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Jeudi
15 mai 2025

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 15 May 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 15 mai 2025

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Good morning, everyone.

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT ONTARIO BY BUILDING FASTER AND SMARTER ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO EN CONSTRUISANT PLUS RAPIDEMENT ET PLUS EFFICACEMENT

Mr. Flack moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to infrastructure, housing and transit and to revoke a regulation / Projet de loi 17, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'infrastructure, le logement et le transport en commun et abrogeant un règlement.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the minister.

Hon. Rob Flack: Good morning to all. I wanted to start first, because I've been up a few times—I want to recognize the great people of Elgin–Middlesex–London who elected me last February and thank them for their continuing support. I'll do my best to never let them down.

It's a pleasure to get to speak today about Bill 17, the proposed Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025, what we feel is an essential and comprehensive piece of legislation that will help us get shovels in the ground and meet the growing need for more affordable homes in Ontario. I announced the tabling of this bill just last Monday, in Vaughan, Ontario, joined by—and I'm going to take my time because I want to make sure I recognize the great support we have with this bill. Obviously, my minister colleagues Stephen Lecce, Prabmeet Sarkaria, Kinga Surma and Peter Bethlenfalvy were there—very much appreciated—as well as our great parliamentary assistant Laura Smith. As well, Mayor Del Duca, mayor of Vaughan, and Mayor Parrish, from Mississauga, flanked me at the podium. I was also very pleased to have with us in Vaughn Robin Jones, the president of AMO, Scott Andison, from the Ontario Home Builders' Association, and I'm going to list some great stakeholders, folks here:

—Justin Sherwood, from the Building Industry and Land Development Association, BILD;

—Michael Giles, on behalf of the Residential Construction Council of Ontario—Richard Lyall couldn't be there, but Michael did a great job;

—Cathy Polan, from the Ontario Real Estate Association;

—Nadia Todorova, from the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario;

—Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association;

—Steven Crombie, from the Ontario Road Builders' Association;

—Jason Ottey, from LiUNA Local 183; and

—Michelle Baker, on behalf of Ontario's Big City Mayors.

Speaker, I also want to acknowledge Tony Irwin from the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, FRPO, who was unable to attend but very, very supportive of this bill.

As you can see from this long list, this bill has received a tremendous amount of support right across our industry, right across Ontario and for a very good reason.

The dream of home ownership has been feeling further and further out of reach for the hard-working people of Ontario due to a challenging gap between supply and demand. It's no real secret. This is a dream we must protect at all costs, and we are taking action to do that with this bill.

Since I was in high school, the population of this province has more than doubled. I remember 7.5 million to eight million people populated the province of Ontario; today it's 16 million people. And new home construction has not kept pace with the rapid population growth we have experienced and continue to experience in Ontario.

Speaker, we are at a crisis that demands urgent, immediate action—a crisis that has only been further exacerbated by the threats we face from President Trump. Make no mistake, he is taking direct aim at our economy, which takes direct aim at our housing industry.

However, as the Premier has said, our government is determined to protect Ontario. We are taking bold action against the headwinds we now face, as we promised the people of Ontario that we would do. I look forward to hearing Mr. Bethlenfalvy's budget this afternoon, which I know will be rich with support for all Ontarians. We are keeping workers on the job, supporting Ontario businesses and creating the environment to get more homes built faster and smarter.

The suite of proposals we are tabling have been developed in close consultation with all home builder stakeholders—and I emphasize, and I listed many of them off. I repeat: This bill has been fully vetted and supported by municipalities, AMO, the Ontario Home Builders' Association and our housing supply implementation team. It is extensive and will go a long way to addressing the need to get vital projects moving faster, without delay.

Speaker, let me be frank: It takes too long and it costs too much to build a house in Ontario. We can no longer accept the status quo that stifles growth and slows down progress, and that is reflected in this bill. There are many proposals contained within it, but I'm going to highlight just a few to you here today.

Speaker, I should point out I'm going to be sharing my time with the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and parliamentary assistant Brian Saunderson at the end of my 20 minutes.

One of the steps we are taking is the elimination of the requirement for secondary provincial approval of construction products that have already been evaluated federally by the Canadian Construction Materials Centre, known as the CCMC—an important requirement. This change would help make sure our construction and development industry have ready access to the latest innovative and safe products, along with supporting Ontario manufacturers.

We are also eliminating the need to apply to a committee of adjustment for some minor variances—this is key. As you know, minor variances are small departures from a zoning law that must be granted by a municipality's committee of adjustment. For example, if a property owner or a developer currently wishes to have a structure closer to a property line than is allowed in the municipal bylaws, that party must apply to the municipality's committee of adjustment to be granted a minor variance by the bylaw. It's bureaucratic; it's red tape. This process takes too much time, costs too much money and provides no certainty as to whether the minor variance would even be granted.

That is why we are proposing changes that would provide flexibility for landowners to meet certain standards in most residential neighbourhoods as of right or without having to go to a municipal committee of adjustment—again, reducing red tape. This would apply if the building proposal were within a prescribed percentage of the required setback, which is the minimum distance a building a structure must be from the property line.

We are also proposing changes that would clearly define what studies home builders are required to complete to get shovels in the ground. This means that as part of a complete development application, a municipality could not require studies and reports beyond those currently identified in their official plans—again, cutting red tape and speeding up the time it takes to get shovels in the ground.

We are also proposing an act in clarification of Ontario's building code. I want to point out that the Building Code Act already states—it's already in position—that municipalities cannot pass bylaws setting out construction standards for buildings. The building code is king. As I say, the code is the code is the code; it always has been and it always will be.

However, we are hearing from builders that they are being required to comply with different construction requirements depending on where the project is located, causing unnecessary confusion and, again, delays. We are,

therefore, clarifying that municipalities do not—I repeat, do not—have the authority to require their own unique construction standards. This will help provide consistency, reduce costs and increase uniformity of technical standards for builders, making it easier and faster to build homes right across this province.

Another impediment to building that we have heard a lot about over the years are the two words that I hear a lot, and that is development charges. Historically, home builders pay development charges, or DCs, to municipalities, who are responsible for building infrastructure like roads and sewers to service new homes. We get it; although DCs are needed—I repeat, they're needed—for critical infrastructure, our government has heard time and time again how DCs are increasing the cost of new homes to the point where they are pricing homebuyers right out of the market.

0910

Here's a statistic that will add some context: The Ontario Home Builders' Association found that these costs add an extra \$100,000 to \$150,000 per single-family home, especially in large urban cities. To be clear: We are not saying development charges are a bad thing. Indeed, and on the contrary, they are a necessary tool to fund needed infrastructure in this province, but they need to be used strategically, in a way that does not deter housing starts and growth. Our government is working to ensure they do exactly that, through actions including the following:

(1) Important to note: Merging service categories for development charge credit purposes to provide more flexibility for developers; for example, using credits from road works to pay for development charges related to transit if they're both in the same category of service.

(2) Simplifying the process for municipalities to amend their bylaws to reduce development charges—and I'll talk about that in a second.

(3) An important add to this bill, eliminating development charges for long-term-care homes: We need 56,000 to 60,000 refurbished or new LTC homes across this province. This will lower the cost to get these built and get shovels in the ground faster, and I know those stakeholders will be very pleased.

(4) Making it a standard practice across municipalities to defer payment of the development charges until occupancy: Again, what used to happen, or is currently happening, is builders would pay these DCs up front upon getting a building permit and then have that cash tied up for however long it takes to get these homes built. We need to unleash this cash flow to allow our home builders to get shovels in the ground faster and start more projects sooner.

(5) Making it a standard practice to ensure that developers pay either the current development charge rate they are facing or rates that were frozen at the time of their site plan zoning application, whichever is lower.

I want to point out something else, Speaker: We also cannot lose sight of the bigger question of how we fund needed infrastructure. On that point, we intend, through this bill, to start consultations to explore alternative approaches to paying for infrastructure we all use while

not unduly burdening new homebuyers. In other words, we need to look at utility corporations, municipal service corporations to help attract investment, private equity, pension funds to help fund this massive need we need across Ontario not only for new infrastructure but for aging and out-of-date infrastructure, and making it a standard practice to ensure that developers pay the current DC, as we already said.

These proposed changes would make it easier and faster to get shovels in the ground on new homes, businesses and infrastructure and ultimately serve to protect jobs and stimulate Ontario's economy by freeing up cash flow to support new projects, as I said, and new start-ups.

Speaker, I do want to note that some mayors have already recognized that high DC rate charges are impeding much-needed housing development in their communities and have already taken bold action to lower their rates. Mayors like Mayor Parrish, of Mississauga, and Steven Del Duca, of Vaughan, who I was proud to stand beside on Monday, have done just that. For example, in Vaughan, they've reduced DCs significantly, extended when they are due and they've saved homebuyers \$44,000 at closing. In Mississauga, Mayor Parrish extended—again, deferred—the DC payable until occupancy and cut the DCs in half. And guess what? The proof is in the pudding: 11,600 new starts, or close to 11,700—I want to get the number right—new starts in Mississauga since they've enacted that. We're seeing it.

And let's point something out: DCs are great. They're needed. But we have a crisis in Ontario. We need to get homes built. What needs to happen is I want our mayors to consider for a period of time how much they charge for DCs. Let's get them started. Let's get houses built, and we can look at them down the road again, using different tools like municipal service corporations to get infrastructure built.

On Monday, Ministers Surma and Bethlenfalvy were also pleased to announce—as I just talked about infrastructure—that we are supporting our municipal partners by investing another \$400 million to expand, repair and rehabilitate housing-enabling infrastructure. This is on top of the already \$2 billion our government has invested in critical infrastructure with our municipal partners, so we're almost at \$2.5 billion. Stay tuned; we're going to continue to support our partners with critical funding for infrastructure and explore new ways to get funding out to our municipal partners.

I was at ROMA this year and last year, and I couldn't get over the insatiable need for infrastructure and the investment we need to make in that, and we plan to do that by exploring these different utility corp. models.

It is a reflection of our commitment to lifting up Ontario's municipalities and ensuring we have the resources and tools needed to support their communities and build more homes faster and smarter.

MZO conditions—another key component of this bill. The three letters I've learned most since taking on this ministry: MZO. They've become an important tool for getting critical local projects like affordable housing, long-

term-care homes and transit-oriented communities moving faster and getting started quicker. You will hear more about this from the Minister of Infrastructure, but, currently, under the Planning Act, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has the power to make MZOs to regulate the use of land in Ontario. MZOs are useful, as I've said, because they can override any conflicting municipal zoning bylaw. As I mentioned, MZOs are used to fast-track development projects in Ontario that are of provincial interest and will benefit Ontarians for generations to come.

However, we have heard concerns about the transparency and environmental impacts of MZOs. We also know that sometimes there are issues in a community that must be resolved before an MZO can be made. This is why this bill, if passed, would make a change to the Planning Act to allow a minister to impose conditions on MZOs. These conditions would have to be met before the zoning could come into effect and before the proposed use or development is allowed. These conditions could involve actions for municipalities and/or proponents, such as home builders, to undertake. This proposed change would add more transparency; it would add more oversight to the MZO process and hold proponents accountable.

Again, I think it's important that we look at this: sign an MZO with conditions, then it's back to the proponent to make sure those conditions are met before the MZO can continue, and if they're not met or won't be met, we can revoke the MZO.

While at the same time, MZOs will continue to help speed up development of projects needed to grow Ontario's economy and boost housing supply, such as transit-oriented communities. These are a vital part of our housing continuum in Ontario. If we've ever driven in Toronto, we'll realize why they are so important. We need to get people moving and get cars off the road.

I'm looking at the clock, Speaker. I want to add a couple of stories here; you may have heard them before. When you think about owning your own home—and I hope everyone in this chamber has had the opportunity to own their home; it really is the Canadian dream. When I bought my first house in 1983, interest rates were 19%. I paid \$54,000 for the house; I had \$16,000 down as a down payment. I was making about 30,000 bucks a year, and I was able to make the math work, even at 19%. I remember I was so thrilled as it closed. I took out an open mortgage; the interest rates dropped, and when it hit the 12%, I thought I'd hit the jackpot. The math worked. Incredibly, the math could work.

I was talking with Mayor Guthrie last week, the mayor of Guelph—that's where I bought the house. He said that house, a starter house—1,000 square feet on a 40-foot lot, a very basic home, a nice home—would cost \$1 million. So you would have to have a similar income of about half a million dollars to be able to cash-flow that house—not probably overly realistic today—and interest rates are at 4% or 5%. The math doesn't work. I'm looking at a young colleague across the way here hoping that he doesn't have to go through that pain.

So we need to change it. And how do we change it? We need to bring out supply. We need to bring more supply on the market, create that environment, create those conditions, if you would, to get shovels in the ground faster.

The second story I want to share, Speaker, is one when I was made associate minister a year and a half or two years ago. I remember going to dinner in Toronto with my wife. We sat down in a nice restaurant and a young female server came up and we were having a great chat and I asked her what she was going to do in life. As we got into the discussion, I told her I was the new Minister of Housing. As we talked about that, she started to cry—not weep, but I mean tear up. And I was—“Okay, what did I say? What did I do?” And my wife said, “What’s wrong?” She says, “I have lost the hope of ever owning a home in my life.” She was crying. She was welling up. So, then my wife started to well up, and I’m sitting there and I’m going, “Okay, we’ve got our work cut out for us.” And we really do.

0920

Again, I want to come back to the notion—and I’ve got a daughter getting married next month and she’s not been able to buy her own home yet. She’s a teacher, a musician, she works hard and it’s tough. I bought my first house when I was a young guy, like a few of us in this room were able to do. I remember thinking at the time, “I’ll never get to buy a house at 19%; how can you ever do it?” But we had supply. We didn’t have development charges then. The world has changed not for the better when it comes to housing. We have to get shovels in the ground.

I’ll conclude simply by saying, I think, from purpose-built rentals to supportive and affordable housing to transit-oriented communities to single-family homes, collectively, we need a bias for action and a sense of urgency to get more homes built smarter and faster.

Before I cede my time, I will end again by saying I know it takes too long and it’s too expensive to build, and this legislation really boils down to one compelling reason: The dream of home ownership can never be extinguished. And if you work hard, if you save hard and you make sacrifices, surely to goodness, we can help create that environment, create those conditions, so young people today can have the same dreams we had, Canadians have—because it is truly part of the Canadian dream to own your own home.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thank you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for sharing his time with me this morning. Thank you for those stories that you told at the end about your own journey to home ownership and the conversations that you’ve had with others, the hopes and dreams that you have for your daughter. Those are universal, those hopes and dreams. Also, I think every time those of us that work in this chamber and have the honour to be in this chamber have an opportunity to have a conversation with somebody like that, it’s one of the

most important conversations we’ll have, because that conversation is very much focused on that individual’s future and that individual’s family and what opportunities they will have through the power of home ownership.

I would say, Madam Speaker, that, again, it’s an honour to talk about this subject today here in the Legislature and bring a little bit of the experience that I have had as a community leader, as somebody that’s seen this from a couple of different angles, as somebody that’s fortunate to be a homeowner in Ontario. It wasn’t all as simple as I had hoped it would be, but we managed to make it happen.

Maybe I’ll just start with a story about one of my family members, a nephew; he’s in his thirties. He gets up every morning, he works really hard and he wants to be super innovative about how he approaches housing. So he saved his money. He bought a small lot in a municipality, and he decided that he was going to build a very, very, very small house, pretty much as small as you could build. He didn’t want to overbuild and get house-poor like some people get into. He just wanted to get into home ownership. And so, he set about to do that. He wanted to do it all the right way, and he’s done all the right things. This is not to chastise municipalities, by the way, why I tell this story. It’s just about how we all collectively need to do better—because I’ve told him, “If you need any guidance, if you need any help, I’m here to provide it. I’ve had a little bit of experience in my municipal world and municipal life.” And he said, “Thanks. You know, I want to try and do it on my own.” The phones rang a couple of times, because it’s very hard for him to do it on his own, very hard for him to build this small, tiny house, because studies, plans, red tape—things that an average person probably can’t do on their own, which means that you have to hire somebody, pay them money for that plan. So this little, tiny home project for one individual who’s doing all things the right way is turning into—not a nightmare, by any means, but certainly something more than he thought it would be, something that’s taking a lot more time than he thought it would take and something that is ultimately going to cost him more money than he thought it would cost.

I said, “Please, as we go through this, write down a list of every barrier that you come to, every bar that you need to get over, every hoop that you feel you need to jump through. When you get to the end of this project, I want you to give me that list so I can bring it to this place and we can make the dream of home ownership for young people that want to get into that first home and have done everything right to get there that much more simpler.”

That’s why this bill is so important today, because it starts to dismantle some of the challenges and the roadblocks that are out there today for people like my nephew, for people like the minister’s daughter, for all the people in this chamber that have family members that have the same hopes, dreams and aspirations.

When I was a mayor in Bracebridge—and I’ve talked as recently as yesterday about my time at AMO—one of the reasons I loved doing that work was because, in talking with all the other municipal representatives when we would get together at a conference or an opportunity for a

meeting, we could share those challenges in our communities. I didn't want to be part of those groups because I could go away for a weekend or have a good time—but it was that. It was because I wanted to be better at my job, and I knew the only way to be better at my job was to go and talk to people that had the same job, that had run into the same roadblocks, the same obstacles, had the same challenges in their communities, and I would learn from them. I certainly don't believe I know everything, but I know that if we get enough collective minds in a room and work really hard together, we can figure out challenges. Again, aren't I lucky to be here to be able to do that with all my colleagues?

Through those conversations, certainly, I did learn a lot, but there were similarities in those conversations of where roadblocks were. The mayors and councillors and even the staff members that I would talk to would reference the frustrations that they saw, the red tape that they saw, how some processes worked well or maybe were well-intentioned, but then over time didn't work so well—you know, climbing development charges.

Whether it was sitting with my own council and staff, or whether it was working with those colleagues that I would see at these different places on different occasions—again, those conversations were always hugely worthwhile and it's something that's never left me and something that won't ever leave me. So a shout-out today to everybody that is working on this issue, whether it's in this chamber, whether it's federally, whether it's municipally, and all those groups out there that are trying to work towards making housing better.

This bill is about doing our part here in the province in that and setting out guidelines and guardrails and making changes that will ultimately have a positive impact on that one individual—that one individual and their partner and their family, and then they'll want the same thing down the line for those individuals. We're going to act today to make a difference for people tomorrow.

The challenges aren't a secret. We know—again, red tape, as we've talked about; development charges—extremely high in some areas. To talk about development charges for a little bit: We're taking steps in this bill to make some significant changes to the development charge regime, but I think what's important to note is that if in the past there was resistance to the conversation and resistance to change, in the present, as the situation around housing has continued to grow more complicated and challenging for many, whether it's AMO, whether it's the Ontario Home Builders' Association, whether it's BILD, whether it's ResCon, whether it's the individual caucuses of AMO that represent all parts, regions and demographics throughout this province, everybody has kind of arrived in the same spot.

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Development charges in particular have gotten out of hand. Things have gotten more costly than DCs fund, unquestionably. But the application of development charges and how the system works is not working for the people of Ontario, and it's not even necessarily working well for the

municipalities. This notion of growth pays for growth, which has driven that development charge conversation for a long time, is still a reasonable principle, but what goes in as development charges, how the background studies are done, when the charges applied, what that means for the upfront cost for home builders and the way that they need to finance their projects and the work that they do—these are all really important questions that we are beginning to tackle in this bill.

When I was a mayor in Bracebridge—and I'll go back 11 years now, to the first time that we had a development charge background study done in our community, and almost simultaneous to that it was happening in the district of Muskoka—we went through the study. We did all the things that we were legislatively required to do and got the numbers back. And I will say, if anybody looks up the numbers, the numbers will seem quaint in comparison to some of the numbers that we talk about today, especially in large, urbanized areas. But we looked at those numbers, and as council we looked at them with some concern. We had had a large developer come to the community in the early 2010s with a 10-phase development, hundreds of homes—something our communities desperately needed. The financial impacts of 2008 I think were a little bit delayed and kind of reached our area maybe more in the early 2010s. So as they were getting off the ground and starting to sell homes in the community, those challenges were starting to impact the community a little bit more. So everyone was a little bit more cautious with their spending, a little bit more cautious with their money. The developers were certainly cautious with the cash outlays that they had to make to continue to build homes.

Eventually we got to a point where this transformational project for my community ceased. They built two phases out of 10. They had nice model homes that you could come and look at and get a sense of what you were going to buy and flip through all the books—closed. They sold those homes. They literally had no interest in selling homes in our community anymore.

So we got to work, and I started to think long and hard about what we could do, and in 2014, after a few years of this cessation of building, I saw an opportunity through these development charge numbers that came in—and this isn't just about that one developer, but I'm using them as an example. We went to them, we went to the planning community, we went to others, and said, "If we take these numbers, which have come back as pretty significant numbers—what if we lowered them? What if we find other ways to do this?" And ultimately, we did lower them, 30% on residential. We took commercial to zero. And at the district of Muskoka, where development charges were of a much more substantial amount, because they were the carriers of all the water and waste water infrastructure, they got reduced by 50%. That immediately got that developer back into the community. That immediately got that developer interested in building homes in the community that I was leading again. So they built a new model home and they opened the offices again and back came the catalogues you could flip through and all the different

models of homes you could buy and back came the people. And they built and they built and they built, and now that entire development has been built out: all 10 phases, hundreds of homes. It has made a massive impact to that small community. And the other thing it's done is raised the overall assessment of the community significantly. So even though development charges were cut, there was a big win there on the assessment side.

I tell that story not because this bill is suggesting that everybody slash their development charges in half, but, again, 11 years ago, I did that in my community. We've seen communities in the current day, whether it's Vaughan or Mississauga, take those steps. Did Burlington take that step?

Interjection.

Hon. Graydon Smith: Yes. And it's having a very positive impact.

What we're proposing in this bill is important, but my message to municipalities is if you can go further, go further. Take that opportunity to do that. Take that opportunity to make it easier and more affordable to buy a home in your community.

There are a lot of other important components in this bill to talk about, especially around planning aspects and studies and what studies are required of a home builder when they come and they want to start a project.

If I opened up my phone right now and just wanted to read from my phone for the next 15 minutes, I could read you stories of home builders who repeat the same message over and over and over: "I went to community X, I gave them my plans and they asked for some studies." There's nothing inherently wrong with that story. Some studies are needed to ensure various things when you're looking at a large housing development, or even a small housing development, in some cases. "So I did the studies and I brought the studies back—and it took a year to do all those studies—and then they asked me for three more studies. That's going to take another year, and that's going to take another suite of professionals and that's going to add more costs." All the while, the cost of materials is going up, the cost of getting shovels in the ground is going up, the cost of land, in a lot of cases, is going up, so, "The house that I had built, the pro forma that I had to make this project work, is starting to fall apart, and I don't know if I can do it again."

We can't create situations like that for people who want to build homes in Ontario. As the minister talked about, this is a matter of supply. This is a matter of having enough supply to meet the demand. We know the demand is high. Our population in this province has been increasing non-stop because people want to be in Ontario, and that's a great thing, but we need to have that home for them. We've taken a number of steps through a number of bills, but this is non-stop work that we've taken on, and we're going to meet that challenge.

But, again, as I said in the beginning of my comments, every time that we have an opportunity for a conversation, we learn a little bit more about what works and what doesn't work in terms of getting things done, getting those

shovels in the ground and creating those opportunities. And dependant on where you're from, opportunities can look very different. In large urban centres, obviously, opportunities can look like higher density, more storeys; in smaller communities, they can look like low-rises and row houses and town homes. And in all communities, there's always a mix of housing.

People want to get on that housing ladder and get on that first rung, and then maybe get up another rung or two as they go through their lives and their families increase. Then they want that opportunity, maybe, at the end to climb down a rung as they get older and the kids aren't at home anymore. They hope the grandkids visit often, but they don't always visit often enough, so they just don't need the house that big anymore and they need to take a step down that ladder. So that mix of housing types is really important.

What is important for us to do, again, is take all these circumstances, all these stories, all these situations from all these different places in Ontario, whether it's southwestern Ontario, whether it's the GTA, Ottawa, eastern Ontario, northern Ontario—and I would just say that there is a lot of opportunity in northern Ontario for growth. As we see development and the exciting things happen in northern Ontario, such as the development in the Ring of Fire, boy, you know we're going to need a lot of housing to support that. We're going to need to be able to build in all parts of this province, and that's exciting. So we need to get this work done today. We need to get this bill passed and get on with working together and building for Ontario.

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When you looked at that podium the other day, as I talked about before, who was on it when the minister made his announcement of this bill? It was very telling of the point in time that we are now enjoying, of this commonality of thought on what we need to do and what we can do together. So let's not miss this point in time. Let's take this point in time. Let's create a situation where we can build houses for people like my grandparents.

My grandfather was a labourer his whole life. He worked a lot of years where it was maybe three quarters of the year, and he had to take a few months off in the winter. And my grandmother, as was kind of the style at the time, so to speak, was a homemaker. She supported him and he supported her in their home, that they bought as a labourer—a roof over their head, a place to be every night, a place to be in love and raise my mom. That's where it begins.

This bill is important to get us to that point, and I thank everyone for the time today. I want to yield the floor to my colleague the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member for Simcoe—Grey, who's going to inform us a little more about the consultation process on this bill today. Thank you very much, everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Good morning. I want to thank Minister Flack and Minister Smith for their comments. I have listened to them with great interest.

I know in my riding of Simcoe–Grey, the housing crisis is something that we've seen grow continually over the last decade. This legislation, Bill 17, Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025, is a key pillar of our government's continued commitment to protect Ontario's prosperity and future. I want to build on the comments of my colleagues, and while I'll try not to repeat that they have said, much of what they've said bears repeating.

I also want to thank Minister Surma and Minister Lecce for their work. This has been an all-of-government approach to this issue. Having worked in the municipal sector for eight years, both as deputy mayor and mayor of the town of Collingwood and as a member of Simcoe county council, I know how the housing issues have grown over time and that all levels of government need to come together to work on this, together with the private sector, to help address these issues.

Municipalities are a statutory creature of the province, and so this is a key point in time for the province and municipalities to work together, together with the federal government, to address these issues, because we are at a pivotal moment. Our province and our country are confronting one of the most serious economic disruptions that we have seen in decades, and that has exacerbated the housing costs and prices. Across the border, actions by U.S. President Donald Trump are threatening the flow of commerce that Ontario has long depended on. With escalating trade barriers and growing protectionism, the economic uncertainty is real and immediate. Premier Ford has made it clear we will not stand still, and we need to act decisively to protect Ontario's economy and to ensure that we remain competitive, resilient and prepared for the future.

Speaker, this is not just about reacting; it is about leading. That is why this bill, crafted through the close work of the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Transportation, and Infrastructure, is so important. It represents a coordinated effort to remove red tape, accelerate housing and infrastructure development, and ensure Ontario's workers remain on the job. We're not just building homes and roads; we're building confidence: confidence in our economy, our communities and our ability to meet the moment.

Speaker, this legislation is about protecting Ontario's economy by providing the conditions to get shovels in the ground. It was a challenge before these issues arose, and it continues to be a challenge, and in fact a heightened one.

What we're proposing in this legislation is common-sense reforms to expedite the development of homes, roads, public transit, and essential services like water and waste water systems. We know that this government has passed initiatives to spend over \$3 billion to work with our municipalities to get critical infrastructure in the ground, whether that's the \$1.2-billion Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund, the \$1-billion enabling water systems fund, the Building Faster Fund—all of those aspects that we are

working with our municipalities on to try to accelerate housing and break the gridlock of infrastructure, whether it be new infrastructure or dated infrastructure, and make sure that we can build the communities that are resilient and sustainable.

The truth is, Madam Speaker, that the processes are too slow. They're too expensive and too complicated to build homes in Ontario, and the consequences are being felt in communities across our province. Our population is growing at a record pace, and housing supply has not kept up.

In fact, alarmingly, since I was in secondary school—without having to tell you when that was—our population has effectively doubled. Ontario now has 16 million residents, and more arrive each day. In fact, we have 40% of Canada's population. Ontario's families and young people are watching the dream of home ownership drift further out of reach, and this cannot continue. We need to act boldly in Ontario to protect that dream for all aspects of our society, whether it be those looking to get into the housing market, to raise their families, or to downsize and enjoy their retirement.

We've heard compelling stories from both ministers about the impacts they've seen in their ridings, from their residents. I have three sons of my own, all of whom are grappling with the concept of trying to buy a first home. Behind every delayed permit is a family waiting for a home. Behind every stalled project is a missed opportunity to house those who need housing. It's a missed opportunity to create jobs, and it's a missed opportunity to strengthen our economy and grow our province, as is muchly needed.

We had debate the other day about working to get encampments out of our parks. This is all part of that issue. If we cannot make housing affordable, if we cannot build the housing we need, we will see that crisis continue to grow. We will see people having to rely on encampments instead of being housed. This legislation before us today is about trying to reverse that trend and to do it with urgency, efficiency and speed. In the coming days, you will hear from members across this House about the real-world impact of these reforms. In partnership with the Ministries of Transportation and Infrastructure, we will get this job done for the people of Ontario.

As a mayor and upper-tier representative, I know of the experiences that Minister Smith spoke about in terms of permits, studies and the costs of building. One of the key measures that we are advancing in this legislation is an amendment to the Building Code Act to streamline access to construction products. Right now, some building materials that have already passed rigorous federal assessments through the Canadian Construction Materials Centre still require redundant provincial approvals. That is unnecessary duplication that is causing delays and holding back innovation. By removing this secondary step, we can accelerate the use of safe and proven construction products, save time and keep Ontario's building sector moving forward. This is about trusting science, trusting engineers, and trusting the systems that we already have in place to accelerate the building process.

We are also proposing in this legislation legislative clarity to ensure that municipalities are not imposing their own separate construction standards outside of what has been established in the provincial building code. While that act already prohibits this, we continue to hear from builders who are encountering different requirements across municipalities, causing confusion, delays and added costs. We hear stories of home builders who literally need one set of permits on one side of the street and a completely different set on the other. This is not just inefficient; it's costly, ineffective and unacceptable. By reinforcing provincial authority and cutting red tape, we will work to create a more uniform, efficient and cost-effective system for home builders across Ontario.

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Another well-known barrier to new housing is development charges. We have heard both Minister Flack and Minister Smith speak about those, and I am familiar with them from my work in the municipal sector. These charges, which we understand are necessary for municipalities to fund infrastructure related to new growth, have jumped significantly, adding tens of thousands of dollars, and in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars, to the cost of the new home. When the developer brings forward an application for a site plan agreement for a subdivision, these costs, on top of lands, happen before they've done any work. And if you add \$80,000 to \$120,000 on top of those costs, you've already raised the cost of the home before the shovels are in the ground. And those costs are passed along. They're borne by the purchaser, and they add to the increasing burden of those trying to get into the housing market. We've listened to developers, we've listened to municipalities, and we've listened to homebuyers alike, and the message is consistent: The current system is unpredictable, opaque and contributes to the housing affordability crisis.

That's why we're proposing significant amendments to the Development Charges Act. Our reforms would, first, standardize and simplify the development charge framework. This will reduce administrative complexity and ensure that developers, municipalities and homebuyers alike can navigate the system with greater ease. A consistent approach across the municipalities across Ontario will help to eliminate confusion and reduce costly delays.

We will also allow for greater flexibility for builders to apply credits across similar service categories. What this means is that if a developer has already contributed to infrastructure in one area, such as water services, they can apply those credits towards similar needs in another project. It is smarter, it is more efficient in the use of resources, and it encourages investment by a developer in the community that will enable future development where they have credit.

Thirdly, we will enable developers to defer payments until occupancy, bringing alignment across municipalities. By deferring payments until a home is occupied, we're easing the financial burden during the construction phase, when costs are at their highest. This change will improve cash flow for builders and help to accelerate project

timelines. It allows the developer to know that they will be paying when they receive the money for the home that they are building as opposed to having to invest it at the outset. It will reduce their costs and allow them to move forward.

Fourthly, we will provide certainty by ensuring builders pay either the rates in effect at occupancy or the rates frozen at the time of zoning/site plan approval, whichever is lower. Again, this is to fix costs and take away the uncertainty to allow developers to know the pro forma that they have to meet to make the development feasible. We heard from Minister Smith how that is a moving target, how goalposts can change and how it adds uncertainty to the development process. This will protect builders from unexpected cost increases and allow them to plan with confidence, and it also ensures fairness by locking in rates based on when the planning milestones are achieved. It's an incentive for the developers to move forward.

Together, these reforms will create a more predictable, transparent and builder-friendly environment for our developers. It will support faster housing delivery while maintaining the infrastructure funding that municipalities need to ensure that their communities grow in a sustainable, resilient and intentional way, and not an opportunistic way where services are available. We have seen the success of proactive municipalities. Both Minister Flack and Minister Smith mentioned that at the time Minister Flack announced this bill, Mayor Parrish of Mississauga and Mayor Del Duca of Vaughan both stood beside him. Both mayors have decreased their DCs and made changes to create an environment that has enabled a sharp increase in housing starts in their municipalities. These changes to the DC framework will bring predictability, lower costs and, most importantly, help get more homes built faster, smarter and more affordably.

These changes will also help to support our vulnerable populations. There our DCs go even further. We are eliminating development charges on long-term-care facilities to support the needs of our aging population to ensure that housing is available for every stage of life. Our province is projected to need thousands of new long-term-care beds, and our government has committed to meeting that supply, as well as refurbishing thousands of existing beds. Eliminating DCs will result in millions of dollars of savings, savings that can be reinvested directly into the creation of new long-term-care homes for people who helped build our beautiful province and deserve that benefit. This is not just a fiscal decision, Madam Speaker; it is a moral one, and we owe it to our seniors to ensure they have access to safe, dignified and timely care.

We are also enhancing transparency by creating the authority to clarify how municipalities calculate their development charges, with regulations to follow that will define eligible costs, reporting standards and spending requirements. We want to do this to ensure that we work with municipalities to make sure that they spend where it matters most and, when they do their DC targets, they target the critical infrastructure that is necessary to support

the growth in that area while, at the time, keeping those DCs at a legitimate level.

We're consulting with municipalities to make sure that they allocate at least 60% of certain reserve funds each year to development-charge-eligible services. In other words, we're working with municipalities to ensure not only that the fees they charge for new development—they are spending at least 60% of those fees on an annual basis to ensure that they are harvesting the funds they already have and using them to enable development.

Let me be very clear: We're not leaving municipalities behind; we're working with them. This province, as I said earlier, has been backing our municipalities with billions of dollars in provincial investment for housing-enabling infrastructure, including roads, sewers and water systems. In fact, Madam Speaker, since this government has come into office since 2018, we have increased municipal funding by over 36%. I have seen that in my riding of Simcoe–Grey, where five municipalities of the seven in my riding have received in excess of \$130 million for water-enabling infrastructure. That, in fact, is \$1 in \$10 of the entire fund. My riding has been blessed, and we are moving forward to ease our housing crisis.

And that is a partnership, Madam Speaker. It is not a download. We are working with our municipalities, not against them, because we need to ensure across this province that growth is supported by the infrastructure that it demands, and we continue to work with municipalities to see how we can change and reform infrastructure needs and service delivery to work with them.

Madam Speaker, another part of this important legislation is making a smarter application process. We are also tackling the approvals process by cutting the time it takes to get an application approved. We heard from Minister Smith—and I know from my riding—that every time that development application goes back to the developer, it costs time, opportunity costs, and it costs money.

Under our proposed changes to the Planning Act and the City of Toronto Act, we would limit of ability of municipalities to request study after study from applicants. Municipalities would be restricted to requiring only those reports listed in their official plans, and those lists would need ministerial approval if they are to be changed. We need to fix the number of reports. We need to provide certainty across the province so that developers know what they need to provide to move something forward expeditiously. These changes will stop delays caused by redundant and often obscure studies. We cannot allow home building, particularly in this time, to be slowed down by unnecessary bureaucracy when we urgently need new homes.

On top of this, Madam Speaker, we're introducing regulation-making authority that would allow the government to do the following:

Identify prohibited study topics: We would provide a list to our municipalities that ensures that applicants are not burdened with irrelevant or excessive study requirements that do not contribute to the planning process. This will eliminate costly and time-consuming requests that

have little to do with the outcome, whether it be safety, functionality or sustainability.

We will also set out which studies can be required to begin with. By clearly defining the scope of permissible studies, we are creating a more predictable and transparent process for the applicants. This will help municipalities focus on the most critical and evidence-based assessments while reducing duplication and inconsistency across jurisdictions. We will do that in consultation with the municipalities and with our professional sector to be clear on what are essential and mandatory studies.

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We will also mandate that municipalities accept studies verified by specified professionals such as engineers and architects. This reform respects the expertise of licensed professionals and prevents municipalities from rejecting valid studies without cause. It will streamline approvals, reduce unnecessary back and forth, and reinforce trust in our professional standards. These standards have been proven time and again over the decades.

These measures will help to reduce red tape, increase fairness and ensure that planning decisions are based on sound evidence, not bureaucracy. They will help level the playing field for smaller builders, who may lack the resources to navigate an overly complex system.

Madam Speaker, the other day we spoke, during the legislation, on our encampments and trying to work with municipalities to reduce those encampments. We know from the CMHC that, since 2022, across Canada, we've had over 200,000 housing starts, 100,000 of those in Ontario for two years. Those are the largest number of housing starts going back to the late 1980s, and we know in the last year those housing starts have declined because of the economic pressures which are now being exacerbated by what's going on south of the border.

At that 200,000-housing-start level, the CMHC has said that our housing crisis will continue to grow, that by 2030—in five short years—this country will be 3.5 million units underhoused, the majority of those being in Ontario, where we have 40% of the population. We need to take action; the status quo is not working. I hope that the parties on both sides of this floor will work with us to make sure that we can create housing for people across Ontario, including my three sons.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Just before we go to questions and responses, a reminder to all members that you must refer to members by their ministerial title or their riding. Thank you.

Questions?

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you for that introduction of the bill. There is much in it that are good, laudable goals. We do need to build housing faster. I was on a city council and understand how housing starts can be held up in many different ways. I've worked with developers and understand the pressures that they can be under when they're not able to build housing as efficiently as they otherwise could; taking a year can add many costs.

But I do want to ask, just in terms of affordability: I've never received a good answer from anyone on how you

will make housing less affordable for people purchasing the new home and yet not bring down the value of housing for people who own their homes today.

Hon. Rob Flack: I think the whole notion of this bill is to lower cost. Time can be money, and when we take a look at how long it takes to get a building permit issued sometimes in municipalities—I can give you examples in my area, part of my riding, London, where it can take years to get a building permit. I know you don't see right up front, "It costs X amount," but you know that it takes time when people are waiting to get shovels in the ground.

When it comes to affordability, I think the deferral of these DCs will certainly help. The notion of coming up with the municipal service corporation to fund infrastructure going forward will certainly help. Again, we can go deeper into the weeds in terms of affordable housing—and I'm glad to do it—in terms of other things we can do. We'll talk about that more.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: As Ontario continues to grow and build, we know that innovation in construction materials and building technologies can play a critical role in helping us deliver housing faster and more efficiently. I was happy to join the minister at the Kiwi Newton facility in Guelph, where they're leading in innovation and contributing to affordable housing projects across this province.

Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing share what steps our government is taking to streamline approvals for new construction materials and how we're ensuring safety continues to be a top priority?

Hon. Rob Flack: Great question.

It was great to be at Kiwi Newton last Friday, I believe, to see some innovative approaches to housing and infrastructure, parking, through the use of cement and modular builds. It was a great event. That probably is one of the key drivers in our economy today—construction.

What we're doing in this bill is creating, again, the conditions where Ontario manufacturers, Canadian manufacturers—if there's a federal approval on materials, why are we duplicating it by having another provincial approval? What we're doing is streamlining the process, ensuring that that federal approval, which meets our standards—it's a one and done. Instead of prolonging the approach, again, it's about speed, getting shovels in the ground.

As an example, at Kiwi Newton, if they come up with a new process, it's Ontario-made. It's going to help our economy. It's going to help our jobs—keep our jobs here and made in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Given the growing demand for long-term-care homes in our province, what steps is the government taking to accelerate the construction and the development of long-term-care facilities to ensure that our seniors have access to the care that they need in a timely manner? Specifically,

how does the government's investment of \$6.4 billion for 58,000 new beds fit into this strategy?

So my question is, how can we really approach this to ensure that it aligns with our broader strategy for supporting an aging population and creating a sustainable, high-quality long-term-care system?

Hon. Rob Flack: It's a great question.

One of the things I'm most proud of in this bill is that we're eliminating development charges completely on long-term-care homes. While we know our municipal partners need infrastructure, we're still going to support them with an additional \$400 million that Minister Surma will be implementing and awarding in the months ahead.

I think the number you used was 58,000. I always say 56,000 to 60,000 refurbished or new long-term-care beds are required yesterday, not today. We need to have this happen quickly.

Again, this bill is about building faster and smarter, and it's about affordability.

I think about the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility and what a great job he's doing, and what great news this will be for all seniors who are looking to move and transition to long-term-care homes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

MPP Catherine McKenney: It's another question to the minister.

I was surprised not to see one of the top recommendations from the housing task force in this bill: to legalize the missing-middle housing—duplexes, fourplexes—as of right in municipalities. I wonder if you could respond—if that is going to be a requirement, if you're going to take the recommendation from your very own experts.

Hon. Graydon Smith: I appreciate the question from the member from Ottawa Centre.

When I was mayor, there was some as-of-right legislation brought forward for duplexes and the ability to have in-law suites. We implemented that in our community because that's what the government of the day wanted us to do, and it had very little impact. The fact is, just saying you can do something doesn't mean it's going to get it done.

What we've done is go back to the building community, go back to municipalities, consult everybody who is part of the building continuum in this and talk to them about what the things are we can do today to improve both the process and improve the outcomes to get more homes built.

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And while I understand your question, I think the things that we're doing, the steps we're taking, are more important and going to have a tangible positive immediate effect.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

MPP Tyler Watt: Young people everywhere right now—we just want a chance to get into the market. A lot of us feel like we are going to be renting for the rest of their lives.

There's some really good stuff in this bill. However, something that I've noticed is that this bill lacks a corresponding plan to ensure that those developer savings are actually going to be passed on to renters and first-time homebuyers. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can this government point out a single provision in this bill, or what they're going to do to ensure that we will be building more affordable homes?

Hon. Rob Flack: Well, there are a lot of things we're doing in this bill to create affordability. I look at the member beside you and the things we did working with Habitat for Humanity. All types of housing are being affected positively in this bill, whether it's purpose-built rentals, affordable market homes or whatever it may be.

One other idea that we continue to talk about, that we need to implement as we go forward, is looking at repurposing government-owned lands. I know the federal government talked about that prior to the election. We own a lot of land, too. I think we can repurpose that—again, working with not-for-profits like Habitat, Good Shepherd, Indwell, whoever it may be, and key building suppliers—creating that environment again, to make sure that shovels get underground so that housing continuum can work best.

Listen to your partner beside you there: Habitat has a great model, and I like it very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): And now, members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Good morning, colleagues. Six months ago, our government announced the construction of a new mental health unit at Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington. Today, I'm proud to share that demolition preparations are now under way, marking the start of a state-of-the-art facility that will meet the growing mental health needs of our community. This project is part of our government's broader \$50-billion investment in over 50 hospital projects across the province.

The new unit at Joseph Brant Hospital will offer expanded in-patient and outpatient services, enhanced psychiatric intensive care and dedicated spaces for individuals of all ages. It will be staffed by interdisciplinary teams focused on personalized support and long-term recovery. This means reduced wait times, better access to care and timely, compassionate support for those who need it most.

Speaker, this project is more than just bricks and mortar. It's about building hope. It's about dignity, accessibility and a healthier future for Burlington and the surrounding region. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who helped bring this important initiative to life, and I look forward to watching it take shape in the months ahead.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Today is budget day, a pivotal moment for Ontario. With an ever-shifting economic threat, now, more than ever, is the time for a bold, transformative and inspirational vision. Ontario needs to invest in the nation-building infrastructure that supports people. Build affordable homes like lives depend on it, because they do.

Invest in all levels of education, as well as training, upskilling and apprenticeships in a meaningful way. Fully fund needs-based therapies for autism and all exceptionalities for young people; you will change lives and save money.

Invest in care, not profit. Stop US-style profit-mongers from snatching care dollars from our treasured public health care system.

Develop an Ontario intellectual property research, development and innovation pipeline, to stop our bright ideas being homed in the US through our inaction and lack of investment.

Pay nurses and health care workers equitably, no matter what domain of health care in which they practise. Stop shifting precious public dollars into private pockets with agency nursing.

Get people on social assistance above the poverty line by doubling ODSP and OW.

Creative industries are economic development. The arts bring us together, build communities and are a key critical investment at this time.

Support our amazing non-profits, who are stepping in where the government has failed.

Attract talent: scientists, professors, thinkers, artists and experts wishing to flee Trump's dangerous regime. Bring the brain drain north. And invest in people, not profits for the already wealthy few.

MONTY MCDONALD

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I rise today to recognize a truly remarkable resident of Don Valley North, Mr. Monty McDonald of Bayview Village, whose lifelong service to community and to country is an example for us all.

For decades, Monty has been a pillar of civic life, from serving as chair of the BVA environment committee to organizing community cleanups for nearly 20 years and mentoring new leaders. He has always believed that a strong neighbourhood is not built by chance but by people who care deeply.

Last year, Monty was recognized on the national stage with the Meritorious Service Decoration, awarded by Her Excellency the Governor General, for founding the Vimy Oaks Legacy. Inspired by his friend Lieutenant Leslie Miller, who gathered acorns from Vimy Ridge during the First World War, Monty partnered with the Vimy Foundation to grow over 1,000 descendant oak trees. These trees are now planted across commemorative sites all across Canada and at the newly created Centennial Park at Vimy

Ridge, which Monty himself helped to fundraise over \$2 million to create.

On behalf of the Legislature and the grateful residents of Don Valley North, I thank Monty McDonald for his vision, his service and his unshakable commitment to community and our country.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is taking action to build the critical infrastructure Ontario needs to thrive. While past governments sat back and did nothing, we're building and we're delivering results.

We're building Highway 413, a vital corridor that will cut gridlock, connect our growing communities and keep Ontario moving forward. We're also moving ahead with the Brampton underground LRT, a transformative project that will reduce congestion and provide faster and more reliable transit options for the people of Brampton and for the people of Mississauga. And it doesn't stop there. We've made the gas tax cut permanent and we're putting money back into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians and helping them keep up with the rising cost of living.

These projects aren't just about concrete and steel; they're about creating jobs, attracting investment and securing Ontario's economic future. That's the kind of leadership we have under Premier Ford: a government that's getting it done and building for the next generation.

NURSES

MPP Robin Lennox: It is Nursing Week, and our Ontario nurses are calling us to action. They want safe working conditions, mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios and wages that reflect the value of the care they provide to Ontarians.

As it stands, our nurses are being disrespected and undervalued while private agencies profit. Agency nurses are being paid double or triple what staff hospital nurses are being paid, amounting to \$9.2 billion spent on private agency nurses in Ontario over the past decade. Hospitals are hemorrhaging money to private corporations and having to cut public nursing positions because our Ford government won't act.

Taxpayers across Ontario expect their hard-earned dollars to be invested back into them and their communities through publicly funded, publicly delivered services. Instead, this Ford government is throwing money away and allowing corporations to thrive while Ontarians suffer on wait-lists and in hallways.

We need to increase nursing wages and permanent, unionized nursing positions. Our Conservative government is trying to dismantle our public health care system by way of death by a thousand cuts, but we can resuscitate our system by immediately stopping the hemorrhage of public funds into the private sector, investing in our nurses and relieving the pressure on hospital budgets so that they can continue to serve our communities.

EVENTS IN SCARBOROUGH— AGINCOURT

Mr. Aris Babikian: I extend my warmest greetings and congratulations to the chief priest, staff, teachers, students, families and volunteers of Sri Varasiththi Vinaayagar Hindu College as they celebrate the 19th annual cultural day.

This annual gathering is a shining example of how cultural heritage, education and community pride come together to create a nurturing and enriching environment for our young generation. The talents of over 200 students, showcased through performances in music, dance and drama, reflect their hard work and creativity—also, the strength and the vibrancy of the Tamil community and the broader South Asian communities in Scarborough—Agin-court.

1020

The Scarborough Health Network's annual volunteer appreciation dinner is an important annual tradition to recognize and celebrate the heart of SHN: its dedicated volunteers. Whether assisting patients, supporting staff or helping families, their selfless contributions reflect the very best of Scarborough. Their efforts remind us that care extends far beyond medicine. It lives in the kindness, compassion, patience and presence of those who give their time to serve others.

I would like to congratulate Joyce Dorman and Margaret Jamieson from Scarborough—Agin-court for receiving the 40 years volunteer service award.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Again, as members are coming in, could they take their seats quietly so that we can hear members' statements? Thank you.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

MPP Catherine McKenney: In 2017, as a member of the Ottawa Public Health board, we approved a consumption and treatment site in Somerset West. This site was chosen to support people living in an underserved community that was experiencing the second-highest number of drug overdoses in the city of Ottawa. The community was exhausted and traumatized from losing their friends and family members to overdoses.

As a key piece of the approach to addictions, prevention, treatment and harm reduction, it was successful in keeping our community members alive while they waited for treatment, for supportive housing, family reunification—whatever they needed to exist.

On March 1 of this year, the site was forced to close by this Conservative government, and a sharp increase in open drug use was the result, with no access to health care professionals, housing workers or the supports necessary to access treatment services.

Where people once had a place to go to use drugs, they are now forced outside in public spaces. And now we are asked to accept that the only solution is to fine and jail people who suffer from addictions and who are without housing and shelter.

The Safer Municipalities Act will not make our communities safer. It will not lead people into treatment. It will not house one person. And it will not end this health crisis.

There are evidence-based solutions, and I will continue to work with residents in Ottawa Centre to keep people safe in their parks, in their workplaces and in their homes.

HAMILTON CARDINALS BASEBALL CLUB

MPP Monica Ciriello: Madam Speaker, as spring returns, so does the baseball season. And I rise today to celebrate the 67th season of the Hamilton Cardinals, who take the field for their intercounty league home opener this Friday night at the Bernie Arbour Stadium in Hamilton Mountain.

Cardinals games are a great way for families to connect with their community, and if you come out on Friday night, you'll see former major leaguer Fernando Rodney take the mound and you will see your Hamilton Mountain MPP throw out the first pitch.

On Friday night, the Hamilton Cardinals are playing the Brantford Red Sox. As a result, I'd like to make a friendly wager with my friend the member from Brantford—Brant that the Cardinals are going to beat his Red Sox. And if they do, my friend can send some of Brantford's finest local beverages to the Mountain to help us celebrate. And if, by some miracle, the Brantford Red Sox win on Friday night, I will send some beverages from Shawn and Ed Brewing, a local brewery in the heart of Hamilton—a way to celebrate local and the big game.

With that being said, I encourage all Hamiltonians to come out on Friday, wear red and support the Cardinals.

NUCLEAR POWER FACILITY

Mr. Lorne Coe: The Ontario government has approved Ontario Power Generation's plan to begin the construction of the first of four small modular reactors at the Darlington nuclear centre in Clarington, within the region of Durham.

Once complete, this SMR will be the first of its kind in the G7, producing enough reliable, affordable and clean electricity to power the equivalent of 300,000 homes, supporting thousands of good-paying jobs across the province and helping secure Ontario's energy supply for decades to come. This transformative project will strengthen the region of Durham's economy, provide long-term careers and reinforce Durham's role as a leader in clean nuclear innovation.

Advancing construction on the Darlington new nuclear project SMRs is just one part of Ontario's affordable energy future, the government's vision as it plans for rising energy demand.

BRADEN CARBERRY

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise with a heavy heart today to pay tribute to a member of the municipal law enforcement team in my riding of Guelph. Braden Carberry was Guelph's bylaw compliance supervisor and, tragically, he died while on the job on January 8, 2025. Braden leaves behind his wife and three children. He was 49 years old.

Braden had a long career in municipal law enforcement. He is greatly missed by his colleagues at the city of Guelph, where he served for 13 years. Braden also served with the city of Toronto and the King City fire department. Braden's commitment to safety and public service earned him the admiration of his peers.

Outside of work, Braden was a skilled and passionate fisher, hunter and outdoor enthusiast. After his passing, his friends and family shared memories of special time spent enjoying the great outdoors with Braden.

I want to thank the first responders who were there with Braden in his final moments and who worked alongside him in Guelph.

I offer my condolences to the Municipal Law Enforcement Officers' Association and their members across the province.

Most of all, I extend my heartfelt sympathies to Braden's family and friends, including his wife, Kaylie; his children, Blair, Colten and Chase; and his mother, Aeriol.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(h), 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 House shall commence at 9 a.m. on Monday, May 26, 2025, for the proceeding orders of the day.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today Harman Idema. He is the consul general of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Toronto.

He is joined by Elizabeth Witmer, who served as MPP for Waterloo North during the 35th and 36th Parliaments and Kitchener–Waterloo during the 37th, 38th, 39th and 40th Parliaments.

Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature.

Point of order: I recognize the government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. Point of order: I just want to advise the House that the night sitting scheduled for this evening has been cancelled.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Introduction of visitors?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We have four PC interns who are working in the Ministry of Health this summer, and I

wanted to introduce Luca, Paulina, Matt—or Matthew—and James.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to welcome Penny Ormerod to the House today. She is my constituent assistant, and she's looking forward to seeing the budget today—first budget delivered.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Good morning, Madam Speaker. I'd like to welcome some of my friends here from My MS Family, a charity that supports individuals living with multiple sclerosis. Joining us are Peter Busciglio, Doug Pilkey, Ian Lubek, Patricia Allard, Heather Austin and Ivan and Sonja Veg.

Thank you so much for all you do. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to welcome the Aspen Institute from Germany, and welcome everyone cordially to a reception in the dining room today at 5:30. It's a non-partisan, transatlantic delegation from the US, Canada and Germany. Guten Tag. Welcome to your House.

1030

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd like to welcome today's page captain Shyla Naraine's family: her mother, Grace Naraine; sister, Sahara Naraine; brother Rohan Naraine; and her grandmother Evangeline Parlan. I'd also like to welcome her father, Dr. Virj Naraine, and brother Nixon Naraine. Thank you for everything that you do here in the House. I'd like to welcome her entire family.

Mr. John Jordan: I want to introduce the great resident and community supporter of the beautiful town of Perth, Ontario, past CEO of Shopify, Toby Shannan.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'd like to introduce two guests we'll be meeting with later this afternoon from the Ontario Schools Cricket Association. Please join me in welcoming Ranil Mendis and Ken Jeffers. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Les étudiants et étudiantes de l'école St-Charles-Borromée sont dans l'autobus des Wolves de Sudbury pour se rendre à Toronto pour voir les Blue Jays. Ils vont être ici dans quelques instants. J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à deux de leurs professeurs : M. Sam West pour la quatrième et cinquième année, et Sophie LaChance pour la sixième, septième et huitième année. Bienvenue à Queens Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Mr. Jamie Webb, co-owner of Anderson Webb, a major contractor in Sarnia-Lambton, here for the budget.

MPP Jamie West: My colleague from Nickel Belt had mentioned that two teachers were coming. I wanted to recognize that one of them was my son. I'm very proud of him—in his first year of teaching, on his way here to Toronto.

QUESTION PERIOD

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, everybody. Speaker, this question is for the Premier. Nearly three months after an election about defending Ontario jobs and our economy, working people are still waiting for relief, for reassurance and for results from this government. But since the election, all we've seen are thousands of layoffs. Trump is targeting our auto jobs. Instead of protecting those jobs, though, we're seeing equipment being moved out of our communities and across the border, and the government's EV strategy is just coming apart in real time.

My question to the Premier is, what are you going to do about it?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: You know, Speaker, more important is to talk about the fact that over the last years—we have to look at what our opposition has done. They watched as 300,000 manufacturing jobs fled out of Ontario. At that time, there was no once-in-a-generation crisis. There were no tariffs. It was policy designed by the opposition to push those jobs away and crush our goods-producing sector.

Now they want us to revert back to their playbook, and we refuse to do that. We will not stand idly by as President Trump tries to take our companies and take our jobs. We're going to do everything in the power of a government to keep those jobs here and to keep those companies here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: This isn't a moment where you should be applauding yourselves. Workers are worried right now and they're pretty anxious about the future. Look at the folks who are awaiting those jobs in Honda in Alliston. Last month, they were told there was going to be no change in Honda's production. The Premier took the company at their word, and now they've announced a two-year pause in production. Honda is saying one thing in Canada and a completely different thing, by the way, in Japan.

How many more job losses and cancelled shifts is it going to take before the Premier actually takes action?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the 4,200 men and women who work at the Honda plant will continue to work at the Honda plant in Alliston. The Honda Civic, as an example, is the number one passenger vehicle sold in Canada, proudly made by those men and women in Alliston.

The Premier and I have both spoken personally to the CEO of Honda in Japan. He has reaffirmed their commitment to their operations and their planned expansion in Ontario. Yes, they have taken a pause; there's no question about that. But there's no change to their current employment or production in Alliston.

Tariffs are causing chaos and uncertainty worldwide. We're facing a once-in-a-generation challenge from down

south, but we are going to continue to do everything to protect the progress that we've made in the auto sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, I hope he asked that CEO what he meant when he said that they were going to be, in the future, moving those jobs to the United States, because that's what's being reported.

Almost 700,000 people right now in Ontario are unemployed. That's like the population of Hamilton, right? You say you're protecting Ontario, but you're not protecting Ontarians who are losing their jobs and can't afford their groceries. A recession is coming. This is the time for government to step up. It is not enough to wait and see. So why should workers trust the Premier and this government to hold big companies accountable, like Honda, when they have failed to do so time and time again?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: President Trump has made it extremely clear: He wants the companies that we've attracted to Ontario and he wants all of the jobs.

We have landed \$46 billion in investment here in Ontario. That is just in the auto sector. We have landed \$6 billion in investment in life sciences. We've landed tens of billions of dollars of investment in the tech sector.

Speaker, since we took office, almost one million jobs have been created. That is a record here in the province of Ontario. Yes, there are headwinds, and we are fighting them with every tool. You'll hear more about some of those tools in today's budget, which we hope you'll stand and support.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Ms. Marit Stiles: To be clear to the minister, that investment is at risk right now.

But listen, Speaker, I want to go back to another issue right now and back to the Premier. This government put forward a list of nation-building projects to the federal government that included things like this Premier's fantasy tunnel project. But there were some big things missing, things like hospitals and schools.

We have an opportunity now in this crisis to, yes, create more jobs and to build the infrastructure we need—schools in communities that are growing, hospitals that have been promised for decades.

Speaker, to the Premier: When will this Premier step up and say yes to building hospitals and schools and no to his fantasy projects?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know, when I look at the investments that we've been making in our hospitals since 2018—\$50 billion, 50 different capital projects, whether those are new hospitals, renovated hospitals, expanded hospitals. Those are the investments our government has been making under the leadership of Premier Ford, and those are the investments we will continue to make.

We have no intention of pausing or waiting for the federal government to step up and help. We're getting the job done today and we will continue to do that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary? I recognize the member for Ottawa West—Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Well, Speaker, the government's record is just not cutting it. Over a third of Ontario schools are not in a state of good repair; 32 schools need to be replaced entirely. But the Financial Accountability Officer says that this government is spending \$12.7 billion less than what we need to bring schools up to a state of good repair. Building and repairing schools provides a better learning environment for our children, and it creates jobs for local workers.

Will the Premier use today's budget to invest in our kids and ensure that Ontario's schools are not crumbling?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As the member opposite highlighted in her first question, we are investing in hospitals. She needs to go to Niagara south and see the build that is happening currently. She needs to go to Mississauga and talk to the Trillium hospital leadership who are building, right now, an expanded project. She needs to go to Brampton and talk to TMU, who is building and opening the first new medical school in the province of Ontario for decades. And might I add, the last medical school that was opened in the province of Ontario—oh, that's right, it was a Progressive Conservative government.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Well, I'll tell you where the government isn't building, and that's at the Queensway Carleton Hospital in my riding, which is built to serve 100,000 but is now serving 500,000. I'm not surprised that the government doesn't want to talk about education, Speaker, because their record is a massive shortfall in education funding: \$1,500 less per student, \$12.7 billion short to fix our schools. It's hard to have a world-class education system when our children are learning in schools with leaky roofs and flooded hallways.

A safe school to learn in is the most basic expectation of a publicly funded education system, but under this government, parents can't even expect that. What will it take for the Premier to make these critical investments into our schools?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Perhaps the members should go to Quinte, should visit London, should visit Ottawa, should visit Brampton, where we are investing in our hospital capital. But we're not just investing in hospital capital, because as important as it is to ensure that we have world-class facilities—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. The Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries will come to order.

I apologize. Continue.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Absolutely.

As important as it is to have and continue to offer world-class facilities, we also have to ensure that our health care professionals have the ability to upskill, to train

and to actually practise in the province of Ontario. We're doing that with the largest primary care expansion that we have seen in decades in the province of Ontario: multi-disciplinary teams that are working in communities across Ontario to ensure that people have access to a primary care provider. That's the work we're doing. We're not waiting for the federal government and we are absolutely not—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Health. So, Bill 11—there are some very good things in Bill 11. There's stuff around nurse practitioner scope and French-language services.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, don't get too excited. Don't get too excited.

The minister would know that schedule 6 in Bill 11, which concerns people's personal health information and their access to their records, is problematic, to say the least. So my question to the minister is just simply, will you assure this Legislature that Bill 11 will go through the full committee process once it passes second reading?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Do you know what? I will assure the member opposite that as we continue to consult with all of the experts in the field, including, of course, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, we will make sure that people get what they want from their health care system, and that is the ability to actually assess, review and see what those lab tests look like, and actually be able to look at their records, their personal records.

We are absolutely working with the IPC, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, to make sure that we are protecting individual access. But we know that people want to have that empowerment so that they can take those results, those lab tests, and they can have a conversation with a nurse practitioner, with a primary care physician, with a physiotherapist. We need to make sure that we catch up, frankly, with where the people of Ontario are, which is they want to be empowered and they want to have access to those medical records.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: The commissioner has written the ministry twice with very serious concerns, and it's not actually reflected in the legislation. It's been more than a year. So it's hard for me to believe that the ministry is actually working with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, because one of the concerns is, actually, that it may not increase people's ability to access their records; it may diminish it.

There are really serious concerns, and I'm not suggesting that government would sell people's personal health information, but we know that there are people out there looking for it. One of the concerns is that it's got to have guardrails and governance. It's a serious thing. We have time. We've got the summer. The question is, are you

going to put it through to the full committee process after second reading? Yes or no?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Respectfully, what I'm hearing from the member opposite is if we cannot have complete 100% access to our medical records, if individuals choose not to share their medical records with other health care practitioners, we should stop all progress on this. I don't believe that. I think the vast majority of people are interested in having access to that to share it with other primary care providers and medical professionals. And we need to ensure through our process that they have that opportunity.

Is it going to be 100% so that individuals who choose for any number of reasons not to access it through electronic means? That's okay. But we need to catch up. We need to join the 21st century and actually get to a place where people have control over their own individual medical records. That's what we're doing with Bill 11—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will ask both the government side and the third party to come to order.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: The minister clearly misunderstood my question. I am just asking—I want us to get it done as badly as she does. We all do. We just need to do it right. It's really hard to sort out why the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the person who's there to protect our information and our privacy, is being ignored.

All I'm simply asking is, let's just put it to committee. That's a normal thing. It doesn't have to slow it down, but we can take enough time to get it right. All I want you to say is, "Yes, we'll do that." I'm not asking you what to put into it. I'm just saying take this information and do it. So just please say to all of us here, "We're just going to put it to committee and we're going to get it right and we're going to protect people's health information." That's all you need to say.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): A reminder to ask your questions through the Speaker.

I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We are and we will continue to protect people's health information.

But I want to reinforce to the member opposite that we've got to catch up. We have people right now who are saying, "Why can my lab tests that occur in community—why can't I share those with my primary care provider? Why can't I share those lab results with my physiotherapist?" It is, frankly, something that we need to catch up to the rest of the world—ensuring that people have access, empowering people to take more control over their health care pathway. We want to do that. We're doing that with steps with Bill 11. As I said, will continue to work with the Information and Privacy Commissioner because I know that they are an expert in this area as well. But we need to catch up and ensure that people get access to their primary care records. That's what they're asking for, and that's what we're doing with Bill 11.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr. John Fraser: This government plays catch-up all the time. The problem is they trip over themselves when they're in such a hurry.

You're not working with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, with all due respect. Yesterday in debate your parliamentary assistant said this: "As long as the information is de-identified, that is to say they cannot identify the patient's name or date of birth and stuff like that—de-identified information—that appears to me to be a safety mechanism that is very useful." Does the minister agree with that? Yes or no?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: What I agree with is that people have been asking for access to their medical records. We have clinicians who are asking to ensure that they have access, and we are doing that moving forward with Bill 11. That's the change. That's the movement that we need to do in the province of Ontario.

I have people every day saying, "I do not understand why existing lab tests that I have had in my community I don't have access to, I can't review, and ultimately I can't share." It doesn't make sense. We are operating in the 19th century, and we need to catch up. That's what we're doing with Bill 11.

Mr. John Fraser: I unfortunately caught the Minister of Education's heckle, which told me I'm not smart enough to understand this, so apparently I don't.

I can't get a simple yes or no answer from the minister about whether or not they're going to bring it to committee. If it's no, just say no so we all know. You keep telling me you're working with the Information and Privacy Commissioner and you're not, so it's like: Yes or no, are you going to put this to committee, put it through a full process? If you're not going to, just say no. If you're going to, say yes.

I think it's actually something—look, we want to work with you to get it done, to help you get this done the right way. The commissioner is trying to do that and all I hear from you is, "We got it all right, and we're in a hurry. So don't worry, we won't trip over ourselves again."

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): A reminder to ask your questions through the Speaker.

Back to the Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I think that was more of a statement than a question, but I will remind the member opposite that we have had PHIPA, the Personal Health Information Protection Act, in Ontario for many, many decades. We understand that that legislation governs the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information within the health sector in Ontario. The stakeholders understand that; the hospitals understand that; the clinicians understand that; we as parliamentarians understand that. We're going to ensure that Bill 11, as we move forward on the electronic medical records, is absolutely following the rules of PHIPA, and we will continue to also have opportunities for people in Ontario who wish to have access to be able to access their personal health care information.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Final supplementary, the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll try once more. I know I'm beating my head against the wall. Now, I'll just remind the minister that actually, if you have read these letters, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has expressed concerns about how this relates to PHIPA.

We need to get this right, all of us here. It's not about you and us; it's about all of us. The smartest thing to do is to take this thing to committee and to listen to the commissioner and address those concerns, or say you're not going to address those concerns. But I know, and we all know, that when we don't listen to the advice of officers outside this Legislature what happens, and we know what happens when we do. One more time: committee or not, Minister?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): One more time, ask your questions through the Speaker.

Back to the Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you. Again, the member opposite did reference the Personal Health Information Protection Act. We know that the object is to keep personal health information confidential and secure while allowing for the effective delivery of health care.

We are empowering individuals who voluntarily decide who will have access to their personal health records, who will have the opportunity to review them and use them in clinical decisions. It will ultimately be a personal decision of those individual patients to decide. I think, in the 21st century, we need to empower people and say, "Yes, you can have access to your individual personal medical records." Why? We want to do this so that people can be empowered and can share, when appropriate, with the appropriate clinicians. That's what we're doing with Bill 11, and that's what we will do moving forward.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. The Premier recently promised auto workers in my community of Oshawa that not one of their jobs would be lost under his watch. Well, there are 750 GM workers in my community of Oshawa facing layoffs and 1,500 to 2,000 more losing their jobs. So what is in the budget that holds the Premier to his promise to these auto workers?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response, the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the question. We have said many, many times here that we have worked hard in the last seven years to turn the auto sector around. It was headed over a cliff, just like Australia's was. Australia decided to go off the cliff and get out of auto completely. Here in Ontario, we decided to stand up and fight for those 100,000 auto workers. That was the first move.

The second move was to expand us into the future, into the production of electric vehicles, into the production of batteries, into the production of all of the components. That's how we've landed that \$46 billion worth of

business in the auto sector. We will work every single day to make sure that Ontario keeps these jobs here, and we'll fight for them every day.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oshawa is hurting, but we aren't alone. There are also 5,000 auto sector and related jobs in Windsor—2,000 at Stellantis alone, hundreds of GM workers in Ingersoll laid off. It's 1,000 promised jobs in Alliston, gone just like that. How many more will there be as Honda shifts production to the US? We don't know. It's also auto jobs in Brampton and Niagara.

So my question is, what real, tangible measures are the Premier and this government taking that will ensure that not one more auto job is lost?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We should be dealing with facts here, especially the facts about Honda. The fact about Honda is they are swapping production between Alliston and the US, not shifting production. Let's just get this correct to make sure when we're making these arguments that we're arguing with the facts.

Again, we will work every single day. We've worked hard, very hard, with no support from the opposition, to bring that \$46 billion here. Look, we are in an economic war with the United States, and we are fighting that war every single day. We are fighting to reduce the auto tariffs to zero. We've made great headway on the files that we have. We're not where we need to be yet, but we will continue that fight in Washington every single day until every one of these jobs is settled.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

M^{me} Lucille Collard: People in my riding of Ottawa–Vanier are watching closely, hoping that today's budget will finally address the homelessness crisis with real investment in affordable housing.

We know that a housing-first approach to homelessness is not only more effective, but it's actually cost efficient—more than the shelter model—especially when we factor in the savings for our health care system and our justice system.

The government knows our communities are suffering because of the consequences of homelessness, but punishing people is not a solution. Housing is a provincial responsibility, yet time and time again, this government has passed the buck, leaving municipalities and front-line organizations to clean up the mess.

Will the government announce new investments in supportive housing today, or will it once again disappoint the people and communities across Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rob Flack: Speaker, I think we've acknowledged many, many times it takes too long and it costs too much to get any type of housing built in Ontario—supportive, affordable, purpose-built rentals, market housing—period. That is why we introduced Bill 17 this week, protecting Ontario by building faster and smarter. If you take a look at some of the initiatives within that bill, you will see that that is exactly what we're doing.

I would also add that we continue to support our municipal partners' massive infrastructure dollars: \$2 billion, plus \$400 million more announced this week. We continue to support our municipal partners. Take a look at who's supporting this bill: AMO, all key municipal partners in Ontario and all building industry organizations.

That being said, we're going to see results. More of the same isn't working. We're getting it done by building faster and smarter.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Ottawa–Vanier for supplementary.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Some of the people experiencing homelessness need more than a roof. They need supportive housing and access to mental health care if they are ever going to get back on their feet.

The homelessness and opioid crises are devastating our communities. In Ottawa–Vanier, our streets are reaching a breaking point. What is needed is a serious, coordinated, all-hands-on-deck response.

So I ask again, will this budget finally invest in the outreach, treatment and supportive housing people urgently need, or will this government continue to watch from the sidelines while communities fall apart?

Hon. Rob Flack: We continue to invest in the homelessness crisis. We continue to invest for supportive housing. Let's take a look at some of these investments: \$75.5 million last fall to end encampments and support wraparound treatments for those in most need; \$700 million in homelessness prevention funding; and close to \$550 million dollars in treatment centres in this province—wraparound services. Nine have opened in April. We're going to continue to look at these investments.

This Minister of Health continues to support this initiative day in and day out and so does this government, so does this caucus. We're going to get it done for the people of Ontario.

1100

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: My question is for the Minister of Transportation.

For too long, families in Mississauga have been stuck in traffic. They spend hours on the road, missing time with their kids and loved ones. But Bonnie Crombie and the Liberals don't care. She just recently said again, "I didn't think there was a need for the 413." She's doubling down on her opposition to the infrastructure that families need.

Highway 413 will cut commute times, create jobs and boost our economy. It will help families spend less time in traffic and more time at home. But the Liberals want to block it. They want to make life harder for working people.

Speaker, can the minister share how our government is building the roads families in my riding need to cut gridlock and support growth?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Brampton East.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville for that question and her strong advocacy for the people of Mississauga. She's a true champion and the absolute best person who could have represented that riding.

Highway 413 is a key pillar of our government's plan to build Ontario. As part of that plan, we're fighting gridlock and supporting jobs.

Speaker, gridlock is not just going to disappear, and neither is commercial traffic. Toronto already ranks as the seventh most congested city in the entire world.

The people of Ontario and Peel region spoke loud and clear when they re-elected our government with a historic third straight majority government. They want to see Highway 413 built.

We can't maintain the status quo. We need to build new roads, new highways, and our government is going to do just that. We're building for the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Mississauga East–Cooksville.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for his response.

Bonnie Crombie and the Liberals are choosing politics over people. They're against Highway 413 even though it will cut commute times, reduce gridlock and give families more time at home. Instead of standing up for drivers and workers, Bonnie Crombie is doubling down on her opposition. She said, "I didn't think there was a need for the 413." This highway will make life easier for families, create jobs and keep our economy strong. But the Liberals want to hold Ontario back.

Speaker, can the parliamentary assistant please share why building Highway 413 is so important for Ontario's future and how our government will put commuters first?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Speaker, the reality is that it takes too long to get around the GTA, especially Mississauga and Brampton. Highway 401 is already the most congested highway in North America, and when you factor in the 200,000 people immigrating to Ontario each year, the need for Highway 413 has never been more clear. We can't afford to delay getting this highway built. More delays equal more gridlock. Failure to build also comes at a high cost to our economy and our quality of life. We cannot maintain the status quo. We need to address this now.

Bonnie Crombie and the Liberals continue to choose politics over people.

Our government and this Premier are taking bold action to protect Ontario and the people of Mississauga, the people of Brampton.

We're going to build Highway 413, and we're going to get it done for the people of Ontario.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, for years, Ontario colleges and universities have struggled with the lowest per-student funding in Canada,

while this government sat back and allowed international student tuition to keep our system afloat.

Now our post-secondary institutions are sinking. In the last year, over 450 programs have been suspended, with hundreds more expected to shut down. Entire campuses have closed. Thousands of staff are being laid off.

Speaker, when will this government provide the permanent increase in base funding that our colleges and universities urgently need?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Our focus has not changed, and maybe the member opposite missed the fact that we just invested \$750 million into STEM programming across our sector. That's 20,500 new seats in the STEM sector, on top of the 70,000 graduates that we are graduating on an annual basis in the STEM programming.

Speaker, we will continue to stand with the sector and have conversations with them. On top of the \$1.3 billion that we invested last year, we've invested over \$2 billion in the last 16 months. That's on top of the \$5 billion that we invest annually into the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, expanding STEM seats is not enough if our colleges and universities can't keep the doors open. And it's not just STEM grads who are needed to strengthen our economy and our province. It's health care grads, business grads, manufacturing, tourism and, yes, liberal arts. Instead, local employers can't find the grads that they need. Students are being turned away from high-demand programs because of enrolment caps, and the vital campus services that support students are being cut.

Speaker, why is this government standing by while our post-secondary sector collapses?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Two billion dollars in investments in 14 months is not standing by at all. We know our colleges and universities are building Ontario's workforce for decades to come. That's why, instead of giving in to the opposition's request to just throw more taxpayer dollars in, prolonging a systemic issue, we're taking a comprehensive approach with the sector to strategically invest in critical areas that will benefit Ontario's economy.

The people of Ontario elected our government, Speaker, because they know it's this government that will make fiscally responsible decisions and it's this government that will maintain Ontario's reputation of having a world-class post-secondary education system.

As I just mentioned, our government strategically invested three quarters of a billion dollars into STEM programs that funded almost 21,000 new STEM seats annually to develop a talented workforce, whether that's in health care, EV, automotive or life sciences. Our government is leading the shift in higher education to prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow. We have committed to a funding model review in advance of 2027-28. As we always have, we will continue responsibly and—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: After years of fighting for bike lanes—from municipal motions to countless petitions and advocacy from cycling and environmental groups, media coverage, pilot projects, legal action, and many economic and environmental studies—Toronto was able to proudly start a network of protected bike lanes. So imagine the shock and disgust of municipal officials and staff who support protected cycling infrastructure, advocacy groups who fight for safe roads for all and families of cyclists who have lost their lives when the Premier introduced dreaded Bill 212 to remove safety on our roads.

Then hope came when judges granted an injunction to bar the government from tearing out three bike lanes, followed quickly by fear and outrage hearing that the Premier may allocate funding in this budget for the removal of additional safe cycling infrastructure, instead of investing more in housing, mental health supports, health care and education.

My question to the Premier: Will this budget leave Ontarians with a feeling of hope and admiration or fear and outrage—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Will the sides please come to order? The government House leader.

I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Our government was elected on a mandate to rip out these bike lanes and that is exactly what we will do. These bike lanes have caused Toronto to become one of the most congested cities not only in North America but all across the world. Toronto is too important not to be moving efficiently and effectively.

That is why we have a plan. We have a plan to build and invest over \$70 billion in public transit, which the Liberals have voted against every single time. We have a plan to invest \$28 billion over the next 10 years into highways like the 413, the Bradford Bypass, the Garden City Skyway. We're going to get these investments built, we are going to get these investments through so we can continue to build this province for the future, and we will get people moving.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Beaches–East York. Please keep the sidebar conversations to a minimum. Thank you.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, I don't see Christine Hogarth in the chamber anymore, so something must have come out.

On May 6, 2024, in this chamber, the government stood up in response to my question on interference in municipal matters and advocacy for active transportation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Interesting, actually—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. I will start naming people. Order. I'm warning people. Order.

I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: The government referred to bike lanes as radical policy. That's interesting, actually, because I would not say that ensuring Ontarians arrive home safely to their families and allowing judges to simply do their duty to investigate charter violations is radical.

However, to me, "radical" is slashing environmental protections, discarding public consultations, ignoring Indigenous rights and bypassing due environmental assessments, spending millions of dollars removing infrastructure that keeps road users safe instead of addressing the affordability crisis, the housing shortage, the—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: My question to the Premier: Will you ensure that this government's budget is not spent interfering in municipal matters and instead invests in things that matter for—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Madam Speaker, perhaps the member opposite missed the fact that on February 27, the people of this province elected this government for a third time to continue on our mandate to build—a mandate to build Highway 413, a mandate to build the Bradford Bypass, to continue investing in public transit and to rip out those bike lanes that have caused gridlock all across the city of Toronto.

People don't want to come into the city anymore because of a couple of ideological radicals who have destroyed the streets of Toronto and made it impossible to get around.

We are bringing common sense back to the streets of Toronto. We are going to rip those bike lanes out, we are going to make sure we invest in public transit, and we're going to ensure that we build highways for the future. That is because we got elected—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Toronto Centre will come to order.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: —for a third time, a historic mandate from the people of this province, and we will continue to ensure that we deliver for the people of this province and build those highways and subways and rip out those bike lanes.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. I want to start off by saying I'm sorry for your loss—the Leafs' loss, that is. Go, Leafs, go!

In Kitchener, low-income people are losing their homes at an alarming rate, often because they simply can't afford the cost of rising rent. Every week, I meet with people who

are living in their cars, living in tents or trapped in violent relationships because they have nowhere else to go. We all agree in this place that this is not okay.

One major reason is simple math. Shelter allowances haven't kept up. Ontario Works shelter allowances cover 25% of average rent, and for ODSP, that number is less than half.

My question to the minister: Instead of spending millions to put homeless people in jail, will this government raise Ontario Works and ODSP shelter allowances so they actually reflect the cost of housing?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank the honourable colleague for the question. It is an important question.

Our government is constantly working to support Ontarians at a very challenging time. We're focused on solutions that have an impact on the people of this province. It's why I mentioned earlier in the week we increased ODSP supports to 17% in just a little over two years. We tied rates to inflation so they can keep up with the cost of living. We changed the earned income threshold from \$200 to \$1,000 monthly so they can keep more money in their pockets.

But that's just part. We're taking a whole-government approach to make life affordable for Ontarians because we know there are challenges right now outside of our borders that impact all Ontarians.

Unlike opposition parties, we're not putting blinders on. We will not stop fighting for the people of this province. We'll continue to work hard every single day to make life more affordable for Ontarians, especially those on social assistance.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Speaker, again to the minister: I do appreciate the ODSP increase, but we all know it falls short of covering the cost of living, and Ontario Works has been frozen since 2018. That gap leaves seniors, folks with disabilities, newcomers, Indigenous people, children and families feeling hopeless.

We know that stable housing reduces calls to fire and paramedic services, emergency room visits and police interactions.

A recent AMO report projects that chronic homelessness could exceed 250,000 people by 2035. This crisis will be this government's legacy if we don't see bold action in this budget.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Will this upcoming budget spend money wisely and keep people housed with rent subsidies and shelter allowance increases instead of spending \$133,000 per person, per year to put them in jail?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Again, I thank my honourable colleague for their question.

Madam Speaker, here's the only thing that I would ask my colleague: You sit across; I ask you, I implore you, to work with the members opposite here to support initiatives that deliver tangible results for the people of this province.

When we increased the Homelessness Prevention Program, through you to my colleague, Madam Speaker, every single person except the majority middle voted

against the initiative. When we increased ODSP rates, the opposition voted against it. The "camera, lights, no action" parties will always be around to vote against initiatives that make life more affordable for Ontarians, but they'll come here and lobby for it. The Homelessness Prevention Program, the new HART hubs, the housing initiatives under the program that was just recently announced—the opposition can't run fast enough here to vote against these initiatives, but they'll lobby for them when the cameras are on.

Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member opposite. I ask the member to talk to some of her colleagues across, to ask them to support initiatives that help Ontarians. They have a—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Solicitor General. Firefighters are heroes, and I am proud to serve among them. Firefighters literally walk through fire to save lives. Firefighters put themselves in danger to protect others.

Speaker, I have to salute my new friend Genna, an Ottawa firefighter who this week has given 60% of her liver to a fellow Ottawa firefighter. Genna, I wish you a speedy recovery.

That's why we need to continue to keep supporting our firefighters, and our government is doing just that. We are investing in the tools and the training they need. We are funding the Fire Protection Grant. This helps keep our firefighters safe so they can keep us safe. It's not just about equipment; it's about respect for the work that they do and the risks that they take. Firefighters deserve our support, and they deserve it every day.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General share more about how our government is backing our brave firefighters and ensuring that they have the resources they need to keep our communities safe?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my colleague from Brantford—Brant, who himself is a volunteer firefighter. He's an example of a parliamentarian that comes forward and views our public safety with the highest priority, and I want to thank him.

He's absolutely right, Madam Speaker, but I'd say this as well: There has never been a government ever in my lifetime that has led by having a relationship—the golden era of the relationship—with our firefighters, with our fire chiefs and with everyone who puts on that uniform and wears that flash.

And I can tell you this, Madam Speaker: In my meeting yesterday with the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, we talked about the priorities, we talked about the relationship, we talked about that we will be creative, we talked about having their backs. That's differentiating our government, led by Premier Ford, from governments of yesteryears.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the Solicitor General for his continuing support for our brave firefighters.

Speaker, firefighters do one of the most difficult jobs in the world. Firefighters run towards danger when others are running away. Firefighters keep our families safe, and they put their lives on the line to protect us. That's why our government is making sure they have the tools, the training and the support that they need. It's about keeping them safe so that they can keep us safe.

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With a \$30-million Fire Protection Grant, we are backing our firefighters. We are funding cancer prevention programs, investing in new equipment and supporting mental health.

Firefighters need to know that we have their backs, just like they have ours. Speaker, can the Solicitor General share more about how these investments will help protect our firefighters and keep our community safe?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: When the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association said it's time that the government consider a fire protection grant, we listened. Our government, led by Premier Ford, came forward with a \$30-million grant. The first of the \$10 million has been received by 374 fire halls across Ontario.

What does this mean? It means that they can purchase extractors to keep bunker gear clean. It means that firefighters that put on bunker gear can make sure that the carcinogenic by-products don't go through their skin. We have listened to them.

And one more thing, Madam Speaker: Our government is looking to the innovators and the entrepreneurs of Ontario: Build here in Ontario. Build fire trucks, build bunker gear and keep Ontario safe.

HOMELESSNESS

MPP Alexa Gilmour: My question today is to the Premier. Just a few days ago, the Premier received a letter from the National Homelessness Law Center in Washington, DC, urging him to withdraw Bill 6.

Now, Speaker, the government looks to be importing what the law centre says is some of the US's worst, least effective, most expensive policies on homelessness and addiction. Study after study, both here and in the US, show that we simply cannot arrest our way out of homelessness and addiction.

We need housing. Why is this government pursuing an approach that is not only cruel, but is not cost-effective?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rob Flack: I guess I would begin by saying having people live in a park is not a solution. I would say, Speaker, that when you take a look at what we've invested and continue to invest, it's continuing to change people's lives. I would also say, Speaker, that everyone deserves a roof over their head, but supporting Bill 6 would be an important initiative to help end homelessness and help bring wraparound services.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Hon. Rob Flack: These treatment hubs are a major part of the solution. The Minister of Health has introduced them. Nine have started since April; more will be coming. Watch for the budget today. We're getting the job done.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Parkdale–High Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I have an idea: The Premier should look west instead of south, to Manitoba instead of the US.

In Manitoba, Speaker, the province is already partnering with municipalities and community groups to move from encampments directly into housing and to provide the mental health, addiction and primary care supports that are needed to make this work. And guess what? It is working. Not a single person housed through the Manitoba approach has returned out of doors.

Here, we have a made-in-Canada solution that is compassionate, effective and saves taxpayers' dollars. Will the Premier commit to implementing Canada's solution to homelessness?

Hon. Rob Flack: Specifically, our government, led by our Premier, has made the largest investments in supportive housing and homelessness in the history of this province. Fact, Speaker—that's a fact. These record investments include the New Deal for Toronto at \$1.2 billion; a new deal for Ottawa at \$400 million.

Speaker, this government will not leave anybody behind. We will continue to invest and continue to tackle the challenges of homelessness. Bill 6 works. People need to use these parks for fun, not fear, period.

HOUSING

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The dream of home ownership in this province is slipping further and further out of reach. What was once a realistic goal is quickly becoming an unattainable luxury reserved for the very few.

So, my question to the minister: Given the government will be delivering its budget this afternoon, will he commit today to putting forward a real plan that will actually build homes families can afford?

Hon. Rob Flack: As I say and will keep saying, it takes too long and it costs too much to build a house in this province. The great member opposite wants a plan. I suggest he read specifically Bill 17, which was tabled this week. Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter will standardize the building code in this province that we need. It will defer DCs in this province to occupancy, and it will eliminate DCs on long-term-care homes permanently.

I would like to thank the member opposite. When he was with Habitat for Humanity, he did a great job, showed great leadership. That organization has done a wonderful job in helping us in our housing continuum. They'll play an important role, and I ask for his advocacy and support as we continue to work with Habitat for Humanity.

That was a great question.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Don Valley North.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I appreciate the response and the kind words from my friend the minister. Minister, I am always committed to working with everyone to find a solution to the crisis happening in Ontario now.

But, Minister, I read Bill 17. If you truly believe that you are doing everything that you can, then why are home prices 13 times higher than the average household income in Don Valley North? Why are families being priced out of communities that they love? You promised affordability, but prices keep rising. You promised 1.5 million homes, but all we see are delays. Families can't afford more excuses. They need homes.

So, will the minister now admit that his so-called plan is failing the people it's meant to help?

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you for the question. It's hard to admit a plan has failed when we haven't even voted on it yet. I think we've got a great plan ahead of us. Again, we understand we have a housing crisis. We're dealing with it spot on, dead on.

Speaker, along with housing, we need critical infrastructure. I think we all know that. And this minister, the Minister of Infrastructure, and the Minister of Finance have provided another \$400 million to make sure we can have housing-ready availability.

And remember this: I stood beside the mayor of Mississauga, the mayor of Vaughan, AMO, OHBA, BILD, ResCon and other key stakeholders and organizations. They all support Bill 17.

I ask him and the members opposite to get onside and vote for this important legislation.

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Laura Smith: This question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation. First Nations have a long history of leadership in this province. They know the land and the opportunities that it holds. That's why it's critical that our government continues to work with First Nations on major projects.

It means job growth and real economic power for those communities. It's about building strong partnerships, and that's why Ontario recently hosted the eighth annual First Nations Major Projects Coalition conference. It brought together leaders, investors and innovators, and it focused on creating real partnerships, building trust and removing those barriers. It was about making sure that First Nations have a tool to lead in infrastructure, mining and energy.

Can the minister please share how our government is supporting First Nations on these important projects?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Thank you to my friend the MPP for Thornhill, the amazing PA for Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Listen, Saskatoon; London, England; Toronto; Montreal—all places, destinations, where major conferences were being held, I was invited to come as a panellist or a

speaker. These were investors at the London Stock Exchange, Indigenous business leaders in Saskatoon and London, and entrepreneurs in mining, innovation and petroleum electricity transmission corridors who wanted to know from this politician why Ontario government was doing so well in its partnerships with First Nations, and how they could partner as equity partners, capital partners or business partners in the exciting things that are going on here across Ontario.

1130

Madam Speaker, these are the kinds of partnerships that are redefining the relationship between our government and First Nations—hope, opportunity and prosperity for First Nations communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the Minister for his continued leadership, not only in his community but across the province of Ontario. Supporting First Nations leadership in major projects means creating jobs, building strong communities and unlocking new economic opportunities. Our government is working with First Nations like Webequie and Marten Falls to advance critical road projects, and these projects are so essential. The Northern Road Link and community access roads connect people to jobs and businesses. We're also partnering with Aroland First Nation. We're supporting skills, training, infrastructure upgrades and energy projects. This ensures that communities benefit from economic growth.

Can the Minister please share how our government is helping First Nations communities build lasting economic opportunities and strengthen their economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the minister for a response.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Well, it's these economic and community partnerships that I mentioned earlier that are redefining the relationship not just between the government and First Nations communities, but among Indigenous business leaders from across the country, financiers from across the pond over there in London.

Madam Speaker, it's an incredible opportunity to be able to participate in these partnership agreements, and they're not just confined to the Ring of Fire area, the corridor to prosperity. We're building new community partnership agreements there. The mighty Berens River will have a bridge built across it led by a First Nations community. The southwest council—the First Nations in southwestern Ontario—are partnering with us on a number of key initiatives to give hope, opportunity and prosperity a real meaning for all First Nations communities from one end of this province to the next. We think that's a good thing.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker. I'd like to wish everyone a great constituency week. Under standing

order 59, I'll advise the House on the schedule for the week of May 26 to May 29.

On May 26, in the morning, there will be second reading on a government bill which will be introduced this afternoon. In the afternoon proceedings on Monday, a government bill will be introduced, followed by second reading of a government bill that will be introduced this afternoon. Our night sitting on Monday, May 26, will be second reading on Bill 17, Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025.

On Tuesday, May 27, in the morning, there will be second reading on a government bill which will be introduced this afternoon. In the afternoon proceedings, there will be a government bill introduced, followed by a second reading of Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act. Our night sitting on Tuesday, May 27 will be continuing second reading on Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act.

On Wednesday, May 28, in the morning, we'll debate the budget motion. In the afternoon routine, a government bill will be introduced, followed by debate on the budget motion.

On Thursday, May 29, in the morning, again, further debate on the budget motion. The afternoon will be determined.

That's my report under standing order 59.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Well, folks, it's that very sad time. I'd like to ask our pages to assemble. I know it's budget day, and this is my first budget, so we have to win, okay? We have to win. I don't want anyone to be hurt, but when you deliver the budget, please, let's make it the record time—no pressure.

It's now time to say a word of thanks to our legislative pages. Our pages are smart, they're trustworthy, and they worked so hard in the past few weeks.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Yes. They are indispensable to the effective functioning of this chamber, and we are indeed fortunate to have each and every one of them here with us.

To our pages: You leave us having made many new friends, with a greater understanding of parliamentary democracy and memories that will last a lifetime. Each of you will go home now and continue your studies, and no doubt you will contribute to your communities, your province and your country in very important ways. We expect really, really big things from each and every one of you. You may actually come back one day and be sitting in one of these chairs and we'll be getting you water. No matter where your path leads you, we wish you well.

I ask the members to please join me in thanking our legislative pages.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to proceed immediately to the afternoon routine.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to proceed immediately to the afternoon routine. Agreed? Agreed.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments, dated May 15, 2025, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 61(b), this House stands in recess until 4 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2025 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2025

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Finance has moved, seconded by the Premier, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

I would now like to ask the indulgence of our members. This is my first budget and it's their first budget, and there will be a competition to beat the previous time to deliver the budget. Folks, are we ready? Go.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I'm not quite sure, but I'm going to ask the table: Is it a record? It's a record.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's like Christmas in Toronto and Ontario. Everyone has got their budget.

Today, Ontario and Canada face challenges unlike anything we have ever faced before.

Our closest ally and trading partner—our neighbour, the United States—has overturned an economic relationship we once saw as unshakeable.

Madam Speaker, I lived in the United States for almost 15 years ...

My wife is American. My children were raised there, and I remember those days fondly.

Working for a Canadian financial institution, I also served as president of the Canadian Association of New York.

When the tragedy of 9/11 occurred, the Canadian Association of New York rallied to support our American friends by hosting a massive “Canada Loves New York” campaign.

Thousands of Canadians flocked to New York to show their support.

Madam Speaker, I know Americans would do the same for us ...

We are not only friends, but we are family ...

And that is why this trade war hurts ...

But as families go through bumps, we too will go through these bumps and come out stronger.

My father, arriving in Canada in 1951 as a refugee, chose this country ...

He came to Canada with nothing, and Canada gave him everything.

So, I dedicate this speech to him and the 41 million people who call this land of ours home.

Madam Speaker, I also want to congratulate you for being the first woman Speaker in Ontario since Confederation.

Before I begin, I would like to paint a brief picture of the time and place our province finds itself in.

First and foremost, we need to face the facts ...

Ontario and all of Canada are at a precipice, and we need to take serious steps to make sure we don't find ourselves anywhere near the bottom.

These tariffs imposed by the United States have been a wake-up call for Canadians.

Ces tarifs imposés par les États-Unis ont été un avertissement pour les Canadiens.

A wake-up call that highlights the underlying issues we face as an economy and a nation.

Un avertissement qui met en évidence les défis sous-jacents auxquels notre économie et notre nation font face.

But now is not the time for fear of tariffs and uncertainty ...

Mais ce n'est pas moment de craindre les tarifs et l'incertitude...

Now is the time for growth and improvement ...

Improvement in our standard of living ...

Growth in our real GDP ...

And growth in our wages, with bigger paycheques!

We need to achieve this reality because future generations depend on it ...

And we need to leverage every tool at our disposal to make that happen ...

Whether it's our competitive advantage in critical minerals, energy, technology, talent and our workers, or any other area ...

We will need to bolster our economy by investing in our powerful and promising industries ...

By building more, by building faster ...

And by protecting jobs and creators.

By doing so, we achieve long-term prosperity.

After all, a strong economy provides the necessary revenues to invest in education, housing and health care.

And so, the next question is ...

How?

How will Ontario stand to face the challenges before us and deliver the economy that our future depends on?

Madam Speaker ... I come here before you today with a proposal ...

A plan ...

Au nom du premier ministre, Doug Ford, et tout notre gouvernement de l'Ontario, j'ai l'honneur aujourd'hui de vous présenter le budget provincial de l'Ontario de 2025 : Un plan pour protéger l'Ontario.

On behalf of Premier Doug Ford and our entire government of Ontario, it is my honour today to present to you the 2025 Ontario provincial budget: A Plan to Protect Ontario.

In my time as Ontario's Minister of Finance, I have had the honour of introducing four different provincial budgets, and four fall economic statements.

Successive budgets that—since 2018—have helped create one million more jobs ...

Grown our GDP to over \$1.2 trillion ...

Attracted new investments in key sectors ...

And have the most ambitious capital plan in our history with over \$200 billion over the next 10 years.

Madam Speaker, this did not happen by accident ...

And it did not happen by chance ...

These accomplishments came as the result of ...

Hard work ...

From the people and businesses that make up Ontario's economic engine.

The workers who build our infrastructure, manufacture our goods, and extract our natural resources ...

Because Madam Speaker, it is they, the great people of this province, who for generations have led the way for Ontario to become the economic engine of Confederation.

Madam Speaker, these sweeping tariffs have taken aim at our most critical industries ...

But make no mistake ...

Canadians have never been more united than we are right now ...

United in pride and purpose—with a common goal to stand up for and help one another through these tough times.

United in rejecting outright threats to our sovereignty.

Madam Speaker, let me be clear as I echo the words of the Premier ...

Canada will never be the 51st state. Canada is not for sale!

Applause.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: It's amazing to witness the burst of patriotism across our province and our great country. Our people and businesses are already out there supporting the local economy in every way they can.

Putting their money in Ontario-made and Canadian-made.

And just like them, our government's plan to protect Ontario is designed to strengthen and support not only Ontario's economy ...

But Canada's economy as a whole—by positioning us for long-term prosperity and growth.

Ontario must make a decision that will not only shape the future of our province—but the future of all of Canada.

Madam Speaker, if not now, when?

As Ontario goes, Canada goes.

Our leadership during this period of uncertainty demands that we get the big decisions right.

And so, we are left with an important choice to make ...

A choice between the old economy, and a new economy.

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A choice between an economy of uncertainty and vulnerability ...

Or an economy of growth, prosperity and resilience.

A choice between the economy of yesterday ... and the economy of tomorrow.

A future where Ontario enjoys free and unfettered trade with every province and territory, with nothing to stop us from building the most powerful nation and economy in our country's history!

A future where a united Canada—with Ontario as its largest economy—is the most competitive nation to do business in all the G7!

A future with clean nuclear energy and pipelines that power our economic engine and cement our place as a global energy superpower!

A future with critical minerals unique to Ontario's north that make us the envy of the world!

Madam Speaker, these are the economic drivers that will ultimately dictate whether a nation is in ... or out.

Who holds the cards, and who the major players are ...

And luckily, here in Ontario, we have all the cards we need to make sure we find ourselves at the table.

Natural resources, the talent and the ingenuity.

Ontario has everything we need to seize our place in the world as an economic powerhouse that will span generations.

Ontario must embrace this new-found opportunity to embark on nation-building projects that will kick-start the next economic age ...

Like the critical mineral mining projects in the Ring of Fire.

Building nuclear energy generation, including the first small modular reactors in the G7 right here in Ontario.

A new deep seaport in James Bay, to serve as a gateway to bring Canadian resources to new markets.

Tunnelling the 401 to ease congestion as the busiest highway in North America.

And building GO 2.0, the next generation of GO passenger train service in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

Our government was re-elected with a strong mandate from the people of Ontario to protect the economy and protect jobs. We expect the federal government to come along with us.

We will continue to use every tool in our tool kit—not only to defend the jobs and industries of this province ...

But to guide us through one of the greatest economic challenges this province has seen in a generation!

As John F. Kennedy once said, about big bold ideas, “We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things not because they are easy, but because they are hard.”

Madam Speaker, if not now, when? Now is not ease up. Now is the time to be bold. Now is the time to do hard things.

The economy of tomorrow is at the door ...

And I'm here to tell you that our government is ready to answer the call!

First and foremost, Madam Speaker, is the work our government must do to defend our economy from the immediate impacts of tariffs ...

These are the measures needed to protect jobs and job creators alike, by providing them with certainty at a time when uncertainty threatens their well-being.

Like the \$11 billion that we're rolling out as direct support to help our most impacted businesses and their workers.

First, we're deferring around \$9 billion worth of provincial taxes for 80,000 businesses ...

This is providing a tremendous amount of liquidity and financing relief for our businesses, and it would give them certainty where there is uncertainty.

And then secondly, there's a new \$2-billion rebate through the WSIB that's going to flow directly to safe employers to help keep workers on the job ...

And on top of that, Madam Speaker, our government is also proposing to create the all-new Protecting Ontario Account, one that will help us support impacted businesses and our economy to weather the storm...

But we're going to need the federal government to step up and do their part as well.

Tariffs have created an economic challenge right across Ontario, and it is our communities who are hurting the most, Madam Speaker—but our government is there for them too ...

Through the new Trade-Impacted Communities Fund, we will provide \$40 million in tailored, flexible grants to help communities respond to disruptions in their local industries.

This funding would go to municipalities, economic development organizations, and other industry associations to help them source locally and find new markets.

Madam Speaker, protecting our economy is about more than just ensuring our workers and businesses have been given the tools they need to weather this storm ...

It is also about protecting the gains we have made since 2018.

Gains that include more than \$46 billion in new investments that we attracted since 2020 from global auto-makers, parts suppliers and manufacturers of EV batteries and battery materials.

This is why we are doubling down on initiatives that we know are working, like the \$1.4-billion Ontario Made

Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit we launched back in 2023.

I'm proud to announce that we are sticking to our commitment by proposing to temporarily enhance and expand that tax credit.

If approved, this would increase the rate of support to 15% and make even more manufacturers eligible, including public corporations operating in Ontario.

Altogether, this would mean an additional \$1.3 billion in support to attract capital investment, help lower costs and—most importantly—protect Ontario.

Madam Speaker, in thinking about our economy—and the work needed to safeguard it—we must not only look to the past and progress thus far ...

We must also capture the growth we all want to see tomorrow.

Making concerted efforts to foster a growing, innovative and strong future economy.

And that is why, as part of our efforts to stimulate entrepreneurship and economic growth for our young Ontario companies, our government—through Venture Ontario—is providing an additional \$90 million in venture capital funding to strengthen competitiveness at the earliest stages of growth!

This funding will have a major impact on a number of sectors focused on industries like defence, technologies like AI, cyber security, life sciences, biomanufacturing and many others ...

All of which will have a growing part to play, not only for today—but in the economy of tomorrow.

So, Madam Speaker, these are some of the many actions being taken by our government to protect Ontario from tariffs, and we are not stopping there, Madam Speaker ...

The defence of Ontario's economy has already begun.

We have introduced real measures with real, tangible support that will help us weather the storm, while we work with our partners in federal, provincial and territorial governments to build the strongest economy in the G7.

Make no mistake, Madam Speaker ...

Our colleagues in Ottawa, the provinces and the territories are just as determined as we are to propel Canada towards the economy of tomorrow.

For months now, we have been in close collaboration with our counterparts as a united Team Canada to develop our joint response to this increasingly unpredictable situation.

As chair of the Council of the Federation, Premier Ford—or Captain Canada, as I like to call him and many others do as well—has been an incredible leader in the coordination of our plans with our Canadian partners, and in the negotiations with Washington ...

Premier, thank you for your leadership.

And I, myself, as chair of the provincial and territorial finance ministers, have had the privilege of working with my counterparts to build provincial and national solutions.

Co-operation is key, Madam Speaker ...

But as a leader amongst the provinces, Ontario has a responsibility to set the tone for the rest of the nation ...

That is why this government, under Premier Ford, is leading the way in tearing down interprovincial trade barriers once and for all ...

And we've taken steps to become the first province in Canada to remove all barriers under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement ... with no exceptions!

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These measures have the potential to boost the nation's GDP by around \$200 billion—and Madam Speaker, when all of Canada wins, Ontario wins!

We hold our relationship with all the provinces and territories in incredibly high regard, Madam Speaker.

And our relationship with the federal government is no exception.

Including with our new Prime Minister and his new cabinet.

Congratulations to them all.

And I'm here to reinforce what our government and our Premier have been saying all along ...

That we will work with anyone to protect Ontario and all of Canada.

All levels of government need to work together to tackle the most pressing issues facing Ontario and Canada today ...

Issues that we know are holding us back from delivering on the nation-building projects to become the most competitive economy in the G7.

Our government is ambitious, Speaker ...

What we have in store for Ontario's economic future is nothing short of revolutionary.

And while I know we're ready to kick-start these ambitious initiatives ... we're going to need the help of our partners in the federal government to ensure it happens without delay ...

Our government made a commitment to the people of Ontario that we would spare no expense to protect jobs, businesses and families ...

And we fully expect the federal government to do the same by reinvesting every cent of tariff revenues back to impacted workers and businesses.

Just as importantly, we're going to need to work very closely with our federal counterparts to deliver on nation-building projects such as reactors, seaports, railroads, pipelines and refineries.

But historically, Madam Speaker, this has taken time.

So much time, in fact, that in 2020, Canada ranked 188th out of 208 economies in the number of days businesses spent dealing with construction permits for new projects ...

But it doesn't have to be that way.

With the right mindset, and the right team, we could fast-track permitting to get nation-building.

That can be Team Canada, Speaker!

And that partner can be the federal government!

It is reassuring to hear that the federal government has already made commitments to defer to the provinces on issues like environmental assessments by July 1, and Madam Speaker, we will be holding them to account!

The federal government must work with us to do everything in its power to clear the maze of bureaucracy and red tape.

Barriers like Ottawa's Bill C-69—nothing says “don't build in Canada” like Bill C-69.

That's why we continue to call on Ottawa to put an end to this legislation and to work with us.

And it's why our government recently introduced legislation to get approvals in Ontario done in months—not years—through a “One Project, One Approval” model.

This would cut review timelines, uphold robust environmental standards, and help us get nation-building projects going.

For example, there are countless billions in economic power held underground in Ontario's north, Madam Speaker ...

But 15 years to open a mine is not acceptable.

We need to send a clear message to the world from Ontario—and all of Canada—that Ontario and Canada is open for business!

And it all starts by approving projects—like the unlocking of the Ring of Fire.

That is why I am pleased to announce that as part of our government's Plan to Protect Ontario, we are proposing the creation of the all-new \$500-million Critical Minerals Processing Fund.

Madam Speaker, this investment will help ensure we can dig here, process here, and sell those critical minerals to new markets here at home and all abroad.

But we're going to need all hands on deck to help to unleash the economic potential of these critical minerals, and we will work alongside Indigenous partners in the north to do it ...

It is important that we use this opportunity to deliver unprecedented economic development in northern Ontario.

That is why we are working to create partnerships with First Nations that offer economic opportunities and that will span generations, bringing prosperity to the north.

We will do this through our new \$3-billion Indigenous Opportunities Financing Program!

This expansion will support Indigenous participation in more sectors, including electricity, critical minerals, and resource development—offering generational economic opportunity for these communities.

And we are building those partnerships through a new Indigenous Participation Fund—an investment of \$70 million to enable meaningful consultation to better equip Indigenous communities with skills training in mineral exploration and mine development.

We are also investing \$10 million over three years to create new scholarship opportunities for Indigenous students.

We must leverage every resource and every partner so that we can attract even greater investments, strengthen our supply chains, and support critical job growth in the north ...

And of course—fuel the economy of tomorrow.

We will continue to work closely with the new federal government to make these timelines a thing of the past and invest more now.

We need to prioritize these bold approaches.

We need to think in the big picture ... in the long term.

It is time for bold action.

From interprovincial trade, to mining, and to energy, Madam Speaker.

Our energy needs demand that we take careful and calculated approaches in order to launch us into the economy of tomorrow.

And let me tell you ...

The economy of tomorrow is hungry for energy.

Electricity demand in the province alone is expected to grow by 75% in the next 25 years.

We are making excellent progress, including upgrading our nuclear generating stations in Pickering, Darlington, and the Bruce Peninsula ...

But, Madam Speaker, we are doing more.

As a matter of fact, just last week, our government announced construction approval of the first of four small modular reactors at the Darlington nuclear site—making them the first of their kind in the G7!

Not only will this first small modular reactor, or SMR, produce enough energy to power the equivalent of 300,000 homes, it will also support thousands of good-paying jobs.

And although we are exploring the development of the first new large-scale nuclear plants in over three decades within the province—with potential locations in Bruce county and Port Hope—we are still going to need to do more.

That is why we're investing in new generation, transmission and storage as part of our plan to spearhead the largest expansion of electricity generation in over 30 years

...

Ontario's plan to power our economic growth proves once and for all: You can grow the economy ... you can create jobs ... you can lower costs ... all while transforming Ontario into an energy superpower.

And, Madam Speaker, speaking of being big and bold

...

We continue to have the most ambitious capital plan in Ontario's history with over \$200 billion over the next decade to build and maintain critical infrastructure such as roads, highways, transit, hospitals, and high-speed Internet.

These projects will help get people and goods moving faster, while improving our economic productivity and prosperity.

That includes our historic investments in the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund and the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, and will include an additional, immediate \$400-million investment to enable the construction of more homes ...

To get more built faster than otherwise would not get built, we are proposing \$5 billion in additional funding through the Building Ontario Fund ...

Through this, we are leveraging Canadian institutional investments to create value for taxpayers, and deliver on

even more infrastructure projects in energy, housing, and long-term care.

But with the increasing need to propel Ontario and all of Canada's economic potential towards the future, we're going to have to build more ...

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And we're going to have to build faster ...

Including projects like Highway 413.

We are building the Bradford Bypass ...

Building the Highway 401 tunnel ...

Building the Ontario Line, with shovels in the ground along all parts of the new subway ...

And building the Gardiner Expressway—and its unprecedented 24/7 construction schedule to finish in two years what was planned to take three years.

We're also working to deliver on the Hazel McCallion LRT ...

We're making it easier and faster for people to get where they need to go by expanding and building better GO train and bus services ...

From cranes to cement trucks, Ontario is building the most energetic and vibrant economy in the G7.

As you can see, our government isn't holding back.

From tunnels, highways, nuclear reactors, mines, processing facilities, homes and more ...

We're leaving no stone unturned, and no community left behind ...

With all the work there is to do to build infrastructure and protect our economy, we're going to have to count on the great workers in Ontario.

And to do that, we're going to need to give them the right tools to get the job done ...

Tools that will help them find good-paying jobs in the face of economic uncertainty ...

Not only by continuing to deliver relief for businesses and workers ...

But by also doubling down on the strategies we know have maximum impact.

All the historic infrastructure projects I listed are going to help ensure workers have their place in building Ontario's future ...

But supporting our workforce also means ensuring they can acquire, develop and retain their skills.

And with another \$1-billion investment we have now announced a total of \$2.5 billion in our government's Skills Development Fund.

Almost one million workers have been trained and re-skilled for in-demand jobs to date ...

And it means even more workers can gain valuable skills and experience to help retain the jobs and salaries that they and their families depend on.

And what are families if not the lifeblood of our communities?

The beating heart of every home, in every town and city in Ontario.

But with everything going on in the world right now, families are anxious.

Anxious about making ends meet.

Anxious about their jobs.

Anxious about their savings.

We get it, Madam Speaker.

We've done a lot of work since 2018.

Never raising a tax for Ontario people and businesses.

And under Premier Ford, we're taking that leadership one step further.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to affirm that, starting with the current provincial gas tax cut that would have ended in June, we propose to make it permanent!

This change, if passed, would save Ontario drivers 5.7 cents per litre on gas and 5.3 cents per litre on fuel! All in, we have saved families and businesses nearly \$4 billion.

But wait, Madam Speaker, there's more ...

Because we are proposing that starting June 1, 2025, our government can help save Ontarians even more time and money by removing all tolls on Highway 407 east.

If approved, this would put \$7,200 directly into the pockets of daily commuters every single year! That's real money.

We're taking bold action where bold action is needed, Madam Speaker.

We have made record investments in health care, education and social services. But these investments are not sustainable without a growing and prosperous economy.

And it's why we've focused so hard on retaining a prudent fiscal plan that secures long-term stability for lifelong success.

Ontario received two credit rating upgrades last year alone, and we are spending a lower share of our revenue on interest costs than we have since the 1980s. We have some of the lowest borrowing costs of any Canadian province!

We're also seeing our debt-to-GDP ratio—which is an excellent way to measure an economy's fiscal health—near the lowest levels in 15 years.

And, Madam Speaker, we can now use that balance sheet to protect workers and businesses, because you cannot make record investments in health care, like we have, without a responsible plan.

Thanks to our powerful balance sheet, we have made significant strides towards pushing our health care system to the forefront of excellence ...

Under the leadership of our great Minister of Health, Sylvia Jones, and Dr. Jane Philpott—we are leveraging our \$2.1-billion Primary Care Action Plan to make primary care the backbone of our health system.

Madam Speaker, Ontario is leading the nation in health care once more, by becoming the first Canadian jurisdiction to establish a framework that connects every willing person to a family doctor within four years, no matter where they live in Ontario.

We are creating and expanding over 305 primary care teams, including over \$235 million this year alone, for 80 additional teams and to connect 300,000 more people ...

We're also delivering on the construction of new hospital infrastructure, like the Campbellford Memorial Hospital, and Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital to serve our growing communities!

And we're creating new opportunities to hire more health care professionals across Ontario through our government's Learn and Stay grant ...

This will enable us to grow the number of nurses, paramedics, primary care practitioners and med lab technologists across the province by paying for their school and supplies in exchange for time delivering care in our communities.

Since 2018, our government has registered nearly 100,000 nurses and over 15,000 doctors ...

We're seeing this success in health care human resources, and we're also seeing more positive outcomes when it comes to reductions in surgical and diagnostic wait times, Madam Speaker.

Since 2020, we've invested over \$1 billion to support surgical recovery, including supporting hospitals to perform more surgeries than they did before the pandemic, including opening hospital operating rooms on weeknights and weekends ...

And in 2024-25, over 39,000 cataract surgeries, nearly 66,000 hours of MRI, and over 31,000 hours of CT scans were funded in community surgical and diagnostic centres, all paid for by your OHIP card, never your credit card!

Ontario has some of the lowest—if not the lowest—surgical wait times in Canada. But, Madam Speaker, we can do more.

That is why we're investing up to \$280 million to expand community surgical and diagnostic centres to continue making it easier and faster for people to connect to publicly funded surgeries and procedures.

Because you cannot build this healthy economy without a healthy population ... we are going to get them back out on their feet in the community.

We continue delivering meaningful outcomes here at home. We are going to continue to call on the federal government to increase the Canada Health Transfer so that we can continue building a resilient and transformational and effective health care system.

Congratulations to you, Minister Jones, for your great work.

Madam Speaker, working to protect communities is at the heart of this budget.

There's fighting the rising cost of living ...

There's providing access to world-class health care ...

But there's also safety ...

Keeping our streets, communities, and our whole province safe from criminals and gangs, and safe from the dangerous and illegal gun and drug trade coming from our southern border.

Our brave police officers and border patrol agents are out every single day, working to protect our communities and keep families safe.

I want to thank each and every one of them for their service.

And I'm here to tell you that we're going to keep supporting them every chance we get, with every resource.

Just like we did in January, when we supported our federal partners by bolstering our efforts to protect our

border and combat illegal activity by launching Operation Deterrence.

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We know these measures are working—and working well ...

So we're going to continue investing in the strategies we know are making a difference.

That's why our government will also be bolstering the security of our borders, by expanding our joint air support unit with two new police helicopters ...

Which will support the Niagara regional police and the Windsor Police Service as they increase patrols, security and enforcement at key points of entry.

Taken with our announcement last year of five new helicopters, for the GTA and Ottawa police services, this brings our total number of joint air support unit helicopters to seven!

Our message to criminals and traffickers is clear, Speaker ...

We're coming for you ...

Speaker, there's no sugar-coating the situation we find ourselves in ...

Ontario and Canada are facing one of the single greatest economic challenges in our modern history.

Plain and simple.

Tariffs threaten to slow down what we have achieved to date in our mission to rebuild our economy and make life more affordable for Ontarians.

We must act with strength, prudence and determination ...

To protect our economic strength ...

To protect our jobs ...

To protect our industries ...

And even our sovereignty ...

But even in the face of a challenge of this magnitude, I am here to tell you that there is hope.

Hope for prosperity.

Hope for a safer community.

Hope for a future where not only are we less reliant on the United States and more reliant on ourselves ...

But a future where Ontario and Canada find themselves at the epicentre of a new economic age.

Every moment in our history has brought us to this point ... an economic age where control over our own destiny and our own success is dictated by us.

An economic age where we leverage our natural resources, our clean energy, our infrastructure, our technology, and our workforce, in order to become the single most competitive economy in the G7.

An economic age where Canada's number one trading partner is Canada!

And where free trade amongst the provinces and territories is just that ...

Free ...

That is the economy of tomorrow ...

We have everything we need to propel Ontario towards a future ripe with more opportunity than ever before.

We need to work together ...

As a province united ...

As Team Canada.

We've done it before, Speaker.

We've overcome every challenge before us, and we stand proud today as Ontarians and Canadians because of it.

Every moment in our history before this point has led us exactly to where we are today.

This budget is the foundation of our government's plan to help us turn this vision into a reality.

But we cannot do it alone.

It's time we put aside our party stripes, forget our differences, and work together ...

At the national level—yes—but at home here in Ontario as well!

To our colleagues from the NDP, the Liberals, the Greens, and to the independent member ...

I ask that you work with us.

So that every worker, family, and business in every community across the province is part of the economy of tomorrow!

Let us put aside our differences—and join us.

Let us build Canada together.

We are here ...

Armed with an ambitious, bold, and targeted plan that will make the investments necessary for our well-being today, as well as the well-being of our future generations.

Armés d'un plan ambitieux, audacieux et ciblé qui pourrait voir les investissements nécessaires pour assurer notre bien-être, et celui des générations futures.

Now is not the time for distractions ...

We cannot afford them ...

And while I know that rampant uncertainty caused by tariff policies makes that difficult ...

We cannot lose sight of the danger at hand.

We cannot lose sight of who we are.

The times demand that we be prepared for anything.

And make no mistake, Speaker ...

Ontario is ready.

We have a vision.

We have a mandate.

We have a plan.

We have the people.

And together, we will build a stronger Ontario,

We will build a ...

Stronger ...

Sovereign ...

And prosperous Canada.

Thank you, and God bless the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

PLAN TO PROTECT ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LE PLAN POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 24, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Does the Minister of Finance wish to explain the bill?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: No. Carry on, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands in adjournment until Monday, May 26, 2025 at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1648.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---|
| Allsopp, Tyler (PC) | Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte | |
| Anand, Deepak (PC) | Mississauga—Malton | |
| Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP) | London—Fanshawe | |
| Babikian, Aris (PC) | Scarborough—Agincourt | |
| Bailey, Robert (PC) | Sarnia—Lambton | |
| Begum, Doly (NDP) | Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Bell, Jessica (NDP) | University—Rosedale | |
| Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC) | Pickering—Uxbridge | Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances |
| Blais, Stephen (LIB) | Orléans | |
| Bouma, Will (PC) | Brantford—Brant | |
| Bourgouin, Guy (NDP) | Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James | |
| Bowman, Stephanie (LIB) | Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest | Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu |
| Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND) | Haldimand—Norfolk | |
| Bresee, Ric (PC) | Hastings—Lennox and Addington | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Burch, Jeff (NDP) | Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre | |
| Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC) | Markham—Stouffville | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation |
| Cerjanec, Rob (LIB) | Ajax | |
| Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC) | Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord | Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité |
| Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC) | Willowdale | Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux |
| Ciriello, Monica (PC) | Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain | |
| Clancy, Aislinn (GRN) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | |
| Clark, Steve (PC) | Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes | Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Coe, Lorne (PC) | Whitby | |
| Collard, Lucille (LIB) | Ottawa—Vanier | Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu |
| Cooper, Michelle (PC) | Eglinton—Lawrence | |
| Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC) | Oakville | Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement |
| Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC) | Mississauga—Lakeshore | |
| Darouze, George (PC) | Carleton | |
| Denault, Billy (PC) | Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke | |
| Dixon, Jess (PC) | Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler | |
| Dowie, Andrew (PC) | Windsor—Tecumseh | |
| Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC) | Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte | Attorney General / Procureur général |
| Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC) | Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord | Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence |
| Fairclough, Lee (LIB) | Etobicoke—Lakeshore | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|---|---|
| Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC) | Nipissing | Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce |
| Fife, Catherine (NDP) | Waterloo | |
| Firin, Mohamed (PC) | York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston | |
| Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC) | Elgin—Middlesex—London | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario |
| Fraser, John (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti |
| French, Jennifer K. (NDP) | Oshawa | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC) | Newmarket—Aurora | |
| Gates, Wayne (NDP) | Niagara Falls | |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
| Gilmour, Alexa (NDP) | Parkdale—High Park | |
| Glover, Chris (NDP) | Spadina—Fort York | |
| Gretzky, Lisa (NDP) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | |
| Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC) | Brampton East / Brampton-Est | |
| Gualtieri, Silvia (PC) | Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville | |
| Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC) | Milton | Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution |
| Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Oxford | |
| Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC) | Kitchener—Conestoga | Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Hazell, Andrea (LIB) | Scarborough—Guildwood | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC) | Thunder Bay—Atikokan | Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers |
| Hsu, Ted (LIB) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | |
| Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin—Caledon | Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé |
| Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC) | Chatham-Kent—Leamington | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise |
| Jordan, John (PC) | Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston | |
| Kanapathi, Logan (PC) | Markham—Thornhill | |
| Kernaghan, Terence (NDP) | London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord | |
| Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC) | York Centre / York-Centre | Solicitor General / Solliciteur général |
| Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC) | Barrie—Innisfil | Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives |
| Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC) | Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre | Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée |
| Leardi, Anthony (PC) | Essex | Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC) | King—Vaughan | Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines |
| Lennox, Robin (NDP) | Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre | |
| Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC) | Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek | Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport |
| Mamakwa, Sol (NDP) | Kiiwetinoong | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC) | Durham | Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs |
| McCrimmon, Karen (LIB) | Kanata—Carleton | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|--|
| McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC) | Brampton North / Brampton-Nord | Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme |
| McKenney, Catherine (NDP) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | |
| McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB) | Beaches—East York | |
| Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC) | York—Simcoe | President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor |
| Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC) | Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest | Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie |
| Pang, Billy (PC) | Markham—Unionville | |
| Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC) | Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill | Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| Pasma, Chandra (NDP) | Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean | Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC) | Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud | Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences |
| Pierre, Natalie (PC) | Burlington | |
| Pinsonneault, Steve (PC) | Lambton—Kent—Middlesex | |
| Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC) | Timmins | Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord |
| Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC) | Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry | Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité |
| Racinsky, Joseph (PC) | Wellington—Halton Hills | |
| Rae, Matthew (PC) | Perth—Wellington | |
| Rakocevic, Tom (NDP) | Humber River—Black Creek | |
| Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC) | Kenora—Rainy River | Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu |
| Riddell, Brian (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Rosenberg, Bill (PC) | Algoma—Manitoulin | |
| Sabawy, Sheref (PC) | Mississauga—Erin Mills | |
| Sandhu, Amarjot (PC) | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest | |
| Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC) | Brampton South / Brampton-Sud | Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports |
| Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC) | Glengarry—Prescott—Russell | |
| Sattler, Peggy (NDP) | London West / London-Ouest | |
| Saunderson, Brian (PC) | Simcoe—Grey | |
| Schreiner, Mike (GRN) | Guelph | |
| Scott, Chris (PC) | Sault Ste. Marie | |
| Scott, Laurie (PC) | Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock | |
| Shamji, Adil (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | |
| Shaw, Sandy (NDP) | Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas | |
| Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC) | Flamborough—Glanbrook | Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative |
| Smith, Dave (PC) | Peterborough—Kawartha | |
| Smith, David (PC) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | |
| Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC) | Parry Sound—Muskoka | Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Smith, Laura (PC) | Thornhill | |
| Smyth, Stephanie (LIB) | Toronto—St. Paul's | |
| Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP) | St. Catharines | |
| Stiles, Marit (NDP) | Davenport | Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario |
| Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC) | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre | Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure |
| Tabuns, Peter (NDP) | Toronto—Danforth | |
| Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC) | Mississauga—Streetsville | Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---|
| Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC) | Scarborough—Rouge Park | Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances |
| Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC) | Huron—Bruce | Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales |
| Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC) | Vaughan—Woodbridge | Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé |
| Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC) | Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington | Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Tsao, Jonathan (LIB) | Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord | |
| Vanthof, John (NDP) | Timiskaming—Cochrane | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Vaugeois, Lise (NDP) | Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord | |
| Vickers, Paul (PC) | Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound | |
| Wai, Daisy (PC) | Richmond Hill | |
| Watt, Tyler (LIB) | Nepean | |
| West, Jamie (NDP) | Sudbury | |
| Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC) | Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre | Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes |
| Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | |