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of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

N° 112A

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Tuesday  
21 November 2023

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43<sup>e</sup> législature

Mardi  
21 novembre 2023

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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# CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 21 November 2023 / Mardi 21 novembre 2023

## ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

### Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, 2023, Bill 139, Mr. Gill / Loi de 2023 pour plus de bon sens et moins de formalités administratives, projet de loi 139, M. Gill

Mr. John Fraser .....	6345
Mr. Will Bouma .....	6345
Ms. Peggy Sattler .....	6346
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff .....	6346
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	6346
Mr. Anthony Leardi .....	6349
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	6349
Mr. Will Bouma .....	6350
Mr. Will Bouma .....	6350
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	6350
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff .....	6351
Third reading agreed to .....	6351

### Working for Workers Four Act, 2023, Bill 149, Mr. Piccini / Loi de 2023 visant à oeuvrer pour les travailleurs, quatre, projet de loi 149, M. Piccini

Ms. Peggy Sattler .....	6351
Ms. Laura Smith.....	6353
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	6353
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	6354
Mr. Kevin Holland.....	6354
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	6354
Second reading debate deemed adjourned .....	6354

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

### Haliburton County Development Corp.

Ms. Laurie Scott.....	6354
-----------------------	------

### Child care

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens .....	6355
--------------------------------------	------

### Agri-food industry

Ms. Donna Skelly.....	6355
-----------------------	------

### Grey Cup

Miss Monique Taylor.....	6355
--------------------------	------

### Diwali

Ms. Laura Smith.....	6355
----------------------	------

### Diabetes

Mr. Tom Rakocevic .....	6356
-------------------------	------

### Harry Chatzis

Mr. Will Bouma .....	6356
----------------------	------

### Michael Garron Hospital

Mr. Adil Shamji .....	6356
-----------------------	------

## Small businesses

Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	6357
----------------------------	------

## Mental health and addiction services

Mr. Robert Bailey.....	6357
------------------------	------

## House sittings

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	6357
------------------------------------	------

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	6357
L'hon. Caroline Mulroney.....	6357
Mr. Chris Glover .....	6357
Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady .....	6357
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson .....	6357
Mme Chandra Pasma .....	6358
Ms. Donna Skelly.....	6358
Hon. Michael D. Ford .....	6358
Hon. David Piccini .....	6358
Mme France Gélinas .....	6358
Hon. Todd Smith.....	6358
MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam .....	6358
Mr. Brian Riddell .....	6358
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff.....	6358

## QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

### Government accountability

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	6358
Hon. Paul Calandra .....	6358

### Ontario Place

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	6359
Hon. Kinga Surma.....	6359

### Ontario Place

Mr. Chris Glover .....	6360
Hon. Kinga Surma.....	6360

### Taxation

Mr. Will Bouma .....	6360
Hon. Todd Smith.....	6360

### Automotive industry

Mr. Terence Kernaghan .....	6361
Hon. David Piccini.....	6361
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	6361

### Automotive industry / Taxation

Ms. Laura Smith.....	6362
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	6362

**Justice system**

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam..... 6362

Hon. Doug Downey..... 6362

**Land use planning**

Mr. Mike Schreiner..... 6363

Hon. Paul Calandra..... 6363

Hon. Doug Ford..... 6363

**Taxation**

Ms. Goldie Ghamari ..... 6364

Hon. Todd Smith ..... 6364

**Land use planning**

Ms. Sandy Shaw ..... 6364

Hon. Paul Calandra..... 6364

**Health care**

Mr. Ted Hsu..... 6365

Hon. Sylvia Jones ..... 6365

**Taxation**

Mr. Lorne Coe ..... 6366

Hon. Graydon Smith..... 6366

**Government contracts**

Ms. Jennifer K. French ..... 6366

Hon. Kinga Surma ..... 6366

**Energy policies**

Mr. Dave Smith..... 6367

Hon. Todd Smith ..... 6367

**GO Transit / Energy policies**

Ms. Catherine Fife ..... 6367

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria..... 6368

Mr. Mike Harris..... 6368

**Taxation**

Ms. Natalie Pierre ..... 6368

Hon. Graydon Smith..... 6368

**Member's birthday**

Ms. Lisa MacLeod..... 6368

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 21 November 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 21 novembre 2023

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

LESS RED TAPE, MORE  
COMMON SENSE ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023

POUR PLUS DE BON SENS ET MOINS  
DE FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. John Fraser:** No one else is going to stand up; I might as well stand up—

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Well, you did your hair this morning.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Yes, well, at least I've got some, Minister.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** Pardon me. We're talking about hair this morning.

I'm going to keep it really simple, talking about the fall economic statement, for my colleagues across the way. In the fall economic statement, the centrepiece, the place where you all got up and clapped and cheered and roared, was the fact that you were creating a bank.

So the Premier—who wrote the Bank of Canada not once, but twice—in his fall economic statement, put at the top of the list making his own bank—absolutely not doing anything for the average Ontarians with regard to affordability. He made a bank. He's got his own bank now. I'm sure he can be proud of it, but it's not putting food on the table or paying the rent or keeping the house warm.

So when the Premier had an opportunity to, say, for instance, raise the Ontario Child Benefit by \$50 a month to help those families that are really struggling to put food on the table, did he do it? No. He created a bank, which is going to do nothing for those families who are struggling.

When he had an opportunity to return to real rent control in the fall economic statement, to make sure that those people who are living in buildings built after 2018—did he do it? No, but he created a bank. He created himself a bank. Is that going to help any of those families who are

struggling right now to pay rent increases that they can't afford? No, it's not going to do that.

When he had the opportunity to say to families, "We're going to help you a little bit with the activities that your children have after school. We're going to help you out. And so we're going to make this small credit"—people are looking for some indication this government knows that they're there, and they're not getting any. Did they do that? No, but they created a bank. And what's that bank going to do for those families? Absolutely nothing, but it's the same bank where all of you got up and cheered like it was the second coming.

We have an affordability crisis here in Ontario, and when the government had an opportunity in the fall economic statement to say to families, "We want to help you. We know you're hurting. We know you need just a little something," they couldn't even give the families of Ontario just a little something. But we're going to create a bank, and we're going to cheer about it, because it's the greatest thing since sliced bread. It's not going to help any of those families one bit.

When you had the opportunity to take the HST off home heating fuel and inputs, you didn't do it. What did you do? You created a bank. The Premier has got his own bank. I'm not going to say his own little piggy bank—that may be something totally different, and we could talk about that later—but he created a bank.

Speaker, I'm pleased to debate Bill 139. I would like to take this opportunity to have members across the way ask me some questions.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We'll now have questions to the member for Ottawa South with respect to his remarks.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I didn't realize we were debating the fall economic statement, because we're looking at a red tape bill here. But I'm going to just ask the member if he's voting in support of the red tape bill.

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's pretty innocuous, yes. I think there are more important things for us to be discussing here, like how we can help families, and that was my point—

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** It does help families.

**Mr. John Fraser:** What?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Cutting red tape helps families. Come on.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Oh, my gosh. Why don't we cut red tape that is around families actually trying to transition from pediatric care to an adult, or people with developmental disabilities transitioning? Why don't we cut that

red tape? You want to talk about red tape? I'll talk about red tape.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** He answered a question with a question.

**Mr. John Fraser:** That's the best kind.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Okay. The way this works is, the member has made a presentation, and then other members can ask him questions. They have to be recognized by the Speaker to engage in the questions, and it's about a minute each.

The next question will be the member for London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you to the member for Ottawa South for his comments. The member will know that the red tape bill includes a number of schedules that extend the term of a chair of a board of governors at five specific universities in Ontario. It extends that term from six years to eight years.

Given the Liberal government's record, when they left office, of students paying the highest tuition fees in Ontario compared to the rest of all of Canada, and this government's record of now the lowest per-student funding for both college and university in all of Canada, does the member think that increasing the term of the chair of a board of governors from six years to eight years is an appropriate response to the crisis in our post-secondary system?

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you very much for the question. As you do remember, we did provide a lot of tuition assistance—free tuition—to a lot of students across Ontario and reduced tuitions, and we brought grants back.

But here's the thing: You're right. The government has basically said to universities, "You have to cut tuition costs, but we're not giving you any support. We're actually going to hold back." Now, they're asking universities to find efficiencies. Here's the problem: How are we going to get the most highly educated, highly skilled workforce if our institutions are being squeezed and underfunded? We should be investing in it.

The member is right. Happy to answer that question.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, we have the member for Niagara West.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I listened intently to the member. I have to say that the member, when he was speaking, seemed to cast a lot of doubt upon the intent of this legislation. This is legislation that's intended to help struggling farm families, to help struggling businesses, to help people who are dealing with the skyrocketing costs of the federal carbon tax, who are seeing a federal government that is increasing regulations and that is putting onerous, burdensome measures upon the backs of businesses and families.

And yet, the member here says that this legislation doesn't matter. He essentially stood up and said, "Oh, we shouldn't even be talking about this." He was responding earlier and acting as if this legislation is somehow almost useless. That was the intent, or at least the way he was portraying this conversation.

And so, I want to ask if the member is going to apologize to those hard-working families and to those hard-working job creators who know that this legislation is going to reduce the burden on their backs and ensure they're able to create more jobs, put food on the table and support their families.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I have to say, I looked intently through the bill, and I couldn't see carbon or HST in it or any other measures to actually put money in front of people to help them with their everyday lives. So yes, I support those hard-working families. Yes, I congratulate them. And do you know what? That's why we're all here on this side, fighting for you to do just a little something for those families. Give them a break. Raise the Ontario Child Benefit. That's what you could do, and do it very easily. It would help a lot of people. Return to real rent control. Do you want to help people? That's what you need to do.

**0910**

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I don't think there is enough time for another question and response, so we're going to move on.

Further debate?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I'm pleased to be rising in the House today to debate Bill 39, the Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act. I always smile when I read the titles of the government's bills, because sometimes the title of the bill is very different than what's in the bill itself. Right now, I'm doing some work on the government's affordable housing bill, where the government is looking at changing the definition of affordable housing to something which is actually going to create less affordable housing than we currently have. It's very interesting.

I'm going to talk a little bit about this bill. Overall, this bill isn't that bad. It has some housekeeping items which are needed to be done. I'm going to go through some of them right now.

Number one: Schedule 1 looks at the Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act, and it has some minor technical amendments for that.

Then schedule 2 looks at the Algoma University Act, and it also has some technical amendments in that. It would allow the chair of the board to sit for a period of up to eight years, to be determined by the board, and it could only be accomplished by the institution's board of governors. We don't see any huge red flags with that. But when we are starting to get into the schedules, the thing that comes to mind is around priorities. What are this government's priorities? When I think about how we can fix the post-secondary education sector, extending the term that a chair of the board can sit is not the top priority for universities and colleges today.

In my riding, I have the University of Toronto. We're the biggest university in Canada. We're a huge economic driver for my riding in Toronto. When I host student forums, or when I speak to the faculty association, or I communicate with the board of governors, they don't bring up the length of terms for board chairs; what they bring up is the high cost of student fees. When we increase

student fees, it means people with means, people who have families with means, are more able to go to university, and people who don't—that door to go to college or university is closed. Or if they do go through that door, it means they will take on an increasing amount of debt, which, in this day and age, especially for young people, is very challenging, because it has never been more expensive to live in Ontario, especially if you're a young person. Rent is so high, food costs are so high, transportation and transit are exorbitant, and then you've got exponentially increasing student fees on top of that. That's the big issue I hear when I talk to students.

We'll go on. I don't see anything about making post-secondary education more affordable, and I don't believe allowing the chair of the board to sit for a period up to eight years is going to achieve that.

Next we have schedule 3, the Charities Accounting Act. This removes the notice of requirement to the public guardian and trustee where, in a will, property or right or interest in property is given to a person for a religious, educational, charitable or public purpose. We don't have any red flags there.

Schedule 4, the Commodity Futures Act: This amendment is to reduce the minimum period during which the Ontario Securities Commission is required to give a reasonable opportunity to interested persons or companies to make written representations with respect to a proposed rule from 90 to 60 days—okay.

Then we've got schedule 5, the Corporations Act. Once again, this is a housekeeping amendment. This proposes amendments to the Corporations Act. These are technical amendments that enable the government to reduce the risk of dissolution of social clubs: "Currently, section 2.1 of the Corporations Act governs the continuance of social companies from the act to the Non-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, the Co-operative Corporations Act or the Business Corporations Act. And subsection 2.1(4) currently provides that if a social company has more than one class of shareholders, the special resolution passed by the corporation to authorize the continuance must be approved by each class of shareholders by a separate vote." That subsection is proposed to be repealed—definitely a housekeeping bill. A complementary amendment is proposed to subsection 2.1(7). So no huge red flags there.

Then, we've got schedule 6. This is a technical amendment—another one—that would make it easier for credit unions to issue shares to purchase other credit unions, prepare investor offering statements and take deposits from brokers who manage money on behalf of clients, and it would allow a credit union to accept deposits from a member in trust for a named beneficiary, and there's a regulatory proposal out on that. It seems reasonable. My hope is that you've done outreach to the credit unions in Ontario. My guess is that they're asking for it.

Schedule 7 is the Farm Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act. There are minor technical amendments there.

Schedule 8 is the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario Act. This proposed amendment is to

reduce the minimum period during which the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario is required for feedback from 90 days to 60 days—again, housekeeping, technical amendments. Okay.

Schedule 9 is Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act—love those titles. You've got some housekeeping here. You're changing the definition of "minister" so that it names the Minister of Red Tape Reduction—classic, classic Conservative move—and changes the term "businesses" in one provision to "regulated entities."

Schedule 10: minor technical amendments to the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act.

Schedule 11: the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. This changes section 23(c). It provides for exemptions of classes of persons, and not just classes of development, from requiring a development permit. Since the statute already grants the minister broad authority to prescribe exemptions for classes of developments, I suppose this could be an incremental change and does not necessarily signal an intention to exempt more activities from requiring a development permit in the Niagara Escarpment, which is part of the greenbelt. We're not entirely sure what this means, so we're doing outreach to stakeholders.

When we're talking about schedule 11 and the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, the thing that comes to mind for me is this government's continued attempt to open up precious farmland, forests and wetlands to development, which is a problem. Whenever I see anything related to the Niagara Escarpment or the greenbelt or municipal boundaries, instantly what I think is, "Oh, is this another clever way where the Conservatives are looking at opening up land so their developer donor friends can win big because they buy the land cheap when it's zoned for farming and then, once it's zoned for development, the land is worth a whole lot more?" Often, these developers don't even build on the land. They just sell it because they'll get the profit margin even more quickly. So we are curious about what schedule 11 means.

Schedule 12 is the Nipissing University Act. This is a minor amendment to schedule 2, and it applies to Nipissing and would allow the chair, under certain circumstances, to serve for eight years instead of six. It could only be accomplished by the institution's board of governors. Once again, no red flags.

Schedule 13 is the Ontario College of Art and Design University Act. This is the same as schedule 2 and schedule 12. It would allow the chair, under certain circumstances, to serve for eight years instead of six. Once again, it can only be accomplished by the institution's board of governors—no red flags.

Schedule 14 is the Ontario Heritage Act—ooh, heritage. It always makes my eyes open wider when I see this government wanting to meddle with heritage. This is what this says: This bill will amend the Ontario Heritage Act to allow alterations of heritage attributes related to religious practices in a building used for religious practices. If the alterations are required for religious practices and all prescribed conditions are met, a limited religious exemp-

tion seems reasonable. The associated regulatory notice, which we have looked at, lists the criteria in which a municipality would be required to allow an alteration on religious grounds to the building, to the heritage attributes to be altered, to the alteration of the heritage attributes for religious practices—this makes sense to me—any additional conditions prescribed by regulation, and the applicant provides counsel with an affidavit or sworn declaration that the application meets the conditions in the act or prescribed in regulation.

#### 0920

Schedule 15, the Professional Engineers Act: This repeals section 7(1)10, which eliminates the ability of the PEO council to prescribe forms of applications for licences, certificates of authorization, temporary licences, provisional licences and limited licences and requiring their use. There are related amendments to this restriction. The issuance of these temporary licences and so on is now through the registrar. Other amendments here appear technical, again, in order to modernize the act. It changes reporting requirements when the registrar is investigating a potential act of professional misconduct or incompetence. The registrar must report the findings to the complaints committee instead of the council of the association. It adds the requirement to report the findings of the investigation to the subject of the investigation.

Then, we've got schedule 16, the Retirement Homes Act. There are some minor technical amendments there.

In my work as the housing critic, we have done some work to amend the Retirement Homes Act, and the reason is because we do have some fantastic retirement homes in our riding, and then we've had some retirement homes that we've lost. The one that comes to mind is Davenhill. Davenhill was a retirement home just south of the Toronto Reference Library. Unfortunately, the land underneath Davenhill was sold, and the building was bought by a company that wanted to turn it into a condo. What we found in working with the residents there is that there aren't enough protections for people who live in retirement homes. What we found is that when you move into a retirement home, you are protected by rent control for the actual cost of renting your small room, but there are no restrictions on how much the owner of the retirement home can raise the fees for the services that you need to live there. If you are using nursing services, if you require regular medication, if you are going to use the dining room or use food or parking—there are no restrictions on how much those fees can be raised. What we saw, in talking to residents, is that if a retirement home wants to remove someone or generate more revenue, they'll increase the cost of those fees to a point where residents have to give up and move out. I think that's very concerning. We have introduced legislation to call on the government to look into this loophole that allows big increases for fees for people who live in retirement homes, and I think it's worth the Conservatives taking a look at it. When you are a senior, you've got health issues, you don't work anymore, you're on a fixed income, so a small increase in the amount of money that you have to pay for your home and for the

services can have a really negative impact on your life. So it makes a lot of sense, when we're looking at amending the Retirement Homes Act, that this government take a look at how we can make things more affordable for people who live in retirement homes.

Schedule 17 is the Securities Act. This is similar to the provisions that have been outlined above. It reduces written feedback for proposed changes from 90 days to 60 days.

Schedule 18 is the St. Lawrence Parks Commission Act. It adds a clause to section 6 of the act, allowing the commission to dispose of an interest in land by the grant of an easement without the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Essentially, the commission would be able to use commission lands for a limited purpose unilaterally. Section 6 currently grants powers to the commission, at the behest of cabinet, to acquire purchase, lease or appropriate any land. The St. Lawrence parklands are part of the historic Crawford Purchase treaty and border a number of First Nations.

I have never visited the St. Lawrence parklands; I would love to do so.

Schedule 19 is the Université de l'Ontario français Act. It is similar to other provisions in this bill. It allows the chair of the board to sit for eight years instead of six in certain circumstances, and it can only be accomplished by the institution's board of governors—no red flag.

And then schedule 20 is really similar to other provisions. It applies to the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and it would allow the chair of the board to sit for eight years instead of six in certain circumstances.

So that's a summary of the schedules in this bill, Bill 139. Overall, I think it's safe to say that there are not a lot of red flags in this bill. Many of the proposed schedule changes are supportable, and it's essentially a series of housekeeping amendments to tidy stuff up. I do wonder when I read a bill like this—I think about what's missing. And when I think about red tape—the government loves to use the term red tape. In fact, this schedule even has a proposal to change the minister's name to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

I think about some of the letters that have been sent into my office that have talked about red tape, and I'd like to read one to you now. This letter is a Q&A, and it comes from a family doctor in my riding who is very concerned about the amount of red tape they experience just doing their job of meeting patients and working to heal them and help them. We asked them a bunch of questions, and this is what they said. This person is Dr. Vivienne Lemos.

Dr. Vivienne Lemos has about 850 patients. She works part-time. We asked her, "Are you forced to turn away new patients?" and she said, "Yes. I currently only accept newborns whose parents are currently my patients. I receive multiple requests a day to accept family and friends of patients and have people cold-call my office to request the same." This experience that this doctor is having is very similar to the experience that I hear from other doctors in my riding, and it's also similar to the experience I hear from constituents who can't get access

to a family doctor. They just can't. They're one of the 2.2 million people in Ontario who can't get access to a family doctor or a primary care provider, which is a huge concern.

So then we asked the doctor, "What's the volume ... like, and how does it affect care?" She said, "The volume is very high. Despite having an hour each day I am in the office for same-day urgent appointments, I am" completely "overwhelmed. These slots fill up within minutes of them becoming available...."

"My practice largely consists of patients over the age of 60 who are medically complex. Each appointment often takes 30 minutes and some require translators. In order for me to provide the high level of care to which my patients are accustomed, I have to book fewer of them, which in turn is reflected on my billings and my availability to my patients."

Then we asked her about the administrative burden. The reason why I want to talk about the administrative burden is that when we're talking about red tape, this is an administrative burden that seems like an example of red tape that is actually a problem. This is how she describes her administrative work:

"The administrative burden has become unmanageable. I spend 20 hours or more a week on paperwork. Despite the part-time clinic hours, the rest of the time I am not in clinic is spent in the quagmire of paperwork that is involved in running a practice: redirecting referrals, prescription refills, responding to patient emails, reviewing results, meetings with lawyers and contractors about our upcoming (non-OHIP-funded) office renovations, book-keeping, human resources issues etc.

"I would not have the time to do any of these things if I was working in clinic full-time."

She says, "The costs of running a practice are overwhelming and our income has not even kept up with inflation. My overhead is 40% of what OHIP pays me every month—the average for most physicians is 25% to 30% but we are located in downtown Toronto and our rent is high. There is little left after paying taxes."

#### 0930

The reason why I bring up this example is because when I think about my riding and what really affects the constituents in my riding, I think about access to a family doctor. I think about how we can reduce the administrative burden for family doctors, so that they can see more people. I think about how we can expand the scope of registered nurses, midwives and more, so that they can see people directly and be a primary care provider. I think about the high cost of housing. I think about education and how our classrooms are full. I think about how we are doing nothing—nothing—to address the climate crisis and the environmental issues we face.

And I wonder why this government, at this time, is looking at introducing a housekeeping bill when there is so much more that we could be talking about.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Okay. That's time for the debate. We're going to move to questions.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Speaker, I move that the question be now be put.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** All right. That's why we have a table with expertise. I'm reminded of the rules, and in order to move the question, you need to have the floor for debate. It can't be done during questions.

So we're at the question period for the member of University–Rosedale.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** It's always a pleasure to hear these submissions made by the member from University–Rosedale. I'd like to ask the member if she would please take a look at schedule 10 of the bill before us, if she hasn't had an opportunity to do so already. Schedule 10 increases the fine under the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act from \$2,500 to \$5,000, and I would just like to know her views on that. Does she think that fine is too high, too low or somewhere in between?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Essex for that question.

You know, there is a lot in this bill that is supportable. A lot of these minor technical amendments that are in the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act that you describe—this is something we are looking at, that we're talking to stakeholders about. But overall, for us, our concern is less around the bill itself and more around priorities.

When we're talking about what kind of bills we could be introducing in this Legislature, what I would really hope to see is a bill that ensures that everyone has access to a primary care provider, that housing is affordable, that people who rent—the 30% of Ontarians who rent—can afford their rent and not go on to be illegally evicted.

It would be nice to see a bill that focuses on the education issues that we have in our province. I have kids in the TDSB school system. The class sizes are so large and kids that are struggling just don't get the teacher's attention. When I talk to my constituents—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Thank you. We need to move to the next question.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you to my friend from University–Rosedale for her words. I would like to ask her, as our critic for housing for the official opposition, what she would have liked to see in a reducing-red-tape bill that would be good for tenants in Toronto and across Ontario.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to our member for Niagara Centre for that question. There are a lot of things that can be done to improve the lot of tenants in Ontario. I'm going to give one example, because I think it's something the Conservatives probably agree with too, and that is fixing the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Right now, if you have an issue with a tenant or you have an issue with a landlord, you are waiting a very long time to get your hearing date: six months if you're a landlord and up to two years if you're a tenant. And then what we're also finding is that even if an adjudicator rules in your favour—say you're a tenant and you were illegally evicted—the Landlord and Tenant Board is not following

up and they're not enforcing their ruling. So most landlords aren't paying the fine, which is small to begin with, and they've gotten away with illegally evicting a tenant, for example. So if we're looking at something that can be done, that's practical, it would be to make our tribunal system and our Landlord and Tenant Board work for Ontarians.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I appreciate interacting with my friend from University–Rosedale. We've heard that already from the member from Ottawa South and now from University–Rosedale: The opposition and the independent Liberals aren't necessarily so much against this legislation, as they don't think that it's such a big deal.

I want to riff a little bit off my colleague from Niagara West's comments earlier—maybe a little bit more heated—because when you actually look through some of the legislation that we're planning on saving Ontario doctors 95,000 hours of paperwork instead of patient care, when we're working with Skilled Trades Ontario to make data sharing more important—you know, government is like a big ship moving in a certain direction. It's very difficult to change the direction of that ship, but by nibbling away at some of these easy wins and low-hanging fruit, we make big changes but slowly and steadily.

I was wondering if the member can comment on the fact these just good, smart things to reduce red tape are actually important and good for the people of Ontario.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Brantford–Brant for that question. The Ontario Medical Association did put in requests to reduce some of the administrative burden faced by family doctors, and there are some moves in this bill to address that.

What the Ontario Medical Association also asked for is for this government to get serious about fixing the crisis in primary care so that those 2.2 million Ontarians can have access to a family doctor. Also, the OMA also had a lot of concerns about the difficulty it is for people with complex medical conditions who live at home to have access to home care. It's very hard to get comprehensive home care so that your loved one can have some time off and so on. They're the two additional things that the OMA asked for and they're not in this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** No, I appreciate that. I appreciate that the member is appreciating what we're trying to do.

I'm curious because I think the Minister of Health is actually going into committee today at some point in order to talk about our improvements to home care, and so it's good to hear the member from University–Rosedale actually supporting the things we're doing to try to solve the primary care crisis in the province of Ontario and to try to take care of some of those other things.

I'll leave her with this, because time's running short, and it doesn't seem like there's too many people rising to ask questions in this House this morning: Will the member be voting in favour of this legislation? I think the answer

is yes. I think I already heard that from the member from Ottawa South, but I'm wondering if the member from University–Rosedale will be voting in favour of this common-sense red tape reduction bill to make life easier for to the average ordinary Ontarian.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Brantford–Brant for the question. I wouldn't want to surprise you in advance, so you're just going to wait for the vote and then find out. You know, wait with bated breath there.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Jeff is in favour.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** What?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Jeff is in favour.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yeah. Well, we're going to keep our lips quiet here.

What we can say is, you mentioned the Minister of Health is looking at bringing in home care legislation and, unfortunately, we do have a lot of concerns with the home care legislation, specifically because we feel that it opens the door even further to privatization. When we allow the privatization of home care, it means more money goes into shareholders' pockets, CEOs' pockets and less money goes to personal support workers and nurses who are providing that front-line quality care. So, we have a lot of concerns about that.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question.

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Thank you to the member from University–Rosedale for your comments. Now, we know that the Ontario Medical Association was also very concerned about fixing the crisis in primary care and expanding and integrating home and community care. There are a number of serious concerns about the privatization of community care. I'm also wondering if perhaps you could speak to the need to expand nurse practitioner-led clinics.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you for that excellent question. We do see real value in expanding the need for nurse-led clinics.

**0940**

The reason why it's so important to me right now is because we just did a forum in Chinatown. We spoke to many older Chinese Canadians, and they told us loud and clear that they don't have access to a family doctor who is fluent in Cantonese or Mandarin. Then we did a little bit of a deep dive and looked at how many doctors in the area provide services in Cantonese and Mandarin, and we discovered that the average age of those doctors is 70. So all these people who are being served by these family doctors are in a really tough spot, because many of them are going to retire, which means that there is a real opportunity there and a real need to bring in more nurse practitioners to provide primary care and to really address the family doctor shortage in communities that are already being underserved.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** That is time.

We're going to move to further debate. I recognize the member for Niagara West.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Sorry. Can I go back? I missed a rotation.

I'll recognize the member for Beaches—East York.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Thank you very much, Speaker, and good morning, everyone. It's always a pleasure to be with you here in the beautiful chamber—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I'm sorry. Again, I apologize. Things are rolling and we're trying to roll with the punches here, and I was just notified by the table that the independents already had their two rotations.

I will then apologize, and I will go back to the member for Niagara West for further debate.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Once again, I move that the question now be put.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Mr. Oosterhoff has moved that the question be now put. There have been more than six hours of debate on the third reading of this bill. I'm satisfied that there has been sufficient time of debate to allow this question to be put to the House. It is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Orders of the day?

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Oh, right, I have further stuff to go through. I apologize for the confusion this morning.

Mr. Gill has moved third reading of Bill 139, An Act to amend various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

*Third reading agreed to.*

#### WORKING FOR WORKERS FOUR ACT, 2023

#### LOI DE 2023 VISANT À OEUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, QUATRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 149, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 149, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi, le travail et d'autres questions.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** It is a great pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 149, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters.

I regret that the labour critic for the official opposition, the member for Sudbury, is unable to be here, and that is because the government called this bill at—I think it was close to midnight on Thursday, which is when the member for Sudbury had the opportunity to begin his leadoff

remarks on this legislation. He has done extensive consultation with stakeholders in labour, with unions, with worker advocates, to get their feedback on this bill. Unfortunately, he was unable to complete his one-hour remarks, which would have been, I think, very helpful for the government to be able to hear, because he has done the kind of extensive consultation that this government has repeatedly failed to do—if they really want to understand the issues that working people in this province are facing, and if they really want to bring forward legislation that would actually address the issues that workers are struggling with in this province.

Bill 149 amends four separate pieces of legislation. It amends the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, 2022, which, interestingly, is not even in force yet. Once again, we see this government passing legislation—quite recently; that legislation was debated in this House, passed in this House, back in 2022. It's not even in force, and yet the government is bringing forward amendments to its sloppy legislation that they had drafted initially, that already requires revisions. This bill also amends the Employment Standards Act—and I'll have quite a bit more to say about the amendments to the Employment Standards Act. It amends the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006. And finally, it amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

I'm going to start with the final schedule, schedule 4, the amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. This legislation finally provides the presumptive coverage for esophageal cancer in firefighters. We heard lots of boasting from this government about how they were going to be moving ahead with these changes in their last employment omnibus bill. They made that commitment. We fully support that commitment. Through the efforts of my colleague the member for Niagara Centre, we actually led that initiative to provide that presumptive coverage, and I want to thank and congratulate my colleague for his efforts, for his advocacy on behalf of Captain Craig Bowman, and for the private member's bill that he brought forward, Bill 127, which had first reading in June 2023. The government could have moved forward with this change several months ago, with that private member's bill; they could have moved forward with this change when they introduced their previous employment omnibus bill, but they didn't. But here we are today, and we appreciate that change. It is a long-overdue change that is well past due in this province.

We also want to highlight that this presumptive coverage is not just important for firefighters who work in municipal fire services across this province, but it should be extended to include wildfire fire workers. That category of firefighters is excluded from the definition of firefighters that is covered by presumptive clauses under the WSIA.

#### 0950

That change is not included in this legislation, and I have to question why. We know that with the impact of climate change we are seeing severe weather events on a

scale that we haven't experienced before in this province. We all remember the smoke that was coming from the wildfires in Quebec and northern Ontario and the impact that was having on our air quality here in Ontario and well down into the United States. Wildfire fire workers have been combatting these consequences of climate change to an extent that we haven't seen before, and yet they are excluded from this ability to access presumptive coverage under WSIA.

Not only did the government exclude wildfire fire workers from this legislation, but they have cut the number of fire crews that we have in this province when they reduced funding for wildfire management programs by 67%. A 67% reduction to funding for wildfire management programs as we are in the midst of—or in the summer, certainly—a wildfire crisis across the province. We are 50 fire crews short because of this government's decision to cut that funding for wildfire management programs.

Otherwise, Speaker, the changes that are set out in the first three schedules of this bill will have some impact on workers in the province, but they are very much baby steps. They are the kind of incremental changes that workers don't deserve. Workers deserve a government that is going to listen to the challenges that they are facing and make the kind of changes that would really have an impact on their lives.

I'm going to now go to schedule 1 of the bill, the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act, 2022. A new section is added that requires that a pay period as set out in the act not exceed the prescribed number of days. What does this section do, Speaker? What this does is it waters down the already flimsy minimum-wage protections of the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act by adding the clause "Unless the regulations provide otherwise" to section 9(2) of the act. That section of the current legislation sets out that employers must pay minimum wage for assignments. In other words, the minimum-wage provisions only apply when a gig worker—a digital platform worker, an Uber driver, a Skip the Dishes delivery person—the minimum wage only applies to when that worker is in the process of delivering. It does not apply to the time between assignments and to the time it takes to get to an assignment or to the next assignment. What that means is that these workers are effectively protected by the minimum wage provisions of this bill just an estimated 60% of the time that they are on the job.

Speaker, I think that you were a member in this House when I brought forward a private member's bill called the Preventing Worker Misclassification Act, which was also legislation that would protect digital platform workers, the gig workers. We have seen an erosion of the quality of work in this province. We have seen an explosion of the gig economy, with too many workers forced to patchwork together gig jobs, contract jobs, jobs which, until the government introduced its bill, had no protections whatsoever in terms of labour.

This is at a time when we are seeing, internationally, recognition for gig workers to be recognized as the

employees they are. We're seeing decisions in Spain, the UK, New York City, other jurisdictions, where the courts have ruled that digital workers are employees and should be covered by all of the protections and benefits of the Employment Standards Act, and that's what my bill would have done.

My bill addressed worker misclassification. It addressed the reality that too many gig workers are doing work that should be legitimately covered by the Employment Standards Act but are completely excluded. It created a new test for how you identify an employee under the Employment Standards Act, so that those gig workers would not be misclassified as independent contractors; those gig workers would be recognized as the employees that they are, and therefore entitled to minimum wage protections—fancy that, Speaker. They would be entitled to vacation pay. They would be entitled to scheduled breaks in the days that they work. They would be entitled to protections around hours worked.

And so that legislation that I introduced was debated in this chamber, and the government refused to support that direction. The government refused to acknowledge the rights that digital workers should have and that the courts, as I said, are recognizing in other jurisdictions. Instead, they went ahead with their own Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act.

So let's talk some more about digital platform workers. They spend, on average, as I said, about 40% of their work time waiting for deliveries or rides, and that is the 40% of their workday that is not going to be covered, now, by any of the protections of the government's Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act. It would also allow large international companies like Uber and Lyft to avoid paying workers, as I mentioned, for the time that they are not actually on assignment.

The amendments to this act do not protect platform worker wages from being further reduced below minimum wage, because when 40% of your workday is not covered by any minimum wage protections, you can imagine that, over the course of a workweek, a digital platform worker, when it's all averaged out, will actually be earning much less than is required by Ontario's minimum wage laws.

In the short time I have left—it's surprising how quickly 20 minutes go—I want to talk about the schedule of the bill that the government claims is going to provide some pay transparency. Speaker, I don't think you were elected at the time, but when the Liberal government, just prior to its ouster by the people of this province in 2018—just prior to that election, the Liberal government of the time introduced a Pay Transparency Act.

#### 1000

I have to commend and acknowledge the hard work and the efforts of the Equal Pay Coalition, and in particular, the two lawyers who have been driving forces behind the Equal Pay Coalition and driving forces behind advocacy to get the government to move forward with pay transparency legislation. Those two lawyers, that I've had the great privilege of working closely with, are Fay Faraday

and Jan Borowy. They have been formidable champions of equal pay and pay equity and pay transparency.

Again, we have seen in other jurisdictions, other countries, that pay transparency is a critical tool to help close the gender wage gap in Ontario. It is a critical tool to ensure that women are no longer earning 75% of what a man earns.

Every year, Equal Pay Day is recognized in Ontario—not by this government, of course; they don't want to draw any attention to the fact they have failed to do anything effective to help close that gender wage gap, but on this side of the House, we certainly highlight Equal Pay Day each year, which marks how much further into the next year a woman has to work in order to earn the same amount that her male counterpart would have earned in the previous year. And, Speaker, typically, that day falls somewhere at the end of March or early April, because that is the reality for women in this province—in particular, it is the reality for racialized women, women who are living with a disability, Indigenous women. Equal Pay Day for some women actually falls much closer into the middle of the year, or even the following autumn. That is how underpaid certain groups of women are in this province. So pay transparency is, as I said, a critical tool to help close the gender wage gap.

So what this bill does is it requires employers to post information about expected compensation levels for any position that they are hiring for. Does this address the goal of the previous legislation, the Pay Transparency Act, Speaker? Not in the slightest. This very modest, simple requirement will not go anywhere as far as we need to go, which was set out in the previous Pay Transparency Act.

In fact, Speaker, instead, we could have saved the government some time. Instead of working on a schedule—a change that's included in the bill—the government could have enacted the Pay Transparency Act because that legislation was introduced, as I said, just prior to the 2018 election. It was debated in this House for second reading, went to committee, it was debated in this House for third reading—it was passed, Speaker. It got royal assent, Speaker. Has it been enacted, Speaker? No, it has not. This government pulled that legislation and has been sitting on that legislation while they claimed to be doing a consultation with employers about that bill.

Now, that would have been something that would have really made a difference for women workers in this province—had the government announced that they were going to actually enact the Pay Transparency Act. It's the provisions in that Pay Transparency Act which—again, I want to credit Jan Borowy and her efforts for helping improve that legislation at committee and ensuring that those measures that were included in that bill would actually start to close that gender wage gap that has been so damaging for women in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** We're going to move to questions.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I listened intently. I want to thank the member opposite for her submissions.

I was looking at statistics, and apparently 6.1% of individuals in Ontario are now working in the food industry or food services, accommodation; in my riding of Thornhill, it's probably far greater, because we're the food capital of Canada—that's just my own opinion.

One of the things that we're going to be implementing is something that will make it much better for the people who work in the hospitality industry. I have teenagers. I think many of us in this room understand that there are sometimes bad actors. Sometimes people are asked to do unpaid shifts and forced to pay in dine-and-dash situations. Does the opposite member think that's fair? And does the opposite member think that industry workers deserve more protection from bad actor employers? And what does she think of that aspect of our bill?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** There's so much I can say in response to that question and the kinds of protections that hospitality workers in this province deserve, but I certainly agree with the member that hospitality workers should not have to pay when there is a so-called dine-and-dash situation. That is already prohibited in the Employment Standards Act.

One of the ongoing challenges, of course, with the Employment Standards Act is that it requires complaints to be made, and that has always been a real barrier to ensuring that the protections of the act are available to all workers in this province, because too often employees don't know their rights and are exploited by unscrupulous employers.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question?

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Thank you to the member from London West for her insightful comments.

I'd like to move back to wildland firefighters. According to Minister Smith and Minister Fedeli, Ontario is experiencing challenges with the ability of skilled and experienced candidates—to get people to fill those positions. But according to Noah Freedman, a forest fire leader from Sioux Lookout, “We don't have issues bringing new fire staff into the program—we can't retain people. When the season is over, and our backs and lungs are destroyed, staff look at their bank account and ask, ‘Why did I do this?’” We know that they are still not covered for presumptive cancers. And, frankly, what do we do when the government itself is the bad actor?

I see a lost opportunity. I also see a betrayal in what is not covered in this bill. I wonder if you could speak to that.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you very much to my colleague for the question. I know that she has been a huge advocate for wildfire workers in her riding in northwest Ontario, and I really appreciate her efforts.

Yes, I totally agree; it is beyond insulting for the government to leave wildfire firefighters so poorly compensated and poorly supported and excluded from legislation like this. As a result, as the member points out, we are unable to retain those essential workers, who are going to be even more important as the impacts of climate change continue to be felt.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you to my friend from London West for her presentation.

I want to ask about health care workers. A lot of what's not in this bill is very important. It's a missed opportunity. In my riding, I have health care workers contacting my office who worked on the front lines but never received their pandemic pay.

What are some of the things that could have been in this bill to help health care workers in London?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I appreciate the question from my colleague the member for Niagara Centre.

Certainly, I have heard a lot since 2019, in fact, about Bill 124, and that is the government's infamous legislation that capped the wages of public sector workers. Of course, a big part of our public sector workforce is health care workers. The government did this, they implemented this legislation, just prior to a global pandemic. In a global pandemic, the last people you want to see leaving their professions because they are not compensated appropriately are health care workers. What we would have liked to have seen is the government drop its challenge of the court decision on Bill 124 that found that legislation unconstitutional and do something to increase the wages of health care workers.

1010

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question.

**Mr. Kevin Holland:** I listened with great interest to the member opposite, and I have to call into question some of the information that she is putting out there and some of this rhetoric that she's stating here. As a 21-year firefighter in my community, serving both wildland firefighting and house firefighting, and as the mayor of my community for 31 years, we advocated with previous governments for a long time to bring in legislation that provided this protection to our firefighters. We have—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Kevin Holland:** You can sit there and wave your arms all you want, but this government is the one that has brought in legislation recognizing the importance of protecting our firefighters. This is our third piece of legislation for working for Ontario workers, so I just want to ask the member opposite, do you not recognize what we have done to this point and recognize that it is a progressive piece that we are continuing working on with the members in the sector that I have worked very—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Thank you for the question. Member for London West to respond.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I just referenced Bill 124 in a previous question. You know who else has been impacted by Bill 124? I talked about the impact on health care workers, who are leaving the profession in droves—

*Interjection: Firefighters.*

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Firefighters are also leaving. In this province, the government's decision to reduce funding to wildfire services has meant that there are not enough experienced fire rangers to lead fire crews. Low pay,

precarious work and the exclusion of wildfire firefighters from this presumptive coverage are fuelling that turnover. It is causing more people to leave that occupation at a time when those workers are desperately needed.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for London West for her excellent presentation. I know and I recognize the huge amount of work you've done to improve workplace conditions. I'd like to get your perspective on the government's changes to digital workers. Where are they falling short?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I appreciate that question from my colleague the member for University–Rosedale. You know, Speaker, digital workers are the only workers in the province of Ontario who have their own set of labour protections. What is fundamentally missing in terms of the government's support for digital workers is to recognize them as the employees that they are and to ensure that all of the benefits and protections of the Employment Standards Act apply to those gig workers. There is no reason that they should be regarded as a second class of workers with a lesser set of protections, as outlined in the Digital Platform Workers' Rights Act.

We are seeing, across the globe, a growing recognition of gig workers as employees, as workers who deserve to be covered by employment standards legislation so that they have access to minimum wage, so that they have vacation pay, so that they have severance, so that they have everything that workers in this—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Thank you. It's 10:15.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** We're going to move to members' statements.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### HALIBURTON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT CORP.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** The Haliburton County Development Corp. has been a trailblazer for businesses in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. The HCDC is a dedicated group of individuals who are committed to helping entrepreneurs fulfill their dreams by connecting local innovators with the resources they need to start, maintain and grow their ventures. In fact, they are one of the province's biggest success stories for supporting local businesses. In the last three years alone, HCDC has moved over \$15 million in capital financing, which has developed over 890 jobs across the area.

It is my pleasure to congratulate them on their new venue, the Link. The Link will be home to a business incubator, the chamber of commerce, the arts council, tourism and economic development staff, and services from the Business Development Bank of Canada. The

HCDC has created a space that will be foundational in supporting businesses with one-stop shop convenience for local entrepreneurs.

Never afraid to think out of the box, HCDC recently partnered with the county's Places for People to launch a new community bonds program to help bring more affordable housing units to Haliburton county.

I would like to thank the hard work and dedication of executive director Patti Tallman and board chair Pat Kennedy and their teams for providing leadership for community economic development in Haliburton county.

#### CHILD CARE

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I stand here today as a grandmother filled with pride, celebrating my grandson Greyson's fifth birthday. His smile, his energy are captivating.

Grandchildren provide a line of sight on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed by grandparents, shining a light on a pressing issue affecting families across Ontario—the challenge of securing child care.

In our province, despite promises of new child care spaces, families continue to struggle due to the slow and unclear rollout of these initiatives. The reality in the Niagara region, and everywhere, is a growing wait-list of over thousands of names, sounding an alarm bell to the urgent need for accessible, affordable child care options.

This struggle is compounded by the fact that while some steps have been taken, like wage increases for early childhood educators, we still see a significant gap in support and resources for all child care workers. The slow rollout in Ontario is primarily responsible for the lack of subsidized spots, severely impacting the availability and quality of care.

I know there are many grandparents in this chamber. So from one grandparent to another, we must accelerate our efforts, provide clear direction, and ensure that every family in Ontario has access to the child care they desperately need.

Happy fifth birthday, Greyson James Walter Uhryn. You are a symbol of the bright future we are fighting for. Grammie hopes all your wishes come true.

#### AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** It's my pleasure to rise today to highlight an exciting initiative announced yesterday at Brenn-B Farms in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Speaker, I'm sure you'll be delighted to learn that our government, through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, is investing up to \$25 million to expand production capacity and boost energy efficiency in the agriculture and food sector. The money will be provided to eligible farm and food processing businesses to help them invest in innovative technology, equipment and processes.

Shawn Brenn, president of Brenn-B Farms, said, "Today's announcement ... is welcome news for the agricul-

ture sector. Growers are continually looking to innovate in order to manage constantly rising input costs, address labour shortages and market instability in an effort to keep their farms sustainable for the long term.

"Cost-share supports like" this "will help jump-start these investment decisions and support the viability of locally grown fruits and vegetables. I applaud our government's forward thinking and encourage ongoing collaboration that aligns with keeping our farms and agri-food sector resilient and strong now and into the future."

I would like to thank Shawn and all of Brenn-B Farms for hosting the event and for sharing his thoughts on this exciting opportunity for the agriculture community across Ontario.

1020

#### GREY CUP

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Today I'm rising to show my love and gratitude for the 110th Grey Cup Festival, which happened this past week in Hamilton. Thank you to the Hamilton tourism and Grey Cup committee, who did not miss a single detail. They worked tirelessly to bring fans from across the country to the Hammer.

I was honoured to be part of the Stampede pancake breakfast, hosted by the Calgary Grey Cup Committee and Legion 163 in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. They served up the true spirit of community, with music, laughter and fun.

Later in the day, I continued to be amazed at the Calgary VIP events at Shoeless Joe's—great energy, with local leaders, CFL fans and Calgary's mascot horse, Tuffy, who was piped into the bar for a cold refreshment.

Saturday started with the Spirit of Edmonton breakfast, featuring all of our CFL cheerleaders, sluce juice and fans of every team and colour.

Our annual Santa Claus parade was next on the list, which also had a Grey Cup theme. Thank you to Santa and Mrs. Claus for sharing your special arrival and for bringing smiles to the faces of children of all ages who lined our streets. James Street North was the daytime place to be, with so many interactive events for families to enjoy and experience the magic of the CFL in all its glory.

Special thanks to the convention centre, who hosted nightly entertainment with team-themed experiences to lead us up to the big game.

I know I'm out of time, Speaker, but a huge congratulations to the Montreal Alouettes for bringing it home for the east. I'm looking forward to being in BC. See you next year with the Cats.

#### DIWALI

**Ms. Laura Smith:** November marks Hindu Heritage Month, and I'm proud to represent members of this community in my riding of Thornhill. I recently had the privilege of attending the Diwali celebrations hosted by the Thornhill Senior Citizen Club. This club is one of the many organizations in Thornhill keeping our amazing

seniors engaged and active. Speaker, there's nothing more effervescent than their Diwali celebration: their smiling faces, beautiful traditional clothes, fantastic food and the music.

For many years now, the president of the club, Kashmir Sangha, and his vice-president, Jitu Parikh, have been doing a great job of bringing everyone together with creative dance and theatre performances, not only keeping their minds and their bodies active, but also preserving a connection to their culture and keeping their rich heritage alive and vibrant. But what struck me most was that the spirit of Diwali was not just in the festive decorations, but in their genuine connections they're forging between individuals, bridging together generations and creating a family within a community.

The senior citizens group have made me feel welcome, truly. They accepted me into their family, and celebrating with them is one of the highlights of my year. As we celebrate Hindu Heritage Month, let's not only revel in the beauty of the lights and the joy and the music of Diwali, but also the community spirit that shines brighter than all the lights and candles combined.

#### DIABETES

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome the Motta family from my community. One year ago, merely days before World Diabetes Day on November 14, the Mottas received a shocking diagnosis that their own young daughter, Noemi, had type 1 diabetes.

Type 1 diabetes is a chronic condition that affects children and adolescents, requiring a lifetime of vigilant management. In Ontario alone, thousands of young lives are impacted by this condition, and the numbers are growing.

Since receiving this diagnosis, the family dedicated much of their time to supporting other families affected by this condition and raise awareness. At home in our community, young Noemi decided she wanted to mark World Diabetes Day this year by organizing an awareness event at her school, and last week, with the incredible support of her friends, who I know also wanted to be with her today, a beautiful display of blue ribbons was constructed by students from all grades at her school to raise awareness and start conversations about the condition.

Noemi, today I'd like to recognize you for your extraordinary efforts in raising awareness about diabetes at your school. Your dedication and commitment to this cause have not only educated many but also inspired many others to take action. Despite challenges, you have turned your personal experience into a powerful tool for advocacy, a testament that age is no barrier to making a significant impact. Your outstanding efforts in raising awareness has empowered your peers with knowledge and your actions have truly made a difference in your school and community. So thank you for being a beacon of hope and an inspiration and a role model for all of us.

#### HARRY CHATZIS

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Good morning. I am honoured to rise today to pay my respects to a pillar of the Brantford–Brant community, Harry “the Admiral” Chatzis. Harry “the Admiral” passed away earlier this month at the age of 86, leaving a hole in our community. He founded Admiral Submarine in Brantford, a culinary staple in the late-night food scene, known for its incredible sub sandwiches and the famous “Junkpile.”

I had the privilege of being served personally by Harry, and, Speaker, the sandwich I had was more than worth having to duck to enter the building.

Having grown up in Greece under Nazi occupation, Harry became all too familiar with the feeling of being hungry. After moving to Canada when he was 17, Harry worked to ensure that no one in his community would experience the hunger that he had experienced in his youth. Harry never hesitated to feed those who couldn't afford food, and as his son Gus said, “He believed that if he could fill someone's belly, that person could then focus on other things.”

Other than for the delicious food, Harry will be remembered for the many lives he touched with his kindness and generosity. Harry's presence will be deeply missed by the Brantford community, but the impact he had on the people of Brantford will endure for years to come. Rest in peace, Admiral—all of Brantford–Brant salutes you.

#### MICHAEL GARRON HOSPITAL

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** As much as we try to help people in our constituency office, I am always in awe of how much members of our community help each other. A local hospital serving Don Valley East, Michael Garron Hospital, has earned its reputation as the “Heart of the East.” It has been there during our community's toughest times—serving the most marginalized, leading with clinical excellence and being present when needed the most. It led the way in setting national records by vaccinating 10,000—and later 30,000—people with COVID vaccinations in a single day.

I am proud of our community and we're proud of our hospital. We've stepped up to support MGH in every way that we can—by volunteering and contributing as generously as we can. But the hospital needs more help. Making a difference cannot just be up to individuals.

I walked through our emergency department last week. I've spoken about this before and I will say it again: My colleagues are struggling, as the needs of the community have outgrown the emergency room. Doctors and nurses are working out of a portable in the ambulance bay. Admission wards are old and in dire condition.

While the area around our hospital is budding with development, and there will soon be an influx of people into our community, Michael Garron Hospital needs an influx of funding to fulfill its plan to expand and renew its facilities. It is my hope to work with this government to

see that this funding comes through sooner rather than later for health care workers, for patients and for future generations in Don Valley East.

### SMALL BUSINESSES

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** November 25 is Small Business Saturday, and I rise today to recognize all the small neighbourhood gems that make big contributions to Etobicoke–Lakeshore. My riding is so much richer because of the economic opportunities that these small businesses create.

Last week, I had the pleasure of welcoming Glam Room on the Queensway, a new beauty clinic that offers services that make you look better. I also welcomed Pokeworks, which is located on North Queen, and enjoyed a fresh, healthy and delicious dinner.

Over the years, small businesses like Dino's Pizza on the Queensway, Le Gourmand on Lakeshore, and PHNX Cosmetics on Bloor in the Kingsway have made valuable contributions to our neighbourhoods. These, and many other small businesses like them, keep our community vibrant and thriving.

I also want to give a shout-out to our seven BIAs: the Village of Islington, Mimico Village, the Queensway, Mimico by the lake, the Kingsway, Lakeshore Village and Long Branch for their hard work and commitment towards keeping dollars local.

1030

And don't forget all the Christmas markets that are happening this weekend—one is at the Franklin Horner Community Centre; there is also one at the New Toronto Holiday Market, and many others in the community—to get your stockings stuffers.

The way we spend and where we spend makes a difference. Once again, I want to thank all the small business owners and workers for their valuable contributions to Etobicoke–Lakeshore. Remember: This Christmas, shop local and support your local community.

### MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** It's an honour to rise, once again, in this Ontario Legislature. I'd like to take this opportunity to share with the Legislature the news of an innovative new investment by the Ontario government in health care delivery in rural Lambton county.

On November 17, the Canadian Mental Health Association of Lambton-Kent, along with Bluewater Health in Sarnia–Lambton and the North Lambton community health clinic, launched a brand new, state-of-the-art MobileCare clinic in Lambton county. The clinic was made possible by a nearly \$323,000 investment by the government of Ontario. The new 30-foot custom designed walk-in clinic on wheels is providing mental health, addiction and primary care services in rural communities around Lambton county three days a week. So far this

mobile clinic has made stops in Sarnia, Watford, Alvinston, Thedford, and Kettle and Stony Point First Nation.

The MobileCare clinic includes a multidisciplinary team of mental health and addiction service providers, nurse practitioners and social workers. The clinic itself is equipped with multiple rooms to provide service and accessibility equipment to support everyone visiting. There are no appointments needed, and of course, there is no cost for patients to access services.

Mr. Speaker, the MobileCare clinic is a great way to provide early intervention care close to home, thereby reducing the burden on rural residents in Lambton county to travel to access high-quality health care. I am certain the MobileCare clinic will have a tremendous impact in Lambton county.

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

### HOUSE SITTINGS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 9(g), the Clerk has received written notice from the government House leader indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and therefore, the afternoon routine on Wednesday, November 22, 2023, shall commence at 1 p.m.

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I'm very proud to welcome the Motta family from my community: Daniel, Elisa, Noemi and Jorge. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**L'hon. Caroline Mulroney:** J'aimerais présenter à Queen's Park aujourd'hui l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario, l'ACÉPO. L'ACÉPO represents all French-language public schools boards across Ontario. I welcome them today for their advocacy day.

I would also like, Mr. Speaker, to introduce Bryan Fieldhouse of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, a constituent of mine, who is here as well for their advocacy day. Welcome.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I would like to welcome, from Ontario Place for All, Norm Di Pasquale, Emmy Egulu and Bruce Van Dieten; and from Architectural Conservancy of Ontario Inc., Bill Greaves. Welcome to your House.

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** It's my pleasure to welcome to the House one of my favourite chicken farmers, Henk Lise. Henk is a Haldimand county farmer and is usually one of my very first calls when I have a question, as he is a wealth of information. Welcome, Hank and CFO.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I would like to join my colleagues on the floor here to welcome the Chicken Farmers of Ontario to Queen's Park today, and in particular, Chair Murray Opstein and vice-chair and neighbour, from my riding of Huron–Bruce, Mr. Rehorst. Thank

you for being here very much, and the entire provincial directorship.

I think everybody will be looking forward to their chicken wing reception later today.

**M<sup>me</sup> Chandra Pasma:** J'aimerais aussi souhaiter la bienvenue aux représentants de l'ACÉPO qui sont venus de partout dans la province, et surtout la présidente, Anne-Marie Gélinault, et nos représentants d'Ottawa : Samia Ouled Ali, présidente de notre cher CEPEO; Christian-Charle Bouchard, directeur de l'éducation pour CEPEO; et Jean-François Boulanger, directeur de l'éducation pour le Centre Jules-Léger. Bienvenue.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** I'm thrilled this morning to introduce Murray Opstein, who is here with the Chicken Farmers of Ontario. He is also from my riding of Flamborough—Glanbrook. Good morning.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Good morning, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I know we have great school communities across our province, but today in the chamber, in the public gallery, I have students, teachers and staff from Chaminade College School from the riding of York South—Weston. Welcome to the Legislature.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I'd like to also welcome the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, and a special welcome to Tim Klomp maker from Asphodel-Norwood. I want to thank him for all he does for our Fare Share food banks and for our community.

I'd also like to welcome the Ontario General Contractors Association, who are here with us this morning, and a special welcome to Giovanni Cautillo, Lewis Cowan, Al Youmans and Frank Perricone. I'm looking forward to meeting with them. And a special thank you to Laryssa Waler, who keeps them in check.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinais:** Moi, aussi, j'aimerais ça accueillir des gens du Nord qui sont descendus nous voir. On parle de Anne-Marie Gélinault—pas Gélinais—la présidente de l'ACÉPO et présidente du Conseil scolaire du Grand Nord; Francine Vaillancourt, vice-présidente du Conseil scolaire du Grand Nord; et Sébastien Fontaine, directeur de l'éducation au Conseil scolaire du Grand Nord. Merci beaucoup de votre rencontre ce matin. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Speaker, as someone who's had a pound or two of chicken wings over the years, I'd like to welcome Prince Edward county chicken farmer Jeremy Prinzen—all the way from the county this morning—to Queen's Park.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Yesterday, I made a mistake by not acknowledging Melissa Hudson and Nicki Ward, who were both here for the Trans Day of Remembrance. I wanted to make sure that members of the House knew that their presence was here.

**Mr. Brian Riddell:** I have the honour and pleasure today of introducing Shahan Awan, one of our legislative pages, and his family: Naeem Awan, Rafia Awan, Fatima Awan, Abdullah Awan and—if I screw this up, I apologize—Aliyan Awan.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I have the privilege of welcoming to the Legislature today three fine constituents

from the Chicken Farmers of Ontario: Andrea Veldhuizen, Jordan Fois and Kim Tsementzis. Welcome to your House.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This question is for the Premier. I have asked this government multiple times to clear up their relationship with Atlas Strategic Advisors and the Premier's former principal secretary Amin Massoudi—the same Amin Massoudi who was on the infamous boys' trip to Vegas. Massoudi was paid through his private company Atlas nearly a quarter of a million dollars to do the same job as when he was the Premier's principal secretary, yet this government has refused to answer questions on just exactly when that contract started.

So I'm going to try again: My question to the Premier is, can you finally clarify when the contract with Atlas Strategic Advisors started?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'll answer again, Mr. Speaker: The contract started after Mr. Massoudi was no longer employed by the Premier's office and after he reached out to the Integrity Commissioner to clear the work.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It's a simple question that merits a simple answer. When did the contract start? People want to know, Speaker, because the Premier's office told media that the contract started on "about July 1, 2022." And that matters, because through an FOI, the official opposition NDP obtained documents that show Mr. Massoudi was going to meetings as the Premier's principal secretary as late as August 23, 2022.

1040

That's a two-month overlap between when Mr. Massoudi started billing the taxpayers through his company and while he himself was still on the government payroll. So back to the Premier: Was the Premier's close friend paid twice to perform the same work?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** No.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It really shouldn't be so difficult. It's not just the dates that—

*Interjections.*

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

The member for Brampton North will come to order, the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke will come to order. The member for Kitchener—Conestoga will come to order. We're just getting started.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** A bit cranky today. It's not just the dates that we're concerned about because while Mr. Massoudi's company, Atlas Strategic Advisors, was billing the Premier's office for speech writing, that same company was lobbying the government on behalf of numerous private interests related to the greenbelt grab.

In fact, the Integrity Commissioner has been looking into this. They've been "looking into Atlas Strategic Advisors for allegations of illegal lobbying since June."

So back to the Premier: Why was a close friend of the Premier awarded a contract to write speeches at the same time that they were actively lobbying this government?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will take their seats. Order. The member from Hamilton Mountain will come to order. The government House leader can reply.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** But the standing ovation really isn't for me, right? It's not for me. The Leader of the Opposition says that I'm cranky but why would I be cranky when last Thursday there was a motion in front of this House, a motion of confidence in the government, and you know what happened, colleagues? A 100% confidence in the government. Not one member stood in their place—wait for it. Not one member of the opposition stood in their place to vote against the government. Not one said that they did not have confidence in the government. It was a historic vote.

But colleagues, that has happened once before in the history of the province. You know when that was? In the last Parliament.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We're engaging in a conversation here. The government House leader has the floor.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Sure Speaker, I'll go through you to them because had you been able to vote I'm sure you also would have had the exact same confidence in the government that 100% of this Legislature had. It was a historic vote. I appreciate the confidence from the Leader of the Opposition. I appreciate the confidence from the third party. A historic vote—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. Order. Start the clock. The next question.

## ONTARIO PLACE

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I have another question for the Premier. Today, Ontario Place for All is filing an injunction to stop the environmental vandalism at Ontario Place, including the destruction of 800 mature trees. The clear-cutting at Ontario Place should have been part of an environmental assessment but the government conveniently exempted it, saying it was a privately led development.

Speaker, it is abundantly clear the Ontario government is running the show at Ontario Place, so an environmental assessment should have been done. So will the Premier

order a full environmental assessment of the Ontario Place project?

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

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** We've conducted two environmental assessments, one on the site-servicing work that is necessary in order to make sure that we can have tenants on the site. Good news: We actually completed our category C environmental assessment on Friday. It will be made public. It is shared with the public. But what's most important is we are bringing Ontario Place back to life.

No one goes to Ontario Place anymore. The site is deteriorating, the site is flooding. In fact, Live Nation had to cancel its concerts back in 2017 because of the flooding issues. We will make sure that we improve the shoreline. We will make sure that there will be lots of activities for families to do at Ontario Place. If it was up to the NDP, they would do nothing. They would let the site deteriorate and let the site continue to flood, but we will not let that happen.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I'll tell you what we wouldn't do, Speaker: We wouldn't sign a 95-year lease. In fact, the government's hands are all over the Ontario Place redevelopment. They're so hell-bent on this private luxury spa that they're ignoring municipal bylaws, claiming they don't apply to them. The government is threatening to use provincial powers to expropriate city-owned land to ram their luxury spa project through. The government is trying to have it both ways.

Will the Premier stop the environmental destruction of Ontario Place and order a full environmental assessment?

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what Ontario Place looks like right now. First of all, it is mostly paved. It's mostly paved. The marina is rusting. The island is flooding. This is not a place where people bring their families any more. That is just the reality of this situation.

And Mr. Speaker, we had a competitive procurement process where Therme wellness facility participated and was successful, and now they will be an active tenant on the site that will contribute to the annual maintenance of the site to make sure that it does not fall into disrepair like it has done under their watch. They closed Ontario Place. We are going to bring it back to life with wonderful activities to make sure that we bring the site to good standard so that families can enjoy it for years and years to come.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** In fact, Speaker, 2.1 million Ontarians visited Ontario Place last year. That's more—

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Yes. And it's flooding, so the government's solution is to put in an underground parking

garage. I mean, everything about this deal is fishy. This government has gone so far above and beyond for this luxury spa company, it smacks of preferential treatment. They're going out of their way to avoid scrutiny. They signed a 95-year lease with Therme but won't share the details with Ontarians. They're putting in at least a half billion dollars into this and it seems like it was all a set-up from the beginning. The deal reeks.

To the Premier: Do we have to wait for another Auditor General report or the RCMP to get the details?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Infrastructure.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Everyone here knows that the people that do go to Ontario Place are going there to enjoy the concerts provided by Live Nation, and included in our redevelopment plans is a brand new stage that will be operational all year round so that the public can enjoy more concerts at Ontario Place.

If my memory serves me correct, the city of Toronto just passed a motion asking for the wellness centre to be moved at Exhibition Place, but do you know what one of their arguments was for that? "Oh, because there's parking." Parking is a necessity when it comes to tourist attractions. Wonderland, the zoo—every tourist attraction has parking. We want to make it as accessible for people so that the mom from Scarborough with three kids can make it down to Ontario Place to enjoy.

#### ONTARIO PLACE

**Mr. Chris Glover:** To the Premier: Walter Kehm, a prominent landscape architect who designed Trillium and Tommy Thompson Parks, has withdrawn his support from the Ontario Place redevelopment project. Mr. Kehm is speaking out against the Premier's environmental vandalism at Ontario Place, including the clear-cutting of 800 mature trees and the habitats that they support in order to make way for a government-subsidized private luxury spa.

The Auditor General has already announced an investigation of the Ontario Place scheme, and now Mr. Kehm says the public needs to know the truth about the harm this project will cause. Will the Premier halt his environmental vandalism at Ontario Place?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Once again, the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** This is a wonderful opportunity to talk about all of the environmental improvements that we are making at Ontario Place. For example, we will have 50 acres of free public realm and park space for the public to enjoy. We will have aquatic habitat, wetlands and improved water quality at Ontario Place. And again, to reiterate, we will have shoreline improvements and enhancements to protect the island for generations to come so that our children, our grandchildren, have a wonderful place to go all year round.

1050

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: The plan that you have, there was no environmental assessment, and your plan is actually to clear-cut 800 mature trees and destroy the habitat for 125 bird species and other wildlife. There was no environmental assessment just because this government, just before they announced the call for the Ontario Place redevelopment, made regulatory changes that exempted this project from the Environmental Assessment Act. Did the government make those changes so the public would not know the truth about the environmental vandalism the Premier was planning at Ontario Place?

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** To add to my previous comments, we will be adding a 6-to-1 ratio on trees for larger trees and a 2-to-1 ratio for smaller trees. In fact, there will be far more vegetation on Ontario Place, once fully redeveloped, than today.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's ask what their plan is. Do you know what the plan of the NDP is? Do nothing. Don't build subways, don't build highways, don't build schools, don't build long-term care and don't bring Ontario Place back to life. No wonder no one supports your party.

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

*Interjections.*

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. The member for Brantford—Brant has a question he wants to ask.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Will Bouma:** My question is for the Minister of Energy. The Bank of Canada has confirmed what the Premier and our government have been saying for years: The carbon tax is raising the price of everything. After years of pushing energy costs higher, the Prime Minister has finally announced that the federal government is pausing the carbon tax, but only on home heating oil and only for three years.

Speaker, this is a serious issue for many Ontarians as costs continue to soar. I've heard from many of my constituents over the weekend who heat with natural gas or propane who are concerned that the federal Liberals are leaving them out in the cold this winter. Speaker, can the minister please explain how the carbon tax is negatively impacting the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Once again, the member opposite is correct. The Bank of Canada has confirmed that Canadians are paying more for carbon tax and they're worse off because of the carbon tax than they were prior to its arrival here in Canada and in Ontario. The federal government has

admitted so because of what the member opposite mentioned: They've realized that it's costing Atlantic Canadians more, so they've carved out home heating fuel in Atlantic Canada, but they've left those who heat here in Ontario and the rest of Canada holding the bag with higher costs of living, Mr. Speaker.

The Liberals are fully aware that the carbon tax is costing Canadians more, so why won't they do the right thing, Mr. Speaker? Why won't they do what the member opposite is suggesting, make it cheaper for everybody across Canada to heat their homes this winter?

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you to the minister for that response; I appreciate that.

It seems that there is now broad recognition that the carbon tax costs families much more than what they will ever get back. However, this recognition does little to help people who are struggling to pay high heating costs. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that by 2030 the carbon tax will cost families over \$2,000 per year even with climate rebates. That's why, Speaker, it was so surprising to hear a member of the Liberal caucus rise in this House to repeat the claim that families are better off because the carbon tax.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on the effects of the carbon tax on individuals and families across the province.

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Mr. Speaker, he was shocked? I was shocked too. I couldn't believe it last Thursday when a member of the Ontario Liberal Party stood in her place—and I believe the exact quote was that families are better off now thanks to the carbon tax than they were before it was introduced. If the federal Liberals are starting to realize that Canadians in fact aren't better off because of the carbon tax, it's amazing to me that members of the Ontario Liberal caucus—and let's be honest; it's shrunk significantly because of energy issues over the last five or six years. But it's shocking to me that a member of the Ontario Liberal Party would stand in her place and say that families in Ontario are better off now than they were prior to the carbon tax. It doesn't make any sense.

I wonder: This party is down to a handful of members; when are they finally going to come to the realization that it's their job to stand up for Ontario families like this party is doing—

*Interjections.*

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

The next question.

#### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** My question is to the Premier. Some \$15 billion in public funds have been committed to build the NextStar battery plant in Windsor, with a third of that committed by the province. On this side of the House, we welcomed that investment and the good jobs that are supposed to come with it. Stellantis-LG is potentially

looking to have international workers build and staff the plant—a pretty big loophole if the province missed it.

Speaker, the government's going to point fingers and state borders are federal, but what is this government doing right now to protect long-term Ontarian jobs at NextStar?

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

**Hon. David Piccini:** I first want to say, Speaker, we're excited about the world-class EV battery manufacturing that's taking place in Ontario thanks to the leadership of this Premier and this Minister of Economic Development.

Speaker, the Minister of Economic Development and I have asked a very simple question; we've written to the federal government and asked them to disclose the number of foreign workers currently working on the site and how many will be arriving at the site via the labour market impact assessment. Then, we just asked simply that the federal government disclose the labour impact assessment, make it public and just share with Ontarians how many foreign workers they expect to arrive.

We know there's going to be thousands of good Ontario unionized jobs created on this site, and it's no thanks to the members opposite. We're creating those jobs thanks to investments this government is making. I look forward to explaining to the member from Windsor West next about more work this great government is doing to invest in jobs.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The supplementary, the member for Windsor West.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** The minister should actually thank the workers in Windsor and the union that helped negotiate that deal over years.

Back to the Premier, this Conservative government had two different opportunities to get this deal right, and they still missed the mark. Windsor workers have been left behind because it didn't even occur to the Conservatives to tie the investment commitments to our local workforce. As many as 1,600 workers from outside the country are reportedly on their way to work on the plant. Windsor is excited to be the home of the future battery plant. The people of Windsor have the skills and experience to do the work.

Speaker, why did the Premier fail to ensure that Windsor workers would be at the forefront of these good-paying union jobs and fail to have the proper protections in writing for the NextStar battery-plant deal?

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. David Piccini:** That member knows, just as every member of this Legislature, that there's going to be great unionized jobs created on that site, and we're looking forward to it.

You know, Speaker, I've got the letter from that member opposite where she meanders to talk about MZOs, but there's one thing we do agree about: This \$15-billion project is of huge significance to my community, our province and our country. What that member fails to recognize is the very MZOs she talks about in this letter—we issued one to get that record investment in her community.

Secondly, this minister and this Premier have been working around the clock to land these deals, no thanks to them. They voted against every single measure in this place to support workers in her own community. Those workers know that the only time they'll see that member is when she and her seatmate show up for the photo op.

Speaker, they can decry everything they want, notwithstanding the decent photo op, because that's what NDP stands for. They only show up for—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The House will come to order. The next question—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. Member for Niagara Falls will come to order. Member for Brampton North will come to order.

The next question.

## AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY TAXATION

**Ms. Laura Smith:** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. We've seen a record number of investments come into our province since we took office because we have kept costs low for businesses. In the auto sector, we have attracted generational investments that are building Ontario's end-to-end EV supply chain and creating tens of thousands of jobs in the process.

**1100**

But rather than supporting our low-tax agenda, the NDP and Liberals in this House continue to support the federal government's carbon tax. They will never miss an opportunity to support tax increases as they are doing with the federal carbon tax.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is positioning Ontario as a global powerhouse in EV production by keeping costs low?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Waterloo will come to order. The member for Brantford-Brant will come to order.

The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade can reply.

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

We have to think about where we were in 2018. Speaker, we had lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. The Liberals, supported by the NDP, had left Ontario completely unprepared. In fact, in 2019, Reuters announced there would be \$300 billion spent on the EV supply chain and not one penny of it was scheduled to come to Canada—not one penny of it.

Our government took office, reduced the cost of doing business by \$8 billion annually and, as a direct result in our negotiations with all of the companies, we landed \$27 billion worth of auto and EV. Bloomberg has announced us as the number two global supply chain and that's because we kept taxes low.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you to the minister for his dedicated work for this province.

Under the previous Liberal government, years of high taxes and endless red tape led to countless businesses to pack up and leave that province. Thankfully, from the first day we took office, we've been focused on lowering costs for businesses, which is why we've seen record investment in job creation across the province. Yet last week, a Liberal member in this House spoke in support of a federal carbon tax—a tax that's making everything more expensive for businesses.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how the federal government's plan to continue hiking the carbon tax will affect Ontario's businesses?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Speaker, you heard in my original answer, we talked about how unprepared the Liberals had left this province. We have changed all that. For the past five out of the past six years, Ontario is now the number one in the site selection in all of North America. This is where people want to be.

The Liberals lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. They wanted us out of manufacturing and into the service sector. They jeopardized our competitiveness. They tripled the carbon tax. They are tripling the carbon tax by 2030—they're going to add 37 cents a litre. They're going to continue to jeopardize our competitiveness, just like they did for the 15 years that they were in office. Speaker, we cannot go back to the days of the Liberal tax-and-spend. That's why we want them to axe the carbon tax.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The Minister of Energy will come to order.

The next question.

## JUSTICE SYSTEM

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** On several occasions, the legal sector magazine *Canadian Lawyer* has raised legitimate concerns about this government's pattern of politicizing the judicial appointment process.

Internal government documents show that on November 19, 2021, the Attorney General was notified of an imminent judicial vacancy in Cornwall. This provided more than enough time for the Attorney General to work with the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee, a non-partisan and respected advisory body, and choose from the committee's highly qualified and vetted list of candidate recommendations.

Speaker, it's been two years since that notification and Cornwall is still short one sitting judge. Is the Attorney General ignoring the committee's advice because his Conservative candidate choice was not on the list of qualified and vetted recommendations?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the judicial advisory committee and how they

work. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, we have been working to make the system more transparent and more fair.

Talking about choice, when we came to government, the committee would give two names to the Attorney General for choice. They could get a hundred applications. They could do fifty interviews and two names would come forward. Those are the only two names that you would see. In one occasion, I got John Smith and Joan Smith in one location; and Joan Smith and John Smith in the other—effectively, giving you choice: “Would you like vegetables? It's peas.” That's it. There was no choice.

So we changed in 2021 to allow for six names per appointment, because the Attorney General is charged with making that appointment. We've also made other changes to improve the process. We've been very open about our criteria.

Now, rather than the conspiracy theories that abound in NDP, I would like to know which one of the 83 judges I have appointed she doesn't like.

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

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** This government's years of political meddling with tribunal and judicial appointments are very well documented now. The Attorney General himself admitted in a TVO interview that he should have the right and ability to appoint judges who reflect the same values as he.

Political interferences has produced dire consequences for Ontario's justice system. Under this Conservative government, there have been record-high tribunal waitlists, massive court staffing shortages, courtrooms literally falling apart, charges against violent offenders being tossed for unconditional court delays, and much more.

Considering their insistent political meddling with tribunal and judicial appointments and the current criminal investigation of this government for reported corruption, how can anyone from the legal community or the general public ever trust this government again?

*Interjections.*

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

The Attorney General can reply.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I thank the opposite member for reading her rambling question, because it covers a lot of ground.

What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that we work closely with the Ontario Bar Association, with the Law Society of Ontario, and with the Federation of Ontario Law Associations. We work with the judiciary. And the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee is that. It's an advisory committee. Of all of the Chief Justices, the regional senior judges, the JPs, the regional senior JPs, the Associate Chief Justices, and the 83 judges that this government has appointed, I challenge the NDP to tell me one that is inappropriate.

#### LAND USE PLANNING

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** My question is for the Premier. Instead of building homes, your government has wasted

time and money on the \$8.3-billion greenbelt scandal and forced boundary expansions, which you are now reversing. Housing starts are not on track, and the RCMP is closing in.

Tomorrow will be exactly one year since I tabled bills to legalize home building in existing communities without paving over farmland and lining the pockets of speculators, saying no to expensive sprawl and saying yes in my backyard.

So, Speaker, will the Premier say yes to my bills to legalize building fourplexes, walk-up apartments and mid-rise housing so people can find a home they can afford in the communities they know and love?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I do appreciate that, but I think the member is incorrect. Really, the policies that have been ushered in by this government and the significant housing supply action plans brought in by the former minister have actually helped us increase housing starts across the province to their highest level in over 10 years. In fact, purpose-built rentals, because of those policies, are at their highest level in over 15 years. Because of the policies that the Minister of Finance fought for to ensure that we took off the HST on purpose-built rentals, the federal government finally, after a year, came on board and has matched that.

What we're doing is working with our municipal partners to get more shovels in the ground as quickly as we possibly can, removing the obstacles that the Liberals put in the way, and we're going to continue to do that. Our policies are working, and they're working because we know how important it is to remove obstacles, to cut red tape, to reduce taxes so that people can get out of their parents' basement and into a brand-new home for themselves.

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

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** With all due respect to the Minister, Speaker, the government is not on track to meet their housing goals. That's what the facts say. They've spent their time focused on helping well-connected speculators cash in, instead of focusing in on building homes that ordinary people can afford in the communities they want to live in. They've focused in on expensive sprawl, which increases property taxes and makes commuting more expensive.

I'm focused on building homes that ordinary people can afford in the communities they want to live in. So the government has an opportunity. I'm happy to help them here. They have an opportunity to say yes to legalizing fourplexes, four-storey walk-up apartments and mid-rise developments so ordinary people can afford homes. Will they say yes to that?

1110

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Mr. Speaker, I find it very ironic, the member from the Green Party saying all this, when he votes against every single piece of legislation we have to speed up development, to make sure that municipalities have all the tools they need to get things built. I want to

remind you, once again, in his own riding—they voted against student housing on Guelph University’s property themselves; I never heard a word from them.

Maybe if Mr. Green comes on board and starts voting for building homes and cutting out red tape and making things happen—you’re welcome to come to this side of the aisle any time.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I’ll remind the members to refer to each other by their riding name or ministerial title as applicable.

The next question.

## TAXATION

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy.

I hear from my constituents that they want to be treated equally and fairly when it comes to the carbon tax. They see how the federal government has moved quickly to provide a pause on the carbon tax for Atlantic Canadians, and they are asking that Ontario be provided with the same opportunity. I agree with my constituents; all forms of home heating in Ontario should be exempt.

As winter approaches, home heating costs are top of mind for many families. Unfortunately, the independent Liberals and opposition MPP do not appreciate the hardship many Ontarians face because of the carbon tax. Speaker, through you: Can the minister please explain how the carbon tax negatively impacts Ontarians who need financial relief?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Speaker, this seems like something that everyone in this House should be able to agree on. Especially with winter on our doorstep, everybody should be able to agree that the carbon tax needs to take a pause for a while. But if they can’t agree on that, I think everybody here should be able to agree that affordability is an issue right now, and it’s not because of anything that this government has done.

We brought forward so many different levers to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario, including removing the HST off of home heating bills. That was a motion that was brought forward last week, and I was really happy that our government House leader brought forward that motion to ask that the harmonized sales tax be removed from home heating for all Ontarians. It’s something that everybody should be able to get by—especially at this time of year.

I commend our government for standing up for the people of Ontario. Why won’t the opposition Liberals do the same?

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

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Thank you to the minister for that response.

Along with the minister, I fully support the government House leader in calling on the federal government to at least pause the collection of HST from home heating bills, even if they won’t scrap the disastrous carbon tax. Ontario households should never have to choose between heating and eating just because of the federal Liberals’ carbon tax.

It is shameful that the majority of Liberal members have once again demonstrated that they just don’t care about affordability by voting against our government’s carbon tax motions, even after they themselves suggested that they would support this very same measure.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please elaborate on how the federally imposed carbon tax negatively impacts the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Speaker, once again, the Ontario Liberals are proving that they’re not serious about making life more affordable for the people of Ontario, and we saw that in real time for 15 years when they were the government of Ontario. They kept making it more expensive to live in Ontario—you’ll recall the phrases “heat or eat” and “energy poverty”—and it’s part of the reason why the Ontario Liberal caucus has been reduced to the minibus party. They continue to make the same stupid decisions that they made back in those days. They’re driving up the price for people across Ontario, and they have members that are standing up and saying that the carbon tax is making life easier for the people of Ontario than before the carbon tax. It’s ludicrous.

These Liberals are all about playing politics while our government is doing everything that we can to make sure that life is more affordable for the people of Ontario. That includes the government House leader’s motion to remove the harmonized sales tax from home heating fuel for all Ontarians.

## LAND USE PLANNING

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Yesterday, the Premier said the people of Ontario “don’t give two hoots about” his government’s attempt to carve up the greenbelt, but I disagree. So do hundreds of people who signed petitions and joined rallies to oppose this government’s decisions. I imagine also Ontario’s Auditor General, the Integrity Commissioner and the RCMP would disagree.

My question is for the Premier: How can the Premier say people don’t care about his government’s shady greenbelt deal when it was public pressure that forced him to reverse the policy in the first place?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Once again, I’m going to caution the member on her choice of words.

Government House leader and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** What the Premier was saying yesterday was how important it is for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and for the government of Ontario to focus on the priorities of the people of Ontario. Those priorities include affordability. Those priorities include building homes. The people of the province of Ontario are worried about the increasing interest rates.

Now, today is the day where the federal government is, at four o’clock, giving a fiscal update which will include, presumably, measures which will either hurt or harm the economy of the country. Have the NDP asked even one question on the economy? We’re now, what, 40 minutes into question period and the NDP have yet to ask a question

on the economy because they don't care about the people of the province of Ontario.

What they care about is ensuring that people are dependent on government. It is an overriding theme for them. While we want to give people the tools to succeed, they want people to be dependent on government. We're going to do what we think is right: cut taxes so that—

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Try as they might, the government can't keep hiding from the public. They're blocking the public from being heard on this important bill. They've only allowed for one hour of committee hearings to discuss the greenbelt reversals and the minister plans to use it up all by himself.

It sure looks like the government is intentionally blocking the public from participating at committee. Are you doing this to avoid being held accountable by the public for preferential treatment of the greenbelt's special speculator friends?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Let me get this straight: When the bill was in front of the House, do you know what happened? Again, when the dining room closed downstairs, the vote collapsed and the NDP went home. They left hours of debate on the table for the bill. They're upset that the public doesn't have an opportunity—according to them. According to them, the public doesn't have an opportunity to speak, but the public elected them to come here and speak on their behalf. If they're so upset about it, you'd think they could carry debate for more than an hour. No, they couldn't, Mr. Speaker. That's why it collapsed, and that's why we're going to go to committee. We will spend that time at committee.

It is listed on the Environmental Registry right now. People have the opportunity to comment. If they are against the changes that we are making, they will have that opportunity to say so in committee, but we will continue on to provide the maximum protection of the greenbelt, despite the fact that they never did it. This party will stand up for the greenbelt. We will stand up for the environment and—

*Interjections.*

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. Start the clock. The next question.

1120

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Mr. Speaker, in January, this government forced the walk-in clinic in Mallorytown to close after they changed how virtual clinics bill OHIP. It was the only one of its kind in Leeds-Grenville, and over 1,000 rural residents were left without another option.

In April, a funding application was submitted for a nurse-practitioner-led clinic, another option for rural residents. An announcement was supposed to be made in September, and then October, and then the fall economic statement—crickets. The mayor just called it “a very deathly silence.”

In the meantime, you've still got rural Ontarians without access to primary care. More people with more complex problems crowd the Brockville emergency room. How many times is this kind of thing being repeated in rural and northern Ontario?

Mr. Speaker, innovative ideas for primary care are ready to roll across the province. Why can't this government make up its mind and get rural Ontarians access to primary care?

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

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I am absolutely thrilled that the member opposite is finally talking about an expansion of primary care in the province of Ontario—an initiative that our government brought forward and he voted against. To suggest that we are in any way delaying this expansion is a complete fallacy. We are assessing all of those expressions of interest. And I will say, there are some wonderful examples of innovation, that we will be able to expand primary—the first primary expansion of multidisciplinary teams in the province's history. I'm very happy to do it. I'm finally pleased that the member opposite is on board and supporting it.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to ask the minister to withdraw the unparliamentary comment.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Withdraw.

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

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Speaker, they're still waiting.

The minister is probably going to make up some attack on the Liberal record in her answer to this supplemental question, so let me just say here that the first nurse-practitioner-led clinic in Canada was in 2007 in Sudbury, in the first term of a Liberal government. Team-based primary care began in 2005 in the first term of a Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, the government's MPP for Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has been standing up and asking about this critically important rural health care issue in this Legislature. To the minister: Why does the Liberal MPP next door have to fight for health care in rural communities?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I don't know—maybe your leadership candidate isn't going so well.

What I know is, primary expansion in the province of Ontario is expanding. We are assessing those expressions of interest. We have literally received hundreds of applications. We're seeing innovation. We're seeing partnerships. We're seeing community care, health care centres coming forward and showing that they can help and be part of the solution. We'll continue to do that work. We want to make sure that primary care expansion is absolutely at the core of how we are improving health care services in the province of Ontario.

I have to say, Ontario still is leading Canada in the number of people who have connections with a primary care clinician—we're at 90% in Ontario. These are not my numbers; these come from CIHI. We're going to do better, with this most recent announcement of primary care expansion.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

What's clear is that the carbon tax is not working to reduce emissions. However, the carbon tax is working to drive up inflation and make the products we need every day even more expensive. Businesses across Ontario are forced to pay this tax instead of making investments to expand their workforce by hiring more workers. It's not right that this federally imposed, regressive tax is making it difficult for businesses to innovate and grow. There are other ways to reduce emissions without this useless tax.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is supporting businesses to strengthen economic growth and curb emissions?

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** The member from Whitby—the great member—is absolutely right: There is a better way. I talked about it last week, and it's around carbon capture utilization and storage, one of the great things we're doing here in Ontario to make this province a global leader in reducing emissions. We can do this by creating jobs and creating opportunity.

Enbridge appeared at committee last spring, and they said the path to net zero in Ontario is achievable by 2050 with cost-effective, reliable and resilient approaches, one where CCS is expected to play a key role. It's critical for industry, communities and governments to continue working together to create the right frameworks to support CCS opportunities in Ontario, opportunities like creating low-carbon hydrogen.

Speaker, the way isn't to drill into the wallets of Ontarian families; the way is to make sure that we're creating jobs for Ontarians every day, while meeting our obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That's what we're doing through my ministry. That's what this government is doing every single day.

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

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Back to the minister: As he explained, the investments that our government is making will support job creation and reduce emissions.

It's clear that carbon capture technology is just one way that our government has supported job creators and our shared goal of reduced emissions. Investments in job creation and innovation are key to building a better Ontario. Many sectors have great potential to integrate new technology that will significantly reduce emissions. That's why it's so concerning that the independent Liberals and the opposition NDP insist on supporting this job-killing and regressive tax.

Speaker can the minister please elaborate on the importance of enabling the technology that is essential for reducing emissions in Ontario?

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** Thank you to the member for the question. I think it's incredibly exciting what we're doing across many government ministries here in Ontario. We've heard from the Minister of Energy about the steps that they're taking to make sure that we continue to

produce clean energy in Ontario, expanding the nuclear fleet.

Last week I talked about the great work of the Minister of Mines. Boy, I love looking at the Minister of Mines. He's excited to go to work every day and make sure that we build that road to the Ring of Fire, make sure we extract those metals, make sure that we build the EV battery capital here in Ontario. The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade is on the case every day.

Mr. Speaker, we know in Ontario that it's not about taking money from Ontarians and saying, "Oh, trust us; we'll give it back to you later." It's about creating jobs. It's about meeting our obligations. We are focused on that. We are doing it every single day. We'll continue to do it every day. I'm hoping at 4 p.m. today, the federal government realizes that and takes the opportunity to get rid of that carbon tax.

## GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** My question is to the Premier. Last week, Infrastructure Ontario announced that Colliers Project Leaders would continue to provide project management services for the province's real estate assets. In 2017, the Auditor General criticized Infrastructure Ontario's previous procurement of project management services. She said that procurement had been structured in a way that favoured large companies like Colliers. There were only three bids for two massive contracts. The new Colliers mega-contract appears to be even bigger.

What is the value of the new Colliers mega-contract, and how many eligible bids did Infrastructure Ontario receive?

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

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Well, I'm happy to speak about some of the efforts that we're doing to improve real estate management in the province, such as the bill that will be before the House this afternoon, in terms of centralizing real estate assets and having better oversight and a sight-line into the use of our real estate so that we can address some of the most pressing challenges in society that we are facing today, like affordable housing and long-term care. I'm very happy to speak about that further.

1130

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

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** The Auditor General's 2017 report also pointed out that Infrastructure Ontario and its embedded private contractors do a terrible job at managing the province's real estate assets. The permanent presence of embedded private contractors within Infrastructure Ontario means public dollars keep going towards private profits, instead of keeping Ontario's public buildings in a state of good repair.

Why is the Premier wasting money by maintaining a permanent presence of embedded private contractors within Infrastructure Ontario, instead of bringing this core function back in-house to be delivered by civil servants who are accountable to the public and not to private shareholders?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** In regard to the legislation that I will be speaking to today, we are in fact listening to the recommendations made by the AG back in 2017, when they said that government needs to be more innovative and be more efficient in terms of managing real estate assets. We are doing that, Mr. Speaker, through the legislation, through centralization and through a holistic approach to make sure that we manage our properties better.

But there are also other things that we are doing to make sure that we make greater use of public lands through our surplus properties, whether it be for economic development, long-term care or housing opportunities across the province. Our government is taking action, and we are doing more with our real estate assets.

#### ENERGY POLICIES

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I was at three Santa Claus parades this weekend, and a resounding theme came up from people who were talking to me. It was about affordability and the challenges that they're having in the rural part of Ontario.

My question is for the Minister of Energy. As winter approaches, our government continues to take action on measures to make life more affordable for home heating. Our government continues to advocate on behalf of Ontarians to the federal government to walk back the disastrous carbon tax. It has played a key role in driving up inflation. We are looking to the other parties in this Legislature for their support by asking the federal government to scrap the carbon tax, or at least cut the federal HST from home heating.

Speaker, can the Minister of Energy please share his views on the urgency of financial relief for Ontarians when it comes to the carbon tax?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Thanks to the member for Peterborough-Kawartha for the question this morning. It's an important one, and he's right: This is what people are talking about on the streets in our communities with the affordability crisis that is going on right now, where people are having to choose between heating and eating in some cases.

While we have put lots of different affordability measures in the window, it's unfortunate that the opposition Liberals here in Ontario continue to support their federal cousins in imposing a carbon tax, which, according to the Bank of Canada and according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, is driving up the cost of everything.

I'm not going to say exactly which member it was earlier who, when I was answering a question about the carbon tax, indicated that we care more about bicycles in Ontario and riding bicycles than we do about driving. There are a lot of people outside of this city who drive vehicles and it is costing them more and more to drive vehicles. If this Ontario Liberal Party isn't careful, they're not going to be the minibus party or the minivan party; they're going to be the bicycle built for two.

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** That's an excellent point. When the grocery store in Apsley burned—it's a 55-kilometre drive

to get to the nearest grocery store. I'm not sure how you do that on a bicycle.

I want to thank the minister for his great answer, though. It's clear from the minister's response that support from the NDP is tentative at best and really kind of fails to offer actual help for Ontarians. While it appears the NDP are at least interested in supporting the installation of heat pumps to help reduce the cost of home heating and emissions, they kind of missed the mark on supporting the cost-saving energy programs that our government has implemented.

Can the minister please elaborate on how our government is supporting the people of Ontario with cost-saving energy initiatives?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question. This time I will address the meat of the question that he is asking. We have several programs that we've put forward, including the Ontario Electricity Rebate, the Comprehensive Electricity Plan and cutting the price of gasoline by 10 cents a litre. We have the Clean Home Heating Initiative, which is also making heat pumps available in communities across the province. These are hybrid heat pumps that will allow people to reduce their use of natural gas and still at the same time heat their home using electricity.

We are putting all of these measures on the table, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP's plan to give heat pumps to everybody is uncoded; they said it would cost less than \$1 billion. It's that kind of half-baked policy that is going to result in massive, massive over-expenditures. If we were to give everybody who's on natural gas or home heating or propane in the province a free heat pump, our back-of-the-napkin math would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$16 billion.

You can't afford the NDP. And the Liberals won't stand up for the people of Ontario.

#### GO TRANSIT

#### ENERGY POLICIES

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the Premier. Over the last couple of weeks, the NDP, the official opposition, have put forward two motions that would make life more affordable for Ontarians. Both of these motions have been shut down by this government. Last week, we tabled a motion simply calling for a clear timeline and a clear, firm funding commitment for the expanded, two-way, all-day GO train service between Kitchener and Toronto. The business case for this is very sound, but the government chose to vote against that motion, even though in 2018 and 2022 this Premier promised the people of Kitchener-Waterloo that he would get it done. This Premier also has a candidate in Kitchener in the by-election right now, and when they announced him, they promised to deliver two-way, all-day GO service. I wonder how this candidate feels now that the government has voted down a firm funding commitment and a firm plan for two-way, all-day GO.

My question is very simple to the Premier of Ontario: Why does he keep leaving the people of Kitchener-Waterloo behind, stranded at the station?

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Mr. Speaker, there has been no government in the history of this province that has done more for public transit than this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford.

In fact, on the Kitchener line, we have increased service by over 27% since 2020. And guess what? That member from Waterloo has voted against every single one of those service increases. This government has been committed to making sure the tunnels are built, to ensure that we can have all-day, two-way GO across the Kitchener line. But then again, when we put those investments forward in this House, in the budget, that member stands up every single time and votes no—votes no for expansion of GO rail transit across this province, specifically on the Kitchener line, and says no to the people of Waterloo for better public transit.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** To the member from Brampton South: I would like to remind him that there has never been a government in the history of the province with a criminal investigation from the RCMP, and people do care about that.

Speaker, just yesterday, we saw this government again vote no to a measure that would benefit the lives of Ontarians. The NDP motion to make heat pumps subsidized, actually, in co-operation with the federal government, to help Ontarians with energy-saving retrofits was the only solution, so far, put forward in this House to tackle affordability and climate change. This would create good, local jobs. It would address the underground economy. It would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It's a good idea. But this government is not going to go down that road. Our proposal actually would make homes so much more efficient and lower people's energy bills.

To the Premier: Why does this government continue to vote against the interests of the people we are elected to serve in Ontario?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The parliamentary assistant and member for Kitchener-Conestoga to reply.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I find it rich, coming from someone who actually has had an Integrity Commissioner investigation launched against her and was found guilty of what she was accused of.

Let's talk a little bit about what we've done for Kitchener. We're building a new hospital in Kitchener. We're building Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph. We are seeing incredible investments when it comes to GO train service in the region; in fact, we've increased service almost 100% since 2018, when we took office.

I'm extremely proud to be part of a government that is putting Waterloo region first—not like this member who sits across, votes no.

We're going to get it done for the people of Kitchener.

## TAXATION

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. The carbon tax means rising prices for everything. It's costing every sector in Ontario more on every single thing they grow, produce, manufacture and transport.

We've heard from the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Minister of Transportation and others about the negative impacts of the carbon tax on our economy and environment.

Speaker, our government is finding solutions to reduce emissions while supporting job creators. That's why it's so disappointing that the independent Liberals and opposition NDP continue to support the federal carbon tax.

Can the minister please elaborate on how innovative approaches to reduce emissions will support Ontario's economy and environment?

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** Thank you to the member for the question. I've had the chance to speak about some of those innovations today.

It strikes me that the carbon tax is a little bit like a bad movie, written by the Liberals and our friends over here in the opposition, called Groundhog Day 2. In this movie, Bill Murray wakes up everyday with a full wallet, and by the end of the day, all the money is gone because he had to pay a carbon tax on buying gas, on buying groceries and on paying his heating bill. Well, Speaker, I can tell you that this caucus is prepared to do a rewrite on that script and turn this into a movie with a happy ending. We're working at it every single day for the people of Ontario. It's easy to write a good movie; the Liberals need to give us a hand to do it.

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

## MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Nepean has a point of order.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Today, I just learned that a great friend of everyone in this chamber—someone who just asked a question—a very strong mental health advocate and a great member from Burlington is having a birthday.

Happy birthday, Natalie.

*Applause.*

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

*The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.*

*Report continues in volume B.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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

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

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)</b>	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
<b>Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)</b>	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
<b>Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)</b>	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Ke, Vincent (IND)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
<b>Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon Andrea (PC)</b>	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
<b>McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)</b>	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
<b>Skelly, Donna (PC)</b>	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
<b>Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)</b>	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	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	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Vaugois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Vacant	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	