2015 where the Liberal government of the day cut 50 medical seats. We would have an additional 450 physicians trained and practising in the province of Ontario.

Now, imagine a place—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Don Valley East will come to order. The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will come to order. The Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development will come to order.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Imagine a place where we wouldn't have to be playing catch-up, and 450 physicians would have been trained and practising in the province of Ontario.

Fast-forward, we now have and have licensed—

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: They really don't want to hear this, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I do, but sorry, time's up.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order. I'm going to be moving to warnings now, just so you know.

The next question.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. We know that Ontario faces a growing demand for skilled workers and we have people here, underemployed. Every day, we hear stories of newcomers with strong skills and years of experience who need help finding jobs in the trained professions.

This is particularly true in Richmond Hill. We have a lot of newcomers. We have engineers, health care workers, tradespeople—highly skilled individuals ready to contribute to Ontario. But instead of working in their fields, they too often face unnecessary barriers, delays and red tape. This hurts our economy and our communities. It is clear that we need to do better to help these skilled immigrants get the jobs they are trained for.

What is the government doing to help skilled newcomers find work in their professions faster?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member for that question and for her advocacy to help people find better training and better jobs with bigger pay cheques.

With our Working for Workers Five Act, we've taken a number of steps. In fact, we've streamlined the registration process for internationally trained workers. What has that meant? Thousands more nurses entering the ranks of nursing; more men and women in the skilled trades building a stronger Ontario.

We know the federal government have grossly mismanaged our immigration system, and shattered and strained the consensus around immigration. While they work to fix the system they broke, we're working hard in Ontario to set people up for success. Through our Skills Development Fund, we've trained over 600,000 workers: 92,000 in manufacturing, 66,000 in construction and 36,000 PSWs—and we're just getting started.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, Minister, for your great work and for that strong leadership.

The federal government has mismanaged the immigration system and, sadly, we have heard heartbreaking stories of newcomers who have arrived in Ontario with dreams of building a better life, only to be hurt by confusion and exploitation. Fraudulent agents promise quick fixes, fake job offers or forged school acceptances. It has to stop. This has not only crushed the dreams of all newcomers, but has put people in vulnerable and dangerous situations.

The federal government has failed to protect these individuals, leaving provinces like Ontario to pick up the pieces. What is the government doing to crack down on this fraudulent immigration?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to that member. She sees this first-hand in the GTHA. The broken immigration system has left provinces like Ontario to pick up the pieces and to fix the broken system. We're shouldering the unsustainable financial costs of their inability to manage the asylum system, for example.

With limited data sharing and no clear federal strategy, we're seeing fraudulent immigration representatives all across Ontario misrepresenting application statuses on programs like the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. While they dither, we're going to act and we're going to act aggressively. We're stepping up and we're introducing new legislative measures that impose fines, bans and stricter standards on scammers and scumbag bad actors. Their day in this country, their day in Ontario, is over.

Stay tuned. I'll be introducing more this week.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

MPP Jamie West: My question is for the Premier. According to a CBC freedom-of-information request, workers in Ontario are owed \$60 million in stolen wages. Like Ontarians across the province, New Democrats believe in the value of hard work, and we believe that includes workers getting paid for their hard work. If those wages are stolen, then the government should be their ally and get them their money.

My question is, why is the Conservative government allowing bad bosses to get away with stealing \$60 million from Ontario's workers?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member for that important question. The bottom line is when workers are treated with disrespect, when workers' wages are withheld, we have to act. That member's absolutely right; it's completely unacceptable. We've taken a number of steps as a government: implementing high fines and amending the Employment Standards Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act to make sure workers are protected.

But we have to do more. We know that when this gets to court, judges often take great liberties with respect to these fines. That's why in my next Working for Workers bill, we'll be taking steps to crack down on that and make sure that these workers are treated with the respect that they deserve.

I appreciate the member asking that question. He's right. It's unacceptable. We're going to continue to act to protect workers in the province of Ontario.

1130

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

MPP Jamie West: My question again is to the Premier. Speaker, Ontario's workers have 60 million reasons to believe the Conservatives aren't serious about getting their

stolen wages back. The Conservative government will brag about doubling the fines for wage thefts, but during estimates the Minister of Labour wasn't able to cite a single time that the previous maximum was ever used or enforced. The government's own stats show us that most of the time stolen wages are never paid back.

My question is, when will the Conservative government get serious about wage theft and collect the \$60 million owed to Ontario's workers?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: I appreciate, again, the question from the member opposite.

Speaker, stay tuned for our next Working for Workers bill, where, again, that discretion that the judiciary has exercised—we're going to be cracking down on that to make sure workers get what they deserve and making sure that bad-actor employers have serious consequences.

But, Speaker, I have to say, when we've worked together on a number of initiatives, we've put workers first. Under the leadership of this Premier, we've worked together for firefighters, we've worked together with previous Working for Workers bills. I'm going to crack down on that.

And they have millions of reasons to see why: Through the Skills Development Fund, we've acted to support 600,000 workers. They voted against that. We brought labour on side with our Working for Workers bills, after leaving them in droves, Speaker. And we're working to build the coalition that supports workers in the province of Ontario.

This has never been a one and done. That's why, through successive Working for Workers, we'll continue to put workers first and ensure that we build a stronger Ontario that we know we all need.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of the year, Canadians gather to remember the sacrifice that veterans made. They gather to pay homage to those Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice to keep Canada a safe and democratic country. It is a sacred day for Canadians and it is a sacred day for veterans.

So you can imagine my surprise, Mr. Speaker, when we heard the news about a school in Ottawa where they took their woke leftist narrative—

Ms. Doly Begum: It's a song about peace. It's a song about peace.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: They took their woke left narrative agenda, Mr. Speaker, and they imposed it upon a Canadian tradition—

Ms. Doly Begum: You called me a terrorist in this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough Southwest, come to order.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question to the government is: Does the government, does the Premier think it's appropriate to use taxpayer-funded dollars to disgrace Canadian veterans?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Minister of Education.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I was just as disturbed by this as the member is. Myself, my staff, the Premier as well heard an outpouring of reaction from parents, from taxpayers. I had the opportunity to speak with the director of education to find out what the next steps were going to be, and the board will be investigating the situation.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you for the response from the minister.

My supplementary question is: Mr. Speaker, if you go to the Royal Canadian Legion's website, the first thing it says is, "On Remembrance Day we honour those who gave their lives to serve our country." That country is Canada.

My parents immigrated from a brutal Islamofascist dictatorship and came to Canada because they wanted their daughters to be raised in a free and democratic society. The reason Canada is the way it is today is because our veterans paid the ultimate sacrifice. So my question to the Premier is, will this government make a commitment to ensure that the disrespect that was given to veterans on November 11 will never happen again in a taxpayer-funded institution?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I too want to thank all the veterans and their families who made the ultimate sacrifice. I had the opportunity to attend many Remembrance Day services in my own area, as well as the Indigenous Remembrance Day ceremony.

I want to assure the member that I had a conversation with all directors of education and board chairs on Friday where we discussed—one thing being the discretionary spending that has been happening, but also the politics in the classroom. I wanted them to commit to ensuring to keep the politics out of the classroom and the focus to be on back to basics—ensuring that our students are there and preparing them for the jobs of tomorrow. That is my commitment to our children and to our—

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

The next question.

FOREST INDUSTRY TAXATION

Mr. Rick Byers: My question is for the Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products. Ontario's forest products are a cornerstone of our economy, supporting thousands of jobs in communities across the province. From lumber mills in the north to cutting-edge wood

construction in the south, this industry touches every part of Ontario.

But, sadly, the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is driving up costs for everyone. It's making it harder for forestry companies to compete and forcing families to pay more for essentials like home heating and building materials. This tax doesn't just hit big companies, it hurts workers, their families and entire communities that rely on the forestry sector to thrive.

Speaker, can the associate minister please tell this House what our government is doing to support this vital industry in the face of this harmful tax?

Hon. Kevin Holland: Thank you to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for that question.

I'm proud to say that our government is supporting the forestry sector despite the disastrous Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax. Our government is building programs to support businesses in the forestry sector, helping to lower costs and create jobs, all while managing carbon emissions. That is why we invested close to \$5 million in Element5, Ontario's first certified mass timber plant, a state-of-the-art facility in the great riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London. This is an investment in the forestry sector that will create jobs, use our great renewable forest products while helping to build homes.

And not only that: We are providing nearly \$8 million in funding for advanced wood construction projects, supporting projects like the University of Toronto's 14-storey mass timber building, the Academic Wood Tower just north of here on Bloor Street.

It's our government that's supporting innovation, creating jobs and reducing emissions, and we will continue to do so.

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

Mr. Rick Byers: I thank the associate minister for that response.

It's clear that the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is not only hurting the forestry sector, but all hard-working Ontarians. This tax makes everything more expensive, from running a business to heating a home. Families are struggling to make ends meet, and small businesses, especially in rural and northern communities, are feeling the financial pressure. They're seeing their costs rise, their margins shrink and their futures put at risk.

While Liberal and NDP members support these harmful policies, our government needs to focus on real solutions that will help the people of Ontario. Can the associate minister please explain how our government is giving financial relief to Ontarians to cope with these rising costs?

Hon. Kevin Holland: Thanks for that great question. It's disheartening that members opposite support a tax that harms our northern and rural businesses, while routinely voting against policies to support them. This government is taking a different approach. We are providing financial relief for families and businesses.

Speaker, times are tough. Inflation and the cost of living are stubbornly high. And that's why our government is

providing the extension of the gas tax cut, saving Ontario households, on average, \$380 per year since the cuts were first introduced in July 2022. And this is saving the forestry sector \$2.8 million a year.

The Premier and the Minister of Finance are taking action to provide families, people and workers some much-needed relief. Starting in early 2025, every Ontario tax filer will receive a \$200 rebate, as will every child in qualifying families. These are the latest steps to put more hard-earned money back into the pockets of the people of Ontario. It's a shame the members opposite will put politics ahead of affordability for Ontario's families and businesses.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question to the Premier: Hydro consumers in Ontario deserve to be protected from higher prices, but the fall economic statement continues a Liberal plan to increase privatization and consolidation of local hydro utilities by giving tax breaks to private investors. Why is the Premier giving tax breaks to private investors when it means higher prices for consumers?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The associate minister of electrification.

1140

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I'm very pleased to answer the question from the member opposite.

As the member knows, we have taken substantial steps, since coming to office, to finally fix the hydro mess that we saw created under the Liberals and supported by the NDP in the province of Ontario. We saw hydro rates go up by 300% when the Liberals were in power, and every single step of the way, we saw the NDP support them.

That's why, in comparison with the Green Energy Act fiasco that we saw under previous governments, we have the Affordable Energy Act that is being debated in this chamber, setting, as a base-level support for the people of Ontario—strong support on affordability and strong measures to ensure that our local distribution companies and every part of the energy sector are working together to address affordability for the province of Ontario.

I'll speak more about why the measure included in the fall economic statement is so important to support affordability and ensure that more people in the province of Ontario are receiving affordable, reliable, clean energy—a luxury that we didn't have under the former Liberal government.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Notwithstanding what has been said, the government continues to perpetuate Liberal policies that will drive up hydro rates.

We all know the strong rise in hydro rates started with the privatization of power by the Harris Conservatives. The Liberals continued the privatization and extended it to local utilities, claiming it would save money. But the

Auditor General, in 2022, showed that smaller utilities were, on average, more efficient than the bigger ones.

The program this government is continuing is one that will drive up hydro rates. They're following the Liberal example.

When will the Premier abandon this Liberal policy that drives up hydro rates?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: It's rich coming from the member opposite—speaking about driving up hydro rates.

We heard from the Auditor General, when the Liberal government was in power, supported by the member opposite, who was here at that time—a 300% increase. What did that look like? That meant that we saw, in the feed-in tariff system, FIT contracts that were 10 times market value—80 cents a kilowatt hour—and that directly led to the massive increases in electricity rates.

We had a plan, when we came in, to stabilize electricity rates, and it has worked. As a result of that plan, we're attracting new businesses, new entrepreneurs into the province of Ontario, and we're seeing that economic growth in every single corner. But it's not just about businesses, it's about the people of the province of Ontario, who no longer have to choose between heating and eating.

Every single aspect of our integrated energy plan is focused on affordability for the people of this province, as we lean into our clean energy advantage, create a super-power here in the province of Ontario and ensure that we're able to export that energy across the continent as well, supporting families, supporting job creators and supporting the people of the province to grow and thrive.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Francophone Affairs.

Speaker, in my riding, there's a vibrant francophone community that has called Sarnia home for over 400 years. I know how important it is for residents of Sarnia to receive the support they need in their first language.

For far too long in this province, Franco-Ontarians were left behind, unable to receive services in French, which is frankly unacceptable. That's why our government must ensure that our francophone population is being respected and their needs are being met.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to ensure that Franco-Ontarians across this great province, including in my riding of Sarnia, have greater access to French services?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Merci au député de Sarnia-Lambton pour cette importante question.

Depuis le 1^{er} novembre dernier, la désignation de la ville de Sarnia en vertu de la Loi sur les services en français est officiellement en vigueur. Cette désignation fait en sorte que notre gouvernement fournit des services en français à Sarnia—le tout, conformément à la Loi sur les services en français modernisée par ce gouvernement

en 2021. Cette avancée aurait été impossible sans le leadership du député de Sarnia–Lambton.

This designation would not have been possible without the leadership of the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Monsieur le Président, notre gouvernement a été le premier depuis près de quatre décennies—vous avez bien compris, le premier depuis quatre décennie—à moderniser la Loi sur les services en français. Le gouvernement précédent était généreux en paroles mais avare en action. Nous ne sommes pas de cette école. C'est pourquoi nous continuerons, dans les années à venir—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup.

The supplementary question?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Merci, Madam Minister.

This is incredible news for the residents of Sarnia, as they join the 26 areas that have been designated under the French Language Services Act. I want to thank the minister for her support and leadership in making this designation happen for the people of my community.

It's encouraging to see that our government is delivering on our commitment to provide French-language services across this province. According to the 2021 census, 80% of Franco-Ontarians live in one of these designated areas. While significant progress has been made, more work is still needed to increase access to French-language services and supports of Ontario's francophonie.

Can the minister please inform the House on how the designation of Sarnia fits into this government's long-term commitment to supporting Ontario's francophonie?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Merci au député pour sa question. La désignation de la ville de Sarnia est un autre exemple de l'engagement de notre gouvernement à améliorer les services en français dans la province en répondant aux besoins de notre communauté francophone en plein essor.

Ce travail est le fruit d'une étroite collaboration avec les intervenants de la francophonie ontarienne. Nous savons qu'investir dans la francophonie ontarienne, c'est aussi investir dans la prospérité et le potentiel économique de l'Ontario. La désignation de nouveaux secteurs et organismes s'inscrit dans notre stratégie à long terme visant à renforcer notre francophonie.

Cette stratégie comprend notamment des investissements cruciaux en matière d'éducation en langue française et en facilitant l'accès à la justice. Les réalisations de notre gouvernement relativement à la francophonie dépassent largement celles de tous nos prédécesseurs et nous continuerons de travailler pour faire les choses comme il se doit.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. The Financial Accountability Office has reported that Ontario's exports are struggling and that we've now seen the third drop in the past four quarters. This reflects an ongoing challenge in the auto sector. We need to

promote and support the auto industry. The automotive industry matters to Ontario.

In Oshawa, we know a lot about the importance of a strong automotive sector. Auto manufacturers have been working to ensure that their products are not only made in Ontario, but that Ontarians choose to buy and drive them as well. One challenge that has been identified is the lack of charging infrastructure in the province and the lack of government leadership to ensure folks can charge their EVs or future EVs at home.

My EV-Ready Homes Act is sitting in front of this government with support from industry to help build consumer confidence, and they are ignoring a real solution and a good idea.

When will this government get it in gear and do what is needed to make sure Ontarians are buying vehicles of the future that are made here in Ontario?

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to continue to talk about our wonderful auto sector. Look, we've landed \$45 billion. If you remember, only a few short years ago, both Australia and Ontario were headed off a cliff in auto. Australia decided to throw the towel in and get out of the auto business. Premier Ford said, "Not happening in Ontario. We're going to save the 100,000 auto workers who were working in Ontario, whose jobs were in jeopardy." We went from zero to \$45 billion—that's more than any US state has landed. In fact, in all of the United States, they've only landed \$119 billion, compared to our \$45 billion.

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

That concludes our question period for this morning.

TORONTO ARGONAUTS

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I'd like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Toronto Argonauts on their remarkable victory in the 111th Grey Cup. This triumph, achieved through great determination and outstanding teamwork, marks their 19th Grey Cup title, a testament to their enduring legacy in Canadian football, and it's a shining example of perseverance and excellence in sport.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

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

DEFERRED VOTES**CUTTING TAXES ON SMALL
BUSINESSES ACT, 2024****LOI DE 2024 POUR RÉDUIRE LES IMPÔTS
DES PETITES ENTREPRISES**

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

Bill 195, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to increase Ontario small business deductions / Projet de loi 195, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour augmenter les déductions accordées aux petites entreprises exploitées en Ontario.

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

The division bells rang from 1149 to 1154.

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

On November 7, 2024, Ms. Bowman moved second reading of Bill 195, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to increase Ontario small business deductions.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Babikian, Aris	Harris, Mike	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Hogarth, Christine	Sandhu, Amarjot
Barnes, Patrice	Holland, Kevin	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Sylvia	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Brese, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Scott, Laurie
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Graydon
Coe, Lorne	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Lisa M.
Crawford, Stephen	Mulrone, Caroline	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tangri, Nina
Dixon, Jess	Pang, Billy	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dowie, Andrew	Parsa, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Downey, Doug	Piccini, David	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dunlop, Jill	Pierre, Natalie	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fedeli, Victor	Pinsonneault, Steve	Wai, Daisy

Gallagher Murphy, Dawn
Grewal, Hardeep Singh
Hamid, Zee

Pirie, George
Quinn, Nolan
Rae, Matthew

Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 35; the nays are 64.

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

Second reading negatived.

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

The House recessed from 1158 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: There's a number of people that I wanted to recognize and acknowledge, people that help keep Ontario safe every day. Please let me acknowledge the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, John Cerasuolo; Mark Dapat, the deputy chief in Peel; Deputy Chief Roger Wilkie of Halton, who's also the president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police; Chief Paul Pedersen, retired Greater Sudbury police chief, who is now the executive director of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police; the police chief from Durham Regional Police Service, Peter Moreira; Police Chief Bill Fordy, chief of Niagara regional police; the president of the Police Association of Ontario, Mark Baxter; and many others who have joined us, as well, today.

Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE,
INFRASTRUCTURE AND
CULTURAL POLICY**

Mr. Matthew Rae: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

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

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 29, 2024, the bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

SAFER STREETS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES ET À RENFORCER LES COLLECTIVITÉS

Mr. Kerzner moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 223, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts with respect to public safety and the justice system / Projet de loi 223, Loi édictant deux lois et modifiant diverses lois relatives à la sécurité publique et au système judiciaire.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: This bill proposes amendments to the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, the Community Care and Recovery Act, 2024, the Highway Traffic Act and various other acts. If passed, this legislation would help protect children and keep communities safe while fighting auto theft and creating a more effective justice system.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that the Standing Committee on Government Agencies shall not meet during its regularly scheduled meeting time on Thursday, November 21, 2024, and instead be authorized to meet on Wednesday, November 20, 2024.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: This petition was presented to myself by Ashley Woolhead from Sudbury. I do agree with what she's agreeing with within this—passing anti-scab labour legislation.

The petition states that we should prohibit employers from using replacement labour—to prohibit employers from using both external and internal replacement workers. She also feels that Ontario workers—and pass anti-scab labour legislation, like the Ontario NDP's bill, Bill 90, the Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023. The use of replacement workers undermines workers, and scab

labour contributes to higher conflicts on picket lines, which we don't want to see. Strong and fair anti-scab legislation will lead to shorter labour disputes, which will help with safer workplaces.

Speaker, I agree with Ashley Woolhead from Sudbury. I'm going to sign the petition and send it down with page Laura to the table.

FERRY SERVICE

Mr. Ted Hsu: This is a petition from residents of my riding of Kingston and the Islands, Wolfe Island, Simcoe Island, Howe Island, and it's about the Wolfe Island ferry. They are asking the Ministry of Transportation to restore the 60-minute—the hourly schedule for the Wolfe Island ferry; it's currently running at an 80-minute schedule. What has happened with disruption of the ferry service is that the local family medicine clinic was withdrawn—paramedic service was withdrawn in 2022. Contractors are withdrawing their services to the island because of the risk of irregular ferry service. It's affecting tourism. Businesses on Wolfe Island have been affected by disruptions to the ferry service.

So I join my constituents in Kingston and the Islands to call for the government to restore Wolfe Island ferry service at the previous hourly service or better.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled "To Raise Social Assistance Rates." Basically, what the petition says is that the amount of money that you get on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program is far below the Market Basket Measure poverty line—OW for an individual would be \$733; ODSP, Ontario Disability Support Program, would be \$1,368.

There was an open letter that went to the Premier and two cabinet ministers, and it was signed by over 230 organizations that recommended that the rates for OW and ODSP be doubled.

They also cite that back during COVID, when the CERB program was—federally, basic income was declared at \$2,000 per month. As you can see, \$733 wouldn't even be half of that.

The petition is asking the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.

I support this petition. I think it's a noble cause—to make sure people get out of poverty. I'll affix my signature and provide it to page Alina for the table.

1310

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Ted Hsu: I have a petition today called "No Farms, No Food," signed by people from lots of different communities in southwestern Ontario. It is calling on the government to immediately take steps to stop the expropriation of prime agricultural land, and calling on the government to have a transparent and collaborative

conversation with Waterloo region officials and farmers to promote sustainable development in that region of Waterloo.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled “Justice for Sexual Assault Survivors.” We just heard the Solicitor General table a bill in the House that he proposed will keep Ontarians and children safe. I’m hoping that in that bill, the Solicitor General has taken into account the fact that there are more than 12,000 cases of sexual assault reported in Ontario, but more than 80% of those sexual assault cases go unreported. We know that in 2022 alone, 1,326 cases of sexual assault were withdrawn or stayed before trial. So we have a system that’s allowing sexual assault perpetrators to walk free in this province.

In 2019, the Auditor General put a recommendation forward making strong recommendations to improve this situation that is really difficult. As we continue to see an epidemic of intimate partner violence and femicide in this province, I’m hoping that this bill that we are going to see takes into account the issues I’m putting forward in this petition.

Particularly, I hope that this includes an improvement to the Victim Quick Response Program, and that the recommendations from the Auditor General that want to make the system more responsive and not such a hostile space for survivors, where justice is often delayed—I have hope that this bill will include some of those provisions. We’ll see.

I think that this is a very, very important petition. I’m going to sign it and I’m going to give it to page Ryan to take to the table.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The petition that I have to read today is entitled “Health Care: Not for Sale.” When we look at the track record of this government and their profitization of health care, this petition is to stop the privatization, to stop the profitization of our treasured health care system, something that is a Canadian value for all of us, except for those across the floor.

This petition speaks about how privatization will bleed doctors, nurses and PSWs out of public hospitals and will make the health care crisis worse, something we’re seeing in real time. Privatization always ends up with people having to pay more for health care.

It goes on to recommend some very specific measures that this government could undertake today. One of them is to repeal Bill 124, which they wasted thousands of dollars fighting in court—a losing legal battle; to retain, return and respect nurses, doctors and PSWs with better working conditions; to license the internationally trained health care professionals who are ready, willing and able to practise; to include 10 employer-paid sick days, as well as making education free or low cost for nurses, doctors

and other health care professionals; to incentivize health care professionals to work in northern Ontario; and, more than anything else, to fund hospitals to make sure that there are enough nurses on every shift on every ward.

This is something we fully support in the official opposition. I wish the government would think about our public health care system and not about the profit that certain people can make out of health care.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank Andy Kroeker, the executive director of West Elgin Community Health Centre, for sharing a petition that is signed by 780 people who live in the West Elgin area in towns from West Lorne, Rodney, Ridgetown, Glencoe, Dutton, Fingal and many more places.

The petition speaks to the financial challenges that are facing the West Elgin Community Health Centre, which is one of 1,800 organizations in community health across Ontario that are all dealing with the fact that there has been a base budget increase of just 7% over the past 16 years, when inflation has shot up about 40% over that same period. This means that the West Elgin Community Health Centre is unable to pay fair salaries to their existing staff.

So the petitioners call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deliver an immediate operational funding increase of 5% to the centre and the other community health organizations across the province, which would support the centre’s ability to care for patients and communities.

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition is entitled “Petition to Raise Social Assistance Rates.” This petition acknowledges that people on ODS poverty and OW are unable to afford the basics, such as a safe place to call home.

This petition recognizes that during the heights of the pandemic, the CERB program provided a “basic income” of \$2,000 per month, which isn’t even a start, quite frankly, to afford a one-bedroom in Toronto—St. Paul’s, and those who have signed this petition know that as well.

So really, this petition is calling for compassion. It’s calling for the recognition of folks who are on ODS poverty and OW that they deserve to have the ability to pay for rent, to pay for food, to afford medicine—the “luxuries” that every MPP in this House has.

I absolutely agree with this petition, and I will affix my signature to this petition and hand it over to Ryan.

TRAITEMENT DU CANCER

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier Juliette Denis de Hanmer dans mon comté pour ces pétitions. La pétition s’appelle « Prise en charge des médicaments contre le cancer pris à domicile ».

Comme vous savez, monsieur le Président, si on vous donne des médicaments contre le cancer à l'hôpital, tout est gratuit, mais lorsque vous êtes à la maison, vous devez payer pour—le coût des médicaments contre le cancer pris à domicile peut être très élevé. En Colombie-Britannique, en Alberta, en Saskatchewan, au Manitoba et au Québec, ces provinces couvrent le prix des médicaments contre le cancer pris à domicile.

La Société canadienne du cancer demande au gouvernement de l'Ontario de couvrir les médicaments contre le cancer pris à domicile, car les données démontrent clairement que ça va sauver des vies. Donc, les gens qui ont signé la pétition demandent au gouvernement de donner la priorité à l'accès au traitement du cancer en élaborant un programme provincial qui couvre entièrement les médicaments contre le cancer admissibles, qui sont pris à domicile.

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je demande à Macarius to bring it to the Clerk.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm pleased to be standing in this House and to present this petition entitled "Petition to Raise Social Assistance Rates," and it's going to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I want to say thank you to Dr. Sally Palmer of Dundas, Ontario, who has been raising this petition in this House for many years.

The petition calls on the government to recognize that the poverty rate in Ontario is not addressed with the OW rate of \$733 a month or \$1,368 a month for the ODSP payment. There has been an open letter to the Premier and two cabinet ministers signed by over 230 different organizations that recommend raising this rate by doubling the rates on Ontario Works and ODSP. They also recognize that during the COVID pandemic, the CERB program gave a basic income to Ontarians of at least \$2,000 a month.

This petition is signed by residents from Hamilton to Caledonia, from Woodstock to Ancaster to Lakefield to Peterborough—and it's more and more. I just want to say thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity, and may the government hear us one more time as we call for justice for those who are living on ODSP and OW.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the members to briefly summarize their petitions without getting into additional political commentary on the merits of the petition.

The next petition.

1320

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Carole and René Ménard from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. They're called "Improve Access to Primary Care." Medicare is a program that defines us, Speaker. Care is based on our needs, not on our ability to pay.

Unfortunately, right now in Ontario, 2.3 million Ontarians do not have a family doctor, do not have access to primary care. There are community health centres, Indigenous primary health care, nurse practitioner-led clinics, community-governed family health teams who could all take new patients if only we would fund them.

So the people have signed the petition calling for an immediate increase to funding to community health centres, Indigenous primary health care teams, nurse practitioner-led clinics and community-governed family health teams to give access to primary care to every Ontarian who needs it.

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled "Stop Ford's Health Care Privatization."

As we know, we've been hearing today in the Legislature the questions that our leader, Marit Stiles, the official opposition leader, has been asking about the concerns that we're seeing in our hospitals. We now have deficits all across the province in our hospitals, and there's no clear answer as to how they are going to be addressed.

We're concerned that the privatization that is taking place under this government is bleeding nurses, doctors and PSWs out of our public hospitals, and it's certainly making the health care crisis worse. Certainly, it's making the human resource problem that all of our hospitals are facing—it's become now an absolute crisis.

We know Ontarians have experienced the clear impact of privatization. It always ends up with patients paying a bill. It ends up with long wait-lists. People are not getting the treatment and the procedures that they need. I'm sure all of our constituents are letting you know that they have a year, year-and-a-half, two-year wait-lists to get critical procedures, and so this is a very, very important petition that we hope the government will take to heart and stop underfunding hospitals and make sure that all hospitals have enough staff on every shift in every ward in every province across Ontario, to make sure that we're serving the very basic needs of the people of the province of Ontario.

OPPOSITION DAY

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: I move that, whereas successive Ontario governments have downloaded approximately \$4 billion in annual costs to municipalities for provincial programs; and

Whereas municipalities rely on property taxes to pay for these downloaded costs, which has resulted in property tax increases across the province; and

Whereas, despite these tax increases, many municipalities have had to make significant cuts to essential ser-

vices, like public health, housing, public safety, transit, infrastructure and road maintenance; and

Whereas the province needs a sustainable public infrastructure strategy to support growth, improve transit options, and ensure climate-resilience; and

Whereas the government's neglect of affordable housing and mental health and addictions programs has resulted in a homelessness crisis;

Therefore, in the opinion of the House, the government of Ontario must reach a new deal with Ontario's municipalities, which includes re-uploading provincial responsibility for public health, housing, highways and infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Stiles has moved opposition day number 3, and I look to the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition to lead off the debate.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It really is my pleasure to stand in this House this afternoon to discuss how urgent it has become for the province to give all municipalities a new deal—a new deal to meet the myriad challenges that are facing Ontario and Ontarians.

Decades of unfair provincial downloads—cuts—have emptied the coffers of rural, urban, small, northern municipalities. They're drowning under the huge costs to address issues that are shared responsibilities between the province and the municipalities: infrastructure, transit, housing, child care. Today, we need to all come together to pass this motion, our motion, to give predictable, reliable and sustainable funding that will let municipalities make long-term plans and deliver them.

Speaker, the people of this province are looking for a government that will deliver, at the very least, the basics. Our new deal for municipalities is going to deliver exactly that and more.

Earlier this year, some here will recall that I was at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference and I met, along with my colleagues here in the official opposition NDP, with a number of mayors and councillors and reeves and wardens, the hard-working people who are relentless champions and caretakers of the towns and the cities they represent. Everyone I met—all of them—had one thing to say. They said, "We need help." I know that every member of the government opposite and all of the independents would have had similar meetings. The message was consistent among every one of them: "We need help."

I want to share a conversation I had with the mayor of Tweed, Don DeGenova. Mayor DeGenova told me how deeply his community is struggling—struggling with crumbling roads and bridges, and the rising cost of living. The mayor is a champion for his community, as are all mayors, but he shouldn't have to beg the province just to do its job, to pay for the things that the province is responsible for. He shouldn't have to lobby for Tweed residents to have safe roads and bridges to get to school and to work. These are not luxuries. And yet this is the reality that small towns and cities all across our province are facing. They are left to foot the bill for this government's neglect.

Neglect is something we're seeing in so many different ways, all across the province, from the proliferation of encampments, people in parks and tents because they simply have nowhere else to go, to the one million people lining up at food banks, to the astronomical housing costs, to the mental health, addiction and opioid crisis that we're seeing in every corner of this province. These are the result of decades of neglect, decades of downloading, decades of government cuts.

In 2022, municipalities in Ontario spent \$3.8 billion more than they received in areas of provincial responsibility like social housing, long-term care, ambulance services, social services, child care. These downloaded costs impose disproportionately high burdens on rural municipalities and the people who depend on those services.

Rural and northern communities are having a harder time; that's the truth. The areas they serve are larger, but they have smaller tax bases to draw from. In eastern Ontario, rural municipalities are spending \$536 million a year to operate and maintain their transportation infrastructure, and another \$321 million to operate and maintain their environmental services infrastructure.

I want to thank the Rural Ontario Municipal Association for reminding us that rural Ontario municipalities contribute more than \$480 million to health and social service programs, even as those rural families in those communities are losing access to those very services because of the Conservatives' provincial cuts—cuts to emergency rooms and hospitals; cuts to the programs and the services that people depend on. But they are paying more for that every year, at a time when our communities are being absolutely ravaged by an opioid epidemic.

I want to remind folks in this House that Sudbury was forced to shut down a site that was providing care for those suffering from addiction because of their funding challenges. This should never be the case.

1330

The thing is that what municipalities and the people of Ontario really need from this government at this point is just to do their job. Just do your job.

A new partnership with municipalities and Queen's Park, one based on respect—imagine that, eh?—mutual respect. Evidence—imagine if a government actually ran things based on evidence, respect, empathy.

Our motion today takes us one step closer to that. Our plan for a new deal calls for consultation with municipalities on updating things like governance rules that, I've got to tell you, were created in the 19th century. We also have to look at how we're going to actually empower those municipalities to meet 21st-century challenges.

Our plan is a response to calls that municipalities all across Ontario have asked for, a social and economic prosperity review that is—let's just be clear here—almost 20 years overdue. Our plan applies a rural and a northern lens to all issues. Instead of imposing a one-size-fits-all approach to solutions, it recognizes the very unique challenges and opportunities that are facing so many communities all across our province. Our plan for this new deal paves the way for a historic new partnership to

address the challenges we've spoken about in this place so many times: housing, health care, education, transit, infrastructure.

I want to take one moment here to talk a little bit more about housing, which is an issue we have been raising consistently in this House for years, but especially in light of the Financial Accountability Office's report that came out last week that shows that we are just failing—"we"? No, sorry: The Conservative government is failing. They're not even close to meeting their targets; in fact, they're down over and over again.

Just two weeks ago, this government, aided by the abstention of the Liberal MPPs in this House—and shame on them—voted against our motion to double the supply of affordable housing. I want to again remind members here why Homes Ontario is exactly what we need right now. Housing starts, again, are falling. The government is struggling to even come up with a definition for attainable housing, let alone a plan to build the homes that we need.

We have served you up with a plan—a plan ready to deliver safe, secure, permanently affordable housing to the people of Ontario—and this government says no again and again, despite the fact that this is working in British Columbia. In fact, this worked in the province of Ontario for decades under Conservative, Liberal and NDP governments. We got housing built. People today rely on that housing. They deserve more.

Under our new deal, we would upload the financial responsibility for affordable housing, for shelters, for homelessness prevention back to the province while maintaining a locally focused delivery, and that means in partnership with our municipalities. It would designate a single ministry responsible for the homelessness crisis. Wow, what a difference that would make, addressing the root issues of mental health and addiction and creating the necessary wraparound supports.

Our new deal also addresses the crisis in health care. It will restore the 90-10 cost sharing with municipalities for ambulance services. My goodness, they need that. Boy, do they need that. It would also restore the 75-25 cost sharing for local public health units.

And because people deserve local transit that's reliable, accessible and affordable, our new deal would restore 50% funding for local transit operators.

Ultimately, what this new deal establishes is a new kind of leadership: a leadership that recognizes the help municipalities need and respects all the very hard and important work that they do in keeping our towns and our cities, our communities running. The new deal for municipalities that we're proposing here today allocates provincial infrastructure funding based on need, not self-serving politics. It replaces all of that with fair, predictable and consistent formula-based funding that municipalities can finally count on.

What we're proposing today is providing permanent funding that municipalities can count on so they can plan for our future instead of what this government throws at them: one-time infusions of cash. It's about empowering communities; it's about supporting each other to address

the growing challenges that are facing all of us—including, by the way, the need to adapt to the increased risk of flooding and heat stress associated with the climate crisis.

Ontario's municipalities deserve better than the deal that they have right now. Boy, do they. They deserve so much better than this. Let's just think about it for a minute here: What are municipalities? They're people, Ontarians. Ontarians deserve better than what they have right now.

I've got to tell you, I have taken so many calls from mayors and councillors and reeves who have told me about the challenges that are facing their communities. I have seen first-hand many of their struggles. Every one of us here has, and I know the members opposite have too. They absolutely have.

This motion today is a response to their pleas. Undoing decades of underfunding and downloading isn't going to happen overnight, but it has to start somewhere. Today's vote is a chance to get things moving in the right direction and to start this important work. It's an opportunity for us to signal a new era—an era in which the province supports its citizens and the communities that they call home. It's about a government that will focus on getting the basics right, because—my goodness—people are struggling right now.

Life in the province of Ontario has never been more expensive. We have never had encampments like this, but under the Conservative government of the Premier, Doug Ford, we have encampments in every community. We have an opioid, an addiction and mental health crisis—out of control. Our kids are sitting in classrooms freezing in the winter, overheating in the spring and the fall—too many kids in a class, not enough supports. Our transit is less affordable than it's ever been, and less reliable. Our roads—our infrastructure is failing under this government.

Life has never been more difficult than it is right now under this Conservative government, and it's about time that this government joined us in trying to do something right for the people of this province. Let's help our communities build up Ontario. That's what this motion is about. Let's come together, let's pass this motion and let's build a new deal for Ontario's municipalities right now.

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

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Stop the clock.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): We're going to recess the House for a few minutes. Thank you.

The House recessed from 1339 to 1348.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to thank our leader for bringing forward this timely and important motion, calling for a much-needed new deal for municipalities. This is something municipalities, municipal leaders, AMO and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities have been calling for over the years as costs have increased for municipalities due to downloading and inflation, while

revenue tools and provincial policies have failed to keep up.

This was predicted by AMO 25 years ago, as our leader mentioned. I found a CBC article from 1999 that I'll quote:

"Ontario's mayors and councillors are calling on the next provincial government to reverse most of the changes downloaded by the Harris Tories. They say it was a mistake to make property taxpayers responsible for health and social programs.

"They say their communities will be in big financial trouble if the changes aren't reversed.

"Mike Power, the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, says the restructuring of services such as welfare, ambulance and public health may have helped Harris' bottom line, but it's left towns and cities across the province \$600 million in the hole."

That was 25 years ago, Speaker. But instead of reversing course, this government has doubled down and made things worse.

1350

Just a quick grocery list of how this government has treated municipalities: In 2019, there was a 10% reduction to provincial funding for child care services, reducing the provincial share from 80% to 70% of funding for child care services. The result: Municipalities are now responsible for 30% of the costs, leading to higher fees for families and fewer child care spaces.

There was a 10% reduction in funding for ambulance services, decreasing from 50% to 40%, requiring municipalities to pay 60%, resulting in higher local taxes and service cuts.

There was a 5% reduction in provincial funding for public health services, reducing the provincial share from 75% to 70%, which leads to higher local costs for services like vaccinations and disease prevention.

Of course, we all know about Bill 23, which downloaded even more costs and mandates onto the backs of municipalities, with no provincial funding to make up the financial gap. AMO clearly warned that Bill 23 would reduce municipal revenues that fund growth-related infrastructure, transferring "up to \$1 billion a year in costs from private sector developers to property taxpayers without any likelihood of improved housing affordability."

This government cut provincial funding for community housing by 70%, putting even more pressure on municipalities to address housing and homelessness challenges that were once provincial responsibilities. We see the effects of that today as we sit here in the Legislature.

At the same time, this government has interfered in municipal jurisdiction, blaming them for all the world's problems, especially on the housing file, and has shown a complete lack of respect and concern for the challenges facing Ontario's municipalities, both large and small.

Bill 5, on the heels of the 2018 election, cancelled regional chair elections and reduced the size of Toronto city council, disrupting municipal election campaigns that were already under way. Reminiscent of today, I can remember sitting here shortly after being elected, after we

were called here for the summer, living in a hotel. I think I was standing here at 4 or 4:30 in the morning as people were being led out in handcuffs from the gallery. Here we are today, and we've seen what's happening today.

After a lower court found Bill 5 unconstitutional and granted a stay, the government passed Bill 31, invoking the "notwithstanding" clause to bypass constitutional rights and push the bill through.

We had Bill 218, which included a clause repealing the legislation allowing municipalities to use ranked ballots in municipal elections, removing a local democratic option.

We had the strong-mayor system, which empowered mayors to veto any bylaw that could interfere with provincial priorities, reducing the influence of municipal councils on local decision-making.

The list goes on and on: Bill 39 expanded strong-mayor powers, allowing mayors to propose and pass bylaws with the support of only one third of council members, undermining the principle of majority rule and diminishing the role of councillors.

We had MZOs, ministerial zoning orders, a tool the provincial government can use to overrule or bypass bylaws, planning decisions or processes with little or no transparency and accountability. To date, this government has issued more than 100 MZOs.

Of course, we've all been hearing lately about bike lanes. The Ontario government's new Bill 212 is interfering in municipal jurisdiction once again and requiring them to get permission to install bike lanes while empowering the province to rip out existing lanes.

The list goes on and on and on, Speaker—the disrespect and lack of partnership shown by this government towards municipalities.

As a former city councillor and budget chair in a large urban municipality in Niagara, I know how difficult it is to prioritize spending and balance competing priorities around a fixed budget while trying to keep property taxes affordable. Municipalities, now more than ever, need a partner that will help them to continue delivering the basics while keeping property taxes under control. We believe the best way to do that is for the province to start doing its job so that municipalities can do theirs.

Health care; public health; housing; mental health and addictions; our social safety net: these are provincial priorities and responsibilities that have been downloaded onto the backs of Ontario's towns and cities. These downloads result in tax increases. Ontarians deserve better than a Premier that passes the buck, and it's time to change that.

By supporting our motion today, this government can reverse course, become a real partner to municipalities, start doing its job and deliver on the basics, which is to focus their cities and towns on keeping property taxes down and making life more affordable for everyday Ontarians.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm very pleased to be able rise today to speak to the leader of the official opposition's

motion calling for a new deal for our municipalities by restoring provincial responsibility for public health, housing, transit, highways and infrastructure.

The truth is that this government's downloading is costing people. The government is pretending they are keeping taxes low for Ontario residents, but the truth is that there's only one taxpayer, and the Premier's politics are driving up costs for municipalities, who then have to increase taxes. This is the direct consequence of the province's refusal to cover the costs of these essential services. It has a severe impact on the ability of municipalities to provide these services, which is why we don't have the world-class transit and infrastructure that we deserve. It also costs people more when that happens.

To give an example of what this looks like, I want to talk about public transit in Ottawa. A different Conservative government, the Bill Davis government, had the target of splitting transit funding 50-50: 50% covered by the province, 50% covered by the municipality. But under the Liberals, that target got wiped out, and we saw municipalities cover more and more of the cost of public transit.

Under the Conservatives, the government is currently contributing around one third only. As a result, OC Transpo has a shortfall of \$120 million this year, and that shortfall is being addressed through a massive fare hike. For seniors, the cost of a monthly bus pass in Ottawa is increasing 120%; it's going from \$49 a month to \$108 a month. I have a lot of seniors in my riding who depend on the bus because they're on a fixed income or because they're no longer able to drive. Those seniors will now be paying \$58 a month more, all because this government doesn't care to properly fund public transit.

The government is going to send everyone a \$200 cheque, but for seniors in Ottawa West-Nepean, that won't even cover four months of their increased costs because of the government's underfunding of public transit. That's not even to mention the other \$508 a year that they are going to have to spend annually for their bus pass.

The youth fare is also being eliminated, and free rides for 11- and 12-year-olds as well. They will now have to pay the cost of an adult bus pass, which is \$135 a month. For a family with an 11-year-old, they are now paying \$135 a month that they did not have to pay before. That is \$1,420 a year after you subtract the \$200 cheque. Let's be honest that most of the families who depend on bus passes for their kids are lower-income families; they can't afford to start paying \$1,420 a year.

These are the kinds of costs that the Ford government is passing on to Ontario residents. This makes zero sense. It's time for the government to finally care about the costs that the people of Ontario are paying and lend a helping hand.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The people in London West deserve a provincial government that makes life easier and takes care of the basics. But six years of Ford Conservatives has left communities like London struggling to provide basic

services. Municipalities like London are being forced to use revenues raised through property taxes to fill the gaps caused by the province's failure to properly fund provincial programs, when the reality is that property taxes were never designed or intended to address social services like mental health, addictions and homelessness.

This year, London is looking at a property tax increase of 7.4%, in part because of this government's downloading of costs related to mental health and addictions, homelessness and more. Budget pressures are forcing the Middlesex-London Health Unit to end its program of public health nurses in secondary schools, at a time when students are struggling more than ever.

1400

Community non-profits that rely on municipal funding to do vital work are facing the prospect of significant cuts. Thirty-three of London's largest non-profit organizations that deliver services in health care, education, housing, children's services, arts and culture, food security, employment supports and more have written a letter imploring the city of London to maintain their funding. They highlight the "unprecedented increase in demand for services" and the "heightened need for mental health services" and affordable housing.

Last week, I met with the CEO of London Public Library, who told me that \$1 million a year—that's money that comes from the city—is being spent on security to deal with the crisis of mental health addictions and homelessness. This crisis is affecting every single library branch in our city. Encampments are sprouting up on library property. People are sleeping in their cars on library parking lots and using library facilities in the morning.

The downtown branch's partnership with an on-site CMHA mental health worker lost most of its city funding this year and is only continuing because London Community Foundation stepped up to support.

London is now the second-most congested city in North America because of a lack of investment in municipal public transit systems.

Speaker, Londoners need this government to move forward with a new deal that puts our communities first. I call on this government: Support our motion and start taking responsibility to pay for the services that should be paid for by the province. Municipal property taxes should be used to pay for municipal services, not to subsidize provincial programs that this government is failing to deliver.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: It's an interesting debate that we're having today on this. I think there's some stuff that's lost on this as the conversation is going on.

I'd like to point out that in estimates, the member from Waterloo, who is the critic for finance, made a comment about how we needed to increase the funding for the OMPF, which is funding that goes directly to smaller municipalities to help with a lot of the infrastructure costs. We took that to heart. It was something that we looked at and said, "Yes, this is something that we should be doing."

So in our fall economic statement, we increased the funding by \$50 million this year and \$50 million more next year. It's a \$100-million increase in the OMPF, something that the members of the opposition advocated for in committee. We can pull up the Hansard from committee on it to see exactly what they said. But essentially, what it was was that we needed to put more money into OMPF to help those smaller municipalities, those northern municipalities, the rural municipalities in all of their spending. So we've increased it, then, by \$50 million this year and an additional \$50 million next year—a \$100-million increase, and yet the member from Waterloo voted against it. In fact, the entire NDP caucus voted against it.

So when they say things like, "The provincial government is not doing enough. The provincial government needs to do more"—when we do more, they still say no to it. That is not really what the message is that they're trying to convey today. They're saying on one hand that we're not doing enough, and yet they voted against any of those measures that we do.

When we look at the infrastructure funding, in particular, across all of Ontario, in 2023 alone, it was \$10 billion that the provincial government transferred to municipalities. It grew by over 45% from 2019 to 2023. That's a massive increase. That's all to reduce the burden on those municipalities.

I'm going to talk a little bit about my own municipality, because we're going through some budget processes right now and there's a lot of conversation about it. The city of Peterborough last year had a property tax budget increase of 7%. They said that it was an adjustment that they were making.

In June, the chief financial officer for the city came out and said that he's going to have to have a 10% increase just to maintain status quo. Council gave a direction to come back at 5%, but staff ignored that and came back and said a 7.8% increase is what they needed. And what they cut were things that really couldn't be cut. They were cutting funding to the arts, multiple arts programs. They were going to cut a program that was a contractual obligation, a legal obligation they had to the downtown business association, and their staff are suggesting they cut it.

The reason I bring these things up is because, as the NDP has pointed out, property taxes have been increasing, and they've been increasing significantly by a number of different municipalities.

So the city of Peterborough is roughly 72 square kilometres, and they have approximately 85,000 people who live in the city of Peterborough. And I give those numbers for comparison, because when I look at what some of the other municipalities are doing, that have a different makeup of council, they're doing things a little bit differently. I'm going to point out two in particular. The first one is the city of Kingston. Why do I bring up Kingston? There has been a long-time rivalry between Peterborough and Kingston, similar to the rivalry between Oshawa and Peterborough. Kingston at one point, in 1996, had a population of about 57,000 people, and at the time

in Peterborough, the population was around 75,000, so Peterborough was a little bit bigger. In the last census, Kingston has a population of 130,000, and Peterborough has about 85,000. So Kingston has grown significantly faster and is a bigger community than what Peterborough is.

Peterborough, as I said, has 72 square kilometres that make up the city boundaries. Kingston's boundaries—I believe it's 411 square kilometres, so about 330 kilometres, 340 kilometres bigger than the city of Peterborough. And I bring this up because if you have more land, you probably have more infrastructure; you probably have more roads, more sidewalks, more water/waste water infrastructure under the ground to service all that. That would make sense. They have a population of 130,000 versus the population of 85,000 in the city of Peterborough. Why do I bring that up? Well, because when you look at the services that you're providing, if you have more people, then you're probably spending more money. But here's the real irony, Speaker: The proposed operating budget for the city of Peterborough for 2025 is about \$265 million. When you throw the capital budget on it, it brings it up to about \$411 million, but we'll take the capital and put it aside for a moment and just talk about the operating budgets.

Why do I bring that up? Why do I bring up that Kingston has more people, Kingston is bigger than the city of Peterborough, and the city of Peterborough's proposed operating budget is \$265 million, and the city of Peterborough was proposing to cut about \$1.5 million from the arts community in grants that they were giving? That's the backdrop I'm talking about. And why? Can anyone tell me what the proposed operating budget will be for Kingston for 2025? It's \$265 million, essentially the same as the city of Peterborough.

Peterborough has had some left-leaning councils over the years, and I'm sure that the member from Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes would have some interesting conversations with me about some previous mayors that we had in Peterborough and some of the approaches of the previous mayors. I bring that up because you have on one hand a city that is 45% larger than the city of Peterborough, who is able to operate with exactly the same operating budget.

The NDP have said that the problem is that there's been downloads from the province on it. While the city of Peterborough is receiving about \$82 million next year from the province—that's the proposed amount—it will probably go up. We increased funding to them through the Ontario community investment fund by just over \$1 million for next year, compared to last year. They received \$1.88 million in brand new, found money through the Building Faster Fund. That was money that they had no idea that they were going to receive. We increased funding to the homeless prevention fund by \$2.5 million. Again, all these things were done after the city's budget had been set. So this was found money, to the tune of almost \$5 million. That should reduce the tax burden for the property taxpayer. But through decisions that are made by staff

members and approved by council, that was never realized.

When the NDP talks about the province's downloading—that seems to be one of their favourite expressions—they fail to recognize that the total budget for the city is the total budget for the city or the total budget for the municipality. When we come up with brand new money that they hadn't even considered, that they didn't have as part of their plan, it still gets spent and there's still a burden that's being put on the individual taxpayer for it.

1410

So when you look at what the province has been doing, we have been trying to off-load a significant amount of expenses, because it has been said multiple times that there is only one taxpayer. It is the same person, absolutely. Whether I'm going to them and I'm saying, "Pay a municipal tax," or "Pay a provincial tax," or "Pay a federal tax," I'm going to the same person and asking them to pay those taxes. But we're spending time and effort to build the province back up.

I'm going to come back to the city of Peterborough, again—I know that it sounds like I'm harping on them, but I think this is a prime example of where, sometimes, municipalities get it wrong.

When you look across all of Ontario, there has been a massive investment in electric vehicles, the Critical Minerals Strategy, the electrification of Ontario. And when we look at the billions of dollars that have been invested in this province by other companies to come here and do these things and build the employment base—it's not just the job that is getting created. It's not just the factory that's being built. It's not just the additional housing that is coming as a result of those workers moving to the area. Those businesses all pay taxes, and when you attract a business to an area, that increases the tax base for that area.

What's kind of ironic in all of this is that when we talk about taxpayers, we typically talk about the residential taxpayer. The commercial taxpayer and the industrial taxpayer do not pay the same rate as what the residential taxpayer does. In fact, municipalities will have a multiplier; in Peterborough, for example, it's 1.5 times the residential. So a small commercial business downtown is paying 1.5 times what the residential taxpayer is. The business on the outside of the city of Peterborough is 1.5 times what the residential taxpayer is.

Peterborough points out, because they've made this argument with me a number of times, that they are 37th of the top 50 municipalities. So there are 36 other municipalities who are charging a higher amount to those businesses. The focus should be, then, on how those municipalities can work more closely with the province to attract industry into their area, because that industrial taxpayer will pay significantly more than the residential taxpayer.

What we hear from the different cities and municipalities that are being talked about as the examples of who need to have some funding given to them, it also coincides with the municipalities that are not reaching out and finding ways to attract industry. If you want to bring com-

panies to your province, you need to have willing hosts. We have found that in different communities—the NDP, the opposition, have voted against all of those things—when we look at the \$40-plus billion that has been invested by companies in the auto industry and what the spinoff means for those municipalities that are getting them.

My good colleague from Hastings–Lennox and Addington has had, in Loyalist, part of the EV revolution come into his area. If you've ever been to Loyalist township—I refer to Peterborough as God's country; Loyalist is a pretty nice place to live as well. It's a pretty nice place. They've been able to attract someone, whereas other municipalities have not.

Napanee has Goodyear that's doing an expansion with tires specifically for electric vehicles, because we know the electric vehicles are much heavier than what a traditional internal combustion engine is, so the tires are going to be a little bit different for them. With Goodyear expanding, that is a significant increase in property taxes for the municipality of Napanee. It's also some great jobs that are coming in for the people in that area. And when you have jobs in an area, you have more affluent people who are buying more houses as well, which increases the amount of revenue that goes to the municipalities.

So if you take a look at it, what we have been doing in Ontario is, we've been trying to incentivize companies to come. We have been offering additional funding to municipalities so that they can build the infrastructure.

In fact, we've tripled the amount of money for the housing-enabling water fund. We thought that we were going to be spending about \$354 million on it, but we're up to \$1 billion that is being invested. That is, again, found money for the municipality, and the NDP do not want to give us any credit for that. The Building Faster Fund—we have targets that are set for all of those municipalities. Keep in mind, for a lot of those housing targets, they need water and waste water, so our housing-enabling water fund gives them the money to put the underground infrastructure in place—the piping for it. It also gives them the money if they need to do an expansion of their water treatment plant or their waste water treatment plant, so it's the full gamut.

The province is giving the municipalities money for this, which they can use to attract industry. When they attract those industries, they're attracting more people to come to the area as well. We're providing them the funding they need to put the infrastructure in, and when the homes are built in their area, we're providing them additional funding, with the Building Faster Fund, to say, "Thank you very much for meeting the targets that were set for you. We're going to reward you for it. Here's extra money."

And when we look at the smaller municipalities, the more rural municipalities, the northern municipalities, we've increased the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund to help offset the costs for a lot of that infrastructure as well.

So this is a government that is stepping up to the table and saying, "We recognize that there are costs involved

with this. Here's the money to do it." We're increasing the amount of money that each of these municipalities are having, so that they can get the job done, and what we see instead is, some municipalities are using money in ways that perhaps aren't the most fiscal way of doing it.

I'll come back to Peterborough versus Kingston. Kingston is 45% larger in population. Kingston has four and a half times the land mass as the city of Peterborough. And yet their operating budgets are virtually the same. I could harp on Kingston a lot and continue to bring that up, but that probably wouldn't be the best way to go, because someone would come back to me and say, "Well, do you know what, Dave? All you've done is, you've talked about one community, and one community could be an outlier"—and you're absolutely right: One community could be an outlier.

I want to talk about my seatmate and his community of Brantford that has 110,000 people in it, so 25,000 more people than the city of Peterborough, and it is just over 100 square kilometres, so about 30 square kilometres more than the city of Peterborough.

Why does that matter? As I said before, if you have more land mass, you have more infrastructure—you have more roads, you have more water, you have more waste water, you have more hydro, you have more everything. Your buses are travelling further. Your snow removal is greater because you have more roads. You have more sidewalks, so your maintenance on your sidewalks—that is all going to be more. If you have more people, those people are coming into the municipal office and those people are using municipal services, and they're talking to municipal staff, and they're doing all of those things. So it would make sense to me that if I have a larger community than someone else, the larger community's operating budget should be higher. I don't think anyone in here is going to say, "No, the more people we have and the bigger the place is, the less money that has to be spent on it."

Brantford has a proposed operating budget \$90 million less than the city of Peterborough—\$90 million less. And they exceeded their housing targets, so they got extra money from the Building Faster Fund. So they're doing something right, because Brantford—bigger than the city of Peterborough, more people than the city of Peterborough, presumably having to do more services than the city of Peterborough—can do it for \$90 million less than the city of Peterborough.

1420

Now I'll go back to Kingston again, because I had some of my residents in Peterborough say, "Yes, but you're not taking everything into account." Peterborough has a marina that they operate, and that's an expense to the city of Peterborough, absolutely. Kingston has got a marina. Well, Peterborough has got Trent University. There's this little university in Kingston that someone might have heard of called Queen's, and it's five times the size of Trent, so I'm struggling now with, "Okay, it's the university's fault." But then they come back and go, "Oh, but Dave, Peterborough's got Sir Sandford Fleming College." There's another institution called the Royal Military

College in Kingston. "Well, it snows in Peterborough. We've got to get rid of all of the snow." Kingston has the Lake Ontario effect, and having grown up in Prince Edward County, there's many a time that the winters in Kingston are as bad or worse than they are in Peterborough. So there doesn't seem to be a logical argument that can be made, then, how certain municipalities can manage their money effectively and not put themselves in a position where they are further burdening the individual taxpayer.

Before I sit down, I want to throw this out as one more thing on it, because I think it's really good to take a look at: the proposed budget per person for Peterborough—\$3,045 next year, per person. That is what the proposed property tax is going to work out to. You can talk about it in terms of houses; I like talking about it in terms of people—\$3,045. Kingston: \$1,900 per person. Brantford: about \$1,400 per person.

So when you think about that and you break it down per person and you look at the amount of money that the province is giving to the municipalities and you look at what the province is responsible for and where the province is making those investments, you have to take a step back and say: Why is it that some municipalities can manage their money very, very well under exactly the same constraints, and you have other municipalities who have exactly the same constraints who can't manage their money as well? I think it comes down to local decisions that are being made.

And I want to throw this one last point out before I wrap up: I get accused all the time of being a Conservative, so I don't care about the arts. I hear that all the time. And I want to point out something—it's not a direct quote; I'm paraphrasing. But during the Second World War, Winston Churchill went to his cabinet and his administration and said, "We need to find a few million dollars." One of the suggestions was to cut the funding to the arts in England during the Second World War, and Winston Churchill's comment was, "Then what are fighting for if we're just going to be the same as everyone else? Our culture is based on the arts, and we need to continue funding it."

Kingston is not cutting funding to the arts. Brantford is not cutting funding to the arts. Peterborough wants to cut funding to the arts. So the whole thing is, Kingston can manage their budget and give good services. They've grown from 57,000 to 130,000 in 28 years. That lets you know that people want to move there. Peterborough has grown from 75,000 to 85,000 in that same time period. Why? And the question has to be answered with: Kingston is doing something right. Brantford is doing something right. They can manage their funds and not put a burden on the taxpayer. And yet other municipalities cannot do that.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: We, the Ontario NDP, are calling for a new deal for Ontario's municipalities, which would include re-uploading provincial responsibility of public health, housing, transit, highways and infrastructure. I

want to make it clear that this is an affordability-crisis solution.

After six years with this government, Ontarians' lives have not gotten easier; in fact, they've gotten harder and more expensive. Our new deal will reverse decades of cuts and downloads that have driven up costs for everyone. We'll restore 50-50 provincial funding for municipal transit to improve reliability, affordability and accessibility. We'll restore province cost sharing for ambulance services, for public health units.

Our Homes Ontario plan, which this government shot down and denied, would have actually created 250,000 real, affordable homes. We would have done that through supports with co-ops, through working together with our local municipalities. We would have done this through non-market housing to give people a shot who can't afford the condos and the houses that are going up across the province.

We want to make it clear that by downloading these services, as you have to the municipalities that are already revenue-strapped, this means people are waiting eight, nine, 10, 11, 13 years and more for rent-geared-to-income, for social housing.

Municipalities get 10% of the taxes we pay. Some 90% of our taxes go to the feds and the province—90%. That means that Ontarians deserve to get what they're paying for, and under this government, we are not getting it.

Frankly, a convenient \$200 apology cheque cannot make up for homelessness; for their legacy of encampments; for stripping away consumption treatment sites that save lives; for food insecurity; for cuts to our education system; for people unable to get public health care and mental health care when they need it; for the poor treatment that so many of our tenants, including people in St. Paul's, where I live, who are having to deal with predatory landlords. It just can't. It's too little, too late.

We desperately need a new deal for our municipalities, one that will give the power back to our municipalities and its local community members. The idea of wasting \$48 million to rip out bike lanes—\$27 million of that, the city of Toronto has to shoulder. I can think of 27 million other ways that that money could be used to help our municipalities help our communities.

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

MPP Zee Hamid: I would like to thank the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for his passionate speech, and I would like to tell him, through you, Speaker, that my town of Milton and the riding of Milton is also doing the right things that I'll talk about later on today.

I spent 12 years on the Milton council; four of those years were spent at both tiers, upper-tier and lower-tier. During my time on the council, I chaired more budget committee meetings than any other councillor, so I have some experience in municipal finances and taxes, the challenges municipalities face and where those challenges come from that I would like to talk about.

Before I do that, I want to touch on some points, though. The Leader of the Opposition seemed to imply that

municipalities primarily rely on property taxes. I can tell you that in the region of Halton's previous budget, they're getting \$321 million from property taxes but \$342 million from provincial funding, and provincial funding is a big source of municipal funding. In fact, municipalities rely on property taxes but also provincial funding as well as development charges, user fees and investment income. They have a lot of different revenue sources already.

My big learning during my time on the council as I went to AMO, went to FCM and talked to other councillors and interacted with them was how different each municipality was. Challenges facing Mississauga are very different from challenges facing Timmins, and challenges facing my town of Milton are different from what someone in London or Windsor face. That's why a one-size-fits-all solution just doesn't work.

I do want to talk about overall funding. Between 2019 and 2023, the provincial funding to municipalities has grown at a rate of 10% a year. Cumulatively, they've gone up by 45%. Last year alone, \$10 billion was transferred to municipalities. That's a record investment. It's a record investment in not just municipalities but also, indirectly, a record investment in infrastructure, in community programs, in transit.

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I want to go back to my riding of Milton. During my time on town council in Milton, the town council passed motions, not once but twice, asking the province to build Highway 413. In fact, 413 is supposed to start from Trafalgar Road in my riding of Milton, where Milton plans to put a high-density development—20,000 jobs and over 35,000 residents. Traffic projections in the town of Milton show that without this highway, we will be at a gridlock. This is another form of support for municipalities that we're providing, because we know that municipalities in Milton and other areas that are touched by 413 cannot fund the highway themselves. That's why we're stepping in to build it—something that we don't have the support for from other parties.

Just two weeks ago, in the fall economic statement, we increased the OMPF funding by \$100 million. In 2024-25, I just want to say, Thunder Bay will receive \$24 million under this program; Greater Sudbury, another \$24 million; Chatham-Kent, \$21.5 million; Sault Ste. Marie, \$20 million; Windsor, \$24 million; North Bay, \$11 million; Timmins, \$11 million; and so on.

The criticism that we're not helping municipalities or we're not partnering with municipalities is insincere, frankly. We provided over \$3 billion in investment in housing and community-enabling infrastructure, including \$1 billion in municipal housing infrastructure funding programs, \$1.2 billion for the Building Faster Fund. My town of Milton received \$8.4 million just in March. That's going to be used to build a lot of infrastructure required for building housing. We've allocated \$200 million over three years for the new Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund, \$1 billion over five years for the Homelessness Prevention Program—and I could go on.

But I want to talk about what municipal governments are typically responsible for: things like transit, transportation, library system.

Let's talk about transit. During my time on council, we brought up the issue of One Fare a lot, under the previous government. I know that there are no members from the Liberal Party here, but still—through you, Speaker. We brought that issue up a lot. Nothing got done. It was really this government that stepped in to do that. It's not direct funding to municipalities, but it helps municipal taxpayers a lot. In fact, in my own household, two of my stepdaughters commute into Toronto, and we are direct beneficiaries of this One Fare program. When they get on Milton Transit and take the GO train and then take the TTC, they only pay once, when they used to pay three different times. Before I came to provincial politics, I used to commute to downtown Toronto, paying multiple fares.

We have stood behind the town of Milton's ask for GO Transit, announcing funding for all-day, two-way GO train service, provided that the federal government comes with its share of the funds as well and matches our funding.

The Minister of Transportation was in Milton just a month ago, when he met the town staff and we went over our plan for all-day, two-way GO train service in Milton. That also is not direct funding to the municipality, but it does help the municipality. It helps the town of Milton attract businesses, which helps keep the tax rates low. It helps them attract residents. It helps them attract jobs.

I do want to talk about tax rates, in comparison, which is actually an important topic that the member from Peterborough-Kawartha touched upon as well. An average house in the town of Milton is roughly \$1 million, the tax rate is 0.7%, so you know an average house pays roughly \$7,000 a year. Just south of us, in the town of Oakville, an average house is worth \$1.5 million and the tax rate is 0.73%, meaning an average house pays \$11,000 in taxes. There's a 50% gap. So if you live in Oakville, you pay 50% more than if you live in Milton. In many ways, that's okay, because the taxpayers in Oakville decided what level of service they want to receive, what level of service they want to fund, and they funded those services through their council. Taxpayers in Milton decided what their priorities are, and they funded it through the council in Milton.

It's really important to understand the different municipalities. One of the biggest benefits of having municipal governments is that different municipalities and the taxpayers and the councils get to decide what they want to fund and what they don't want to fund. They do help health in the provincial government—like I said, \$10 billion last year alone. But ultimately, it's up to their municipal councils and municipal taxpayers to decide what level of service they want to receive. That's a good thing because someone who wants to pay higher taxes and get the kind of service that Oakville provides can move down to Oakville and enjoy those benefits. Someone who enjoys lower taxes and efficient service, as the town of Milton provides, are welcome to live in Milton.

I also want to talk about other levels of funding that's not directly to municipal. Our Skills Development Fund is something that my own riding of Milton has benefited greatly from. My riding of Milton is getting two new schools this year—they started two new schools this year: Cedar Ridge Public School with 770 students and 88 licensed child care spaces; and St. Josephine Bakhita Catholic elementary school with 671 students and 88 child care spaces. Overall last year, we opened 21 new schools and additions with 7,000 new students. Compare that to the previous Liberal government that closed 600 schools.

This is all funding for local communities that our government does. We put shovels in the ground for hospital projects like Niagara Health System, Scarborough Health Network, Ottawa Hospital, Cambridge Memorial and so many more.

Ultimately, what do municipalities want? They want a government that's building infrastructure for the growing population or the aging population. They want a government that's funding child care for the younger citizens. They want a government that's there for their citizens, and we're doing all of that. We're giving municipalities more money than any other government in the history of Ontario, and we also have raised it at a faster pace than anyone else. Like I said, an average of 10% a year since 2019 is a huge increase—a 45% increase. That's \$10 billion in funding that municipalities received from the provincial government just last year alone.

I did talk about how municipalities are different. The challenge with adding another layer of tax—because frankly, Speaker, any kind of additional funding comes from taxes. As the member opposite said, there's only one tax grid—that's true. In order to provide more services, we raise taxes and provide that thing, so either way, whether they're paying through their property taxes or they're paying through provincial taxes, taxpayers are paying for it.

The advantage of our approach that funds programs based on targets, that funds housing infrastructure programs, that funds programs that are important and lets local communities decide what's important for them—our approach recognizes that local communities are different; that there are different solutions for different communities.

Challenges facing Mississauga are very different and solutions that apply to Mississauga and the costs that those solutions carry are also different, and it should be up to the taxpayers of Mississauga to decide how and what they wish to fund. Likewise, taxpayers in Milton are happy with a certain service standard and they're funding it the way they wish to fund it. Taxpayers in Oakville are different, like I said. An average taxpayer in Oakville pays 50% higher property taxes than the average taxpayer in Milton because they made different choices, and they should be able to do so.

That's why the one-size-fits-all solution, or solution that raises taxes even more at the provincial level, just doesn't work because it ignores differences between municipalities; it takes their autonomy away. It doesn't recognize that different taxpayers and different municipal-

ities wish to tackle different challenges and wish to do them differently.

I do want to talk about the combination of the Homelessness Prevention Program—\$1 billion to fund that—as well as \$1 billion in the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program. I mentioned my riding of Milton received \$8.4 million in March. It's from the \$1.2-billion Building Faster Fund, and that happened because we achieved our housing target. This kind of funding is important because it gives municipalities a performance-based funding. The fact that the town of Milton did something better—they got awarded for it, they can take that money and invest it in areas that help them do that job even better. They're using that money to hire planners to handle development applications faster. They're using that money to hire urban designers to handle applications faster.

Compare that to other municipalities that did not get this funding because they didn't meet their housing target, such as the city of Mississauga. Funding the way we fund them rewards excellence, it rewards performance, and it doesn't award mediocrity, which is how it should be.

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Writing a blank cheque—I do want to mention that, as far as I recall, the city of Mississauga is one of the only municipalities where affordable housing starts actually went down; they hit only 40% of the targets last year. The notion that everyone should be funded equally, that everyone should get a blank cheque regardless of how they're performing, it's just not what we stand for. It's not how business is done anywhere.

I want to talk about the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund. We've quadrupled that fund, because we know that a growing population requires housing, we know that it requires investment in water systems. That's why we haven't just increased it, we haven't just doubled it, we haven't just tripled it, we've quadrupled it. All that is going to help municipalities tackle the issue of infrastructure. It's helping municipalities tackle the issue of transportation. It's helping municipalities tackle the issue of transit.

Let's talk about transit. We have five different transit lines in construction right now—when has that happened in the history of Ontario?—the Ontario Line, Scarborough subway extension, Eglinton Crosstown West extension, Yonge North subway extension, Hamilton light rail, and not to talk about GO Transit: increased bus service in my riding of Milton; increased train service in my riding of Milton; working on all-day, two-way GO train service in my riding of Milton. All of these things help municipalities in ways that the municipal taxpayers directly benefit from.

Not every type of help, not every type of support is done through a direct dollar transfer. I'm fundamentally opposed to a blank cheque transfer that's not attached to specific programs. We are responsible for our own taxpayers. I know there's only one taxpayer, but when we're collecting taxes as the province of Ontario, we're answerable to our taxpayers. We cannot simply waste their

tax money and write blank cheques without any performances assigned to them.

Municipal taxpayers can keep their municipal council accountable through their votes, and, therefore, it makes sense to let municipal councils and municipal taxpayers decide how they want to grow the community, how they want to invest in the community, whether they want to invest in arts or not, whether they want to invest in transit or not. It's all local decision-making that we respect. Local autonomy is important.

There are other grants that I haven't talked about: grants and programs and applications that are based on need, that are based on funding, where municipalities and non-profits in different municipal areas apply for these grants. In my riding of Milton, our senior activity centre just got funding from the Ministry for Seniors. The Minister for Seniors, Raymond Cho, who's celebrating his 88th birthday today, was in Milton a couple of months ago to make the announcement. If that funding wasn't received, that money would have come from municipal taxpayers. It didn't have to, because we stepped in to fund that program.

We funded a skills program to the tune of \$6 million in my riding in Milton—\$6 million to train female welders to help with the shortage in that industry. That's something that would have come from municipal taxpayers or private citizens' pockets, but we've stepped in to fund that.

The way we organize funding is better because we go where the needs are. We look at where the needs are, and when it's better for us to step in to fill the need, we can step in to fill the need, or we can look at where performance is. If our goal is to build more housing, municipalities that do better, they get more funding; municipalities that don't, they get less funding or no funding at all, and that's exactly how it should be. Funding should be based on performance. Funding should be based on results. We're answerable to taxpayers.

I do want to mention something real quick. Let's take OMPF. OMPF recognizes that different municipalities have different means to raise taxes. Take the region of Halton, which I mentioned earlier, that my riding is a part of. The median household income in the region of Halton is \$157,000 a year, so the ability for the region of Halton to raise taxes is very different from some other municipalities. That's why we increased this funding by \$100 million over two years. That's a significant investment, and that's on top of everything else that was being funded.

Like I mentioned earlier, municipalities like Thunder Bay, Greater Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and Windsor, they're all receiving over \$20 million each year to help, because we recognize that they don't have the same ability to raise taxes as some other municipalities, especially GTA municipalities.

A lot of rural and northern municipalities, they benefit from this funding. What happens is—let's say there was a new deal for municipalities and we wrote everyone a cheque. That means the municipalities that didn't have the ability to raise money, like municipalities in the north and smaller rural municipalities—the money would come from them and fund municipalities like mine, for that

matter, that actually have the ability to raise taxes because they have a large tax base, they have a large business base, they live in an urban area, they benefit from the presence of GO Transit, they benefit from the presence of multiple highways. My riding has Highway 407 and 401, and it's going to have 413 soon. My riding has certain advantages that, say, Thunder Bay doesn't have. So it doesn't make sense for my town of Milton to receive the same level of funding as Thunder Bay, because they have certain challenges that we don't have. It doesn't make any sense for Mississauga to get the same level of funding as Sudbury, because they have different challenges.

Our approach recognizes these differences between municipalities. Our approach recognizes municipal ability to pay. Our approach recognizes that different taxpayers are different. And our approach is more answerable to our taxpayers.

To conclude, I'll say that—and I'll say it beyond a shadow of a doubt—to Ontario's 444 municipalities, there has never been a better municipal partner than our government. We're ensuring that they have all the tools necessary to meet the needs of Ontario's communities, and that's only done through our approach that we stand by.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's always an honour to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the good people of Toronto Centre.

Can you imagine a city like Toronto having to ask this government for a level of respect? Toronto is Ontario and Canada's business and financial capital. We produce 50% of the GDP for this province and 20% for the nation. And yet, we're constantly, cap in hand, asking this government for a level of support and respect—whether it's transit funding, health care funding, or just help to end the homeless encampments that we are seeing.

But this government actually gets a share of some of this responsibility and the glory. Over 29 years, we have been ruled in this province by both Liberals and Conservatives. Mike Harris started this significant downward trend on cities, followed by Ernie Eves. Then, Dalton McGuinty couldn't reverse the trend. Kathleen Wynne couldn't help us. And now we have this Premier back on track to continue to punch municipalities in the gut. We have seen the reckless downloading making the problem for cities bigger and bigger all the time. We have seen public health care being gutted. We have seen this province take away funding that would actually make life better and more affordable for communities.

We recognize that in order for us to be successful in Ontario, we need to have a new deal for municipalities. Municipalities—not just Toronto—everywhere deserve a level of respect that they're not getting from this government. We have over 444 municipalities that are paying over \$4 billion for provincially mandated services that they have to bear on the backs of property taxes, which is grossly unsustainable. We need to be able to upload those services back onto the backs of this provincial government. That is something an NDP government will

do. Only an NDP government will commit to it. An NDP government will get it done.

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

Interjection.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Everyone asks about the RCMP, but they should know that I became parliamentary assistant to the great Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on March 10, 2023, after the greenbelt changes. Anyway, we're not here to talk about that—history, everyone, data point. We're talking about our great municipal partners in the province of Ontario that are working with us to build the homes that Ontarians need, to build the infrastructure, and to ensure that we get things done for the good people of Ontario.

It's a pleasure to rise today and talk about the record funding our government is providing to support our municipal partners across the province. We know that supporting municipalities is an essential part of keeping the dream of home ownership alive for young Ontarians. Municipalities are at the heart of our communities, and by supporting them, we're empowering the foundation of our province's future. By ensuring municipalities have the resources they need, we are also laying the groundwork for vibrant communities that offer stability, opportunity and hope for the future. Our government understands that building thriving communities means investing in the people and services that make those communities strong, and this is exactly what we are doing.

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Housing is more than just bricks and mortar; it's a promise of stability, opportunity and community. Across Ontario, the dream of owning a home has become increasingly elusive for young families. The growing demand for housing, coupled with limited supply, has led to increased home prices and higher rental rates.

We're supporting our municipalities in unlocking more opportunities for home ownership and ensuring that every young family has a fair chance to build their future in Ontario. We're supporting our municipalities by making sure that we are there so that they can build vibrant and sustainable communities.

Municipalities are on the front lines of delivering local services, maintaining infrastructure and building our communities. They're responsible for approving new housing projects, building and maintaining roads, providing essential water services and all the vital infrastructure that supports new housing development. They're partners who help ensure that our communities thrive.

Without strong and adequately supported municipalities, Ontario's future cannot be realized. It's crucial that we, as a government, support municipalities by providing the funding and tools they need to build more homes faster. By enabling them to tackle infrastructure challenges and reduce barriers to development, we can help ensure that new housing projects are developed where they are most needed and in a way that benefits all Ontarians.

Supporting municipalities is not just about today; it is about building a future where home ownership remains a

foundation of our province's prosperity. It is also about creating vibrant communities where everyone has the opportunity to succeed and live the life they want for themselves and their families, ensuring that no one is left behind as our communities grow and prosper.

Our government has recognized the vital role that municipalities play and has acted decisively to support them. Despite the claims from the opposition that the province is underfunding municipalities, the truth is that since 2018, provincial support to municipalities has grown by over 45%, with almost \$10 billion provided in 2023 alone. This significant investment is designed to help municipalities build the infrastructure necessary to support new housing, deliver essential services and address emerging challenges to financial stability.

For example, the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program represents a billion-dollar investment to help municipalities develop core infrastructure projects such as roads and water systems that are essential for new housing developments. By addressing these key infrastructure needs, we're helping municipalities overcome one of the biggest obstacles to housing development: the lack of supporting infrastructure.

This investment is not only about bricks and mortar; it's about empowering our growing communities. It's about ensuring the next generation has the infrastructure it needs to build new homes, support economic growth and create the kinds of neighbourhoods that families actually want to live in.

In addition to the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, we have quadrupled the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund to \$825 million. This fund is vital for municipalities that need to develop, rehabilitate and expand drinking water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure to support new housing development. Access to clean water and reliable waste water systems is a fundamental requirement for any community, and we are ensuring that municipalities have the support they need to expand these critical services.

We understand that infrastructure is the backbone of any growing community, and we're committed to ensuring that municipalities have the tools to meet these challenges head-on. This commitment means building capacity in our communities to foster long-term growth and development.

In addition to direct funding for infrastructure, we're also helping municipalities build their planning and administrative capacities to manage growth effectively. By providing resources for technical training and capacity building, we ensure that municipalities can streamline their processes, make informed decisions and foster growth-friendly environment that attracts new investments.

Speaker, our government knows that addressing housing also means helping those who are struggling the most. That's why we have increased the homelessness prevention funding to municipalities by 40%, resulting in an annual investment of \$700 million. This funding is crucial for municipalities that are facing increased challenges due to the rise in asylum seekers and refugee claimants as a result of failed federal Liberal policies.

Many of these communities are dealing with greater demand for shelter and support services, which is why we are giving municipalities more support to address these challenges head-on. This increased funding helps municipalities provide emergency shelters, support services and long-term housing solutions for people who are at risk of homelessness, including newcomers to Ontario. And by increasing investments in homelessness prevention, we are not only helping those in immediate need, but we're also helping to build stronger and more resilient communities.

The rise in asylum seekers and refugee claimants has created unique challenges, particularly in urban centres, and municipalities are stepping up to provide housing and services to those new Ontarians. By increasing our homelessness prevention funding, we are acknowledging the unique challenges faced by municipalities and ensuring that they have the resources necessary to respond effectively. This is about more than just shelter. It's about providing stability, hope and opportunity for those who have come to Ontario to seek a better life.

But, Speaker, this isn't something we can do alone. While our provincial government is doing its part, we continue to advocate strongly for fair and predictable support from the federal government. Ontario is home to 44% of all Canadian households in core housing need, yet our allocation of federal funding under the National Housing Strategy is only 38%. This discrepancy represents a significant shortfall in funding relative to our needs. Simply put, the federal government needs to pay its fair share. By advocating for equitable funding, we can ensure that Ontario municipalities have the resources they need to succeed.

Despite the record investments by our provincial government, the federal government continues to underfund Ontario. Our municipalities are doing their best to address the housing needs in their communities, support newcomers and provide essential services, but we need proper federal support to achieve these goals. That's why we will continue to call on the federal government to step up and provide the fair funding that Ontario deserves.

But building more homes is not just about funding; it's about also incentivizing municipalities to meet the ambitious housing targets. To that end, we have launched the Building Faster Fund, a \$1.2-billion initiative over three years that rewards municipalities that meet or exceed their housing targets. Municipalities that achieve 80% or more of their annual target can access a portion of their allocation, while those that exceed their targets can receive additional funding as well.

This funding ensures that municipalities are motivated to build housing faster, while also providing the necessary financial support to enable this growth. By linking funding to results, we are ensuring that investments we make lead to tangible outcomes: more homes, more opportunities and stronger communities. We've also set aside \$120 million specifically for small, rural and northern communities that have not been assigned a housing target, recognizing the unique challenges faced by these areas.

These communities play an essential role in our province, and we are committed to supporting their growth and development by addressing their unique infrastructure needs. Whether it's ensuring that there are adequate roads, public utilities or essential services, we are here to support every corner of Ontario. These investments are about more than just numbers. They're about people, about the families who call these communities home, about ensuring that everyone has access to opportunity, no matter where they live in this province.

Furthermore, we recognize that meeting housing targets requires collaboration and innovation. We're also supporting municipalities by providing planning resources, technical assistance and incentives to adopt best practices in housing development. By fostering collaboration among municipalities, developers and community organizations, we're creating an environment that encourages innovation and efficiency in building new homes. This kind of cooperation ensures that municipalities are not alone in meeting their targets but have a network of support to help them succeed.

1500

We also understand that stable funding is essential for municipalities to plan effectively and deliver on their priorities. That is why, in 2024, we are providing \$500 million through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund—OMPF, as many people know it—to support small, northern and rural municipalities. The OMPF funding provides unconditional funding that allows municipalities to address their unique needs and deliver on their local priorities. For many municipalities, particularly those with limited property assessment bases, the OMPF represents a significant resource of revenue that helps them maintain essential services and infrastructure. These funds help create communities where people can live comfortably, access services and feel a sense of belonging.

In addition to the OMPF funding, we have doubled the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund to nearly \$2 billion over five years. This investment supports small, rural and northern municipalities in developing and maintaining essential infrastructure, ensuring that no community is left behind as we work to build more homes across Ontario. Infrastructure investments are about building bridges, literally and metaphorically. They are about connecting people, businesses and opportunities, ensuring that everyone has a fair chance at prosperity. With the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, we're putting our municipalities in the driver's seat, ensuring that they have the funding they need to tackle infrastructure challenges and growth in their communities.

We're also supporting municipalities through programs that help with the maintenance and enhancement of existing infrastructure. Aging infrastructure is a challenge faced by many communities, and our investments are aimed at rehabilitating and upgrading key assets like roads, bridges and water systems. By focusing on both new development and the maintenance of existing assets, we are ensuring that municipalities have the comprehen-

sive support they need to create sustainable and resilient communities.

Municipalities have consistently identified infrastructure as one of the biggest obstacles to building more homes. To address this challenge, we have made record investments in local infrastructure funding to support our growing communities. For example, we're investing nearly \$380 million annually through the gas tax program to help municipalities operate and improve local transit. These investments are essential for creating the conditions in which new housing developments can thrive, providing residents with access to services and other amenities they need. Reliable transit is an essential component of a thriving community. By investing in transit, we're not only creating homes but also ensuring that residents have the means to move around efficiently and comfortably.

Furthermore, through the Canada Community-Building Fund, formerly known as the federal Gas Tax Fund, we're providing nearly \$895 million in 2024-25 to support local infrastructure projects across Ontario. These funds are being used to improve public transit, roads, bridges and waste water systems—all critical components of well-functioning and growing communities.

Whether it's building new roads, repairing old bridges or expanding transit options, we're committed to providing the infrastructure needed to support Ontario's growth. And these projects are about building a future where our children and grandchildren have access to opportunities and a higher quality of life.

In addition to these investments, we're also focusing on infrastructure initiatives that support environmental sustainability. By investing in energy-efficient public transit, stormwater management systems and renewable energy projects, we are helping municipalities reduce their environmental impact while fostering economic growth. Building sustainable communities is not just about meeting today's needs; it's about planning for a future where economic prosperity goes hand in hand with economic stewardship.

Speaker, as we reflect on the importance of municipalities, it's also crucial to remember the past. In the 1990s, under the NDP government led by Bob Rae, municipalities were subjected to significant downloading from the costs of the provincial government. Essential services and responsibilities that were previously funded by the province were suddenly off-loaded onto municipalities without adequate funding. This meant that municipalities had to bear the burden of these additional costs, leading to increased pressures on their local property tax base. For instance, property assessment services were cut, and municipalities were left to make up the difference. While the members opposite might not take my word for it, maybe they'll listen to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who estimate that municipalities need to collect an extra \$1.2 billion from property tax ratepayers to cover these downloaded responsibilities.

I know the members opposite today have talked about Premier Mike Harris and his downloads. What they refuse

to acknowledge is that we actually uploaded one big expense during that reform: education. When we brought that up, it was a significant cost to our municipalities, and we took that on in the 1990s.

In my own riding, since 2022, when I had the pleasure to be elected and serve the good people of Perth–Wellington in this place, I am pleased to report to this House that, working with our municipal partners and many others locally, I have helped attract from our provincial government \$161 million in new investment to Perth–Wellington alone. Our government will continue to work with our municipal partners to ensure that we're making the investments that they are asking us to make: those investments in the roads, the bridges, the stormwater and waste water improvements, ensuring that we're providing that funding.

The greatest example of us stepping up to support our municipal partners is the housing-enabling waste water infrastructure fund. We went to the federal government and said, "We're willing to do a 30%, 30% and 30% infrastructure agreement like has existed in the past. We are fine to match your dollars." But the federal government refused to come to the table. We are now funding 70% of the waste water infrastructure while the municipality has 20% of those costs.

We'll continue to stand with our municipal partners. We're investing \$3 billion in that project alone, while the federal government is investing \$6 billion across the entire country, and some of that is literally just to do studies, not to get anything in the ground and nothing built. Our government stands with our municipalities that want to get things built, and we'll continue to do that going forward.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, my goodness, for the love of humanity, it's so painful in this House this afternoon. Honestly, the revisionism is really quite something.

The reason we brought forward this motion, the new deal for municipalities, is because they have asked us for it because they are actually at a tipping point. Don't take my word for it.

Kitchener mayor Berry Vrbanovic on the Mike Farwell Show: "The model of funding has remained virtually unchanged since 1867 and simply isn't keeping up with the modern issues facing communities. Revenues need to be linked to national population and economic growth. There needs to be diverse, adequate and predictable sources of revenue that increase the autonomy and predictability for municipalities to deal with challenges." This was June 10, 2024.

Burlington mayor and chair of Ontario's Big City Mayors, Marianne Meed Ward: "The deal that we have was built 100 years ago, when really the challenges that municipalities faced were potholes and maybe some roads ... now we are dealing with mental health, with addictions, with homelessness"—and, of course, the housing crisis. "None of those issues were contemplated 100 years ago." This is just from March 24, 2024.

Ontario's Big City Mayors have created a new deal for the city of Toronto and for the city of Ottawa. So at some point, you've recognized that this funding model is insufficient to meet the needs of our communities in 2024.

"Ontario's Big City Mayors renew our call for the province to sit down with municipalities to review the provincial-municipal fiscal framework which hasn't been done for more than 15 years. Our cities and taxpayers deserve a change in how tax dollars are allocated between governments to make things more efficient and fairer for everyone."

"We want to work together to create a new deal."

This is from the 444 municipalities across this province literally begging this government to come to the table with some rational engagement on these issues.

Finally, Catherine McKenney from this morning: She says, "Municipalities need help to fill that gap. We take in something like 10% of every tax dollar but we're responsible for 17% to 18% of all expenditures. It just cannot continue."

1510

Do the right thing. Support the motion, and let's work in partnership with our cities across this great province.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise today in strong support of this motion which calls for a renewed partnership between the government of Ontario and our municipalities—a partnership where provincial responsibilities are rightfully re-uploaded to the province.

Municipalities, including my riding of St. Catharines, are at a breaking point. We face an affordable housing crisis, with wait-lists up to 12 years long in Niagara, alongside a visible homelessness crisis.

Meanwhile, St. Catharines residents saw a 10.5% property tax increase in 2023, an extra \$400 a year for the average household. For families, especially seniors on fixed incomes, this is unaffordable. These hikes are not the fault of the municipality. They are the results of the province downloading billions in responsibilities for public health, housing, transit, infrastructure onto local governments with far fewer resources. Years of provincial neglect have left municipalities struggling to manage problems they didn't create. Property taxes cannot be the solution to filling these gaps.

It is the province's duty to fund and manage critical services like housing and public health. By re-uploading these responsibilities, we can ease the burden on municipalities, allowing them to focus on delivering local solutions to local challenges. The province must address homelessness and the mental health crisis at a systemic level, while empowering municipalities to continue their community-focused work. This requires funding based on need, not political favour.

Let us say no to unsustainable property tax hikes and yes to fairness for families, seniors and vulnerable populations.

Let us support this motion, rebuild a strong partnership with our municipalities, and show our communities they are not alone in addressing years and years of provincial neglect.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today in support of our official opposition motion for a new deal, a fair deal, for municipalities.

In our communities across the province, we've seen the impacts of provincial downloading, and this government has taken it to the nth degree. People are not getting what they pay for from this government, with their reckless, feckless, spendthrift ways. AMO said that \$4 billion has been downloaded onto municipalities because of their cuts. We see this coming through in property taxes.

In the London area, property taxes are set to go up 30% because of this government. We've seen cuts to arts funding. We've seen cuts to community programs. Currently, dozens of London's non-profits across the community—in health care, education, housing, children's services, arts and culture, and a range of social services—are begging the city to not cut back on their funding. Their letter states: "In recent years, our sector has seen an unprecedented increase in demand for services, paired with significant funding challenges. Non-profits are experiencing a heightened need for mental health services, affordable housing, accessible recreational opportunities, and inclusive community spaces."

We have seen need going up. And yet, we've seen funding from this government going down. And where is it going? It's going overseas, into foreign bank accounts. It's going to the movement of Ontario Place, to benefit wealthy insiders. It's going to Therme, an Austrian spa. It's going to the 407 owners, who are also multinational, because this government isn't even collecting on its debts.

The direct implication of the government downloading these programs is that there are these programs which are suffering. People are struggling to find housing. People are struggling with the high cost of living.

The London Community Foundation, in their Vital Signs report, indicated that one in six households in London struggles with food insecurity. The London Food Bank served a record-breaking 454,750 people in 2023-24. That's an increase of almost 100,000 people in comparison to the previous year. The food bank is now supporting 6,000 families per month.

There are 7,000 London families on the affordable housing wait-list. That is on this government. Their inability to provide and build affordable housing and their inability to provide mental health supports and addiction programs have exacerbated all of the crises we see. Doug Ford has only been successful at creating encampments across the province. Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services have a \$2.6 million short fall and there are so many more, whether Middlesex-London Health Unit and more. Cuts, cuts, cuts—reverse those cuts, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the member from Thunder Bay—Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I spoke this morning about a state of emergency in Ginoogaming First Nation, but there's also a state of emergency in the town of Schreiber. That state of emergency has been there since August 1.

I heard a lot of talk about flexibility and there's so much money to help northern ridings, but the reality is that every dollar Schreiber is getting is completely subscribed until 2026 because the waste water plant is falling to pieces. There's no money there. Most money is tied to building new housing, but guess what? Terrace Bay in Schreiber lost the mill—missing in action from this government. They can't build new housing, but they have very old infrastructure and they need funding to support that infrastructure.

You might say, "Well, we increased funding to the OMPF fund." AMO is very aware that the Liberals cut this fund from \$650 million in 2010 to \$500 million. There has been no increase whatsoever until this year, so we are getting a little bit of an inflationary bump. But that's not going to help the community of Schreiber or the other northern communities that cannot afford to build housing but have infrastructure needs.

One last thing I would like to say in my time is that I see moral panic on the other side whenever we talk about co-op housing. I'd like you to say that to the people of Thunder Bay who have fantastic co-op housing that's been there for a long time. We want to build more and the NDP will give us the means to do that and affordable loans so that people like the seniors' organization Suomi Koti can actually build what they've been trying to do for years. It's about time that we had a government that actually could adapt to local circumstances. I heard something about one size fits all. Well, guess what? No grants that are out there are supporting people in my small northern communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to say a few words about the new deal for municipalities. We all agree that health care is the biggest responsibility of a provincial government. That's why we allocate \$78 billion of the budget to it. Yet the mayor of Sudbury, Paul Lefebvre, invited the MPP for Sudbury and me to a meeting where he went through all of the investment that the city has to do in health care, starting with the ACT team, the assertive community treatment team. Did you know—I didn't know—that the municipality actually pays the hospital to deliver that service because the provincial government refuses to fund them? We have 200 people living in encampments in Sudbury, in Nickel Belt, and 500 people homeless. Yet this government refuses to take responsibility and fund them.

The municipality also invested tens of millions of dollars to build a new 40-unit specifically for people who are hard to house—homeless people with severe mental health, addiction and other problems. The federal government contributed, the municipal government contributed.

They asked for the provincial government to do what they are supposed to do—fund health care—and so far it's dead silence. Same thing with our consumption and treatment site. It was the municipality of Sudbury who funded it for a full year because every second or third day a person dies of an overdose in Sudbury—that includes my nephew and two of my friends. That's every single week, yet the government is not taking responsibility.

We need a new deal for our municipalities. They are asking for it. What is this government waiting for?

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It's very timely today to receive this in my email from the city of Hamilton to AMO, as well as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. It's a resolution, and it says: "Whereas in 2024 the city of Hamilton is investing \$185.9 million into housing and homelessness solutions, 67% funded directly by municipal taxpayers."

I just want to remind the members on the other side, all that you download out of the provincial coffers goes onto our provincial taxpayers—only one taxpayer, as you continue to say.

It goes on further, "Whereas Ontario cities have been left to deal with the crisis of housing, homelessness, mental health and addictions without adequate resources from upper levels of government;

"Whereas the government of Canada has announced a \$250-million funding initiative to address the urgent issue of encampments and unsheltered homelessness with the intention of a 50-50 cost-sharing agreement with provincial governments;

"Whereas the government of Canada will work directly with municipalities if necessary, but without the involvement of the province of Ontario, Ontario municipalities will receive half of the potential funding available, while additional costs continue to be downloaded to municipal taxpayers;

"Whereas federal discussions with the province of Ontario have not led to meaningful progress on a cost-sharing funding agreement to date;

"Whereas, the provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has publicly announced an upcoming meeting with the federal Minister of Housing to take place the week of" the 28th—we have fingers crossed, let me tell you—"and;

"Whereas mental health care, addiction treatment and housing are the responsibility of the province of Ontario.

"Therefore, be it resolved"—and I'm just going to shorten this to:

"That the mayor, on behalf of the city of Hamilton request that the province of Ontario re-engage with the government of Canada to ensure that Ontario municipalities have access to fully funded support towards encampments and unsheltered homelessness initiatives;

"That city of Hamilton be directed to work with our federal partners to maximize this opportunity...."

This is coming directly from a municipality that is working so hard to ensure that we are tackling our homeless issue. They have created a full plan to work towards helping homelessness. Currently, homelessness is costing the city of Hamilton quite a lot. We have a lot of encampments that are maintained—some by city staff, others by independent contractors—that all cost the city of Hamilton taxpayers the same dollars that this government refuses to pay.

The city of Hamilton is actually looking at a 6.9% increase to the taxpayer. Last year, it was a 5.8% increase, which has continued downloading from this province. It's not fair. The people of Hamilton tell me clearly that the cost of living is too high. We hear it from the government themselves that the cost of living is high, but as long as they can continue to download on to the single taxpayer, to the residents who are paying the tax rate, this cost of living will continue to increase.

The government needs to support this initiative and ensure that municipalities are getting what they ask for. Re-upload the decades that Harris started and other governments have continued to do. Municipalities can no longer take it. People are buried in their property taxes, as well as every other tax. It's time to do the right thing. Ensure that you upload your responsibilities and tackle the homelessness.

I wasn't even able to address public health and everything else that goes with it. It's their responsibility to deal with. They need to ensure that the people of this province are able to live in healthy homes in healthy communities. Without their help ensuring that funding is there, you're continuing to leave the taxpayer behind.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Pursuant to standing order 45(b)(v), the time allocated for opposition day motion number 3 has expired.

MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1524 to 1534.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): MPP Stiles has moved opposition motion number 3. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Begum, Doly	Hsu, Ted	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Blais, Stephen	Jama, Sarah	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Clancy, Aislinn	McCrimmon, Karen	Taylor, Monique
Collard, Lucille	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gélinas, France	Shamji, Adil	

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Downey, Doug
Dunlop, Jill
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn
Grewal, Hardeep Singh
Hamid, Zee
Hardeman, Ernie

Parsa, Michael
Piccini, David
Pierre, Natalie
Pinsonneault, Steve
Pirie, George
Quinn, Nolan

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

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler
Anand, Deepak
Babikian, Aris
Bailey, Robert
Barnes, Patrice
Bethlenfalvy, Peter
Bresee, Ric
Byers, Rick
Calandra, Paul
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Clark, Steve
Coe, Lorne
Crawford, Stephen
Cuzzetto, Rudy
Dixon, Jess
Dowie, Andrew

Harris, Mike
Hogarth, Christine
Holland, Kevin
Jones, Trevor
Jordan, John
Kanapathi, Logan
Kerzner, Michael S.
Leardi, Anthony
Lecce, Stephen
Lumsden, Neil
Martin, Robin
McCarthy, Todd J.
McGregor, Graham
Mulrone, Caroline
Oosterhoff, Sam
Pang, Billy

Rae, Matthew
Riddell, Brian
Sabawy, Sheref
Sandhu, Amarjot
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Sarrazin, Stéphane
Saunderson, Brian
Scott, Laurie
Skelly, Donna
Smith, Dave
Smith, David
Smith, Graydon
Smith, Laura
Tangri, Nina
Thanigasalam, Vijay
Thompson, Lisa M.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 29; the nays are 65.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I'll give members a minute to exit the chambers before proceeding.

Orders of the day? I recognize the member from Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): There being no further business, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1538.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Allsopp, Tyler (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	Oakville	Associate Minister of Mines / Ministre associé des Mines
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
		Premier / Premier ministre
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (IND)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hamid, Zee (PC)	Milton	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
		Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Associate Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre associé de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Electrification / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Électrification
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Ministre associé de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences Deputy Government Whip / Whip adjointe du gouvernement
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	