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Jeudi
27 octobre 2022

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 octobre 2022

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MORE HOMES BUILT FASTER ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 VISANT
À ACCÉLÉRER LA CONSTRUCTION
DE PLUS DE LOGEMENTS

Continuation of debate on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Supporting Growth and Housing in York and Durham Regions Act, 2022 / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant diverses lois, abrogeant divers règlements et édictant la Loi de 2022 visant à soutenir la croissance et la construction de logements dans les régions de York et de Durham.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's an honour to rise today and speak to Bill 23.

My riding is the epicentre of the homelessness and opioid crisis in Ontario. The Toronto Homeless Memorial is in Toronto Centre. It commemorates the lives lost of those who have fallen to homelessness. Of course, all of that is connected to what we are talking about today, which is trying to build more housing, but in particular deeply affordable housing.

It costs our health care system when hospital emergency wards become de facto warming centres, or somehow respite beds. The time spent affording a roof costs families time together as it also costs parents sleepless nights when their children go missing.

Toronto Centre is one of the three downtown wards in Toronto, along with Spadina–Fort York and University–Rosedale. For those local councillors, there has been more housing combined there than all of the MPPs in this chamber, in this House, together. We have consistently said yes in the city of Toronto to creating housing in Toronto, especially deeply affordable housing, but getting those approvals through the planning process has never been the problem. What we need is to be able to build affordable housing.

Toronto leads the crane index in the world, and certainly in Ontario. Toronto city planning and city council have approved more housing than developers can build right now. So getting affordable and inclusive housing approved is not a problem; getting affordable and inclusive housing built is a problem. And that's where we'll really need to see improvements to this bill that's before

us today, because there's nothing in this bill that actually speaks to those concerns, especially when the government of the day is not at the table with the federal as well as the municipal governments to get that deeply affordable and inclusive housing built.

The housing crisis facing Ontario is not just about supply exclusively; that's only one factor, and to say that it's only about supply is unfortunately a falsehood and misleading.

We just wrapped up a provincial and municipal election where the number one issue is affordable housing—not just housing, but affordable housing—and so in order for us to really tackle the crisis that's before us, we have to talk about building affordable housing.

Speaker, the affordable housing crisis is eating the soul of our democracy. Voters are losing faith in the system and the elections that they are asked to vote in because they don't think that our governments are listening, and given what we're seeing today and the outcome of this bill, one can hardly err them.

This government has identified supply as the only source that's driving the housing crisis, and of course we know that supplying luxury condominiums and building more luxury condominiums doesn't end the encampments. It doesn't end homelessness. Supplying mansions on paved wetlands does not supply families with the purpose-built rentals that they need, that are affordable. Supplying developers with an incentive to demolish and renovict their tenants in older mid-rise rentals will only grow the homelessness crisis and will not grow our affordable housing stock.

Speaker, this government says that they want to build housing, but then they offer no money allocated to building affordable housing. I think that we can all agree that nothing in life comes for free. The NDP supports building 1.5 million homes, but we have to ask this question: If the Premier is just as committed as we are to building affordable housing, then why is he cutting over \$100 million from the province's housing program? A hundred million dollars is being cut from the province's housing program, and when the federal government increases funding for housing, the provincial government then responds by cutting the funding for housing. So where does the Premier think the money to build affordable housing is going to come from?

But that's not the only cut that the government is threatening Ontarians with. The Premier says he wants to build housing, but he doesn't seem to understand that you can't get it without paying for it. The Premier says he also wants to build affordable housing now, which is new, especially since now this bill is before us, but the city of Toronto has

been asking the province for a number of years now to help them invest in their housing program, which is \$23.4 billion in quantum. Splitting the cost between three orders of government, that's about \$7 billion for each government. I know that they have not received a single reply from the province about whether or not they're coming to the table to meet that commitment. The federal government is there. The municipal government is there. But, again, this provincial government is missing.

This bill will enable the construction of shoddy homes on dirty soil and wetlands. Let's be clear about what that does. It is going to create massive flood and erosion problems. We are not going to be able to manage the storm-water flow as we are building the brand new Port Lands flood protection. It cost us \$1.25 billion to get that right. A big section of Toronto will be submerged in water, and that's why we're doing it. Whenever we have a 100-year storm come along and hit the city—and these storms are going to become more frequent, as we know; they're going to become more strong. But if we don't model it correctly, we're going to have some problems. By reducing the environmental protections and making it easier for shoddy construction of housing on environmentally sensitive land, you're going to make it worse, and when the flood comes, it's going to submerge a big portion of downtown Toronto in the flood plains.

The minister says that the federal government's Housing Accelerator Fund could replace any of the development charges that are stripped away. That's one-time funding. The development charges are specifically to pay for sewers and to pay for child care and other such facilities. It's what actually makes communities livable. But if you're going to take that away and then you're going to actually draw money from the accelerator fund that's coming from the federal government, you still haven't put any money out—except you've made the cities poorer. The city of Toronto is currently facing an \$857-million budget shortfall. We've already deferred \$300 million for capital repairs because there isn't a heck of a lot of dollars to go around. You're going to make the situation worse. You're actually stealing from Justin to pay John—Justin Trudeau to pay John Tory.

This bill is about shifting responsibilities and shifting the cost to future homeowners, but also, worse, you're actually shifting the cost to Ontarians by, in addition, gutting the powers of the conservation authorities.

Speaker, there's another great example, about the foundry lands. Some of you may have heard about it. This provincial government tried to demolish heritage properties in the West Don Lands. It was stopped by a legal injunction and a court order. The way the bill is written, you're going to be able to do whatever you want, as long as you want to, and that means that the heritage rules and guidelines no longer apply to you. I get that it was a bit of an embarrassment when the government was caught doing that, but you don't need to go this far, because you're actually eroding heritage assets and cultural assets for our future.

In the modern era of environmental regulations, chemicals should not be just dumped into the earth and asbestos

should not be used willy-nilly. We want to be able to make sure that soil remediation takes place in a responsible way, because we need to live on those lands.

Right now, as it stands, once again, the bill is going as far as it can to erode as much environmental protection as possible. It's going to make people sick. It's a form of environmental racism. It's going to ensure that people who are poor and marginalized, who are on the lower ends of the income ladder, are going to be compelled to live on this poisoned earth.

I want to just point to the fact that, in 1958, Hurricane Hazel cost 81 Ontarian lives. It's why the city of Toronto now has flood protections today. It's also why we have a multi-billion dollar flood protection project that I just mentioned. Those 100-year storms are becoming more frequent.

We have to build housing faster; I absolutely agree. Right now, the applications are being approved, but developers aren't building for a number of different reasons that are not necessarily addressed, unfortunately, in the housing bill.

Before the 1990s, public sector housing was built. It was also part of a postwar social contract. Call me old school, but I think it's time that we get back to the good old days when the government built good houses for working and low-income families.

Call me old school, but I think it's time that we go back to those good old days when people living on ODSP and OW would not be confined to living on the brink of poverty indefinitely.

Call me old school, but I think it's time we go back to the good old days when new housing co-ops opened almost every single month in Ontario, when the Ontario government was contributing to that development.

Call me old school, but I think it's time we go back to the good old days when community legal aid clinics had substantially more funding, and applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board could be heard in a month instead of a year.

All of these problems exist today, and none of them are being dealt with at the board, and none of them are being dealt with in this bill.

We can say yes to new housing, and we should, with aggressive public investments to create deeply affordable housing supply. We can say yes to new housing by investing in seed funding for new co-operatives. We can say yes to new housing by recognizing that getting people off the streets requires transitional and supportive homes so that they can have embedded wraparound supports where they need them. For people who are living with mental illness and addictions, that can also keep them out of homelessness. All of that is not being addressed in Bill 23.

We can say yes to new housing by strengthening the right of homeowners to subdivide their properties and make new units as-of-right, as is permitted by the provisions—that is in the bill. That is a good thing, and I want to be able to acknowledge that.

But there are too many people who are being left behind. This bill does not go far enough, and where it does go too far, it's going far, far beyond anything that we could

possibly ever accept, especially if it puts the environment at risk.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions. I recognize, on the government side, the member for Brampton North.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you to the member for their comments on the bill, especially about the as-of-right piece, because I think that's something that housing advocates have fought for, for a long time. I think it's a really important part of the bill and it's good to be acknowledged.

I do take issue with some of the comments, especially about the role of government being the kind of primary builder of the homes that we want to see.

I'm curious, because our housing task force said 1.5 million over 10 years, and I believe the NIMBY—sorry, the New Democratic Party—also said 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. For the \$21-billion ask, which, I believe, is larger than the entire provincial budget of Saskatchewan, to build affordable homes with the city of Toronto—

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

Mr. Graham McGregor: How many affordable homes will be built for \$21 billion, and how would that get us to the 1.5-million goal?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I really do appreciate that question because it allows me to elaborate.

With respect to the actual quantum of affordable housing and deeply affordable housing, it actually goes into a particular matrix. There is a percentage that will be allocated; it will have to be determined building by building. So in some buildings you may see more affordable housing, such as 25%; there are others that are almost 100% affordable.

If it's about constructing those 40,000 units, which is now, I think, what we can all agree on, it's going to require money. That is going to require money from the public, as well as leveraging public lands. So the city is not just putting dollars out there; it's actually leveraging its assets. That's how it's going to keep the cost of construction low. It's going to make sure that land is available. We're partnering with private developers to get that done, to build affordable housing.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to thank the member from Toronto Centre for their excellent presentation. The member talked about social housing and the importance of having all kinds of affordable housing.

Given that the member has previously served on Toronto's city council—could you share with the members in this House what the state of social housing is in our municipalities, particularly in Toronto with Toronto Community Housing buildings?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I appreciate the opportunity to answer that question.

The city of Toronto currently has a social housing wait-list that's 180 individuals deep. Therefore, it would actually take sometimes 10 years before someone can get access to housing. The supportive housing wait-list is

almost 20,000 persons now. We heard our colleague here from Toronto—St. Paul's describe one family member yesterday in the House—and she spoke very eloquently—waiting years to get into supportive housing. Imagine 20,000 people filling this chamber, all looking for a five-minute meeting with the Premier, asking for exactly the same thing.

We will not be able to dig ourselves out of the housing crisis or the deeply affordable housing crisis unless we—

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Cutting \$100 million from the housing program, as was noted yesterday in the expenditures estimates, is not the way to go about doing it.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: I want to acknowledge and thank the member from Toronto Centre. It looks like you actually believe that we need more housing, and it looks like you actually do believe that we need to build more affordable housing across the province.

On this side of the House, we understand that we need the federal government at the table, working with us. We continue to advocate for Ontario's fair share of federal funding. Of all Canadian households in the core housing need, 44% of them are in Ontario—the highest in the country. However, Ontario's allocation of federal funding under the National Housing Strategy is around 38%, which means the province is underfunded by approximately \$480 million for housing and homelessness over a 10-year term.

My question to the member from Toronto Centre is simple: Will you join us in our call to have the federal government pay their fair share so we can build more affordable housing across the province?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much for that question, member. I would certainly be more than happy to join you in going to Ottawa and making our case to them, because I believe that Ottawa needs to pay its fair share. I believe that every municipality at this point in time has to get into the housing game. We all have to do it.

But I think we also have to demonstrate to the other orders of government that we are serious. That means that we put our money first, we put our money forward, we show them that we're going to unlock surplus lands that are owned provincially to get that done. We cannot be selling provincial lands, which I know is happening right now, to developers for the highest profit and then leaving affordable housing entirely off the table.

So we want to do this; I'll do it with you. I'll be happy to do it with every member of the House, but we have to go in first and we have to let them know that we're serious.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member from Toronto Centre for their excellent thoughts and comments.

I think it was a city of Toronto planner who was talking about this bill and said it means open season for tenants. As a former Toronto city councillor, as a current MPP representing an area with many tenants, and like many of us, with tenants experiencing renovations and demovictions, I wonder if you could comment on whether you

agree with that statement and how you think this legislation addresses issues that tenants are currently facing.

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

I actually took the opportunity to send the housing bill, Bill 23, to a number of city planners I've worked with; I've got great relationships with them. I can tell you that there's significant alarm. Right now, there is alarm from a lot of city planners, not just from Toronto but right across Ontario, who are trying to make sense of what this means.

When it comes to rental replacement, I think that the government has now relaxed rental replacement rules, so you make it so arbitrary and discretionary that there is no longer a requirement to compel developers to replace what they are destroying. There's no longer the right of return for the tenants. You're not replacing anything; you're going to make the affordable housing crisis worse by having awful legislation that actually strips tenants of their power.

I don't know how else to say it. It's really difficult to see that we're here in this House and we can work together to make things better, but instead you're choosing to make things worse.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: We know that municipal fees on new developments have continued to increase, and the approval delays have continued to grow longer and longer. Delays on new housing developments are now 40% longer than they used to be two years ago, averaging 20 to 24 months. Since 2020, average municipal charges levied on new municipal housing have increased anywhere from 30% to 36%. On one side, we want to reduce the cost, we want to have affordable housing, and these charges are going up.

At a time when we find ourselves in the housing affordability crisis, my question to the member is, what do you think of the cost of these excessive fees and what should we do to reduce these costs and make sure the cost of the end result is less?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much, member, for the question.

First, I think it's important for me to just state for the foundational piece—we don't have a problem with approvals. We have approved plenty of housing in Toronto. I can't speak for all of Ontario, but certainly in the city of Toronto, I have some experience. We have approved 500,000 units over a four-year period; developers have only built 93,000, so there is a problem in the capacity of developers to build because of labour shortages, because of building materials and because of, perhaps, regulation. That is something that has to be dealt with, and it's not in this bill.

With respect to your question about the fees and the development charges, in particular, there is an assumption from this government that there is a trickle-down economics that will take place. If you cut those development charges, which is what we call growth paying for growth, you're assuming that those savings are going to be trickling down to the Ontario homebuyer or, perhaps, the renter.

But there is no proof that that's going to happen. What we've seen in the past is that when we do create opportunities for smaller or waived fees, sometimes what we see is that the developers actually just pocket that as additional profits, and you haven't built in any mechanisms in this bill to stop that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We don't have time for further questions.

Further debate?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Bill 23 is a transformative piece of legislation that will get more homes built and brought online faster. When people have the housing that they need, they have better health, education and employment outcomes. When housing is affordable in areas near schools, workplaces and amenities, individuals and families can thrive.

1600

I appreciate that the constituents of Windsor–Tecumseh sent me to Queen's Park to be a part of this government's efforts to improve the lives of Ontarians. This is a bill that will be foundational and impactful for them, whether they be young adults, seniors, families or vulnerable populations. Speaker, the status quo pace is not working for Ontarians. We must act now to streamline bureaucratic processes to get more homes built faster. Under the leadership of Premier Ford and Minister Clark, Bill 23 does just that.

I witnessed first-hand when contesting my former municipal seat on council eight years ago that the supply of housing in our community was clearly the silent issue. Home after home shared stories of families divided—seniors who needed to downsize but couldn't as there was nowhere to downsize to; young and growing families whose living room doubled as a bedroom at night because they were constantly outbid in the market; adults, both starting out and established, who were couch-surfing because there wasn't, quite frankly, anything they could afford in the market.

Speaker, reform is a must if we're going to reduce our neighbourhood school closures, bring eyes and ears to help keep our streets safer, stop consuming valuable farmland, and better use our existing infrastructure while reducing the relative costs borne by local taxpayers.

I want to cite Ms. Gemma Grey-Hall, who was the New Democratic Party candidate for Windsor–Tecumseh in the recent provincial election. She described our situation quite well in her recent municipal election platform, noting, "We need increased residential development at affordable costs to help families put down roots. We need to free restrictions and allow homeowners to build additional dwelling units and convert garages to living spaces if desired." This can-do attitude from Ms. Grey-Hall about the need to grow our housing footprint is truly commendable and is consistent with the goals of Bill 23.

But let's start by looking in the mirror. The province needs to change the way that it does business if it wants to support the development of housing for all. The reality is that today, if you're looking to be part of the solution of helping our housing process and you'd like to intensify or add affordable units, you'll have to accept that your project is destined to land at the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Having a hearing scheduled is critical to deliver new homes, and the proposed changes to the Ontario Land Tribunal Act in Bill 23 will help speed up proceedings, resolve cases more efficiently and streamline processes. The changes would also target frivolous appeals with improved opportunity to dismiss and through payment of costs for those appeals. And timelines will be extended thanks to a new investment of \$2.5 million to improve the backlog at the tribunal, over and above the \$14.7 million over three years announced in the budget.

Ontarians need help to both balance their own household budget and help ease the housing supply. The new as-of-right residential tools will help achieve that. Up to three residential units are going to be permitted as of right on existing properties in residential areas, including within the home, an in-law or basement suite, or a laneway or garden home, all compliant with the building code and existing municipal bylaws—no more rezonings required. That's two fewer dwellings potentially occupying valuable farmland. And because they represent intensification with far less of a burden on existing municipal services, these units would be exempt from development charges and parkland dedication fees. It's infill, not sprawl, and it makes better use of the built infrastructure.

Speaker, change is hard, but it is necessary. The talk about doing something about our housing supply has been going on for years, and governments of all kinds have promised change. Inevitably, critics of all kinds insult developers, call higher-density places to live monstrosities, and seemingly imply that our professional municipal officials lack competence and integrity by citing addressed flooding, traffic and compatibility concerns. The comments persist notwithstanding the in-depth review made on all of these files by staff who practise ethical work day in and day out.

Bill 23 also addresses key frustrations raised by stakeholders. I've heard loud and clear from all stakeholders that process is necessary and is accepted. But the lack of consistency to it between municipalities creates risk and hesitation. That's why Bill 23 will introduce our path to deliver clarity on inclusionary zoning, clarity on the prohibitions and regulation of the demolition and conversion of multi-unit residential rental properties of six units or more. Municipalities and all stakeholders are going to be consulted, while ensuring that rental protections and landlord accountabilities remain in place.

Speaker, one of the most bewildering and daunting burdens for families looking to build their dream home that I witnessed is the amount of additional costs imposed on them by regulatory fees and charges. This can add up to nearly \$200,000 to the overall cost of building a home. Bill 23 freezes, reduces and exempts fees. It exempts for those who need a break on their housing costs most development charges from the municipality, parkland dedication levies and community benefits charges, while reducing development charges and freezing conservation authority fees for rental projects. The province, on its side, is reviewing its fees, with a focus on reducing them or eliminating them where feasible.

Site plan control requirements are a crucial part of the development process to ensure appropriate integration with the neighbourhood. The imposition of costs in this process is also a barrier to bringing smaller affordable housing online. Bill 23 proposes that the Planning Act would remove site plan control requirements for most projects with fewer than 10 residential units without sacrificing building permits and robust building and fire code requirements.

Planning reform between upper- and lower-tier municipalities and centralizing decisions at the lower tier in certain municipalities will also play a part in eliminating time and costs for the builds and making the system more efficient.

Fundamentally, this bill is about restoring the Canadian dream to so many Ontarians. Under Bill 23, the province would be using its own resources to make this happen. With our existing provincial authorities, using surplus or underutilized lands and commercial innovation and partnerships, rapid builds of attainable homes will be realized. These developments would be mixed-income communities where a diversity of housing stock for all price points could be managed.

Bill 23 also includes an announcement first made back home in Windsor by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery that protects Ontario homebuyers from unethical developers, with the doubling of maximum fines for unethical builders and vendors of new homes who unfairly cancel projects or terminate purchase agreements.

Beyond new builds, though, what about what's not being built? In many of our home municipalities, we pass by, every single day, lands that are sitting empty but authorized, planned for residential development.

Just this month, in my neighbourhood, we finally saw the demolition of an abandoned home at the corner of St. Pierre and Dillon. The home was deliberately kept vacant by the owner for almost all of my lifetime, and it was thereby subject to disrepair, vandalism, vermin and was a general unsightly experience. It was left vacant, to the collective detriment of the neighbourhood, as the value of the prospective sale wasn't enough. It was disappointing.

Not only could the measures in Bill 23 repatriate otherwise valid housing stock, but abandoned homes that don't add value to the neighbourhood will be fewer. Bill 23 adds the consideration of local vacant home taxes to discourage these circumstances and bringing the vacant lands and buildings online. A provincial-municipal working group will be established to consult on this framework and to facilitate sharing information and best practices.

Finally, I want to touch upon the imbalance that we have seen across different municipalities. Property tax rates for multi-residential properties are often proportionally higher per unit than for single-family properties. I know in Windsor we've seen movements to convert apartments to condominiums to acquire the lower tax rate. We have the same sort of conflict between affordable rental housing and regular market rental properties. I'm pleased to see Bill 23 explore potential refinements to the assessment methodology—because those who benefit from

reduced rents are those who can least afford higher taxes—and address the tax differential for multi-residential apartment buildings.

In summary, Bill 23 is the right direction for Ontario.

I look very much forward to continuing this debate.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for those comments.

I would hope all of us here are looking for ways to protect lower-income Ontarians, people who are struggling with rising costs. Those include tenants who live in purpose-built buildings, who might find that their purpose-built rental is going to be converted into a condo under this legislation, and they will have no right to return to their unit at the same rent that they're currently living at.

I'm wondering if the member opposite could comment on what he's willing to do to ensure that renters can return to their original unit once construction is complete, at the same rent.

1610

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you to the member from Davenport for your question.

Ultimately, this is exactly what the measures that the minister had unveiled just last week about these very circumstances to protect residents from unethical builders and—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: No, that's very different. We're talking about tenants.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Tenants? I apologize. Can you repeat the question for me, please?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Just respond.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you to the member from Davenport. I will review, and I will actually come to see you side by side.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague and my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh for your passion when you're talking about housing supply and affordable housing from your experience. You covered a lot of ground about our bill.

Madam Speaker, I often hear from a lot of seniors from Markham because they're a demographic moving in. Every single house has a senior in my riding—and they often talk about housing options. They're desperately looking for housing. Actually, they're seeking a basement apartment as a safe haven, because they can't afford to rent an apartment or condominium, because of the affordability.

I know the lack of housing supply affects all Ontarians regardless of their age, their budget or even their socio-economic condition.

Can the member please discuss: What does the plan do for seniors who need housing in our cities, in our neighbourhoods?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you for the question.

Making progress, building more housing—number one. Last year, Ontario saw more than 13,000 new rental starts. That's the most rental starts since 1991. We know we need to do far more to hit our target of 1.5 million new homes

over the next 10 years. That's why we're making it easier for landlords to build secondary suites, such as basement apartments and laneway suites.

Certainly, there's an encouragement for students to work through colleges and universities to support them in their search. Our government will continue to monitor the situation as more students return to in-person learning this coming year.

I know that our government is always looking for new ways to make homes more attainable for hard-working Ontarians and to make it easier to build more houses and rental units to address the ongoing supply crisis.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the comments from the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

I want to point out that the government's own documents suggest that the secondary-suite development, the laneway homes etc., will generate about 50,000 new housing units over the next decade, which of course is far short of the 1.5-million target that we need to reach. Much of the burden or much of the responsibility to move forward with this will fall to cities, and cities are very concerned about the changes to development charges and what this will mean to the tax base and the increased rates that taxpayers may have to pay.

What is the member going to do about ensuring that municipal taxpayers don't foot the bill for this?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you to the member from London West for the question. Certainly, I covered this myself often in debates, about what you do if you want to waive development charges or incentivize development. Many municipalities make this choice to incent housing. I know the municipality of Leamington made that choice for just—

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

Mr. Chris Glover: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to talk about this bill. It's called the More Homes Built Faster Act, but it should be called something else, because I don't think this is going to build more homes faster. I think this bill is actually a massive taxpayers hand-out to developers in the hope that they will build affordable housing. That's the challenge with this.

The actions of this government, if you were to put them into four broad categories, would fall under the categories of chipping away at our democratic rights—twice, the government has brought forward bills to use the “notwithstanding” clause to strip Ontarians of their fundamental rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Most recently, in the summertime, they brought forward the strong-mayors bill, which should be called the strong-Premiers bill, which chipped away at our ability, especially in the city of Toronto—our democratic representation at the local level.

The government is chipping away at our democratic rights and is also selling off public assets and privatizing public services to create opportunities for for-profit companies. We see this with our health care services right now. They've undermined environmental protections. And

they've given massive tax handouts to for-profit companies under the guise of building homes. This current bill falls under that last category, and that's what I'm talking about today.

I want to start by talking about this government's failure on building affordable housing, on making housing affordable in Ontario.

In 2019, the average cost of a home in Toronto was \$780,000; it's now \$1.1 million. In most parts of Ontario, the cost of housing has increased between 30% and 40% over the last term of this Conservative government. That's a failure. That's not success. So this government keeps talking about the supply issue, but addressing just the supply issue hasn't decreased costs. The average rent in Toronto has increased by 20%, from \$1,900 last year to \$2,400 this year. So the government, in spite of this incredible failure of what they're calling their affordable housing strategy, is doubling down on the same strategy.

The actions that this government has taken include cutting \$500 million from the housing budget since 2018. They took rent control off any building built after 2018. In my riding, I constantly get emails from residents who are living in a condo building or a rental building built after 2018 and their rents are increasing by \$300 a month, \$500 a month, because the landlords—it's not regulated. This government keeps talking about cutting red tape; well, some of the red tape that you've cut means that somebody moves into a condo, they have a one-year lease, and at the end of that lease, they don't know what their rent is going to be. When you're living in a place and your rent increases by \$500 a month, well, then you have to move. Then you look at the market, and the market has gone up by 20%, so there's no place to move to. So that deregulation, that cutting red tape, has actually made housing far less affordable for many, many people, and you're pushing people out of housing in the city.

The other thing that this is doing is that it's going to cut development charges. Development charges are charges that a developer pays when they get a building permit. It's usually around \$30,000 in Toronto, depending on the size of the unit. It pays for transit. It pays for roads. It pays for schools and child care centres. We need that money. The idea is that development pays for development. So if a developer wants to build a neighbourhood, then the developer should pay—the development should pay—for the roads and the sewers and the schools and the child care centres that are going to be needed in that neighbourhood. But what happens with this bill is that it's actually going to reduce the development charges. Well, that new community is still going to need roads and sewers and schools and child care centres, but the existing taxpayers are going to have to pay for them, or there's going to be a cut to the services in the surrounding neighbourhoods to pay for the services in the new neighbourhood.

The challenge with this is that—one of the things the government says about this is, "Well, if we reduce the cost to developers, if we reduce their development charges, then they will pass on those savings to the buyer." But that doesn't make sense. It's just illogical. The developers are for-profit developers—most are for-profit developers.

Their job is to maximize the revenue and the return on investment for their shareholders. That's their legally binding job. So they're not going to pass on those savings; they're actually selling their units at the highest possible price. So when you give them a rebate on the development charges, you're just giving them money, just increasing the profit margin. You're not actually building affordable housing.

1620

So the question, then, is: How do we actually get affordable housing in Ontario? The NDP, in our last election, had a pretty good platform, I think, and I think you should look at that. Some of the elements of it are actually in here, and I will talk about those in a minute. The plan was to build 1.5 million homes, which the Conservatives are on board with as well, and to end inclusionary zoning. This bill does some of that—to end exclusionary zoning.

As I mentioned in a previous statement this afternoon, in many ridings in the city of Toronto, the population has actually declined between 2016 and 2021, and that's because all of the growth is along the waterfront and along the Yonge Street corridor. We need to make sure that the development is happening and the population growth is happening in all areas.

But the most important thing that you have to do if you're going to create affordable housing is to actually build affordable housing. You can't just count on the market to do it. Right now, our ODSP rates are around \$1,200 a month and Ontario Works rates are \$750 a month. The average rent in Toronto for a one-bedroom apartment is \$2,400 a month. Minimum wage—if you work 40 hours a week for four weeks, you make \$2,400 a month. You barely make enough, before deductions, to pay for an average one-bedroom rent.

There are people in our economy, in our society, who will never be able to pay market rent, and so the only way to actually support these people, to make sure that everybody has a home, is for the government to get on board and actually build not-for-profit housing. The NDP platform was that 10% of those 1.5 million homes, 150,000 homes, would be not-for-profit housing. Those would be social housing, like TCHC in Toronto; it would be supportive housing for people with mental illness or disabilities; and it would be co-ops for everybody else.

Co-ops are wonderful. The last time we were building not-for-profit housing en masse in the city of Toronto was when we had the last NDP government. We were building 15,000 not-for-profit housing units a year, and we need to get back to that.

I'll give you an example: In my riding, Spadina–Fort York, there are 18 co-op developments in the riding, and they're incredible communities. They are democratically run. They are not-for-profit. There are some people paying full market rent, and there are some people who are subsidized. There are people with disabilities there who live as part of the community.

It's a really wonderful model, but it needs some government investment if we're going to get more co-op housing built. That's one of the things that is missing from this bill.

The social housing is missing, and the supportive housing is missing.

I'll just talk a little bit about supportive housing. The FAO, the Financial Accountability Office of the financial arm of the government of Ontario, says that there are 16,000 people experiencing homelessness in the province of Ontario because there are not enough affordable housing units, and because Ontario Works and ODSP rates are not high enough.

It's the record of this government over the last four years—in 2018, there were 94 people in the city of Toronto who died experiencing homelessness; last year, there were 221. It has more than doubled under your watch.

This bill has a couple of things—you're building housing; we need to increase the supply. You're addressing, to a small degree, exclusionary zoning. But you're not addressing income or housing for low-income people, people with disabilities and people on Ontario Works. You're not addressing that at all, so you're not even touching the homelessness crisis and you're not touching the housing that most people will need.

So I would ask this government, when this goes to committee, to please listen to the opposition. Amend this bill, so that we can actually make sure that everybody in Ontario has a home. Maybe we could even rename the bill "making sure everybody in Ontario has a home," and set that—

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, I was reading some of my notes and I noticed that the opposition has been on record many times saying that they believe we need to build more missing middle housing. I'll give an example from the member's next-door neighbour. The member from University–Rosedale said in the House that she urges the government to look at the ways that we can fast-track "missing middle development so we can build two- and three-bedroom townhouses and laneway housing...."

Well, Speaker, here's the good news: That is exactly what has been doing under our proposal—up to three residential units permitted, as-of-right residential homes, without needing a bylaw amendment. As you know, this will create a broader mix of rental housing and could even help homeowners to pay their mortgage or accommodate extended family. We know about the intergenerational families that could be getting the benefit—increasing the number of units, with minimal impact on existing neighbourhoods.

My question is very simple. Do you support us? Do you support what we're trying to do through this bill?

Mr. Chris Glover: As far as the planning goes, one of the things that's really at issue with this bill is, it's actually stripping municipalities of the power to design or to have a say in what's going to be built and how it's going to be built. It strips municipalities, in the Planning Act, of their ability to design or regulate the exterior of buildings. There's a green environmental standard at the city of Toronto, and this may override that green environmental standard, including the standard for bird-safe windows.

There are 25 million birds a year that die in window collisions in this country. So what this government is doing is fast-tracking by overriding environmental protections, by overriding municipalities' democratic say in what actually happens in their municipality.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Humber River–Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: The city of Toronto has been leading North America for about a decade when it comes to development. We've got cranes everywhere. Anywhere you look in Toronto, you see a crane.

This government wants to reduce development charges, somehow, I guess, what, as an inducement to more development in Toronto. Does this seem like a prudent course of action? Don't you think Toronto needs that money to build more affordable housing and other things? Or do you think it's smart to just put that back into the pocket of millionaire developers—because they're not passing that on to homebuyers.

Mr. Chris Glover: Absolutely. It's a flawed argument that if you give the developers—and this is this trickle-down economics, and it doesn't work. And no matter how many times it fails, the government keeps coming back to that. "Well, we'll just look for a market solution." Well, the market solution—nobody is going to build housing for somebody on Ontario Works at \$750 a month. That's their gross income—that's not just their housing allowance—\$1,200 for ODSP, \$2,400 for a person making minimum wage. Nobody can make a profit doing that.

So the only way to build housing for people on low income is to actually build the housing—we need the government to get back into the business of that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Brampton North.

Mr. Graham McGregor: I noted at the start of the member's comments that he spoke about the 30% to 40% increase in market rent, which—and market housing, costs of a house. We acknowledge that's a big problem. That's why we formed the Housing Affordability Task Force, which said we need 1.5 million more homes over the next 10 years because we have a drastic shortage of housing supply.

The member also said that the New Democratic Party, in their platform, also wanted 1.5 million homes but that 150,000 of these would be non-profit or government-subsidized etc. A previous member indicated \$21 billion for the city of Toronto would get us 40,000 housing units—still a little bit short of the 150,000 number.

What I'm asking the member is—you agree with the premise. You must have got the premise from somewhere. I can only assume it was from our Housing Affordability Task Force report. This bill is acting on those recommendations. Why won't you support it?

1630

Mr. Chris Glover: This bill doesn't address all of the recommendations from the Housing Affordability Task Force. It doesn't address income, for low-income individuals.

This bill redefines affordability as 80% of market rent or market cost of a house. The average house in Toronto

is \$1.1 million now, so if you reduce that by 20% and you pay 80%, you're still well over \$800,000. That's not affordable. The market rent right now is \$2,400; if you give all these subsidies to the developers and they reduce it by 20%, that's still \$1,900. Speaker, \$1,900 is not affordable rent for many people.

So you're going to be giving developers all kinds of tax dollars, and they're not even providing what's really affordable housing. You need to provide housing that's matched to income so that everybody has a home to live in.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I want to thank the member from Spadina–Fort York for his presentation. Actually, a lot of what he shared is the experience of residents in Parkdale–High Park. We are neighbouring ridings. There are many tenants who live in rental units that are not covered under rent control laws. There are many who are on waiting lists for social housing, for supportive housing. So all of the things that the member highlighted that are missing from the bill are obviously very problematic.

Another thing that is missing in this bill is the vacant unit tax. As we know, that's something that the government had indicated was a possibility, but we did not see it in the bill.

Could you please explain to the House why a vacant unit tax is important?

Mr. Chris Glover: There are tens of thousands of units in the city of Toronto that are sitting empty because speculators are holding on to them in the hope that the price will go up and then they will resell them. Those are units that are taken out of the market, and that reduces the supply. So if you actually want to increase the supply of housing, put a vacancy tax on so that nobody can sit on an empty housing unit. That's one of the things that needs to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: As we draw to a close here on a Thursday evening, I wanted to take us away from the city of Toronto a little bit and go to Waterloo region. We have an upper-tier and lower-tier municipality, something that many of the members here, especially from Brampton and Mississauga, will know very well, with them being part of Peel region, but still having different lower-tier municipalities represented as well. One of the things that we see in Waterloo region that's often—we talked a little bit about red tape today. That is a piece of red tape when it comes to the planning processes—duplication of the exact same pieces of regulation at both levels, whether that be at the regional level, at the upper-tier level, or at the municipal level, at the lower-tier level.

This bill seeks to address some of the concerns there and streamline things a little bit more and move it to the lower-tier level, which is that more community level. Does the member support a move like that in this bill?

Mr. Chris Glover: You can't just build housing willy-nilly. You've got to have a plan.

What we heard from my colleague the member from Waterloo this morning is that the municipality of Kitchener-

Waterloo has been developing a plan, through community consultation, about where the intensification is actually going to happen, about what kind of community amenities they want, where the schools and the parks and the community centres are going to be, all the things that actually make a community—because you don't just want a forest of condos; you actually want a community.

What this bill does is, it strips away all the work—and this is what the member for Waterloo is saying. She said it strips away all the work that that regional level has been doing over the last few years and all the work that the community members have put in to actually planning where the development is going to happen.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Since I've got 10 minutes to really talk about whatever, let's pick up where we left off there.

I was mentioning this to the member from Niagara Centre just yesterday: The region of Waterloo has done some planning, but it is interesting planning. They actually have lands slated for development that are part of a parking lot at a quite full recreation centre in Wilmot township, or land that is directly—and when I say “directly,” I mean directly—adjacent to a landfill site. So I don't know anybody who would want to live right there. So, sure, maybe the region has done some good work, but I think there's quite a bit that is left to be desired. But, Speaker, that's neither here nor there when it comes to what I'm about to talk about.

Of course, it is my pleasure—I'll try to bring a little levity to the House, I think, this afternoon, too. It's one of my hallmarks. I am the kinder, gentler Mike Harris now. I know that the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane enjoys when I get the House riled up, because I notice he likes to participate in a little rabble-rousing here and there, but we're going to try to streamline it today.

We're here to talk about the More Homes Built Faster Act. It's Bill 23. Getting more homes built across the province, of course, is a top priority of this government. Concern that the cost of housing is rising out of reach of many Ontarians is something that came up many times for me at the doors during the election; I'm sure it came up many times for all of you, as well. Quite honestly, I think that's one of the reasons that we were sent here with a very, very clear mandate. We won 83 seats of 124 seats in the last election. Colleagues, correct me if I'm wrong: I think it's the largest majority win since, what is it, the 1920s—something along those lines. So it's pretty substantial.

In addition to, of course, listening to feedback from constituents during the election, we just hosted a housing round table earlier this month in Waterloo region. Of course, my colleague, who I see, from Kitchener South–Hespeler was part of that, as well as my colleague from Cambridge. It was really good to have them join us, to hear from people all around the region. Of course, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was there to join us.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the things that are happening in Waterloo region that he and our government and his ministry have been part of. For example,

through the social services relief fund, or SSRF, House of Friendship in Waterloo region was able to purchase and convert a former hotel into a 100-bed emergency housing shelter.

The minister also provided funding to help build a 44-unit modular supportive housing complex operated by OneROOF Youth Services for youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Kitchener.

I've heard members of the opposition talk about how we're not doing anything to address those issues. Well, there are two perfect examples of what we're doing right at home, in Waterloo region.

It was interesting, too, because a lot of these issues that came up during the election are obviously still top of mind for people.

CBC K-W asked people on the street about their top concerns for the recent municipal elections. Their top issues were: rent costing too much; of course, the missing middle housing that's affordable; a lack of student housing, which often is a big problem in our area. We have two top-quality universities and one of the largest colleges in all of Ontario—it actually has the largest trade school in all of Ontario. Some of the other things were: buying a home is out of reach, and there are not enough places—and this is, I think, what's really key to this conversation today—to rent or buy.

Our constituents expect us to work with every level of government, of course, to address housing, and that's what we're doing. Of the roughly 375 people who filled out the municipal election survey on the CBC K-W website, 66%, which is pretty staggering, listed housing and homelessness as one of their top concerns. We know for the majority of people in my riding, in Kitchener–Conestoga, and across Ontario, this is a major concern for them.

One of the ways that our government has shown their priorities is through the throne speeches that we've had over the last few years. Tackling the housing crisis was a key part of our summer throne speech—and I'm just going to quote a little bit from this, Madam Speaker:

“Together, let's build more homes that people can afford....

“Owning a home provides a sense of place and pride in a community. For decades, it has offered families economic security, even during turbulent times.

“But as Ontario's population has grown, housing construction has not kept pace. Now, like much of Canada, Ontario is facing a housing crisis that is freezing young families out of the dream of home ownership.”

1640

On this side of the House, and over here as well—we can't forget our friends on the other side of the aisle. We won such a big majority government that we've actually wrapped around the Legislature and we take up the other side that you don't see behind us here today. It's phenomenal. On this side of the House, and on the other side, as I mentioned, we have been focused on this and, of course, other parts of housing supply for decades.

I want to read a quote, Madam Speaker, and I think this next piece is very telling. I'm not going to stray off script

for this. I really want to get this part on record. Here's a quote from the 1999 speech from the throne: “Ontario's economy is stronger in 1999 than in 1995. New home construction is up.” I'm going to go back further. If we go back to a quote from the 1975 speech from the throne—which, of course, was another PC government that was prioritizing home ownership and quality housing here in the province: “The government will further encourage home ownership so that Ontario families may continue to be the best housed in Canada.” Of course, that's referring to Bill Davis's PC government and—dare I say the name—from 1995 to 1999, former Premier Mike Harris, as well, who led a two-term PC government here in the province.

Madam Speaker, you can be sure that Doug Ford and the PC government that we have here in the province right now are going to continue that legacy.

Unfortunately, if you do a similar search through the throne speeches of the McGuinty–Wynne Liberals, or the Rae government of the early 1990s, there are no similar mentions about prioritizing home ownership or housing supply.

I can say I'm proud to be a member of a party that has a strong history of delivering good-quality housing for the people of Ontario. Bill 23 continues our party's efforts to provide the best housing possible for everyone—and that's key—across the province.

One of the ways that the More Homes Built Faster Act will get this done is by addressing the missing middle of affordable housing. This speaks directly to the concerns of Waterloo region residents. This bill proposes changes to the Planning Act to create a new province-wide standard that will allow a very interesting—I guess it's not a new idea: as-of right zoning, to allow duplexes, triplexes, laneway housing. I heard the term “granny flat”; I think the member from London mentioned it earlier. Or basement apartments—there are all kinds of different things—but without having to go through a rezoning process. I've actually had several people reach out already who are interested in building these purpose-built rentals. It's just that, quite frankly, there was so much red tape and burdensome processes in place that you weren't able to do these and make them economical.

So it's really exciting to be able to be here today debating this bill and looking at what this government is doing, and especially at what we've done over the last four years and what we've committed to doing in our campaign platform. I know the member from Windsor–Tecumseh mentioned it—this is only the tip of the iceberg. We're going to be introducing a very important housing bill every year during this term. I'm looking forward to seeing what the fruits of Bill 23 are going to look like. I think it's going to be a very positive thing for the people of Ontario.

With that, I'll end my comments here today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mr. Chris Glover: You're in the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, and the average rent is now \$1,800 a month and the average price of a house is \$585,000. Since 2018, it has gone from \$495,000 to \$585,000 a month. So, with

this government that you've been a part of for the last four years, you say that you're addressing affordable housing, but in your own riding it's not working. In the last year, rents went up by 20%.

Is it not time to change gears? Is it not time to do something different than just reiterating the same thing: "Oh, we're going to increase supply, and that's going to reduce costs"? You've been trying to do that for four years, and it hasn't worked. Why don't you also actually build affordable housing? Bring back the rent controls on new builds.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the member from Spadina–Fort York.

He brings up a good point: The status quo isn't working—and that's what we're doing with this bill. We are changing the status quo.

I'm sure the member will also remember that we've gone through a worldwide pandemic that has greatly affected markets over the last couple of years. But I will mention that last year there were more housing starts in the province of Ontario than there have been in the last three decades, in the last 30 years. So clearly what we've started to put in place, what we've been able to do—granted, there was a worldwide pandemic, like I mentioned, that, dare I say, interrupted some of the good intentions that our government had. But here we are, debating Bill 23. Hopefully, if we're able to get this passed with the support of the opposition, we'll be able to see the increase that the member is talking about and we'll be able to continue on the good work that we've already done here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member for Brampton North.

Mr. Graham McGregor: We've heard this story before from the members on the other side of the House. They talk a big game when it comes to building houses, but when the time comes to do it, they say no time after time. Now, this is the New Democratic Party; sometimes it can be the NIMBY democratic party. But dare I say that this opposition is BANANAs. They don't want to build anything, near anyone, at any time.

Would the member from Kitchener–Conestoga please reaffirm to the House that our government is committed to building 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years? And are we going to let the NIMBY democratic party get in our way?

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you very much, Gwen Stefani, for the rhyming over there.

Listen, all kidding aside, we all want to see more houses built here in the province of Ontario. As I said in my previous statement, the status quo that the opposition has supported for many, many years just isn't working anymore. We need to do things differently.

We are going to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years—and, dare I say, we're going to build more than 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. That's going to include partnerships, of course, with municipalities. It's going to include partnerships with the federal government. And I hope it can include partnerships with the New Democratic Party, as the official opposition, and with other members here in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: The member, I think, has revised history a little bit. Certainly, for many Ontarians living under the former Harris government's period, they recall it differently. Those on social assistance recall a 23% cut in social assistance rates. Tenants recall vacancy decontrol being introduced. We recall the downloading of social housing to municipalities, the removal of rent control laws—a number of things that really hurt affordability, particularly in housing. Unfortunately, the Liberals, even though they were in power for 15 years, did not revert any of it.

But you are back in power now, as a Conservative government. You still can do the right thing. Will you?

Mr. Mike Harris: I don't have a lot of time left, so I'll just address a couple of things quickly.

Rae Days, where the public sector actually was told to take a day off because the current government could not afford to pay them—if we're going to talk about affordability and we're going to go back and look at history, I think that's a very important part to mention.

Like I said, the people of Ontario have returned us to power for the second time, with an even larger majority, just like they did with Mike Harris in 1999.

I am very proud to be part of this government that is standing up every day for Ontarians. We are—

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It is an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park to speak to Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act.

This is a big bill. It's over 120 pages. It was tabled just two days ago, so we're still studying it and consulting with key stakeholders and experts to understand the full effects this bill could have for the housing sector, for municipalities, for conservation authorities, on consumer protections. So far, it's a mixed bag.

Ontario's housing affordability crisis is one of the most pressing problems. So many of my constituents can't afford to rent, much less buy, a home of their own. Rent is eating up more and more of their paycheques. It's one of the issues I hear most about.

1650

The housing crisis is an issue that should be tackled with a comprehensive approach, and this bill falls short of that. There is so much to say about this bill, but I only have 10 minutes, so I will focus on six key points.

I'm going to start with supportive housing. Bill 23 does not do anything to create supportive housing. A comprehensive approach to housing would go beyond simply getting more homes built; it would ensure that enough types of more affordable homes are built, including supportive housing.

My office received two calls just this week from families whose loved ones with developmental disabilities are awaiting supportive housing placements through Developmental Services Ontario. Both families have been on the wait-list for supportive housing for almost 10 years, and there are so many more in the same situation. Many people

who are unhoused in encampments are in need of supportive housing. Where is the housing for them? Does housing for disabled people, those suffering from mental illness, those who are houseless not matter?

Next, I want to talk about rent control. Tackling the housing affordability crisis means better protections for renters, but this government has actually made it harder to be a renter in Ontario. They ended rent control on new buildings, meaning that tenants living in buildings built after 2018 cannot rely on steady, small increases, as per the guidelines, to their rent each year. Rents can be increased by any amount with no explanation whatsoever, and it is perfectly legal.

Tenants in two buildings in my riding, at 55 Quebec Avenue and 50 High Park Avenue, are facing rent increases of 11.6%. That's more than four times the provincial rent increase guideline for 2023. This increase would have been illegal before the Ford government came into office. So while we should build more homes faster, when rent is allowed to increase by 11.6% in a year, what we're going to see is a net loss of affordable homes.

One of the most concerning parts of this bill is schedule 1, which is the government's plan to reduce protections for renters by imposing limits and conditions on a municipality's ability to regulate the demolition and conversion of rental properties under section 111 of the City of Toronto Act.

There are many buildings in my riding that are purpose-built rentals that were built in the 1960s and 1970s, so they are rent controlled. Many tenants have stayed in those buildings for decades. Many of them are seniors. They simply cannot afford to move. Now, if a big developer tries to demolish one of these buildings or turn it into a condo, the city of Toronto has a bylaw, section 111, which requires the developer to ensure that all renters who live in the rental building are able to move back once it's built and pay the same rate of rent as they did before. This measure is so important because it ensures that the thousands and thousands of tenants across Toronto and across the province who live in purpose-built rentals are protected from developers and investors who want to turn purpose-built rentals into condos. So it's very concerning that the government is trying to change section 111 to give themselves control to override this bylaw in order to remove protections for tenants.

Next, I'm going to talk about co-op housing. A comprehensive approach to the housing affordability crisis also means building more co-op housing.

The Swansea Village Co-op in my riding has three buildings, and it's a perfect example of the benefits of co-op living. When the buildings were first built in the 1950s, they were rentals. They were poorly managed and in bad need of repairs. Tenants were able to come together and purchase the buildings through government support. They had seed funding, and they put in a lot of hard work into repairing and renovating the buildings. In 1982, the co-op officially opened. The Swansea Village Co-op just celebrated their 40th anniversary, and they are thriving. The mortgage has been paid off, the buildings are in great condition, and rents are affordable. Tenants have a strong

sense of community, and they make sure they're always there for one another.

Co-op housing works. It provides affordable housing, it provides autonomy for tenants, and it creates community. But the wait-list remains so long.

We need more co-op housing as part of a comprehensive approach to tackling the housing affordability crisis, and that is something that is missing from this bill and from the government's approach.

I'm going to talk next about the need to maintain existing affordable housing. Ontario needs to build more affordable housing, but we also need to take care of what we already have. One part of that is social housing. The Harris government downloaded the administration of social housing to the municipalities, and the province has never provided adequate and dedicated funding to maintain the buildings and make the necessary repairs.

In June of this year, it led to an incident at the Swansea Mews community housing building in my riding: A ceiling collapsed on a tenant, resulting in their hospitalization. The housing complex was deemed structurally unsafe, and more than 400 people have been displaced. That's 400 people who have lost their affordable home because of neglect from this province. This didn't need to happen. Tenants had been begging for repairs for years but to no avail. According to city staff, there simply wasn't enough funding from the province to provide the extensive repairs. Now Swansea Mews is sitting vacant because it's uninhabitable.

If this government truly wants to tackle the housing affordability crisis, they need to ensure that buildings like Swansea Mews are properly maintained and preserved.

Thankfully, our community stepped up to support the tenants. The Stone Soup Network based at Windermere United Church, supported by local parents and the school community, faith groups like St. Olave's Anglican Church, Swansea Town Hall, the One by One Movement—everybody worked together to raise close to \$100,000 for the Swansea Mews Resident Relief Fund. This help provided some financial relief for the tenants as they moved into the temporary locations. I want to thank and recognize everybody who supported the tenants there. They stepped in and stepped up because the government failed to do so.

Finally, I'm going to touch on how this bill affects conservation authorities. I'm very concerned about how Bill 23 further weakens conservation authorities, and I've already heard from constituents about this. Conservation authorities have a very important role. They work with municipalities and the province to ensure that we protect our natural environment, our wetlands and green space. They also make sure that homes are not built on flood plains. We are facing a climate crisis that is causing an increasing number of extreme weather events. In Parkdale-High Park, we remember Hurricane Hazel. More recently, we saw it with Hurricane Fiona hitting Atlantic Canada. We need to adapt to the climate crisis and ensure homes are built where they will be safe from extreme weather events.

This week, the Insurance Bureau of Canada called for the housing industry and the government to consider and disclose natural hazards and climate risks because of the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters. Even the insurance industry is saying, in effect, that conservation authorities have a really important job. They help us build in a sustainable way that protects our natural green spaces and our natural environment, and that protects future homeowners from their house being swept up in a flood.

This government has already starved conservation authorities of funding, then they gutted their powers, and now this bill further weakens them. That is very concerning.

I'll end by saying that we absolutely need to do more to build homes faster. But we also need to ensure that there are enough affordable and various types of homes that people want to live in. We need to ensure that renters are protected, that existing affordable housing stock is maintained, that we build and support co-op housing as part of the solution. And we need to ensure that new homes that are being built aren't being built on flood plains and that the expertise of conservation authorities is respected.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. In terms of affordable housing, our government previously has brought in legislation that deferred development charges on rental housing and affordable housing. I know previously you voted against that. I did want to bring that point up.

Specific to this bill, I would like to ask—we all agree we need to build 1.5 million homes over the next decade, so that's great. I think there's pretty much unanimous consent on that. My question to you is pretty specific: Do you think it's in the best interest that the province has put down targets for the 29 municipalities in terms of the number of homes they need to build so there are clear guidelines to each municipality? Do you think that's an appropriate measure within the bill?

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: In terms of the number of housing that needs to be built, absolutely, we need to be bold in our targets. We need to ensure that we are working together with municipalities to build that housing.

However, I have to note that a lot of the housing that the government is requiring to be built is ignoring the expertise and the advice and the recommendations of the conservation authorities. Municipalities want to work with conservation authorities. They want to ensure that housing is not being built on our wetlands. So while I appreciate what the government is trying to do in that regard, we cannot ignore and disrespect the expertise of the conservation authorities.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park—as always, really well-considered remarks and comments on this legislation, which is going to have significant impacts in Ontario. I know many

people are concerned, as she mentioned, about the rolling back of some of the protections that have been put in place, particularly when it comes to potential climate change repercussions and such.

Earlier today, we were talking about the Association of Municipalities of Ontario expressing their concerns about the eradication of development charges. I wonder if she would comment on what that means and why municipalities would have these concerns.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I thank the member from Davenport for her question. It's a very important point that sometimes I feel that the other members from the other side of the House are not understanding.

Where do development charges go? They go to help build the infrastructure to support the people living in the newly built housing. That means roads, maintenance, sewage—it's endless. So what the Association of Municipalities of Ontario are saying is that if this pocket of money, which is supposed to go towards infrastructure, is removed, with no replacement—because the province of Ontario is not saying that they're going to ensure that municipalities have funding for the investments they need to support the infrastructure. So that is the concern that has been flagged. And I would like to know, from the members from the Conservative side, what is your answer to AMO?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member for Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: As Ontarians face the rising cost of living and the shortage of homes, our government has a strong mandate to help more Ontarians find a home that meets their needs and budget.

Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, since 2020, average municipal charges levied on new housing in the GTA have increased anywhere from 30% to 36%. Municipal charges are adding an average of \$116,000, or \$53 per square foot, to the cost of a low-rise home in the GTA. In the member's own city of Toronto, they have recently hiked development charges by almost 50%. That is why we are in the midst of a housing crisis.

I just want to say thank you to Ontarians for selecting and re-electing this government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Response?

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Thank you to the member for the question.

You're saying, "Let's get rid of development charges." Okay; as a statement, I take that. If you remove development charges, what you're going to have is no funding for infrastructure, as I just mentioned. Also, what is going to happen to that money that the developers are basically saving—

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

Ms. Jess Dixon: What I want to talk about is what I think is by far one of the most exciting aspects of this new bill. It is the part that gladdened my heart the most when I was first presented with the bill and given the opportunity to read it. I don't think it's getting nearly as much attention today as I wish it would. Of the proposed changes that are

present in this bill, the most exciting one, in my opinion, is that it is allowing for more gentle densification. The proposed changes are going to permit up to three units in the main building, or up to two in the main building plus one unit in a smaller building, on most pieces of urban land without needing a bylaw amendment to permit these added units. So we're talking about a main residence with a basement and attic apartment, or an apartment in a main residence and a garden house or a laneway house or a granny flat—whatever you want to call it.

This development—what it really actually goes to is the concept of missing middle housing. The phrase “missing middle” is something that, 10 or 15 years ago, we never even heard; now it has become something that, when I was campaigning and in my few months as an MPP, I have heard very frequently. And I have heard it from a number of housing advocates who, to be honest, I do not think would necessarily consider themselves particularly allied with the Conservative government agenda; however, they are the people who have been using that phrase, “missing middle.” When this bill came out and I realized how squarely we were addressing the missing middle concept, that gave me a great deal of heart, because what it shows me is that our government is truly listening to people. It's listening to advocates. It's listening to voices that didn't, perhaps, always have a seat at the table.

When you're talking about gentle densification—and I know she's no longer here, but the member for Beaches–East York actually noted that, yes, we need gentle densification, and I completely agree with her. Gentle densification involves, essentially, infilling unoccupied spaces in a way that doesn't massively change an existing neighbourhood's character. Is it a complete answer to the current situation regarding affordable housing? No. But it's an excellent, excellent place to start.

Gentle density allows more homes to be built on existing infrastructure. It means that homeowners can leverage their property to get a second income source, while also providing housing to those who would not otherwise have it. It's also an opportunity to allow the type of multi-generational living that was not always a staple of a traditional, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant type of Ontarian but is much more reflective of the type of Ontario we have today, and which our traditional housing styles that were available were not friendly to at all.

What's also very interesting about this concept of opening up these neighbourhoods is that it opens a neighbourhood that may, by only offering single-family residential homes, particularly older neighbourhoods—there are families, couples, individuals who would never be able to afford to buy a house in that neighbourhood; that, with the availability of smaller-scale living, are actually given the opportunity to rent and live in those areas, which significantly increases your opportunities for a more diverse neighbourhood and also addresses some of the heritage of our systemic racism in housing projects, when we have people who were never able to get into a certain neighbourhood.

When you talk about the missing middle and what this bill does, when you look at a picture of Toronto, you see a

large number of very, very tall buildings, followed by—really, from the air, it just becomes flat. There was a huge importance placed on single-family residential, to the point that, back at the turn of the century, in the early 1920s, in Toronto, the city was so incredibly against just the building of apartment buildings, full stop, that they actually enacted entire bylaws to prohibit apartments from being built. It was that type of zoning that led to the so-called yellowbelt, the space of land—I think one of the stats is that it's twice the size of Manhattan—wherein the city was saying, “You cannot build anything other than single-family houses on this lot for perpetuity.” With that, it meant that, when you talk about the GTA, it became an area that, for literally decades, did not build missing middle—we're talking duplexes, triplexes, low- to medium-rise houses; they never existed.

There are other cities in North America that have less struggle; not no struggle, but less struggle—for example, Chicago, places that had more of a brownstone component—because they had more access to missing middle.

1710

So what we are doing is, we're not just fixing something that has been a problem over the last 10 years; we're fixing something that became a problem at the turn of the century, in the 1920s, and has not been addressed until this government's housing bill here today.

When you think about missing middle—if you imagine a residential neighbourhood in some American or European cities that you love, as you walk along you notice that every house, every brownstone, has three, four, five doorbells. This is a neighbourhood that is vibrant, but it's allowing far more people to actually live there.

However, in Ontario, these single-family neighbourhoods account for, really, the lion's share of metropolitan Ontario. Over the years, they've become increasingly shielded by this tangle of red tape from any form of development whatsoever, which reflects these entrenched local interests that want to keep a neighbourhood as it is. When you put in this shortage of new housing development, combined with the continued demand, obviously that makes it even worse.

I also want to comment that the way that this is written—up to three units, I think, is also a very respectful way to address what gentle densification is. One of the big fears that you encounter with NIMBYism is that we will take a beautiful, leafy, residential neighbourhood and turn it into a concrete jungle. That's one of the things that people are very frightened of. That is not what this bill is doing. What it's saying is, we have opportunities to increase the number of families or individuals a residential lot can actually house without massively changing the scope of that neighbourhood.

What's also interesting to note is, in neighbourhoods that did not allow for this type of gentle densification, they often ended up significantly changing the character of their neighbourhood regardless. You see this in Toronto, actually, everywhere, where you had these neighbourhoods that had relatively, in today's stance, small homes built on large lots. But because of the value of housing in Toronto, one by one, those houses were bought and

demolished to have single-family homes that stretch the entire length and width of the lot built, which really didn't sustain the character of the neighbourhood anyway, but also did not allow for any additional people to live there.

So this is something that I think is very revolutionary. It's something that I heard constantly—it's exactly the type of solution I'd like to hear, which is something that is practical, results-focused and quick.

I've heard the comments about affordable housing, supportive housing and that type of thing. That's what this is. This is allowing people who already own their homes to leverage it to turn it into additional housing, and they can do it very, very quickly. When we're waiting for developers or the concept of the government as landlords to create these projects—these are the types of projects that get caught up for years. These are the types of projects that become showpieces for a municipality or a corporation, versus actually presenting what they really need, which is having people who are housed in safe, affordable places that are going to be quickly accessible to them.

The Premier just recently toured NOW Housing in my area, which is a sort of modular housing organization. Again, I think this is showing the interest that this government has in unconventional ideas to actually bring people into a state of being housed.

We're also talking, with this missing middle concept, of actually addressing—this is housing that could be available for families, but also for single people.

I think it's also very interesting that this government is, when you're talking about the affordability option and development charges, reducing the development charges by up to 25% for essentially three-plus-bedroom units, which is something that we just don't see in Ontario, and I think it is also revolutionary.

So this is what I have to say about this bill, as I think it's innovative and exciting.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: You talked about gentle intensification, and I appreciate your speech. But are you aware of communities like mine, where, emboldened by this government's *carte blanche* attitude towards developers, developers are coming in with projects in an area where planners and communities are expecting a density of, let's say, an 11-storey building—and they're coming in with applications of over 30 storeys? This government is taking away their ability to appear at tribunals, to even have a say whatsoever. They're taking away development charges so that we could actually build proper infrastructure to support these developments. Going further, you're actually going so far as directing municipalities how to spend their reserve funds.

Do you honestly think that this is a respectful way forward for communities and municipalities in Ontario?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I think what you are seeing when you have these developers come in and you have something that's initially zoned for eight to 10 storeys and the next thing you know it's 30—the reason that's happening is because we've taken the ability for developers to build any other type of housing away from them, which is why you

have development that's focused on being a massive condo building or on single-family residential. With condos, there's an economy of scale that's going to fit in, and with single-family residential, there's going to be value that's built in there.

We are opening up the field to encourage the building and development of far more types of housing, which will encourage, I think, developers to be more innovative and, as I said, allow small-scale developers and individual people to develop their land in a way that they have not been able to do. I think that's going to contribute massively to an extension of what is available.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Madam Speaker, it was a real pleasure to listen to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler speaking about gentle intensification. It was a rational presentation. It was a solid presentation. I'm glad I was here to hear it.

I want to ask a question about gentle intensification. It's a very common practice among a lot of groups of people, and if it had been around a long time ago, if it had been legal 20 or 30 years ago, I think a lot more families would be in a better position today. That's why I appreciated the member's comments so much.

I know that gentle intensification is going to be used in the riding of Essex, because we have a lot of small towns in Essex—small towns of 13,000 people or 3,000 people. Gentle intensification is going to work. It's going to happen in Essex, and it's going to work.

My question to my friend from Kitchener South–Hespeler: Is gentle intensification going to be picked up in her riding, and is it going to work in her riding?

Ms. Jess Dixon: Absolutely. In my riding, I have a foot in two cities: I'm in the old area of Hespeler and then a much newer area of Kitchener, as well as an area that essentially did not exist five to 10 years ago. Frankly, my riding is actually an example of a fairly significant amount of sprawl, which is one of the reasons why I'm very interested in anything that conserves farmland and green space. When I see these houses in my riding, many of them are single detached; they're very small; they're new builds.

What I kept seeing as I door-knocked was this sensation that we were not actually providing options to people. You could live in a condo with one bedroom as a young professional, or you could live in a detached house with your own family, and there was really nothing in between. I think that this is going to provide far more options for people.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler for your comments.

You just said that there's an area in your riding that's new, that didn't exist five years ago.

One of the things in my riding is that there are many, many condo towers that have been built over the last four or five years, and they are not protected by rent control, because this government deregulated rent control on anything built after 2018. I am frequently getting emails

from residents who are in these units, and they say, “My landlord is demanding \$300 more a month or \$500 more a month.”

Are you not receiving those same emails, and do you not think this government should re-regulate units built after 2018?

Ms. Jess Dixon: My feeling, and I know we will continue to differ on this—supply is a massive, massive part of this. When you simply cannot find anything else, yes, anybody in control of a scarce resource can certainly ask more for it.

What I have seen is more so, I would say, young, single men who do not make a great deal of money not even being able to find a room to rent because that type of housing doesn’t exist for them. That’s why I’m so optimistic about this, because I see this as opening up a world of possibility for those type of people who don’t usually appear when we talk about this. We talk about families. We don’t talk about the young guy who’s working at the factory who might have a disability or whatever and he can’t even find a room, because a room is \$1,000. So I think this is really going to offer a lot of opportunities to that type of person.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler.

The dream of Canadian home ownership—I asked about this earlier, and you being a young professional woman who, I know, has that dream of home ownership herself, I would start by saying, different times call for different measures, or different actions, and I think this government is doing that very same thing.

When I bought my first home, interest rates were 19%; house prices were a lot lower. Nonetheless, today’s problem, I believe, is even worse.

So I would ask the great member from Kitchener South–Hespeler, what do you think about this bill, and how do you think it is going to help young people, first-time homebuyers, realize their Canadian dream?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I think a big part of it is that, with, as I said, this ability to put in these accessory dwelling units, you’re able to leverage your home in order to cover your mortgage in many ways.

I am fairly recently part of housing—as somebody who went to post-secondary and onwards, I was a little late getting into the housing market. I was incredibly lucky to buy my house, which is a little wartime bungalow, in 2015, right before the rates soared, which meant I am able to afford my mortgage. If I were buying my house today, I’m not sure that I would be able to afford it. So having the opportunity to easily leverage that to offer accessory dwelling units that I could then rent out would be a significant advantage in making that accessible to me and to others.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I’m going to read this off of AMO’s analysis of Bill 23. It says that the proposed

changes to the development charges contradict the government’s own goal of building more housing in the long term. Unless fully offset by funding, this will shift the burden of growth-related infrastructure to municipal taxpayers.

So my question to the member is, why are you leaving municipal taxpayers on the hook instead of developers?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I don’t believe I am. What I think is going to happen with this bill is—as I said, it’s incentivizing a number of different types of property growth. Right now, all we’ve really seen is condos and single-family sprawl, which offers very little benefit to municipalities because they are left paying for the infrastructure, which they will not recoup in property taxes; whereas with this, we are encouraging and incentivizing the urbanization and densification of areas that are already supplied by infrastructure, which I think is going to actually offer a massive benefit.

In Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge, where I am—those are areas that need to be more densified, and they will bring talent for the businesses that are there. We can’t do that if all we build is out.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member for Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I know the time is limited, so I’m just going to quickly ask the member: We talk about the big cities, but what is the impact on the rural areas?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I’m going to go back to the accessory dwelling units, as well. In rural areas, it’s much harder to get really big development companies to come in and do something, but you might have transient projects—mining, resources, that type of thing—that require labour to be in and out. Having rural homeowners and landowners be able to actually leverage their areas to provide more accessible housing is going to be a massive benefit for those of our people residing in rural areas.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It’s always an honour to rise here.

I think we can all agree that we do need more housing. But what kind of housing do we need? What kind of development do we need? I hope we agree that we need responsible development. This is something that members of my community are asking for. I touched on it in a question a little bit earlier.

In communities like mine, we have developers emboldened by this government coming in and ignoring anything that city planners in the city of Toronto have to say, ignoring the densities that they think are sensible or rational for an area, allowing them carte blanche. They know that these developers can just bypass council decisions, immediately go to a tribunal and generally get their way.

What’s making it worse is the fact that you are allowing development charges to be eroded. Think about this: In a community like mine, where land is up for intensification and where the community is expecting and understanding that maybe they will put in 11 storeys, the developers aren’t coming in with a single 11-storey building and preserving the space that was there—a small parcel.

They're coming in with multiple buildings, the tallest one at 30 storeys. We have a school that has portables next to it. This is an area where people have low water pressure, where extensive work had to be done on storm sewers to prevent flooding that people are experiencing. And we're going to be cutting back on development charges. Does this make sense? Do you think it's appreciated by the community that their voice is going to be ignored? It won't even be heard by the tribunal if it gets there.

And don't take it from me, new members. Some of you come from councils; you might have been mayors. If you come from that background, you and your community will face a development that might be beyond what you would have imagined. It might be next door to your home where you live.

The members of those communities and those councillors and those mayors, once they start to get that flak and that heat from the public, are going to turn around and they're going to point the finger at you, as the MPP who represents that community. They're going to say, "Why did you allow this to happen at this level?"

We all agree—but is this responsible? We talked about gentle intensification, and as I said earlier, in many cases, we're not seeing that. And there are other issues to this housing crisis. I get it. We talk about supply, supply, supply. The financialization of the industry, speculation—all of these things add to prices.

Cutting development charges—do you honestly believe for one second that developers are going to turn around and pass those savings on to homeowners? No, they're going to pocket it. You know that. That's what's going to happen. They're going to keep that extra money. They're going to say, "Thanks." A development that could net millions and millions is going to net more millions and millions. They're not going to pass that on.

What is responsible? This government—even in the last session, there were many questions asked about their relationship and how close they were to the development industry and decisions that they made. They weren't just asked by members of the opposition. They were asked by the media and others. One of the things that they went after, and they did it much before what we're talking about as this housing crisis—much, much before that, they talked about weakening conservation authorities. Quite frankly, it's true that conservation authorities are a thorn in the side of this government. They don't want to hear those reports. They don't want to hear from them about protecting flood plains, protecting our water supply. They don't want to hear from them, because it's not convenient.

I want to take you back in time. Has anyone heard of a gentleman named George Drew? Okay. He was the 14th Premier of Ontario, I believe; he began in the 21st session of Parliament. We all love to hear the Conservatives pat their own backs, talk about their huge government majority, what they've got—

Interjections.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Let's hear it. They dropped half a million votes, but they got a big majority.

One of the things that they like to do, and we heard about it, is go back to past governments and pat their hand

on their back for that one. Well, one of the things that Premier Drew did—wait for it—is establish the Conservation Authorities Act in 1946. Here was a person who, at least in his time, agreed with people who had the foresight to predict flooding and other issues.

But the reality is this: You don't want to hear from conservation authorities. This government doesn't want to hear from them. They're going to give you a report, and you will shelve it. We are losing 100,000 acres of farmland a year, and the conservation authorities and others are raising their voices about it. You don't want to hear from them. At the end of the day, if a conservation authority comes out and issues a report that is so negative, it's literally full—"we're going to give it attention with huge red marker so that you understand, 'Oh, my God, look what's happening here'"—you can still ignore it. You'll ignore it. You have the power to issue MZO's. You have the power to do whatever you want—and you use them quite liberally when it comes to that.

1730

Is this the right way forward—to weaken conservation authorities, to not listen to them and others when it comes to the tribunal? I don't think this is the right way forward. And don't take it from me, because as those developments come into place in your communities, in your ridings, and as your councillors and mayors are ripping their hair out because they're not happy or their planners are not happy with what's happening, they're going to turn and they're going to look at you, as individual MPPs, and those councillors are going to say, "Don't blame me. Blame this member or that member, because that's what their government did."

The final thing I want to mention is this: You want to build a lot of homes? All right, but if you're going to build a lot of homes, you've got to get them right. In the last session of government, we had the ability to modify and improve home warranties in Ontario. It was something that when the government was in the opposition prior, under the Liberals, they screamed bloody murder about—the changes that were needed. I remember, as critic of the file, watching how their inspired change got watered down, watered down, watered down to something at the very end where the most active stakeholders expressed extreme disappointment about where we are with this.

If you don't get these new homes built right, if you don't provide those new home protections that are necessary, dreams will turn very quickly into nightmares. You want to rip up conservation authorities? You want to ignore the fact that there are places where there is flooding? Maybe your developer friends can issue—maybe it will be a big feature: in-ground home pools, basements that are pools of water. We'll use the heater tank. We all have our heating tanks in the basement; that will be used to keep that at a nice warm temperature. You could wade into your basement with a nice rubber inflatable—

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: That's right.

These are the things that we're facing. There are communities right now under your watch, and even under the watch of the previous government, that are facing huge

problems. People come in, they get their home for the first time, and there are literally hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage and disrepair in those homes. They go to the home warranty provider and say, “I need help.” And you’re going to get those phone calls—if you haven’t got them. To new members: Watch; those calls are going to come, and you’re going to throw your hands up and say, “I don’t know how to help you,” because the home warranty provider, many times, is not fighting; the new regulator you created got a thousand complaints and didn’t issue a single fine. And what’s going to happen, again, is that it’s going to fall in your lap, and people will lose everything trying to fight this.

You still want to talk about consumer protection? We have a builder directory—and I mention this because I do think this is so important for you to understand: You need to empower homebuyers by giving them adequately built homes, ensuring that there are enough inspectors and inspections out there, giving municipalities the power to be able to say what makes sense in an area and what doesn’t. Believe me: Who is going to wear it in the end? It will be you. But before you wear it, it’s going to be an individual or family who is going to lose the shirt off their back. That happens right now.

There are subdivisions in this province right now where millions of dollars of money had to be paid out to families, after long, protracted fights where they’ve had to stay in hotel rooms, hiring lawyers. There are some people in this room who, when we travelled the bill to actually change home warranties, heard first-hand the damage that these families are facing. In the end, we don’t have those protections that are necessary. We don’t even have a builder directory that’s up to date, so if you’re going to buy a new home, you have no idea what you’re getting into. Even worse, some of these developers that are selling these homes are just being given licences as of right.

The final thing I want to say, because a member mentioned it earlier: He talked about government priorities in throne speeches. I just want to say thank God for government throne speeches, because we have no idea what they’re doing in their platforms during their election campaigns.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I want to ask the question with a little bit of an introduction here. I know that the member from Humber River–Black Creek talked about horror stories involving flooding etc. I want to make it absolutely clear: The stormwater management plan exists and will continue to exist. All of us who have been on municipal councils absolutely know that it’s the stormwater management plan that keeps the water out of your basement, along with other things like backflow protection and all that stuff.

But the thing I was really interested in is the statement by the member from Humber River–Black Creek—and I’ll quote him, and I hope I get the quote exact. He warned all of us here that somebody that might do a development “might be next door to your home where you live.” It’s worth repeating: “might be next door to your home where you live.” It was a warning he gave us all. So my question

to the member from Humber River–Black Creek: Isn’t that quote the very essence of NIMBYism?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I would have hoped you had listened to my entire speech. What I began with was the conversation about responsible development, and what I was speaking about—if you want to play games—is that a responsible development is what we need to build. But if something comes in against the express interests—because planners say that we don’t have the infrastructure to be able to accommodate that. You talked about gentle intensification; it was supposed to be in keeping with the character of neighbourhoods. I’m talking about the kind of development that is way beyond the capacity of a municipality to be able to say—that the planners are up in arms about it, saying that this doesn’t make sense, and that’s what I’m talking about could be built near your home. That’s the concern. Responsible development is always welcome.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the member for the comments this afternoon.

I remember in the last session that you worked extensively on the home warranty system and you found that it was broken. We actually visited together people in Ottawa who had bought a brand new home and, because of construction defects, hundreds of thousands of dollars of repairs needed to be made, and they were bankrupted. They couldn’t move. They were basically going bankrupt on this new home.

Can you talk about some of the regulations—what needs to be done so that when people can buy a home, even though housing is incredibly unaffordable in this Conservative government’s Ontario, what kind of warranty should they be able to get?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It’s one of challenges that you can never expect until you’re in that situation. A lot of times, there might be a defect with a newly built home that won’t even become apparent for decades, or you won’t notice it. One of the simple things—and the Auditor General actually previously laid out a list of recommendations, and they’re not all completed—is what I talked about, this builder directory.

I think we all agree on transparency, consumer protection. The fact is, we need to know the histories and the track records of developers and developments that we’ve seen. The fact that, right now, to this very day in this province, there continue to be new developments where we don’t see on that builder directory the list of infractions—that’s not helping new potential homebuyers in making the right decision for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Rob Flack: I thank the Humber River–Black Creek MPP for his response and his remarks.

This government wants to invest in infrastructure, and I think that was clearly identified in the last election. Whether it’s subways, highways, bus rapid transit or light rail, we want to invest. We also want to work with municipalities so we can get them to help move it along so they

can meet the minimum provincial density targets. We believe Bill 23 does that. Let's put the housing where the transit is so people can go to school and get to work and shop—to live their life. We believe this bill does that.

What would the member opposite do, through you, Speaker, that's different? You don't seem to want to be near this type of housing. You don't want to build this type of housing. What would you do differently?

1740

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: What I'm simply saying is, respect conservation authorities, respect municipalities, respect city planners. We have a system right now—again, it's my own community—where extensive time, money, thought was put in to build targets that municipalities themselves laid out after careful consideration about what is acceptable when it comes to schools, when it comes to sewers, when it comes to water, traffic—the list goes on and on and on. What this government is doing as part of this bill is reducing charges that come out of these developments, reducing the fact that these developers should be giving back to communities in ways and then setting targets to force communities to spend on their reserve funds in a certain way. But you're actually taking money away from the developments that they're having to now address. There are issues with that that I think need serious consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I've been listening to the conversations, and I thank the member opposite from the NDP for his speech.

They've been talking about these big, bad developers. Well, I welcome the member to come to my riding of Perth–Wellington. I have developers who actually want to build the missing middle. They want to work with municipalities, provincial government, and they want to build the missing middle. I'll tell you briefly about one example in my riding a few years ago: They wanted to do that, but it was delayed at the Ontario Land Tribunal. So with this bill, we are fixing some of those issues, as is outlined in the bill.

I was wondering why the member would not support that amendment to encourage developers who want to build the missing middle, but it's delayed in increased costs of millions of dollars for the developers.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I don't know the details of the file within your community, so I can't comment on it.

But I could tell you that in my community, some developers are literally going to the city of Toronto—not all of them—dropping a file and saying, “We're going to go straight to the land tribunal. Don't even bother to consider this as a city. Don't even bother to consider this as communities. It doesn't matter what your experienced planners have to say.” This is happening in the city of Toronto, which for almost a decade has been leading all of North America in terms of developments, with the most cranes in the sky. This is all happening in Toronto. Developers are coming along and ignoring, in some cases, what has been set out, prudent ideas that have been thought out, community consultations that add development, add

new units, add commercial—and bypassing that altogether just to go to the land tribunal and roll the dice there. I don't think that's respectful to communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Member from Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I always really appreciate the effort that the member from Humber River–Black Creek puts into his comments on bills and the history and content and consideration he gives.

It was just a few weeks ago that I was knocking on doors in his community with a local trustee candidate—who got elected, hurray.

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes.

One of the things that really strikes me, and we've talked about this often, is that people in your community work really hard. They're working-class, middle-class people who work really hard every day, and they are concerned about the lack of affordable housing for their families. They want their kids and grandkids to be able to live and work in that community where they grew up, and it has become so deeply unaffordable.

I'm wondering what you're hearing from your constituents on the doorsteps about this legislation.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you so much for the comments, and thank you for coming to my community. You were very well welcomed there, for sure.

Members of my community are asking for more affordable housing, and not just to be incentivized so that they come out of private developments—not just that. They want specific purpose-built affordable housing in large amounts, and it's up to governments to make those decisions, roll up their sleeves and go out there and do it—not to just rely on the private sector to be able to do this. It is within your power.

We've seen decades of that affordable housing built by governments simply ignored. And you, I don't believe, are going to do any different. You are not doing any different.

Members of my community and of communities across this province need this government to step up, get the shovel in their own hands and start building too. Don't just rely on private industry. You have the power to change lives.

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

Mr. Graham McGregor: It's a pleasure to rise in this House to speak to this bill. It's an important generational challenge, I think, certainly, facing my generation. I'd also say it's a real issue for not only millennials like myself, but also for new Canadians and for seniors in our society. I think, today, our PC government is doing the right thing by bringing this bill forward. I think when we look in the future, we'll be very well served by the changes that are happening today.

Speaker, Ontario is the greatest place in the world. I think we have unanimous agreement on that. It's no secret that people want to live here; quite frankly, we need them to. We need more people to move into Ontario. We need more diversity, not less.

We have a labour shortage of about 400,000 jobs, give or take. When I was nominated as a candidate initially, a year ago, that number was actually under 300,000. So the labour shortage that we're facing in Ontario is actually getting worse. It will continue to get worse before it gets better.

For our economy, we need people to move here. But who would we be if we invited people to move into our province and into our country but we didn't provide them a place to live, if we didn't provide them hospital access, if we didn't build transit and roads for them to drive on or to get around? Frankly, it's one of the concerning aspects that we hear with a lot of opposition for the bill.

We reference NIMBYism. We say, "Not in my backyard." That's getting a little bit more dangerous. As the minister noted in his remarks, we're well past NIMBYism; we're at the entire phase of BANANAs. They don't want to build anything near anyone at any time. That's having serious impacts on millennial Canadians, on our seniors and on new Canadians, people who would dare to dream to come to our country and build a better life for themselves and for their families.

The More Homes Built Faster Act is taking unprecedented action to advance our plan to address the housing crisis. Our plan to build 1.5 million new homes over the next 10 years—which I'm proud to say has been endorsed by the New Democratic Party in the last provincial election, where they also pledged 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years—is ambitious. We know it's ambitious, but we also know that it is incredibly necessary.

I hear this all the time from my constituents in Brampton North. I see this concern echoed, not only from my constituents looking for homes themselves, but they're wondering how their children going to afford a home. How are their parents going to downsize properly when the supply of housing isn't there for them?

The thought of having your own place to call home, for so many in my generation, is daunting, and it doesn't have to be this way.

The amount of times a good project and a meaningful project that could help young people who want to get on their feet and want to get going gets squashed by—call a spade a spade. Baby boomer NIMBY local councils have led us to the crisis that we have here today. I think our government has been, step by step, gently putting our hands on the backs of municipalities, but, frankly, we've noticed that what we have done hasn't been enough. We still have NIMBY mayors across Ontario. Some NIMBY mayors just got elected in the recent election, Speaker. I'll leave you to speculate on who I might refer to.

We know that with the housing crisis, housing affordability doesn't exist in a bubble. Housing affordability is not something that exists and respects municipal borders. If you can't afford a house in Brampton, it's not like the old days—I don't know if those days existed; I'm young—you can't just pack up, go to Perth–Wellington and expect the houses to be substantially cheaper. They're a bit cheaper, but it's not as if people can move anywhere else.

I think what the members opposite really suggest that when they don't want to build homes, to make market

homes more affordable for everyday Ontarians—they're actually just suggesting that people want to move somewhere else. We hear this, Speaker. I know the members hear this in their ridings—young families who want to move out to the east coast. We have Alberta, which is aggressively targeting people of my generation, saying, "Come move here. You can buy a house. There won't be traffic. Everything will be hunky-dory." What we need to be doing, all members of this House, every party—we need to be aggressively saying, "No, stay here. Have a better life. We need you in our province. We need you to make our province a better place."

1750

I do want to draw attention to the member for Davenport. We talked about as-of-right in this bill, but I want to talk about the out-of-touch left. This is a party that, believe it or not, copied and pasted—Control+C, Control+V; that's a generational reference—our plan to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. They put it into their platform and then tried to sell it as their own idea. And they say, "Don't worry, 10% of them are going to be affordable." Well, Speaker, we want 100% of homes to be affordable here in the province of Ontario. We want everyone to be able to afford a home.

I think the mayor of Hamilton learned this lesson in the last provincial election: When you continue to say no to Ontarians, Ontarians cease to take you seriously.

I would give free political advice to my friends in the opposition: This is a very, very good bill. You might not like all of it, but there's very, very good material here in this bill. Here is your chance to show the New Democrat delegates that you learned your lesson from last time, that you're willing to say yes to good projects and put the needs of Ontarians first, before partisan politics. I hope that you will take that opportunity seriously, and I hope that happens.

With that, Speaker, I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Mr. McGregor has moved that the question be now put. There have been 26 speakers and over nine hours of debate. I'm satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I do hear a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Orders of the day?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Point of order. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Do we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6? Agreed.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Speaker, I would like to move ballot item number 5, which is the private member's notice of motion number 4, that, in the opinion of this House, every Ontarian should have access to ambulance and paramedic emergency services, and the government of Ontario should ensure the necessary funding to end the periods of time when ambulances are unavailable to respond to an emergency call, known as "code red" or "code black."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This is a very simple motion, but it reflects a very frightening and very serious situation that is occurring in Ontario, and that is when there are absolutely no ambulances available in communities across the province to respond to an emergency.

I know we don't agree on a lot of things in this House, but I cannot believe that we can't agree that if you pick up the phone in an emergency—if your child has been hit by a car; if your mother has fallen down the stairs—if you call for an ambulance, there should be one available. It's so simple and so very basic, but it's not happening in the province of Ontario, and it's really very frightening.

Health care professionals are ringing the alarm. Paramedics, paramedic chiefs, dispatch officers, mayors across the province, medical officers of health, nurses, families who are experiencing this are all trying to sound the alarm that this is getting worse and worse in our communities. It really does not need to be this way, and it shouldn't be this way.

I first brought this up in August 2018, shortly after I was elected for the first time, and exactly four years later—I went through my own Hansard and saw that I brought it up again four years later, only this time it had gotten so, so much worse.

In Hamilton, in 2017, a grandmother, Catherine Terry, died of a cardiac arrest during a code zero event, waiting for an ambulance. That's why I brought it up in 2018.

I cannot believe—I'm shocked to see—that we haven't all stood up to address this and taken this on as the serious crisis that it is. No one should lose their life in Ontario waiting for an ambulance. It's just not necessary.

These events, where there are no ambulances at all to respond to an emergency, have different names across the province in different communities. In Hamilton, we call them "code zeros"; they're called "code black," "code red," and I believe in Ottawa they're called "level zero," but they all paint the same really scary picture, which means that there is no ambulance to respond to an emergency for the entire region, and sometimes these periods of time last an incredibly long time.

Honestly, I think we all just need to imagine—without being overdramatic, it's just like you call for an ambulance and you get an answering machine. "Sorry; we're not here to take your call. Please leave a message." That's not

exactly what's happening, but that's what it must feel like if you call for an emergency and you're told no one is there to be able to help you.

This dire shortage of available ambulances, as I said, is in all parts of Ontario. I'm going to speak a lot about Hamilton, because in Hamilton it has reached crisis proportions, but we're seeing it all across the community. In October, Essex county declared a state of emergency when a code black—which is what they call this—lasted three hours. That's a long time when there are no ambulances, if there was an accident or any kind of emergency. In Hamilton, as I said, code zeros tripled—tripled—compared to last year. In Ottawa, the region of Waterloo and Thunder Bay, code zeros are becoming a nearly daily occurrence.

And this is to say nothing of the emergency room closures that are happening across the province. It could be that you don't have an ambulance available, so you bundle your child in the car and drive to an emergency room, to find that the emergency room is closed. This is Ontario. I can't believe that this is happening and that we're allowing this to happen at all.

As I said, the people, the front-line workers who are dealing with this—the paramedics, the paramedic chiefs—have all responded to this. They have all provided solutions and reports on what can be done to address this.

I just want to quote a little bit from the Paramedic Chiefs of Canada, who have put out a number of reports not only identifying the problem, but identifying solutions. Not only is this a significant risk to people's public safety; it also costs people a lot of money, and the Paramedic Chiefs of Canada said, in part—I just have to say these are also sometimes called "off-load delays," because a lot of it has to do with the fact that when an ambulance arrives at an emergency, they are not able to off-load their patients due to a shortage of staffing in the emergency and/or a shortage of beds. I forgot to describe that, but off-load delays are the primary, fundamental cause of these code zero events.

The Paramedic Chiefs of Canada said, "Not only do off-load delays consume thousands of hours in lost time from providing emergency response in Canadian communities, millions of dollars in paramedic resources are being used to augment hospital systems across Canada including forced overtime for paramedics to continue caring for patients" way "past the end of their shift."

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They also concluded in this small report—because they have quite a number of reports on their website, and I invite you to check them out—"Canadian paramedic services must not only focus on the patient in the moment but the next person who is about to require paramedic services for life-threatening emergencies. This is only made possible through eliminating off-load delays, ensuring the available paramedic resources can serve our Canadian communities."

I've also talked extensively with the Ontario association of paramedics, and it just happens to be that the president of the Ontario association of paramedics is also the paramedic chief for the city of Hamilton, Chief Sanderson.

They have a number of reports that outline the steps that they're proposing to solve the crisis of off-load delays. The information is there. They have done the heavy lifting. We need to be listening to these folks.

They say, "When hospital backlogs keep us waiting for hours to transfer a patient, it is a risk to public safety. Plus, it increases the risk to patients who could experience worse health outcomes that were avoidable.

They say, "Committed and immediate action is needed," and I couldn't really agree more with that.

I speak regularly with Chief Sanderson, who says that this off-load delay, code zero issue is very directly related to staffing shortages and a lack of capacity in general throughout our health care system. But he wanted to stress that this is a significant safety risk that needs to be fixed.

I just described a woman who lost her life. Most of the people I talk to who are dealing with this on the front lines say that they're shocked and surprised—and, I guess, grateful—that no one else has lost their life, so far, in the province when they've been waiting for an ambulance.

It's not just the paramedic chiefs but the paramedics themselves, the people showing up to an emergency, who are providing front-line service care—they are having to deal with this day in and day out in their jobs.

Darryl Wilton with the Ontario Paramedic Association said that delays have reached a level he has never seen in 25 years on the job. He said, "Off-load delays of one to two hours were previously considered extreme but now patients are waiting up to 15 hours.

"This is something that just plain and simple requires beds and staff to fix the problem."

These are sick people, injured people, our loved ones, and I think we need to absolutely keep that in mind.

And paramedics don't want to be waiting there; they want to be on the road helping people, which is what they do.

Mario Posteraro, the president of OPSEU Local 256 in Hamilton, identified the core problem as perpetual underfunding.

Paramedics being bottlenecked in the ER for hours means that they are unable to be out in the community doing the job that they love and that they're so well prepared to do.

I think we also need to understand that it's not just patients, it's not just the paramedics, it's not just the staff in ERs who are part of this picture; it's ambulance communication workers, the person who receives the call when you call 911. We have to really see this through their lens. I've talked to these dispatch workers. They've shared some horror stories of the things they've had to face.

One woman I talked to, who is actually suffering from PTSD—and you'll understand why. She had a mother call with a choking baby on the line during a code zero event, when she had no ambulance to send. She had to put the mother on hold to take a cardiac arrest call where she had to deliver what is called operator-assisted CPR. She said to me that these are decisions no person should have to make—whether you attend to the baby who's choking or the person who's dying or having a cardiac arrest.

The situation is so dire in Hamilton, as I said, that the code zero events have tripled. As of October 26, there have been 334 code zero events; last year, there was a total of 97. These are significant—and according to the data, it's an average of 775 hours a week that's being lost to off-loading patients. So not only is this a loss to patient care, it's a significant cost to the taxpayers.

I would like to talk about one particular day in Hamilton. On October 12, Chief Sanderson submitted this report to Hamilton city council saying that in that 24-hour period, a record high of 337 hours of ambulance response capacity was lost—that's quite a lot of time in one day—and they experienced at least eight code zero events during that time. He said that patients were on ambulance stretchers awaiting transfer of care to hospitals for as long as 11 hours, and the provincial standard for transfer is 30 minutes. In fact, they had to call an ambulance to come from Orangeville in order to help address that situation.

I'm rapidly running out of time, but I just want to talk about the government's record. The government—when I brought this up in the House, I was told that the paramedics should consider batching. Literally, that means that they should double, triple the number of people they're looking after in hallways across our community. Paramedics say—news for the government—"We're already doing that. We can't keep doing more with less." They find that really insulting.

Hamilton paramedics want, clearly, this government to know that the solution to hospital underfunding can't be solved by asking paramedics and other front-line staff to do more with less.

I would like to say that many, many people identify staffing shortage—it's a problem, and Bill 124 gets identified again and again and again as a problem. They can't retain and recruit health care staff.

The Ontario Nurses' Association said, "The crux of the issue is the lack of nurses—it impacts every aspect of health care.... Invest in" registered nurse "retention first and foremost to support patient off-loading and improve access to ambulance and paramedic emergency services."

Finally, I'd like to say that all of this is happening in the context of the Financial Accountability Officer's report that came today, saying that this government has a \$40-billion shortfall across all spending, across all programs, including a \$23-billion shortfall in health care. So I am shocked to believe that this government would sit on these reserves and have this kind of shortfall in funding when people's lives are significantly put at risk. We need to come up with solutions for this, but while we're waiting for solutions, we just can't leave people hanging. It's unconscionable, and it's—

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I would like to thank the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for presenting this motion.

This motion, at its core, is part of our government's five-point plan. Our goals are clear: Provide the best care possible to patients and residents while ensuring the

resources and supports are in place to keep our province and economy open.

In 2021, our government announced the 911 models of care, and we have since expanded this program. The program was designed to further utilize our paramedics to provide health care services in timely and appropriate care in the community.

We are making investments for both our land ambulance service and supporting health human resources. Following the Minister of Health's announcement at AMO, our government increased the land ambulance funding by another 5% this year. That's a 19% increase since 2018. This is a total of \$764 million in funding to assist municipalities with the cost of land ambulance operations this year.

Through the expansion of patient care models that allow paramedics to provide community-based care to some 911 patients, new patient care model projects in more than 40 municipalities enable some palliative and mental health and addictions 911 patients to be treated or referred for care in the community instead of being taken to the emergency department.

Where my riding of Newmarket–Aurora is located, York region has a treat-and-refer program as part of the 911 models of care for palliative and on-scene pain and symptom management. This means that patients can get the treatment they need in the comfort of their home without having to go to the emergency department.

York region land ambulance funding increased from \$45 million last year to \$47 million this year.

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We are also returning ambulances to communities faster with the dedicated off-load nurse program. As part of the budget, we are proud to be investing an additional \$7 million in the program, for a total of \$23 million in 2022-23. This investment will fund additional health care providers to help off-load ambulance patients in emergency departments, freeing more ambulances to return to service in the community. The goal of this program is to strengthen emergency health services province-wide, while helping to reduce ambulance off-load delays in more municipalities.

Again, using my region as an example, the region of York has participated in the dedicated off-load nurse program since 2008, and we are investing more than \$1.2 million annually in this program.

In 2021, the dedicated off-load nursing program helped increase ambulance availability by about 500,000 hours.

Examples of how these 911 patient care models are having a positive impact on our health care system: One pilot that was running in the Middlesex-London paramedic service between March 2020 and February 2021 reported 84% patient satisfaction and 94% service provider satisfaction; transfer of care dropped by 10 to 11 minutes on average in the Canadian Mental Health Association crisis centre, compared with 27 to 87 minutes at the emergency department; and patients received 17 times quicker access to care than in the emergency department.

We're increasing non-ambulance transportation for medically stable patients. In 2021-22, our government provided more than \$280,000 in funding in Hamilton, Niagara and Windsor to support immediate off-load pressures. We have also invested \$1.2 million to enable more than 5,000 patient transfers in Thunder Bay, Rainy River, Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury-Manitoulin in 2021-22.

We're maximizing HHR capacity by increasing enrolment in paramedic colleges, while making policy changes that will support emergency health needs.

I would like to conclude by quoting Chris Spearen, who is the chief of the York region paramedic services:

"Ensuring residents receive the appropriate level of care is a top priority for paramedic service providers across the province, including York region paramedic services. Paramedics have become an integral part of the health care system, improving access to care by collaborating with and linking patients to primary, palliative and community care to ensure their needs are met. Enabling new models of care and adequate funding of the dedicated off-load nurse program are key improvements that can help to create efficiencies in paramedic services and these programs have helped keep paramedics available in our community. Paramedics are a speciality resource that need to be available to respond to the needs of the community, and the time paramedics spend in hospitals needs to be reduced to enable timely ambulance response to 911 calls."

Madam Speaker, our government will continue to work with our paramedics across this great province, to ensure they receive the resources they need to provide support to our community members when and where they need it.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'd like to thank the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for bringing forward this very important motion. It addresses a very crucial issue in our province, one that is seriously impacting the residents of my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean—and it's an issue that I've done some advocacy work on myself.

When you find yourself in an emergency situation, minutes matter. I've had to call an ambulance twice in my life: once for my father-in-law, and once for my son. I remember that heart-stopping feeling of wondering what was going to happen and if my loved one was going to be okay. Thankfully, the ambulances came quickly, and I didn't also have to worry about whether the ambulance would come in time.

Two and a half years ago, I came to the Legislature—my very first time here—on behalf of CUPE paramedics to present data showing that paramedic services were under serious pressure. Call volume was increasing, especially among the most serious and most urgent calls. The time it was taking to off-load patients at hospitals was increasing, tying up ambulances for lengthy periods of time instead of getting them back onto the road. The CUPE paramedics and I warned the government then that the numbers showed the pressure on the system was unsustainable, that we were already seeing more and more

periods of time when no ambulances were available, or when ambulances had to be pulled from other regions to cover shortages. We told the government that we were reaching a point where Ontarians could not be sure that if they called 911 an ambulance would come. Sadly, the government did not listen to us. And now we find ourselves in a terrifying situation where ambulances not coming, or not coming for hours, is a commonplace occurrence.

When I was knocking on doors in Ottawa West–Nepean over the past year, I heard horror stories from residents about waiting for ambulances. One woman waited two hours for an ambulance, terrified the entire time that she was going to die. Her daughter finally came and collected her and drove her to the hospital. Just this past weekend, we learned in Ottawa that this year there have already been over 1,000 level zero events where no ambulance was available. That’s already a 33% increase over the total number of level zero events in 2021, and we still have two whole months to go.

This is a dangerous game of roulette we are playing with people’s lives. Sooner or later, someone is going to pay for this shortage with their life. We are already putting people into incredibly stressful and harmful situations—both the patients and their loved ones, and the paramedics and dispatchers who have to live with the moral injury of seeing crises go unaddressed.

We are seeing the results of this in Ottawa. A survey of paramedics in CUPE Local 503 earlier this year found that stress levels are very high while morale levels are very low. Workers are being forced to work overtime everyday, skip meal breaks, and to live daily with the knowledge that serious calls are going unanswered. No wonder Ottawa is experiencing a retention problem with dispatch staff.

It’s long past time to take action. The government needs to ensure that our paramedic services have the capacity that they need, that they are adequately resourced and have enough ambulances and paramedics to respond to the level of population need. We also need to make sure that our hospitals are able to off-load patients quickly, which means addressing the crisis in health care, repealing Bill 124 and recruiting, retaining and returning nurses to the health care sector.

I hope the government will support this important motion and, more importantly, that they will do what it calls for.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I’m pleased to rise this evening to speak to this important motion put forward by MPP Shaw on funding for our emergency health services, and to highlight how the significant investments of this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford and Minister Jones, have helped address the province-wide challenges facing our health care system and emergency health services, including in my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh.

Our government’s four-part strategy to tackle ambulance-off-load-time issues focuses on returning ambulances to communities faster, providing timely and

appropriate care in the community, facilitating non-ambulance transportation for stable patients, and increasing health care worker capacity. Together, the aim of these efforts is to improve patient flow in hospitals, reduce ambulance off-load time and avoid unnecessary trips to the emergency department.

Earlier this month, Dr. Wassim Saad, Windsor Regional Hospital chief of staff, acknowledged to CTV Windsor, “This is not a one problem, one solution issue. This is multi-faceted.”

Our government understands the complexity of the ambulance off-load time issue, exacerbated by recent health human resource shortages in addition to local factors like rapid population growth and demographic shifts. That’s exactly why we are taking a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to address it.

1820

Speaker, in my community, I have seen first-hand the impact of this government’s diligent efforts to address the pressing challenges facing emergency health services across Ontario today. Through a \$23-million investment into the dedicated off-load nursing program, paramedics can get back into communities faster. Essex-Windsor EMS has participated in this program since 2008. This year, we’re investing \$982,000 for their dedicated off-load nursing program. We are also expanding 911 models of care to empower paramedics to provide more appropriate, timely care in the community.

In Windsor, we have a treat-and-refer model to support patients requiring support for mental health and addictions challenges. This model refers patients directly to a mobile mental health unit, so they can receive treatment at home or in the community without having to visit the emergency department.

Speaker, our government has continued to work in partnership with Essex-Windsor EMS to provide their dedicated and hard-working team with the support they need to maintain ambulance availability in our community. This includes providing an additional \$280,000 in 2021-22 to address immediate ambulance off-load pressures. And over the past year, the Ministry of Health has been in constant contact with Windsor-Essex hospital leaders, Ontario Health West, and Essex-Windsor EMS to collaborate on strategies that will continue to improve ambulance off-load times throughout the region, especially when further challenges arise.

Most recently, Minister Jones, Essex MPP Anthony Leardi and I had a productive meeting with Essex county warden Gary McNamara and Essex-Windsor EMS chief Bruce Krauter to discuss how we can continue to work together to address the ambulance availability and off-load time challenges our local health system has faced. Following our meeting, Chief Krauter released a statement sharing with residents that, “We had frank and fruitful discussions and we were all dedicated to pursuing long-term strategies to address these issues collaboratively involving all regional partners.” Windsor–Tecumseh residents can be assured that we are doing just that.

Speaker, this government takes the issue of ambulance off-load delays seriously, and that's why we will continue to collaborate with Ontario Health, paramedic services, hospital senior leadership and other sector partners to implement both short- and long-term solutions to address local challenges, all while building a stronger emergency health system province-wide for generations to come.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: It's a real pleasure to rise today and speak on this motion from my colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. For the people listening at home, I'm going to read the motion. It says: "That, in the opinion of this House, every Ontarian should have access to ambulance and paramedic emergency services, and the government of Ontario should ensure the necessary funding to end the periods of time when ambulances are unavailable to respond to an emergency call, known as 'code red' or 'code black.'"

In other words, this motion simply says that when you pick up the phone and you call 911, there should be an ambulance available. I think most of us would take that for granted—that, yes, there should be an ambulance available. But in Durham region, in Hamilton, in Waterloo, in Ottawa, in Thunder Bay—across this province—there are code zeros all the time, and they're happening more and more frequently.

We just heard the members from Newmarket–Aurora and from Windsor–Tecumseh talk about all the actions that the government is taking, all the money that they're investing in solving this problem. But the fact is that the NDP and my colleague brought this forward in this House in 2018, and the results from this government's inaction is that an average of 884 patients daily are waiting for inpatient beds in Ontario. That's up 53%. In other words, ambulances get to the hospital and there is no place to off-load them, so they have to wait up to 11 hours with the patient and they can't go and save other people's lives, which is absolutely shameful.

The government talks all the time about how they're investing money here and investing money there, but the real bottom line is: Are there no more code zeros? And the fact is that the number of code zeros is increasing exponentially. In fact, when you look at the finances, the FAO, the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, says that this government is creating a \$23-billion shortfall in health care over the next six years. So we are asking the government to step up—don't just give a bunch of numbers; actually look at the number of code zeros. That's the bottom line.

Will the number of code zeros in 2023 be zero? That's the question. That's the goal that this government should be aiming for, and nothing else is acceptable.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'd like to thank the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for raising this critically important issue for Ontarians, for patients across the province. And I'd actually like to thank the members

beside me, the members for Newmarket–Aurora and Windsor–Tecumseh, for articulating the strategies that the government is taking in order to address this crisis.

I'd like to make the argument today that this motion should be very simple for all of us to support, because it really only says two things. When you break it down, it literally says, number one, that every Ontarian should have access to ambulance and paramedic emergency services. Is that something we can agree to? I think so. The second thing it says is that we should ensure necessary funding to ensure that when someone calls 911, there will be an ambulance crew ready to respond—when there isn't, that's called a code zero. So all it's saying is that there should be adequate funding so that when you call 911, there will be an ambulance crew available to respond. Is that something we can agree to? It doesn't say what route we have to get there. It doesn't define what necessary funding is. It doesn't say that we have to repeal Bill 124; I would argue that we do, but you can agree to this motion without repealing Bill 124, without doing anything. You can say that the plans you just presented are adequate and necessary funding, and in a separate debate, we can say the opposition members disagree with that. But this motion does not define what necessary funding is. All we have to do is say that we believe every Ontarian should have access to ambulance or paramedic emergency services and that there should be necessary funding. That is literally all this motion says. It's non-partisan.

So then, why raise this motion at all? I think the reason for that is, we do need to reaffirm these principles, because right now across our province, every single day, there are countless code reds, code blacks, code zeros or level zeros. There are a million different names for it, but it always means the same thing: that someone is ill or someone is dying and when they call 911, there is no one there to help them. Does this chamber want to help those people? This motion is simply reaffirming that principle. There's no reason for us to disagree to it.

Reaffirming that principle is important, because in August our ambulance off-load times were the worst they've ever been since 2008. Do we all want to fix that? We do. This motion does not lay blame on anyone.

This summer, the last period for which I could find data, there were over 1,000 paramedic vacancies across this province. Do we want to fix that? Of course we do. How? The motion doesn't say how. But we should all be united in wanting to fix that.

I want you to be successful in the community paramedicine program that you spoke of. People love it; I agree with you. But we need to have enough paramedics. Can we all agree that we want our government to fund enough paramedics? All of us can agree to that. That's all this motion says.

Paramedics right now are burnt-out. They have inadequate mental health supports. Oftentimes, they're resorting to non-profit agencies. There's one that reached out to my riding called Boots on the Ground. They could use some more funding. But again, this motion doesn't mandate that they do get that.

Paramedics are underpaid. Ornge, which is the critical care ambulance service, the men and women who literally land on highways and in fields to rescue people in their moments of most dire need, who are at the highest risk of dying in crashes—it happened a few years ago, just outside of Moose Factory. Should they be adequately funded? Yes. How should they be adequately funded—this motion doesn't say it, but we can all agree that they should.

1830

Our patients and paramedics deserve the best that we can give them. I'm aware of countless examples right now of people across the province who have had heartbreaking stories. In one case, there was a critically ill patient somewhere up north—I don't want to say exactly where, for patient confidentiality. He called 911. There were no ambulances, so a fire truck came and put the person in the family car. Do we want that to happen? No, of course not.

All this motion says is that everyone deserves access to paramedicine—

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas on bringing forward this very timely motion. It was certainly timely in 2018, when she brought it forward the first time, and it's even more timely today, as we are discussing this in this chamber.

I just wanted to comment a little bit about some of the recent statistics that we're seeing from London. Two weeks ago, the day after Thanksgiving, there were 16 ambulances, all bunched up together, at the London Health Sciences Centre emergency room. They were waiting to transfer patients to the ER, and they were unable to do that because of the lack of staff in the ER to accept the patients. That was one of the consequences of the government's lack of attention to address the code zero problem—because when we have these 16 ambulances all waiting at the London Health Sciences Centre ER, they are unable to respond to another emergency call when it comes in.

The head of OPSEU Local 147, which represents paramedics in the Middlesex-London Paramedic Service, said that this is actually becoming a daily occurrence. This is happening more frequently than they have ever seen before. The president of that local, Jason Schinbein, said, “Even our high-priority calls, something like a chest pain or shortness of breath”—and we know what that can signify—or a “significant motor vehicle collision ... there's no ambulance to send. There is one coming, but it's coming from 30, 40 minutes away.”

Imagine how scary that would be—if you have a loved one who is having chest pain or shortness of breath and you need to call an ambulance, if there has been a significant motor vehicle collision and you're forced to wait for an ambulance. In those kinds of situations, seconds matter. When an ambulance finally arrives from another jurisdiction—because it has to be pulled in because our ambulances are bunched up at the ER—and you're taken to the hospital, you end up lying in the

stretcher in the ambulance for 12 hours or more. Those are the kinds of off-load delays that people are experiencing across this province. This is a problem that has been building, certainly over this last year, although we had seen it for a long time before that.

The Middlesex-London paramedics released a report over the summer. In two months, July and August, 57 times there were no ambulances available, when code zeros had to be called. And they reported that the number of off-load delays increased 38% this year, and the average length of each delay has almost doubled.

What we hear from the paramedics who staff these ambulances is that they are completely done. They are burnt out from two and a half years of the pandemic, and they are frustrated by having to sit in an ambulance with a patient when they know there are urgent calls they should be going to. They're leaving the profession early, just like we're hearing about nurses. In Middlesex-London, they did a survey and almost 30% of the paramedics reported that they were actively looking for other work; they were hoping to leave as soon as they could to find other jobs. We have a profession where the majority of the paramedics are now in their early twenties, because there are so many experienced paramedics who are leaving.

The solution that paramedics have pointed to—as my colleague mentioned in her remarks, the solutions are there. The solutions are in front of the government, if they would only commit the funding to deliver those solutions. Repealing Bill 124 is an easy one—that is what caps the wages of paramedics and other public sector workers at 1%. That is a real barrier to our ability to not only retain but also to recruit those essential front-line emergency service workers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to thank everyone who spoke to this important bill today. I want to thank my colleagues very much for speaking to it.

I also want to very specifically thank the member from Don Valley East, because you managed to capture the spirit and the intent of this motion. It was intentional that I didn't put any prescribed solutions in there. It was intentional, because I wanted there to be nothing in this bill that we couldn't all agree to and we couldn't all support.

We talked about changing the models of care. There's the off-load nursing program and the paramedicine program. These are all important programs and important solutions, and we need all of the ideas to address this critical problem.

But I just want to say that while we're waiting to see the success of some of these trials and some of these pilots, as the member from Ottawa West–Nepean said, we can't play a dangerous game of roulette with the lives of the people of the province of Ontario. While we're waiting for these other programs to start to show success and to start to reduce the code zeros in the province of Ontario, we can't just leave families on the hook; we just can't leave them on hold, so to speak.

The idea of this motion was that this government could signal to our burnt-out paramedics, our stressed nurses, the ambulance communication officers who take these harrowing calls every day of the week, that you understand what they are facing. It really was simply that you would recognize and acknowledge what they're doing and give them some kind of hope, simply agreeing in principle that every person in the province of Ontario should have access to emergency paramedic services when they need them.

It's hard to believe that there's anything in here that you couldn't support. I know this is happening in all of your communities, and all your families just want to hear that this is a government that understands and that cares, and

that you want the best, as the member said, for paramedics and for patients across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Shaw has moved private member's notice of motion number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): All matters related to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until 10:15 on Monday, October 31.

The House adjourned at 1839.

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Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	