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of Ontario



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Mardi  
27 mai 2025

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Speaker: Honourable Donna Skelly  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement  
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 May 2025

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 27 mai 2025

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### PLAN TO PROTECT ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2025

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 26, 2025, on the motion for second 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):** Resuming debate, I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** I'll resume where I left off yesterday in this debate. In my opening, I recognized that the purpose of Bill 24 is to provide legislative changes that are needed to implement the budget that was announced last week. For my comments, I'm going to speak to three things: (1) priorities, (2) power grab and control and (3) investment, outcomes and accountability.

Though I have some concerns about what is contained in this budget and what it will enable for other legislation, such as Bill 5, there are actually a few positive areas, some light that I see in this budget, that I will also take the time to highlight.

First of all, the first theme is priorities. My colleague the MPP for Don Valley West, Stephanie Bowman, has said a number of times, "Never has a government spent so much to achieve so little."

The budget lays out a plan to spend a record \$232.6 billion with a planned deficit of \$14.6 billion. For line items like post-secondary education, the common phrase is, "We're spending more." Of course we are. The population is growing. There's inflation. But accounting for these things overall, there is less for each child's education.

Yet we see a new \$5-billion fund that is meant to help us weather the storms and threats of instability south of our border to protect Ontarians. However, experts and economists have said that in the current design it will do little to protect employers or employees.

We know that a large portion of that fund is to assist with the implementation of Bill 5 and the special economic zones—they could be called the "special lawless zones," which is what they will allow—but there is little detail on exactly how the funds will be used. They've been siphoned away from other programs that are central to this government's purview to make that happen.

If this threat becomes reality—and we're starting to see less jobs, businesses more hesitant to invest, a slowing of the housing markets—the other reality will be that we need to support people with alternative jobs by keeping them healthy and ensuring young people continue to receive their education and opportunities that will set them up for the long term, not just to weather the immediate storm. Unemployment—among young people is the lowest it's been, and these are the very people we need to be lifting up in other ways to help them prepare for the future.

We also need ways to protect against further exacerbating increasing homelessness. We know that it has increased by 25%, and people are losing their homes due to affordability as rental and housing costs require larger portions of people's income. One in 10 in Toronto rely on food banks for their food. When you look at the statistics provided by the food bank, the people that are relying increasingly are people that—60% have post-secondary education. It's just that life is becoming less and less affordable.

As I read various critiques of the budget, I found this paragraph from the Maytree Foundation really resonated for me. They said:

"The government may not be interested in funding supportive housing, but it is certainly not opposed to paying for new beds in other places. To advance its agenda of putting more people in jail and keeping them there longer, the budget includes funding for 942 beds in correctional facilities across the province, revealing where the government's priorities lie."

Imagine if we put those same funds towards supportive housing or even more affordable housing. However, Bill 17 is quite silent on new commitments in both of these areas. Or imagine if we used that to increase ODSP so that people living on disability weren't living so far below the poverty line. Or adjusting the rules so that if someone temporarily loses their home, they don't automatically lose the shelter component of that benefit.

The new Bill 17 is an attempt to increase housing starts and make home ownership more of a reality, but it doesn't make these commitments to more affordable rentals or trying to solve some of the skyrocketing rents that people have been experiencing. So it's time to get upstream on

these issues through pragmatic actions, and it's about prioritizing that.

Education and post-secondary education are other examples. Really, what we see in the budget is a three-year holding pattern—it's actually a decrease, given inflation—and when we look at the slight increase next year, it is primarily coverage for the large wage settlements after Bill 124 was vetted in the court of law and found unconstitutional. The same is true for health care, where there's a slight bump for one year, but again, a projected flat line for the remaining three years.

Finally, there's also a real lack of relief for families, with no planned income tax relief or HST rebate on electricity or hydro supports. The goal was to deliver promised savings for families or small businesses, but instead, savings are targeted at gas and alcohol prices that really don't apply to everyone—which is really the job of government to make sure we can see these benefits for everyone—with the added effect of reducing government revenues.

The second theme is the power grab and control. It's quite amazing, the number of emails and calls I've received from constituents recently, many of them on this theme. In fact, they include that in the title, "power grab" and "control." All of these bills are being funded through this budget and enacted. So there's this bill, Bill 24, which I've heard about, and Bill 5, Bill 6, Bill 17. But on Bill 5 alone, I have personally received 514 emails into my inbox.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** That's all.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** That's all, exactly. I was just going to say, I can only imagine how many the government must have if, as the MPP of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I've been receiving that many from my own constituents.

Constituents see this as an egregious example of the power grab, narrowing the centre of power on all issues and creating conditions to be above the law on the environment, treaties and land use for areas defined by the minister, with little detail. That's left for regulation.

Unfortunately—and this is what came through in those messages from constituents—there is just not trust in the government after what we've seen on the greenbelt or the way MZO's have been used. Now, we will have these zones that can be designated at the whim of the government.

Again, I'll use an example. The Auditor General reported in 2024 that there was a 17-fold increase from the previous two decades in the use of MZO's. To quote the report, from 2019 to 2023, 114 were made in Ontario, with an average of 23 per year—the highest year being 2022 at 38.

**0910**

Now, I actually feel that there is a need to ensure that projects do move ahead. We need housing, we need to be able to build and we need to acknowledge that we need to do this when things are financially viable. So I want to see more housing builds, including a portion that would be more affordable. However, I feel like this is an example where we've swung so far the other way—limiting com-

munity involvement and consultation and ultimately creating an avenue to just override any municipal planning processes.

In this new \$5-billion plan and the special economic zones of Bill 5, the minister will have the sole discretion, and now we're setting up many other parts of government to do the same. That is what is prioritized in this bill, as well.

In Bill 24 we certainly see this for municipalities: more control on municipalities, many areas that could easily be left to local governments to manage with their residents. But it's like this government can't resist the temptation to be mayor and Premier at the same time. It's all about the local issues and not enough about the vision and implementation needed to create jobs, have an excellent health care or education system—truly provincial issues.

I look at some of the schedules of this bill: schedule 2, the City of Toronto Act, 2006; schedule 9, the Highway Traffic Act; schedule 13, the Municipal Act, 2001—all these schedules are about power and control over decisions that could be taken at the municipal level.

Schedule 9 is squarely focused on Toronto versus the province, as close to \$50 million is planned to be wasted to extract bike lanes that were just implemented. It's probably higher; it sounds like the government might be planning to do more. Regardless of how you feel about them, how can this be justified to taxpayers purely from a financial perspective? This is about the budget, and this is about priorities—especially now, when all we've been hearing is the need to protect people and protect the economy, which is true.

And control: laws on automated cameras, locations for speed enforcement—I've said throughout, as I earned this seat in this Legislature, I wish the Premier and his team would bring the same kind of laser-like focus to health care that they do to these issues. It does actually represent 40% of the budget that you're managing.

World-class cities use more creative policies. They allow municipalities the freedom to try them, working with their citizens to represent them rather than tightening control, taking us backward and wasting our taxpayer funds.

The last theme is really around investment, outcomes and accountability. I mentioned at the beginning I was going to highlight a few things that I like in this budget, and so I'll comment on those now. One is the \$303-million planned investment over three years in base funding for community mental health services so that they can hold on to the expertise and staff that they need to provide basic operations and services. With the growing needs of mental health care this is essential. It was a good decision, and it's been long overdue, since we've seen no increase for the last seven years.

In this Bill 24, I also appreciated the recognition of the role that small businesses play, such as microbreweries. If the government insists on a strong focus on beer, then let's do it in a way that acknowledges the role that microbreweries play in creating jobs and supporting the local economy. The relative ratio of job creation in the industry



to product production is far higher for these microbreweries than the large manufacturers, and it's good to see the adjustment in this bill to ensure the industry is competitive with other provinces. While this will have impact on revenues for government, it at least provides more jobs locally.

The third is on health care. I believe part of the reason I'm in this seat today, representing Etobicoke–Lakeshore, is because access to health care is getting more and more difficult, and they're looking to see it improve. There's 22,000 in our community that are without access to a regular family physician or a primary care team. The government announced the day before the election that they would do something concrete about this, and I'm happy to see that happen. The budget reflects that \$1.8 billion plus an additional \$300 million for academic teams to really take a population approach and increase access to team-based care, with a target of 100% of people attached to primary care in four years.

We had already announced this would be our commitment prior to the announcement in February, so for me now the proof will really be in implementation and accountability.

Bill 13 is missing that strength in accountability to be sure this happens, particularly in the team approach. I'll also say I don't believe the investment will be quite sufficient to reach the target, and certainly I would prefer more public funds be used for that than investing in the spa and a parking lot at Ontario Place. But for the time being, I will acknowledge that this is a good investment.

However, for health care more generally, I still remain troubled. The increase next year really only accounts for a portion of the large settlement in labour—again for Bill 124—after suppressing wages for so many years. Inflation on medical supplies has also risen far higher than what is in this budget, and so the pressures on hospitals, on ED wait times and in-patient stays will stay high.

As I mentioned in my response to the supply bill last week, these are the facts for hospitals in Ontario. Ontario hospital budgets reflect the lowest hospital expenditure per capita by any provincial government in Canada. In fact, if Ontario were to fund hospitals at the average rate per capita—just the average—it would cost the province about \$3.7 billion.

In addition, Ontario hospitals have the lowest cost of an in-patient stay in Canada. So they're given less, and they use it really efficiently. I've seen the trade-offs that need to be made: what it means for patient experience, what it means for care, for our nurses, doctors, pharmacists, people cooking meals for our patients—but you can't say that they're not putting that far less money to good use. So I hope that that will be acknowledged. And when I look at the projected growth in the health sector as a whole—it's not hospital-specific—I'm not sure that we've planned at a necessary rate.

Mental health and ensuring access to cutting-edge treatment and the research in Ontario and making sure that that's available is also something that needs to continue to happen. There needs to be accountability built into ensur-

ing we see more services, not just the funding of deficits given the chronic underfunding of the public sector. I would like to see more about the government's plans to ensure that these investments in mental health and health care continue to transform the system in ways that make it easier for people to access the care they need.

I'd like to turn my attention now to the multi-year outlook for education. Whenever we talk about budgets, it always seems like these really large numbers to the general population—we talk in billions. But when we translate that down to a single child, the picture looks different. And in education, the per capita spending for a child is already down \$1,500 per child. I have teenagers in the public school system, and I've witnessed the difference that that is making to their class sizes, to teachers, to the education supports and, particularly, the increasing strains on mental health in these environments.

The multi-year outlook for education is as follows: 2025-26, \$41 billion; 2026-27, \$41.1 billion; 2027-28, \$41.3 billion. It's essentially flatlined—completely flatlined. So how, then, is that possible, when we know that labour settlements alone will have, at minimum, inflation included? Help me understand how we'll continue to provide high-quality education to our kids when we're actually projecting to decrease what is available to support them.

And post-secondary education, already deeply challenged with daily stories of programs closing, is not a flatline. In fact, it's a projected decrease: 2025-26, \$13 million; 2026-27, \$13.1 million; and in 2027-28, \$12.8 million. Really, is this the answer that we're looking to see in Ontario right now—cancelled classes, laying off teaching staff and increasing challenges for our children to access post-secondary education? I think it's best practice that, in times of economic downturn, we're helping to support people with their education in those times.

Finally, I just want to mention transit. Again, I was pleased to see that we will continue to make investments in transit infrastructure. This is a very good thing, there's no question. Particularly with the young people in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I heard over and over again that we need to enhance transit, get cars off the road and improve the environment at the same time.

But again, this is the theme of accountability. We've seen long delays in projects like the Eglinton Crosstown, two-way GO to Kitchener-Waterloo, increased service on the Lakeshore line. We need to find ways to help to decrease congestion, and this is really our solution.

However, I think, when I look at the situation even in my own riding, there's just some basics that we need to cover. The Mimico GO station is not even accessible. You arrive there in a wheelchair today, you won't be able to get down from the platform. There are no elevators. There are no ramps. The project was promised to be completed by 2023. It still hasn't been started. And from what my recent briefing is, it won't be actually accessible until 2030. I don't think this is good enough. We prioritize talking about a fantasy tunnel under the 401, and we don't have this basic accessibility.

0920

Finally, again, I've talked about government priorities, the power grab and lack of accountability and commitment. I'd like to see us be able to do more for the people that we serve in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Questions?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** You'll know that Ontario is leading the G7 with the development of four new small modular nuclear reactors at the Darlington site in the region of Durham, delivering 1,200 megawatts of clean electricity—enough to power 1.2 million homes—while creating and sustaining up to 2,000 good-paying jobs.

In addition to this, our government is also refurbishing existing units at Darlington, Bruce and Pickering, ensuring we extend the life of our current nuclear fleet and continue delivering reliable, affordable power to thousands of people across the province.

Can the member opposite stand in her place and say that she will support this aspect of the Ontario budget?

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Thank you to the member for the question. I do have a great appreciation, actually, for nuclear energy. My father worked at Bruce when I was a child and actually led the construction of the Darlington nuclear site. So I do think it's the right decision to be making sure that we're investing in energy production in this province.

Again, I've highlighted certain aspects of this budget that I think—there are some good things in this budget. What I've tried to highlight is that the 68% of the budget, which is the core responsibility of the government, I feel is unfortunately lacking. From that perspective, it's going to be very difficult for me to support the budget overall.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Questions?

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Thank you to the member for your comments. We have seen the government spending billions on a fantasy tunnel, \$2 billion of public money for Ontario Place's boondoggle, \$40 million on pre-election partisan ads, \$280 million over two years for private health clinics and yet \$1.2 billion in cuts to colleges and universities. We know that Ontario has by far the lowest funding per student for colleges and universities. What are your thoughts on the consequences of these enormous cuts to post-secondary education?

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Thank you to the member for your question. I highlighted that in my remarks today, because I do think it's absolutely critical. We've got two things going on: We've got this reduction in access and funding to post-secondary education, and we've got the lowest unemployment rate in the exact age group that needs to be accessing that education. So from my perspective, this is about our future. They are the future for our economy. Our kids need this development.

I think that we're already seeing it, right? We're already seeing the reduction in classes, and I think that it's going to be far more difficult for our kids to get the education that they need with this current budget.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Questions?

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Thank you to my colleague for giving really good remarks and criticizing the parts of the budget that we find problematic.

There's one of the measures in the budget that is to build more jails. Now, we know that our province and society, in fact, is going through several crises: an affordability crisis, an addiction crisis, a mental health crisis, a housing crisis. Do you believe that the solution to resolve those crises is through more prison beds? And do you think it's possible that the many people who are going through these crises might actually find themselves in breach of the law and end up unfairly in jail, giving the false impression that we need more jails?

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** I go back to the comments from the Maytree Foundation—that there's this appetite to invest in beds in correctional facilities, but can we actually be investing in housing to the same degree? Can we be investing in care to the same degree?

I think that we need to be really thinking about these solutions. In my comments on Bill 6, I made the point that 80% of the Canadian public are actually looking for those to be the solutions that we tackle, rather than further incarceration of people. As we think about this budget and we—over the next few years, if there can be adjustments to that forecast and outlook, let's think about how we address some of these other issues more head-on.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Questions?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** I enjoyed the part of the debate that I caught. It was just interesting to hear the NDP talk about a fantasy tunnel under the 401. Speaker, I don't know if you remember this, in 2018, when they called the Ontario Line a back-of-a-napkin plan.

In fact, the now Leader of the Opposition in 2019, right before the pandemic, said, and I'm paraphrasing, that this government is focused on Alabama-style online learning. Now, what would we have done during the pandemic without online learning?

The point I'm making here, Speaker, is that the NDP continues to say and criticize everything this government invests in, including future infrastructure. Now, they talk about cuts. Can the member point to anywhere on pages 185, 186, 187 and 188, inclusive, and tell me where the cut is? Because I see ministry line increases and investments in the province of Ontario.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Thank you very much for your question. Earlier in my remarks, I made a few comments on some of those forecasts that you're describing, particularly calling out the numbers on education. At the end of the day, we know that numbers will increase every year because of the basics of inflation. The problem is that what we're seeing in front of us is that there isn't a planned increase even at the rate of inflation in these areas. So, in fact, isn't that a cut unto itself? That's how the math works for me and when I look at what we're seeing in this budget overall.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Questions?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you for your comments today.

One of the games that's played in the Legislature—and it happens a lot in question period—is the government, the Conservatives, will say, “Oh, the opposition voted against this; they voted against this,” and they'll list some things in the budget that are actually pretty good things. But overall, it's very difficult to support this budget when they're making a \$1.2-billion cut to our post-secondary education system when it's already on the verge of bankruptcy. Half of our universities are all running deficits. Our schools—this budget includes cuts to health care, to education—almost every school board in this province is facing a round of cuts and trustees are deciding what programs they're going to have to cut because they can't afford to continue the programs for this year.

So when the government is going to say to you that you're voting against something in the budget, how will you respond?

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Thank you very much to the member for the question.

As I've tried to lay out here, there are some things in this budget that I actually think are good things—there are. And then there are a whole bunch of other things that I think deserve some more attention and a finer look, and I think they're going to have lasting impacts. I think post-secondary and education, more generally, are two really good examples of that. The examples of bringing hospitals to the average in Canada on a per capita basis—that to me seems like we should be shooting maybe for more, but I understand trying to shoot for the average. Even if we spent \$3.7 billion to just do that, it would make a difference to our health care system.

I tried to point out these things that I liked and I tried to point out these very tangible things that I think could be better, so when I do vote against this budget, I will always be able to look people in the eyes and say, “This is how I feel about the budget. I was clear about it from the beginning.”

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Questions?

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** A quick question for my colleague: We look at the budget and what I generally tell people is that I feel the government has misplaced priorities. A lot of money is poured down in investing in infrastructure and very little to take care of people—literally people, like our kids and vulnerable people.

0930

I'd like to hear from you what you hear in your riding. What would be the priorities that they would have liked to see in the budget?

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Thank you for the question.

I think that some of the priorities I've highlighted here would be very consistent with what the constituents are looking for from us—most certainly, around health care and education.

As I mentioned, I received 514 emails just on Bill 5 alone because people have big concerns around how \$5 billion will be used and to what purpose and to what level of accountability.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Madam Speaker, I am rising today to speak on the 2025 budget and Bill 24, the Plan to Protect Ontario Act.

As always, before I start my remarks, I want to say thank you, God, for giving me the physical health and the mental health so that I can stand here and represent the riding of Mississauga–Malton.

Thank you to the residents of Mississauga–Malton, my family, my staff and my extended family for all your support.

On behalf of over 524,000 university students, over 350,000 publicly assisted college students, over 107,000 private career college students—and there are 76,000 STEM graduates annually—on behalf of the 23 publicly assisted universities, on behalf of 24 publicly assisted colleges and over 605 private career colleges, it is my honour to speak on the progress the province is championing. The very foundation of that progress is research, higher education and the vibrant institutions that fuel both: our colleges and universities.

Madam Speaker, before I go ahead, I want to take a moment to thank our Minister of Colleges and Universities for his hard work, and my colleague from Whitby.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** A great guy, yes. You can even clap if you want.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Madam Speaker, it's not just them, but at the same time, the member from Nepean and the member from London West, who are also working as critics on this file: Thank you for your service as well, because we can only grow if we work collaboratively.

When we talk about this bill, I will be focusing on colleges and universities—particularly about research.

I want to start by giving an example of how colleges and universities have impacted my life.

I remember when I started my post-secondary at DAV College, where I got my education in science to graduate and get admission to Panjab University, where I did my chemical engineering undergrad—so I started with college and I followed up with university.

In 2000, when I came to Canada on January 15, I joined a company called Novaquest—and thank God; give a long life to Paul Kuzmenko. Paul said, “If you want to grow in life, you need to be educated; you need to skill up.” I went back to Sheridan College—and thank you to Sheridan College. I used to make \$11.75 per hour; after I took my course, I actually got \$16.25. That's a great jump. Again, this is the impact. It's not just the money; it is the ability to give back to the community, to serve and do the work.

In 2005, when my daughter was born, I took parental leave, prepared for my GMAT, and I went back to the Schulich School of Business. When I joined the Schulich School of Business, my salary was about \$54,000, and when I came out and got my first job, that was at \$71,000. Again, it's not only about the money but, at the same time, the ability to contribute.

This is how our universities and colleges are contributing. They give you the tools required to progress in life,

and they compensate you to live your life well. That's what I'll be talking about.

This is why our government is making a landmark investment of \$750 million in Ontario's post-secondary institutions, especially in STEM fields—science, technology, engineering and math. These funds will directly support 20,500 new student seats, providing thousands of young people access to skills that modern jobs demand. This is about more than increasing capacity, it is about matching opportunity with preparation. It is about ensuring that a student with a dream is able to innovate, build or explore, and doesn't see their dream being cut short because of the limited access to a lab, lecture hall or research mentor.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about Ontario's future, we're talking about the students walking the corridors of the universities and colleges and making sure that they are able to build their career. Our institutions are not just places of learning, they are incubators of progress. They are the places where ideas are born, refined, tested and scaled.

I'll give you an example of that, Madam Speaker. Let's look at some of the key facts: Ontario is Canada's most patent-intensive province, with Ontario universities playing a significant role in generating this intellectual data. According to AUTM, between 2021 and 2023, 12 Ontario universities reported 2,300 inventions. According to the Vector Institute, 8,359 AI jobs were created, wherein creating a wealth of \$1.44 billion in venture capital investment. Ontario universities are leading the development of AI talent, with 1,101 AI master graduates.

And Madam Speaker, let's look at the data in another way. There are about 5,000 universities in the world, and we should be proud that we have many of our universities in the top 100. For example, University of Toronto is ranked 21st of all 5,000 universities. And when it comes to health, it is ranked between seventh and eighth, depending on the year. This is the strength of our province. This is not just the students; these are the young people who are contributing to their society, to making society bigger and better and stronger. Look at McMaster for example, Madam Speaker. We have the McMaster Manufacturing Research Institute, which is providing its operation to design and prototype essential personal protective equipment.

I'll give you an example: ImaginAble, one of the businesses that came out of McMaster. I had an opportunity to meet this young 23-year-old girl. She talked to me and told me about how she saw somebody not able to move their hand, not able to write. It may sound like something small, Madam Speaker, but think about those people who want to create something and are not able to do it. She came up with a brilliant idea wherein she created a tool where these people can put their hand, and because they cannot move their fingers, they can use the elbow to create. Think about when they created, when they wrote the first time, when they created their art that first time, the pleasure they received. Thank you to our universities and colleges for

giving our children the breeding ground to support that innovation.

Another example: Trexo. Madam Speaker, do you know what is the best thing for any parent? When they see their child walking for the first time. Unfortunately, when God takes, sometimes, tests and there are kids who cannot walk—think about the situation. What do they feel? How do they go through that? Thank you to Trexo Robotics from Mississauga. They came up with this idea. They actually built a structure where those kids who cannot walk can take this tool and are able to walk. One of them is the Roberts' son, who has done over 250,000 steps. He said, "The biggest and the best moment of my life was when my son was born, and the second-best moment was when I saw him walking, and I could not stop crying." This is the strength. This is how the universities and colleges of Ontario are helping, supporting and giving life to not just the people of Ontario, but the rest of the world as well, and that is our strength.

And the examples are so many, but considering that I don't have much time, Madam Speaker, I will be focusing more on commitment to research and innovation.

#### 0940

Ontario has always been a leader in research, from breakthrough health care studies to advancements in clean energy, artificial intelligence, agriculture and life sciences. But it doesn't happen in a vacuum. It requires stable funding, collaboration and long-term vision, and that is exactly what this budget is doing. Our colleges and universities are partners in building a stronger economy.

My colleague from Burlington knows, when she was working in the education sector at Sheridan College—when we give the tools to our students and they come up with these brilliant ideas, it not only gives happiness to them and their families but to the educators as well. These are the partnerships and the expertise that we are going to develop through translating their classroom knowledge into real-world examples, helping companies stay competitive while launching careers that matter.

That is why we are proud to say that this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is investing an additional \$5 billion in the Building Ontario Fund, prioritizing infrastructure, housing and Indigenous partnerships. We talked about—many, many times—that not everybody can go to college and university, but that's not the only career. We have the Skills Development Fund, which is now totalling \$2.5 billion and is able to provide support so they're job-ready, competitive and equipped to lead industries from high-tech manufacturing to biotechnology. We are also working to ensure that all Ontarians, especially those in northern, rural and Indigenous communities, have access to the training and education they need. Through expanded broadband, regional rail and transportation infrastructure, we are connecting communities, not just physically but economically and academically as well.

Colleges are more than career launchpads. They are economic catalysts in their communities. In cities like Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie, colleges play an important role. We are making sure that this govern-

ment is expanding the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, and the creation of special economic zones will pair directly with our college system, ensuring workers have access to the training and retraining they need as Ontario reshapes its industrial landscape.

The next thing we are doing is championing equity in education. When we talk about removing barriers, when we talk about financial, geographical and systemic barriers that prevent capable, passionate students from pursuing post-secondary education—this budget supports the Indigenous Participation Fund and the Indigenous Loan Guarantee Program, increasing the maximum available support from \$1 billion to \$3 billion. We are also introducing \$10 million in new scholarships for First Nations students pursuing careers in resource development and other high-demand sectors.

Another vital component of our strategy is enhancing collaboration between universities and job creators. With a \$600-million addition to the Invest Ontario Fund, we are fostering partnerships that not only commercialize research but ensure Ontario leads in advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, health sciences and more. This fund has already attracted over \$7.5 billion in investment, creating over 9,500 new jobs. These are not just jobs—they are high-quality, research-informed, future-focused careers that ensure Ontario remains an economic leader on the global stage.

Let's look at some of the other highlights, Madam Speaker. We are making sure that we are providing relief and support for workers and businesses by deferring provincial taxes for 80,000 businesses; unlocking \$9 billion in liquidity to keep workers employed; \$2 billion in employment rebates through WSIB; helping safe employers retain staff; and launching a \$40-million trade-impacted community program to support local communities. These are some of the investments we are doing—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but pursuant to standing order 50(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.

**Hon. Stan Cho:** Speaker, 50(c) has to be my favourite standing order. I move adjournment of the debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** The debate was deemed adjourned.

**Hon. Stan Cho:** Oh, that's it.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Orders of the day?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** No further business.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott):** The House is now recessed until 10:15.

*The House recessed from 0945 to 1015.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### GRAND RIVER RHINOS

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** I've spoken before in the House about one of the groups from my area, the Grand River Malayalee Association, who have really welcomed me into their hearts. When I was at their spring show, they called me one of their honorary Malayalee. But they also have—not completely connected to the association but many of the same members—their cricket team, the Grand River Rhinos. So the Grand River Rhinos are now the reigning 2024 Southern Ontario Cricket Association champs from last year. They gave me the great honour of presenting their newly custom-designed cricket jerseys from their sponsor, realtor Sudhip Joseph. I, of course, said yes. They have their men's team, and then this year they have a women's team as well.

What I was really especially delighted by, not just to have the honour to present the jerseys to, as I said, the champion team, but they made me my own jersey. So I have my own jersey with Jess Dixon on the back, and they made me number 1, which I thought was very, very sweet of them. As I've talked about before, this community has been so welcoming. The work they do to keep their culture alive but also to give back to the community is incredibly impressive.

So I wanted to say thank you again to the Grand River Rhinos; to Sudhip Joseph for sponsoring them; and to Rajeev, Shyam and Anjali for supporting me and again for welcoming me in and making me part of the team. I'm a terrible, terrible cricket player. I'm not a cricket player, but I will do my best to learn how to—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Members' statements?

### EVENTS IN LONDON WEST

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** In just a few days, London's glorious festival season will be in full swing. On the first Saturday in June, Londoners can experience the sights, sounds, music and one-of-a-kind artisans of the annual Gathering on the Green, organized by the Old South Community Association for the past 43 years. With London's designation as Canada's first and only UNESCO City of Music, the gathering is also on the lineup for Forest City London Music Week from June 1 to 8.

Musical talent is also showcased at PondFest at the Hyde Park Village Green on June 14. Thanks to the efforts of the Hyde Park BIA, PondFest features street performers, unique vendors, great bands, food trucks and more. It also marks the exciting unveiling of the community piano, a public art project painted by student artists from Oakridge Secondary School, which will remain in place for Londoners to enjoy all summer.

The Old South Village Green will come alive once more on June 14 with Wortley Pride, a joyous, family-friendly celebration of love and diversity, and again on June 20 with the 29th annual Indigenous Solidarity Day to

celebrate and honour Indigenous, Métis and Inuit communities and cultures.

Big shout-out to the amazing organizers, volunteers, vendors and performers who bring our city such joy. My team and I can't wait to connect with Londoners at each of these terrific summer festivals.

### IMPAIRED DRIVING

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Ontario is grieving. Last week, a senseless act of impaired driving shattered a family and devastated a community. Three young children were killed when an allegedly impaired driver collided with their vehicle. Their lives were stolen in an instant, and no words can capture the weight of that loss. But this tragedy is not isolated. Impaired driving is on the rise across the province. The OPP laid over 11,500 impaired driving charges just last year. Over two years, that's a 35% increase. These are not just statistics, they are shattered lives, grieving parents and empty classrooms.

Now, as grad season begins across Ontario, the stakes are even higher. For many students, this is a milestone moment, a celebration of achievement, of friendship, of growing up but one bad decision can turn that celebration into a tragedy. We all have a role to play as parents, as teachers, as neighbours, as friends, in reminding young people that there are always options. Call a parent, order an Uber, stay the night—there is always a safer way home.

As legislators, we must ask, are we doing enough? Are the penalties strong enough? Are we reaching young drivers before it's too late? I know I'll be spending part of my summer pondering those questions to see if there's something we can do in this place to make a difference.

1020

We need a culture where getting behind the wheel impaired isn't just illegal, it's unthinkable. We must do better.

### MARKHAM FOOD BANK

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** I rise today to recognize a generous act of community spirit and compassion that took place in my riding of Markham–Thornhill.

On behalf of the Kuo Hua Taiwan food trading company, president Lisa Chung donated 100 boxes of Taiwanese noodles valued at approximately \$3,600 to the Markham Food Bank, providing vital support to individuals and families in need. This heartfelt donation is a shining example of how local businesses can play a meaningful role in lifting our community.

I would also like to thank the many other organizations and citizens who came together in the spirit of giving, including Gifted People Services, Canada One Family Network, Logan Health Clinic, Ficus Education Inc. and dedicated community members John Wong and his wife Bobby Yeung.

The Markham Food Bank graciously accepted the donations and highlighted that hundreds of meals will be

provided to families in Markham. Speaker, this is what community looks like: people helping people.

On behalf of all the residents of Markham–Thornhill, I thank Ms. Lisa Chung and all those involved for showing us how generosity and coming together can make a real difference in people's lives, especially marginalized and vulnerable people in our community. I am happy to co-ordinate this food drive—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Members' statements?

### LANDFILL

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Yesterday, the Ford government in question period tried to defend Bill 5, and it's breaking its promise to require a full environmental assessment for the expansion of the Dresden landfill.

We were told a 1,000% increase in fees for waste was going to be imposed by Michigan, which receives an awful lot of waste from Ontario. And yes, it's true, the tipping fee will go from 36 cents a ton to \$5 a ton—not quite the apocalypse that one might have thought when you heard about such a big increase. In Ontario, the average tipping fee is between \$100 and \$400 a ton.

Speaker, the government has been in power since 2018. It has neglected taking action on waste diversion, particularly industrial-commercial. If we have a waste crisis, it is in the hands of this government. It is because of their inaction.

I want to say to everyone who is concerned about the environment and the reopening and expansion of the Dresden landfill to keep in mind any assurances of environmental protection should be checked as closely as the claim that Michigan was going to make the price of tipping outrageously high for those in Ontario.

### MALALA YOUSAFZAI PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** On May 14, I had the honour of attending the official grand opening of Malala Yousafzai Public School in Brampton West, a proud and long-awaited moment for our community. This school has been years in the making, and I want to recognize the many families, educators and advocates who worked tirelessly to help bring it to life.

Malala Yousafzai Public School opened its doors in September 2024 for the 2024-25 school year. Located in a fast-growing part of Brampton, it delivers 850 new elementary student spaces and 73 licensed child care spaces, helping to meet the needs of our growing population in Brampton West. Madam Speaker, I am proud that the province of Ontario invested \$29.6 million through the Peel District School Board to support this important project—a part of our government's commitment to build modern, accessible learning environments.

Named after Malala Yousafzai, a public advocate for girls' education and human rights, this school reflects the value of courage, learning and leadership. Having visited the same school site with then-Minister of Education

Stephen Lecce in June 2023, it's inspiring to see how far we have come.

I know this school will be a pillar of our community for generations to come.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** It is an honour to rise today on behalf of the residents of St. Catharines and communities all across Ontario who are deeply concerned about the Ford government's reckless, short-sighted Bill 5. This bill does more than just fast-track industrial and resource projects, it tramples Indigenous rights, guts environmental protections and cuts the public out of decisions that will shape our health, our land and our future.

In St. Catharines, we know first-hand the cost of getting these decisions wrong. We are still dealing with the toxic legacy of the old GM site, a former industrial property approved before the environmental protections that Bill 5 now seeks to repeal. It's a prime example of what happens when environmental protections are not in place.

Bill 5 would allow the government to create special economic zones where basic rules do not apply, like the rules that protect endangered species, archaeological sites and treaty rights. And worst of all, it hands sweeping power to a single minister, removing accountability and meaningful consultation with communities and municipalities.

At a time when climate risks are only rising, Ontario needs strong protections, not weaker ones. Bill 5 doesn't build a cleaner future, it builds more risk, more harm and more cleanups, like the one we are still facing in St. Catharines decades later.

Speaker, this bill must be withdrawn.

#### SENIORS' SERVICES

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** As we approach June, Seniors' Month, I rise to recognize the many contributions of seniors in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock that strengthen our communities.

I want to thank the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility for expanding the Seniors Active Living Centres Program across Ontario and within our communities by \$17 million. In my community of Haliburton county, the new Haliburton county senior active living centre will be a valuable resource for our seniors. Along with the existing City of Kawartha Lakes Lindsay Older Adult Centre, it will provide seniors the opportunities to stay fit, active and engaged.

These programs are vital and provide our seniors with programming and spaces to stay engaged, active and connected. I'm especially pleased that funding supports important community hubs, such as local Legions in Haliburton county that host these seniors' programs, the Fenelon Falls Senior Centre and the Lindsay Seniors Association in the Victoria Park Armoury—they offer these social opportunities and events.

I'm excited to share that this June, I will be hosting my annual seniors' seminars in the communities of Beaverton, Haliburton and Lindsay. There's lots to learn and see. I encourage the seniors in those areas to come out, and I thank all those that do presentations so that they are made aware of what services are offered in our communities.

#### SOLVE FOR TOMORROW

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** Good morning. I rise today to recognize an outstanding student achievement in my riding of Burlington. I'm incredibly proud to share that a student from Aldershot School has been named as a finalist in Samsung's nationwide Solve for Tomorrow competition. This STEM-focused initiative challenges students to develop innovative solutions to real-world problems. It's a shining example of how we can inspire and empower the next generation of change-makers.

Aldershot's project, led by their grade 12 student Keerthana, stood out on the national stage for its creativity and technical excellence. Her proposal aims to promote renewable energy efficiency in the agricultural sector through a quantum Monte Carlo method—an innovative approach to better identify faults in photovoltaic farms. What an incredible honour for Keerthana, for Aldershot high school and our entire Burlington community.

This achievement reflects the importance of our government's commitment to back-to-basics education, restoring the focus on academic achievement and excellence in STEM disciplines. I'm very proud of Keerthana and Aldershot School for their outstanding efforts and look forward to the announcement of the winner on May 28.

#### WEARING OF RIBBONS

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services on a point of order.

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to wear the green-and-blue ribbons in recognition of Community Living Day here at Queen's Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the blue-and-green ribbon. Agreed? Agreed.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** I'd like to welcome some of my friends from Community Living who are here joining us today: Chris Beesley, Brad Saunders, Shawn Pegg, Jennie Chanda, Jo-Anne Demick, Jonathan Bradshaw, Claudine Cousins, Teresa Kruze, Michelle Lucas and my friends Judy and William—I know there are a lot of my friends here, so I won't name them all—also, Dr. Robert Walsh from OASIS. Welcome to Queen's Park, and I look

forward to seeing you at the reception this afternoon between 5 and 7.

1030

**Mr. Rob Cerjanec:** I'd like to recognize a friend and former colleague today who is in the gallery: Ahmad Khawaja. He's now here today with the Ontario College of Teachers for committee hearings on Bill 2. Welcome.

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** I'd like to welcome two constituents from my riding: Scott Shedden and his son Spencer Shedden. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** It's a great opportunity for me today to wish my wife Donna a very happy birthday. I'll get the cake in the oven late on Thursday night; it'll be ready Friday.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I'd like to recognize the Platelet Disorder Support Association: Mrs. Kristin Hunt, Dale Paynter and his wife Susan Paynter, Isil Arac, Stefanie Hass, Ryon Dalir and Andrew Retflavi. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** I want to welcome to Queen's Park Mayor Fred Mota from Red Lake—good to see you. With him are Henry Wall and Sarah Stevenson of the Kenora District Services Board. Pleasure having you here—I look forward to our meeting today.

**Ms. Natalie Pierre:** I'd like to welcome my summer intern from my constituent office who is joining us today in the gallery. Welcome, Lachlan.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** I'd like to introduce Community Living Elgin to Queen's Park: Richard Sitzes, Blair Lyons, Denise Pinch, Rita Silverthorn and Rhonda Vandervan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I would like to introduce Tasneem Bandukwala, who is the executive director of the Uptown Yonge BIA in my riding, and her husband Hutaib, and especially their daughter Lyanah, who is serving as page captain today. Welcome to the Legislature.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** It's my pleasure to welcome to the House today John and Maria and their son Peter Armando Meligrana. Armando is a former legislative page and a current youth advocate who has done lots of fantastic work in Parkdale–High Park. It happens to be his 15th birthday today, so happy birthday, Armando. Welcome back to your House.

**Mrs. Michelle Cooper:** I'd like to introduce and welcome today's page captain, page Lyanah. She is from the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence. She and her family are here today at Queen's Park, and I want to welcome you to Queen's Park. We're happy to have you and your family join us. Thank you.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** It's a pleasure today to welcome Elaine Terpstra. She is here cheering on her daughter Allie who is serving as a page, representing Huron–Bruce.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I'd like to recognize today my constituent Gail Strachan of the Platelet Disorder Support Association, who are joining us in the Legislature today. I look forward to meeting with them later today to learn more about their important advocacy and support for those living with platelet disorders. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** I'm excited to welcome Daniel Zafrani, a great Ontarian and member of our synagogue, Magen David Sephardic Congregation. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal:** I'd like to welcome two exemplary individuals from my riding of Brampton East, people who have served the community well. They'll be receiving a King's medal today, and they are Priti Lamba, who has served our community with APDIO and countless community charities, as well as somebody who has served our community through thick and thin: Navdeep Chhinzer, who is a sergeant with Peel police—28 years of experience, an exemplary officer serving his community with passion. He's always there, serving with pride and demonstrating a great work ethic, serving our community, so thank you.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I'd like to introduce Juan Marquez, a student doing his PhD, and a bunch of housing advocates: David Alton, Diana Myers, Nadine Green, Kelly Welch, Peter Martin and Alan Mills, who's here with lots of friends from Community Living Ontario and Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region. Welcome to your House.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I'd like to welcome to the House today two Jesuit priests of the Roman Catholic church who are with us in the gallery: Father Michael Knox, rector of Regis College, the Jesuit community at the University of Toronto and Father John O'Brien, the director of the Martyrs' Shrine in Midland, Ontario, which is approaching its centennial anniversary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** That is all our time for introduction of guests. There will be time at 1 o'clock again—a reminder.

## LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I'd now like to call the pages to gather on the floor.

Over the next two weeks, you'll be joining us, and I'd like to introduce the young men and women who will be working with us.

From Sarnia–Lambton, Aastha Aastha; from Eglinton–Lawrence, Lyanah Bandukwala; from University–Rosedale, Soraya Bayat; from Mississauga Centre, Julia Bressmann-Gill; from Toronto Centre, Abd-Ur-Rehman Chaudhry; from London North Centre, Taylor Doyle; from Mississauga–Streetsville, Shreyas Goyal; from Parkdale–High Park, Emma Hurtado Dagnino; from Simcoe–Grey, Calvin Huynh; from Sudbury, Leif Keresztesi; from Niagara Falls, Sarang Kim; from Ajax, Mayukh Manohar; from Spadina–Fort York, Vishantak Rai; from York South–Weston, Isabela Ramos Gaertner; from Scarborough–Guildwood, Jessica Reynolds; from Oakville North–Burlington, Ibrahim Siddiqi; from Toronto–Danforth, Adrianna Silva; from Don Valley East, Nathan Sojobi; from Huron–Bruce, Allie Terpstra; from Carleton, Emilie Trainor; from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, David Turcan; and from Mississauga–Lakeshore, Noah Tin Kin Wang.



Welcome to Queen's Park.

*Applause.*

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Point of order, Madam Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to continue its work from the 43rd Parliament respecting Indigenous representation as part of the Legislative Building rehabilitation.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to continue its work from the 43rd Parliament respecting Indigenous representation as part of the Legislative Building rehabilitation. Agreed? Agreed.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

##### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Good morning, Speaker. This question is going to be for the Premier.

Bill 5 creates these “special economic zones,” and that’s just a cheat code for the government getting to do whatever they want. A cabinet minister can pick an area or a group or a zone—a project—and decide that no laws apply here. Scrap labour laws. Trample over Indigenous rights. Trash any existing laws and even protect the government from lawsuits.

Speaker, this isn’t about our economy. This is a reckless and shameless power grab by this government. Why is the Premier using Trump’s trade war as an excuse to push for an unchecked, unlimited power grab?

1040

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

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals continue to oppose every single measure that cuts red tape, lowers costs and makes it easier for companies to create jobs here in Ontario.

The situation we are in could not be clearer. We are facing a once-in-a-generation crisis. Coming out of this, the competition to land investments is going to be unlike anything we have ever seen. So we face two distinct choices: Act boldly to ensure investments are going to land here and create jobs, or do as they suggest and sit on our hands, do nothing and watch as our economy gets crushed. The Liberals and the NDP want us to do the latter, but we refuse.

We are going to do everything to ensure Ontario is the place to invest, to grow and to create more jobs for our families.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the Leader of the Opposition for the supplementary.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, do you know what’s unprecedented? It’s the outpouring of opposition to this bill. It’s unprecedented.

The Premier may like to claim that anyone who opposes him is a “left-wing, radical environmentalist”—I think those were his words yesterday—but the only people playing politics here are him and his government.

There are scientists; there are engineers; yes, there are environmentalists; yes, there are businesses and First Nations—everyone thinks this bill is a bad idea, and for good reason.

I want to quote the Anishinabek Nation grand chief, who said yesterday, “Should this bill proceed in its current form, we will be idle no more.”

This government needs to take this opposition seriously.

Will the Premier listen to Ontarians and withdraw Bill 5?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Speaker, the Ontario Association of Architects came out with a new report showing that delays in site plan applications are costing Ontario’s economy \$3.5 billion every single year. In the coming years, the competition to land job-creating investments is going to be unlike anything we have ever seen. We can’t have site applications that are supposed to be processed in 60 days take 23 months—that’s according to that association. If we continue down this path, we’ll see jobs and investments go out of our province, and we won’t even make the short list for companies to invest and expand here in Ontario.

We need to move faster. That is what our government is doing with Bill 5.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, do you know what else is delaying things? The courts—this government being taken to court every five minutes and losing in the courts. And that is what’s going to happen here again.

No consent, no consultations, no laws—this is the playbook that this government is selling.

Experts like engineers and scientists have said that the government’s approach to this will actually result in more delays. How long have we been telling them this?

First Nations chiefs are saying that this is an irresponsible attempt to trample over the duty to consult, and that will inevitably delay projects.

These projects are, yes, critical to northern Ontario’s future, to our province—so get it right the first time.

Will the Premier withdraw Bill 5, go back to the drawing board, and do it right?

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

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Madam Speaker, last time I checked, there was the election a couple of months back—and I was so clear. Every single day, I went out there and told the people of Ontario our plan. I was crystal clear about getting rid of red tape, getting rid of regulations, making sure that we attract investments and create the climate and the conditions for companies to come from around the world to invest. But they aren’t going to invest when it

takes 15 years to do a four-and-a-half-inch-diameter drilling hole to check what critical minerals there are—when investments go to Australia, they go to the US, they go everywhere in the world because it takes 15 years to put a drill in the ground. I was very, very clear.

The people of this province gave us a huge mandate to move forward, to compete against President Trump. He has called an economic war. He wants to take our jobs. He wants to close our businesses. But we aren't going to let it happen because Canada is not for sale—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Question?

#### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, you've got to wonder if the government has learned absolutely nothing from the greenbelt scandal.

But, anyways, this next question is actually for the Deputy Premier. In 2017, the previous Liberal government of the day rolled back oversight on government ad spending. It opened up the floodgates for government to put out partisan ads at the taxpayers' expense. At the time the Deputy Premier said, and I want to quote her here, "It is shameful that this government refuses to respect taxpayer dollars and restore the Auditor General's authority to review and approve government advertising." That was a quote from our now Deputy Premier, and here we are today spending \$40 million—government taxpayer dollars—on purely partisan advertising. So I want to ask the Deputy Premier today, why the change of heart?

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

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Madam Speaker, I don't know what news the Leader of the Opposition is following, but Donald Trump is engaged in a tariff war with Ontario, as the Premier said, to take our jobs, to take our businesses, to challenge this economy and we won't stand for that.

And with regard to promoting Ontario, we are never going to apologize for promoting Ontario. One million new jobs, an economy that now is over \$1.2 trillion—we're very proud of everything that we do in Ontario, everything that we've built in this great province, and we are going to continue doing that because the world has changed and Ontario must change with it.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Well, let me tell you, Speaker, what changed since the Deputy Premier wouldn't help us out there: They got into power, and they said, "Hey, why don't we abuse this? Now we've got the power to spend all those millions of dollars on advertising. Let's go all in." Their own campaign director for the last election has called it opening the firehose, clearly admitting that they intentionally spent those \$40 million on ads that did nothing to advertise a government service. No, simply to sell the Conservative Party—a deep abuse of power, very clearly.

So, I want to ask the Deputy Premier again: Will you make the Conservative Party pay this back to the taxpayers of Ontario?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Madam Speaker, the answer is very clear. We are promoting Ontario, and why are we promoting Ontario? Because we want to protect Ontario, we want to protect the good jobs. Some 300,000 jobs left this province under the watch of the NDP and the Liberals, 300,000 tail lights heading to the US. Now a million have come back to Ontario. That's what I call the economic engine of Canada.

Madam Speaker, let's take a look at some of the things that we're doing to promote Ontario. First of all, we are building \$200-billion worth of infrastructure. You know what that means for communities? That means for communities like in Durham—a new hospital in Durham. What it means is shovels in the ground for the Niagara Health system. What it means is a new hospital for Scarborough, for their Scarborough Health Network and a renovated and expanded hospital in Ottawa and Cambridge Memorial and much, much more.

That's what building Ontario looks like, that's what protecting Ontario looks like and we'll never apologize—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, this was never about promoting Ontario, it was only ever about promoting themselves. That's what this was about.

Speaking of firehoses, \$40 million could go a long way to restoring the cuts to wildland firefighting that this minister made just two weeks ago. You could put that back right now. You could fund the maintenance of 383 addiction treatment beds and three mobile crisis teams. You could do that with those \$40 million. And \$40 million—it may not seem like a lot to you these days, but it's a lot to a lot of people and it could pay for a lot of things in this province. It could start reopening shuttered emergency rooms in rural communities. It could do a lot of things.

1050

I want to go back to the Premier since he's gracing us with his presence today.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I will ask the member to withdraw.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I said he's here. I can say he's here. I just can't say if he's not here, but he's here.

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Withdrawn, Speaker.

Back to the Premier: When will this Premier and this government direct the Conservative Party to do the right thing and pay this \$40 million back to the taxpayers of Ontario?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'm mindful of the fact that two Fathers have joined us in the galleries today, so I will be extra, extra good.

But let me just say this—you know what happened? I'll tell you what happened. Back in January, when the NDP-Liberal government in Ottawa began to collapse and there was no leadership when they were throwing out a Prime Minister, they couldn't decide what to do at a time when a new President was coming into office threatening our economic viability—not only the province of Ontario, but the nation. Who stepped in to fill that void? It was the Premier of the province of Ontario who stepped in to fill that void. And do you know what we decided to do? We decided, as a caucus, as a government, that we were going to do everything that we needed to do to fight back on behalf not only of Ontario but of Canadians. We advertised everywhere. We're proud of it. And you said you supported it—how things change.

### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mr. John Fraser:** My question is for the Premier. Bill 5 is so problematic, and so many people are telling us this. Even the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is speaking out against the backroom deal for the Dresden dump that's included in Bill 5. He knows it stinks. The Premier knows it stinks. We all know it stinks. And even though there hasn't been garbage there for some 30 years, we can smell it all the way from here.

Speaker, will the Premier do the right thing and put the people of Dresden first and not his donors?

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

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Let me be clear: When it comes to the Dresden landfill expansion and any landfill expansion and any project, strict environmental oversight will be the rule. This particular project, I can assure you, will be subject to the environmental compliance approval process and will only proceed after going through such a process.

It is about balance. It's about being self-reliant as a province within Canada. It's about making sure that we are not reliant upon continuing to send 40% of our waste outside of Ontario to Michigan and New York. That status quo cannot stand. And the old, tired Liberal narrative, supported by the NDP, doesn't work anymore. We're in this crisis—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —in part because of inaction by the Liberals propped up by the NDP. But we have the mandate from the people. We will act with balance, with strong environmental oversight.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I apologize to the member. I'd ask the member from Beaches–East York to withdraw.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** I withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the leader of the third party.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Even the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex isn't buying that hogwash. Out of some 800 sites in Ontario for a dump, the Premier singled out one. That one dump was owned by a group of people who

gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Premier's party and, as well, a close political ally of the Premier's pension fund. What's really interesting here in Ontario right now is just what money can buy.

Speaker, through you, will the Premier do the right thing, put the people of Dresden first, listen to his MPP from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and put a pause on Bill 5?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** The expansion of the existing landfill at Dresden is part of a series of expansions. That included one in North Stormont in the last few years. We are expanding because we have to expand, but we will never proceed without strong environmental oversight. That is the balance we must achieve.

We will continue to be self-reliant. We will continue to look toward expanding our landfill capacity and diverting our waste responsibly. That includes recycling and composting and using modern technology for waste to energy. We will look at all options so that we achieve the balance, manage our own landfill capacity and have strong environmental oversight.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** Speaker, some 800 sites—the Premier picks one. There's an advantage to his party because of the people who own that site. As I said, it's interesting what money can buy in this province.

Even the Premier's own ministers are saying Bill 5 needs to be amended because they know that the Dresden dump is actually kind of a microcosm or a really clear explanation of this bill, which is: Go against the will of the people, favours for the Premier's friends and zero accountability.

Speaker, through you: Will the Premier finally do the right thing and put the people of Dresden first, and his member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, and put a pause on Bill 5?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Madam Speaker, Bill 5 is an essential piece of legislation that helps us, as its name indicates, protect Ontario while unleashing our economy. It is a bill with 10 schedules that is all about balance. Yes, it's about building the Ontario of tomorrow. Yes, it's about being self-reliant. And yes, it's about strong environmental oversight.

When it comes to Bill 5, some of the members opposite—I would encourage them to actually read the bill. For example, section 32 of schedule 10 improves and increases the investigative authority of environmental compliance officers to identify and detect harm to species before it happens and then to enforce the law with strict penalties including jail time and up to \$2-million fines for corporations. So it is about the rule of law. It's about getting it right, but it is about balance, and we applaud balance.

### FIRST NATIONS CONSULTATION

**Mr. John Fraser:** I maintain it's really interesting what money buys in this province now.

Back to the Premier: First Nations leaders have sounded the alarm on Bill 5, and they are right to do so. Bill 5 allows the Premier to do whatever he wants with whoever he wants whenever he wants, and to hell with the rules. It's a recipe for disaster. For First Nations, it's a fundamental breaking of what little trust they have in this government.

So back to the Premier: Does the Premier think it's acceptable to show so much disrespect for First Nations partners?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation.

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** I want to thank the member for the question. In no way does Bill 5 abrogate from the duty to consult nor does it derogate from the treaty rights across the province as they're set out. In fact, what we're building here is an opportunity to work in full partnership with First Nations communities.

Never before have I seen a Premier—or a Prime Minister, for that matter—articulate a vision for shared prosperity across this province, and especially in the Far North, where those deficits are on full display.

Our goal, our objective, is to have a working partnership with First Nations communities and businesses who have increasingly said loud and clear, whether it's the London Stock Exchange or Indigenous business gatherings across this country, "We want to be part of building Canada. We want to be part of building Ontario, and we want a brighter future for young Indigenous people." I think that's a policy option we should continue to pursue.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** Back to the Premier: The constitutional duty is to consult, not insult, and First Nations leaders are warning us. Yesterday we heard some words that we haven't heard in a really long time, and that's "Idle no more." That's a sign of the deep concern and fundamental opposition First Nations have to Bill 5. Legislation to let the Premier do whatever he wants with whoever he wants whenever he wants is something that First Nations have seen before, and they're telling us this. So will the Premier finally listen to First Nations and pull Bill 5?

1100

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** We're doing just that. In fact, we've endeavoured to enter into community partnership agreements with First Nations communities across this province to ensure that they are an essential part of building the legacy infrastructure that's required to support many of these resource projects because they reflect the common interests and goals of those regions.

I'm thinking of Pikangikum First Nation, Sandy Lake First Nation—10,000 First Nations communities in the far northwest who are going to be involved in building a bridge across the mighty Berens River so that those folks can get in and out of their communities all year round, that they can unleash the potential for a fibre basket to enter into commercial forestry enterprise and create an opportunity for a critical mineral mine.

Example after example, clarion calls from Indigenous business leaders saying, "We want in; we want to be involved in building Ontario." It's attracting attention around the world, and we think, Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, that is an excellent policy goal to achieve.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** Speaker, the clarion call we're hearing from First Nations is, "Put a stop to Bill 5." That's what we're hearing. That's what we heard yesterday. That's what we've heard inside this chamber. And it's very clear that that's what they want.

I see the government has offered an amendment to Bill 5 in the preamble. So if there's anything that First Nations have heard, it's a lot of words. They were looking for action, not more words in a preamble.

Will the Premier actually take some action, listen to First Nations and pull Bill 5?

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

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Let me just inform our relationship with First Nations. Since we've taken office six years ago, they have told me over and over and over again, from national chiefs to regional chiefs—by the way, I had the regional chief down to my house breaking bread the other day. I've said in every single speech: I want collaboration and co-operation with the First Nations. I treat them with the utmost respect. We have done more for the First Nations than any government in the history of this province, including the Liberals and NDP that sat there and did nothing for the First Nations.

I always say to the chiefs when I meet them and I go visit them or I have them in my house—they tell me, "Never, ever in the history would we be able to call the Premier on his cellphone and get a call back the same day." There isn't a day that goes by that I'm not speaking to the chiefs of the First Nations, not to mention the \$3 billion we're offering First Nations to be a partner, the \$70 million—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Question?

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is to the Premier. I'd like to talk about the buy local policies in the budget. The Conservatives are bringing in a Buy Canadian Day on June 1. Now, on this side of the House, we think every single day should be Buy Canadian Day.

Can this government commit to made-in-Canada labelling to make it easier for Ontarians to go to the supermarket or the store and support Canadian businesses by buying Canadian products?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** To the member opposite, we've been very, very clear with our Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day. This is something we've consulted on with stakeholders, with businesses, organizations, individuals

across the board in Ontario. They're thrilled that we're able to do this. We hope you will support this, and support Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day.

But to mandate this is something that businesses have told us they are not comfortable with. It's going to put too much red tape. Our government is about reducing red tape, making life more easy and more affordable for the people and the businesses of Ontario, and if you believe that, you should be supporting us with this bill.

Buy Ontario, buy Canadian.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member for University–Rosedale.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Canadian businesses want Ontarians and Canadians to buy their products, period.

In the budget, the government is investing in the Ontario grape program to increase the percentage of Ontario grapes in Ontario wines—good. But why stop there?

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is calling for a comprehensive buy-Ontario-grown plan so our public institutions—our school boards, our hospitals—can prioritize Ontario-grown food, from fruit and vegetables to meat and dairy.

In the threat of Trump's tariff war, can this government get serious about supporting the entire agricultural sector and support a serious made-in-Ontario program?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The Minister of Rural Affairs.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'm pleased to stand on behalf of Minister Jones and the entire Ontario agricultural sector. There is no better, committed group of individuals and commodity organizations across this province who are dedicated to making sure that Ontario is considered first.

Tomorrow, I anticipate we'll see you at the beef farmers' barbecue. That's a demonstration of how beef farmers across this province are coming together to increase awareness, not only for the public, but for all of you who maybe don't have the opportunity to be on a farm day in and day out like some of us. So I encourage you to attend the luncheon tomorrow hosted by the beef farmers. It's just one example of so many—and I'm sure, with the TOGA reception just a week ago, you were there to benefit from visiting with the greenhouse producers as well. You will see first-hand a continued commitment to making sure—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Question?

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Speaker, the budget document shows Ontario will reach a record half-trillion dollars of debt in the next two years. Never in Ontario history has a government spent so much to deliver so little.

This year's deficit was forecast to be \$6.6 billion just seven months ago, in the fall economic statement; now the budget document shows it will be \$6 billion, so on the surface, that looks pretty close. But dig a little deeper into the numbers, and you find that the deficit would have been \$9.9 billion if the government had not recorded a \$3.9-

billion payment related to the tobacco company health care costs lawsuit settlement. So their fall forecast was really about 60% off.

Through you, Speaker, to the Minister of Finance: How did he get his fall forecast so wrong?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Oh, boy. Let's think about the Liberal record for a second—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** I know, I know. It really hurts.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The House will come to order.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** When they were in power, they grew the debt. And guess what? They taxed everything, and they built absolutely nothing.

Look what we've done. With the increase in debt by about \$100 billion, our economy has increased by \$850 billion, to \$1.2 trillion—an economy they could only dream about.

Madam Speaker, they had a record of increasing taxes, and they got credit rating downgrades. How does that work?

We've been cutting taxes, cutting fees, and we got two credit rating upgrades. In this environment, that is responsible government.

Madam Speaker, we're going to continue to attract jobs, build the economy, put more money back in the pockets of people. That's what a good Conservative government—

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

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** This government talks about being transparent, but we know they don't walk the walk.

Speaker, \$3.9 billion—that's big. It's 60% as big as their original deficit. The government recorded that payment, and that gets their deficit close to their forecast. That may be a coincidence or it may not be, but we don't know because there are no details in the budget document about this payment to help us understand it clearly. In fact, when contacted by the CBC and asked about this payment—the CBC said on May 13, “Ontario—which tables its budget later this week—did not respond to CBC/Radio-Canada inquiries.”

Through you, Speaker, back to the Minister of Finance: Will he come clean and tell us what's going on with this tobacco settlement payment?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Well, I'm happy to get into deep accounting. Who wants me to go into deep standards of accounting? Anybody? No. It's all there in the budget.

**1110**

Madam Speaker, let's think about this for a second. While they accumulated the biggest debt load in the history of the province since 1867—they accumulated so much debt—what did we get? Did we get more subways?

*Interjections:* No.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Did we get more hospitals?

*Interjections:* No.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Did we get more schools?

*Interjections:* No.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Did we get credit upgrades?

**Interjections:** No.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Did we get lower taxes?

**Interjections:** No.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Well, let me tell you, with this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, do you know what you're getting? You're getting Canadian free trade. Instead of talking about it for two decades, we're actually delivering free trade in Canada.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Economic uncertainty is growing globally and Ontario isn't immune. We've always been proud of our long-standing trade relationship with the States and the mutual benefits that it's brought both of our countries, but it's clear that that relationship has been seriously undermined—a once bright future darkened by the long shadow cast by tariffs.

We are, of course, going to keep pushing to see those tariff walls come down and for our neighbours to the south to see sense. But it's clear that we also need to look further afield and grow trade with countries that are stable, reliable and open to doing business.

Speaker, Ontario has the talent, the resources and the innovation that the world is looking for. We just need to make sure that that message is landing. Can the minister please outline how Ontario plans to grow trade with global partners beyond the US?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** We've just returned from a trade mission in Germany where, incidentally, our two-way trade is now up by more than \$2 billion since we took office. But Germany just announced the release of their debt break, putting \$500 billion in new defence spending out there, and our mission is paving the way for Ontario to get a big piece of that business.

We were also in Eastern Europe where we were forging new relationships with companies in Latvia, Romania, Czechia and Poland. These are countries that will make great platforms for Ontario companies to help Ukraine once the war is over and we can help them rebuild. This is all part of our government's plan to begin east-west trade around the globe as opposed to north-south trade.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler.

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** It's incredibly clear that the world is watching and evermore interested in what Ontario has to offer, but it's also obvious that we can't take that interest for granted. We've seen how quickly things can shift and the risks inherent in overreliance in one market. That's why building stronger trade relationships in Eastern Europe and Asia and in other growing non-US economies isn't just smart and forward-looking, it's clearly necessary.

Ontario has an even greater opportunity now to position itself as a jurisdiction of choice for international companies looking to invest and to expand. Speaker, can the minister please expand on what we've actually been doing

on the ground to turn this opportunity that we're seeing into real investment into Ontario and jobs for Ontarians?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Over the last two years, Ontario has seen 184 companies from around the world land here. They have invested \$30 billion and they have put 18,000 people to work here in Ontario.

This is the success that happens when we share Ontario's value proposition with companies around the world: They locate here. We've reduced the cost of doing business by \$8 billion a year. We have clean, green energy from a reliable electricity grid. We have industrial sites ready for them to land here today.

With all the turmoil that's happening around the world, we've shown these companies that Ontario is the reliable partner they have been looking for.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** This is to the Premier: Last year the city of Toronto proposed changes to development rules to build more affordable housing in the city. That change would ensure that a certain percentage of new units were guaranteed to be affordable, but those changes were rejected by this government despite the growing housing crisis facing the city's residents.

Today the Toronto Star reported that the proposal was rejected by this government after facing pressure from real estate investment trusts. City hall has warned that diluting their proposal would jeopardize at least 5,000 new affordable units.

Did the government really put thousands of affordable housing units at risk and let real estate investment trusts rewrite rules to maximize their profits?

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

**Hon. Rob Flack:** To the member opposite: absolutely not. Just take a look: The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has supported Bill 17.

That's really what we need to be talking about: getting shovels in the ground faster. It takes too long and it costs too much to get housing built. Think about that when it comes to affordable housing. It is the best bill we've put forward yet.

Understand this: The Association of Municipalities of Ontario support it totally, as do Ontario's Big City Mayors. We stand behind this bill. We ask you to support it as well because we'll get shovels in the ground faster.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre.

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** It's clear that the minister didn't listen to the question. But we do know who this government is listening to when it comes to housing, and it is not people all over the province who are facing this housing crisis. They're not even listening to their own experts on the Housing Affordability Task Force. They're just listening to speculators and corporations, putting profits over people.

This government needs to get serious about building accessible and permanently affordable housing. That's

why we continue to call for the government to get back in the business of building housing, to work with non-profits and co-ops to get people housed and stop greedy speculation.

Will the government support a dedicated public agency to build and finance new, permanently affordable housing here in Ontario?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Again, let's point out some of the benefits of Bill 17 that are going to do exactly what the member wants: eliminating DCs on long-term care; postponing DCs until occupancy; standardizing the building code so we can cut costs; cut red tape and get shovels in the ground faster.

What we are proposing in this bill does exactly what the member is asking. It's going to get done. I ask them across to support this important bill. Why? Because it will get results.

We're creating the conditions to get it. Governments don't build houses. I know that's what you'd like to do. We don't build them; we create the conditions for our home builders to do what they do best, and that's building homes. That's exactly what we're going to do.

#### HOMELESSNESS

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** Later today, together with the MPP for Kitchener Centre, we will be tabling legislation aimed to end homelessness in the next 10 years. It would require annual reporting on homelessness because we can't solve what we refuse to measure.

Through the Speaker to the Premier, why has this government failed to implement even the most basic public transparency on this issue, and will they adopt the accountability called for in this bill?

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

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Let us be clear what this bill is about. Public safety is non-negotiable. When public spaces are not safe, I think we can all agree they are no longer public spaces.

This act is returning these parks and amenities to those who they are for, and that is the families of Ontario. We are listening to the people of Ontario who live next to these encampments, to our municipal leaders and to the stakeholders in all these communities. They don't want encampments in their neighbourhoods.

Very importantly, I want to make sure this point is made clearly: We are here to support everyone. That is why this bill is important. This is not a bipartisan approach, it is the Ontario approach because the people know we need to address it. We are taking action because we were asked to do it in the last election. We're doing it because it's the right action. It's what the people want, and you know it.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

**Ms. Lee Fairclough:** It's interesting, actually, because 80% of the public, when asked what they'd like us to do

to address homelessness actually wanted us to look at housing, health care and other solutions.

The issue has only worsened under this government. Homelessness has increased by 25% in the last two years, and 80,000 Ontarians are unhoused. We're seeing people in every corner of the province sleeping in encampments, in hospitals or not waking up at all.

Will the Premier commit today to ending chronic homelessness in Ontario within the next 10 years, or is his government content to keep people on wait-lists, in shelters or worse?

1120

**Hon. Rob Flack:** Well, Speaker, we're acting: \$1.2 billion for the Toronto act, \$700 million for homelessness prevention funding, \$1.2 billion in the Building Faster Fund. We're creating the conditions to get that done. We understand, absolutely, that we have challenges with homelessness. We understand that. That being said, we are acting, and through Bill 17, again, and Bill 9, we will get shovels in the ground faster.

Speaker, I ask the member opposite seriously to get behind this bill and support it because it is doing exactly what you want to get done: creating the conditions to get more homes built, all types of homes—affordable, market housing and, most importantly, purpose-built rentals. All types of housing will get done. Let's talk about your bill.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr. John Jordan:** My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, especially in rural ridings like Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. They create jobs, drive growth and build strong communities. But now they face new threats from outside our borders, including tariffs from the United States. That's why our government must continue to act. We need to keep protecting Ontario's economy and stand up for our small businesses. We need to make sure they have the tools to grow, to trade and to succeed even in uncertain times.

Speaker, can the associate minister share how our government is helping small businesses stay strong and continue to drive Ontario's economy forward?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you to the great, hard-working member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for this question and for his strong advocacy for small businesses.

We are taking decisive action to ensure small businesses remain resilient and competitive. Through the 2025 budget, we introduced the \$5-billion Protecting Ontario Account to provide emergency financial relief to businesses impacted by trade disruptions, including those from the US tariffs. We're investing \$7.5 million in the Digitalization Competence Centre this year to help more small and medium-sized businesses help adopt digital tools, boost productivity and compete globally. We're also investing \$2 million over three years to establish business succession planning services through Ontario's network of small business enterprise centres.

Together, these investments reflect our dedication to protecting Ontario and empowering entrepreneurs to succeed today and into the future.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

**Mr. John Jordan:** I thank the associate minister for that response. Let's look long-term: Ontario's small businesses don't just need help today, they need a strong plan for tomorrow. They need support to grow, to modernize and to keep up with the rest of the world. They need help adopting new tools, reaching new markets and training the next generation of workers—and they need our government to continue to have their back.

From the shop floor to the start-up, small business owners want to know Ontario is a place where they can take risks. They want to know they can hire workers and plan for the future with confidence.

Can the minister share how our government is helping entrepreneurs, rural businesses and manufacturers build for the long term and stay strong?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you again to the member for the question.

Beyond immediate relief, we're investing in long-term growth for Ontario small businesses. For example, last year, Futurpreneur Canada supported nearly 300 businesses in Ontario, including many in northern, rural and remote communities. That's why we've renewed our support to Futurpreneur for another \$2-million investment for the next year. This will help young entrepreneurs aged 18 to 39 with mentorship, in-person programming and loan capital worth up to \$75,000. We've also enhanced the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, increasing the refundable rate from 10% to 15%, providing an additional \$1.3 billion over three years to help small and medium-sized manufacturers modernize and compete globally.

These initiatives are part of our broader strategy to build a stronger Ontario, creating opportunity, supporting innovation and ensuring our small businesses remain a vital engine of—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Question?

#### CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** My question is to the Premier. Speaker, I'm going to try not to cry as I ask it.

Global News reports that 134 children died under Ontario's care network, including protective services like CAS, in 2023. This is the highest number of children's deaths since the provincial government began tracking this data. In the previous years, one child died every three days. Let that number sink in.

To the Premier: Why are hundreds of Ontario's children dying under your care?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Response? I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** Thank you to my honourable colleague for the question. The death of any child or youth

is heartbreaking and deeply tragic. In fact, it's heartbreaking for us as a government and all of us as legislators to hear that, which is why we have introduced measures since we formed government, because we were never happy and we will never be happy until every child and every youth in this province is protected and supported, which is why we have increased our investments to more than \$1.7 billion annually in the child welfare system so that every child and youth is supported.

We introduced the quality standards framework, which brought in measures that never existed before. We introduced fines to make sure that we hold societies, out-of-home care providers accountable—measures that weren't included. We hired new staff, we hired inspectors, we increased inspections, we increased unannounced inspections, all to make sure every child, every youth in this province is supported and protected and lives—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member for the supplementary.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I know that my colleague's heart is good—and that the measures are not working. I am the proud parent of four children adopted through the children's aid society. There are kids today who are being put into hotels, motels, Airbnbs and office spaces. There are staffing shortages, and burnout is rampant. There is a problem.

These 134 children aren't just numbers on a ledger. They were young people who were abused, neglected and abandoned. They were in the government's care, and they died.

To the Premier: Why aren't you keeping these children safe?

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** Again, to my honourable colleague and to everyone in this chamber, let me make it crystal clear: We will hold anyone accountable, whether it's societies or out-of-home care. If you are taking care of a youth in this province, we will hold you to account, which is why we have introduced measures—unprecedented, that never existed—to hold societies accountable. It's why we are reviewing the child welfare system. It's why we have a review of all 50 children's aid societies to make sure every child and every youth in this province, regardless of their circumstances, is supported and protected. It's why we are investing record-breaking investments in this sector to make sure they succeed and thrive. As I mentioned, we've introduced administrative monetary penalties to hold operators accountable.

We will leave no stone unturned to protect every child and every youth in this province because every single one of them should succeed and thrive in their communities. We will make sure that happens.

#### LANDFILL

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Good morning, everyone. The Premier is pushing to enact and justify all sorts of violations through the proposal of Bill 5. In the legislation's schedule 3, the government moves to exempt



the Dresden landfill from a complete and proper environmental assessment. Can you believe this?

So the Premier promised an EA to the residents of Dresden during the by-election, and the MPP of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex did the same as town councillor, as candidate and as MPP. What an about-face. Actually, what a slap in the face to the members of the community.

**1130**

It is puzzling and peculiar that the Premier would choose this site out of all the other thousands of closed landfill sites in Ontario.

My question to the Premier: Why did you fib to the people of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex about—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Please withdraw. I'm asking the member to withdraw.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Sorry. Withdraw.

Why did you mislead the people of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Next question.

#### AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

**MPP Billy Denault:** My question is on an issue very important to my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and it is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

Ontario farmers grow the food that feeds our province and drives a \$51-billion agri-food sector. But with rising global instability and the threat of new US tariffs, we must act to protect them. That means standing up for Ontario-grown food and making sure people know the value of buying local. It's why our government continues to invest in Foodland Ontario and the buy local campaign. When families choose local, they support jobs, farms and food security.

Next week is Local Food Week, a chance to celebrate the hard work of Ontario's farmers and highlight the quality of the food they grow.

Speaker, can the minister please share how our government is protecting Ontario's farmers and food producers by supporting our homegrown agricultural communities?

**Hon. Trevor Jones:** Thank you for the question.

Our government is standing up. We're committed to protecting Ontario and protecting Ontario agriculture. We're designing and have been informed by our farmers, our food producers—to design programs to protect agriculture, to invest in it—in business risk management programs, to preserve what we have and what we cherish.

Madam Speaker, 54% of the food we eat is locally grown. The Grow Ontario Strategy aims to improve that to 30% higher by 2032.

When I say all good things are grown in Ontario—85% of us know that's the jingle for Foodland Ontario. We believe in that brand. We believe in things grown locally. Next week is Ontario Local Food Week. We're going to amplify that message and increase our efforts to protect the \$51-billion sector that is all good things grown in Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

**MPP Billy Denault:** Thank you to the minister for his response.

Backing Ontario's farmers goes beyond what's grown in the field. It means growing markets, building demand and getting more local products into local hands. That's why our government is making smart investments in targeted marketing. We are helping our producers grow their businesses and connect with more customers. We've supported initiatives like the Ontario Craft Cider Marketing Fund and backed the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers to promote their crops during peak season. These efforts boost demand for Ontario-grown food, strengthen local businesses and support the long-term success of our agri-food sector. They are also helping protect Ontario's agriculture industry from global uncertainty and threats, like foreign tariffs.

Speaker, can the minister share how these investments are helping our farmers thrive and grow here at home?

**Hon. Trevor Jones:** Thank you again to my colleague.

By investing in targeted marketing, we're connecting world-class local products with consumers across Ontario and around the world. Our Grow Ontario Strategy seeks to do even more to allow products to expand their reach. We are investing \$6 million into the Ontario Craft Cider Marketing Fund and \$1.6 million to the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers, supporting world-class products during peak seasons and building brand recognition throughout the year.

Earlier this spring, Foodland Ontario hosted 400 sampling events enjoyed by 52,000 customers across Ontario. Another round is coming this weekend. So it's my hope that all MPPs in this House bring your families and friends to a local grocery store or a farmers' market and celebrate all the good things grown in Ontario.

Together, we can protect and grow Ontario.

#### SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** My question is to the Premier. Developmental service organizations in Ontario have received base funding increases of less than 7% over the last 30 years, despite the cost of living skyrocketing by 70% over the same period. These agencies, which are critical to the health and well-being of people with developmental disabilities, are being forced to reduce service levels, lay off staff and even close programs. Why is the province starving developmental service agencies?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** I thank my honourable colleague for the important question. First and foremost, I want to thank all the people that are here from Community Living, all our partners who do amazing work in every community across this province. As I've made it very clear to all our partners, we have your back. We believe in the work that you're doing.

This collaboration that we have with the sector, with our partners, didn't exist before. It wasn't long ago when service providers, family members, were languishing on wait-lists, waiting for supports. It's why we've increased our investments in the sector to more than \$3.5 billion annually. Just to put that in perspective, that's more than \$1.2 billion more than when we formed government. We're investing more than \$798 million in supportive housing for the developmental services sector. That's an increase of \$798 million since we formed government on just housing alone.

Madam Speaker, I'll have more to say in the supplemental.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North.

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** Amazing work needs to be matched with appropriate pay. Staff retention is an enormous challenge, especially in the north, where we are geographically isolated, and Bill 124 has made things so much worse.

Developmental service workers are some of the lowest-paid workers in the public sector with many of the staff working two to three jobs just to get by. Will the government finally show these workers and their clients the respect they deserve by substantially increasing funding to the developmental services sector?

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

Madam Speaker, we've been very clear: We can't thank our partners enough. They are doing amazing work across the province, which is why, as I mentioned to my honourable colleague, we have increased investments in the sector by more than \$1.2 billion since we formed government.

In last year's budget, through our \$310-million investment to our community partners, the developmental services sector saw the largest increase in decades. Why? Because we believe in the work that they're doing.

We have a vision for this sector: Along with families and our partners, we want to make sure we provide the support so that every single person in this province succeeds and thrives and is able. That's our vision, Journey to Belonging—that's a long-term vision, but we have made investments with immediate impact in the sector, and again, I can't thank our partners enough.

#### GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Despite promises, this budget has no middle-class tax cut. Hydro rates are higher than ever. Business confidence is at the lowest it's ever been. After seven years of this Conservative government, life is more expensive, jobs are leaving the province and millions don't have a family doctor.

Now, at the same time, the government has collected the most tax ever, they have borrowed the most money ever and they have spent the most money ever. Madam Speaker, through you to the Premier: Where is all the money going?

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

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Thank you for the question.

Let's just go back a little bit in time. Who raised taxes and who raised fees on drivers' licences and tolls and employer health taxes? It was those folks.

Now let's fast-forward to today. Who has been cutting taxes and cutting fees? It's this government. It's this majority government on this side, putting money into people's pockets. Let's just go back—I know it's a long time ago—a week and a half ago, to the budget. I know it was a long time ago, who cut the gas tax permanently, putting more money back in the pockets of consumers and businesses?

I'm sure the member opposite is going to read the budget because that's the last page, right at the back: \$5.5 billion of tax cuts over the next three years. Read the budget and vote for it.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I believe Judy Noonan is on her way into the chamber. I didn't have an opportunity to introduce her this morning, but she's here with Community Living Guelph Wellington. Welcome to your House, Judy.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

##### RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY ACT, 2025

##### LOI DE 2025 SUR LA GESTION DES RESSOURCES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to enact the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2025 and to amend various Acts with respect to wildfires, resource safety and surveyors / *Projet de loi 27, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur le stockage géologique de carbone et modifiant diverses lois concernant les incendies de végétation, la sécurité des ressources et les arpenteurs-géomètres.*

**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 member wish to briefly explain the bill?

**Hon. Mike Harris:** This Resource Management and Safety Act proposes amendments to the Surveyors Act, the Forest Fires Prevention Act, and the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act with respect to various matters to enable the use of modern technology and to increase community

safety. The act also enacts the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2025, to allow the ministry to regulate geologic carbon storage.

If you'll indulge me for one more second, Madam Speaker, I wanted to thank the previous natural resources minister Graydon Smith for a lot of hard work on this bill and also the Associate Minister of Forestry and my parliamentary assistant as well. They've done a lot of heavy lifting. We've got some staff here from the ministry, so just a big thank you to everybody that's helped to put this bill together. It's going to be a game-changer here in the province of Ontario.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### HOMELESSNESS ENDS WITH HOUSING ACT, 2025

#### LOI DE 2025 VISANT À METTRE FIN À L'ITINÉRANCE GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT

Ms. Clancy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act establishing a homelessness elimination strategy / Projet de loi 28, Loi établissant une stratégie visant à mettre fin à l'itinérance.

**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 member wish to briefly explain the bill?

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I'm happy to co-sponsor this bill with the MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. This is a bill that aims to design a strategy to eliminate chronic homelessness using a housing-first approach. It would call on the government to establish an advisory committee full of experts, people with lived experience—government appointees. It would set goals on targets that we have for supportive housing, for housing benefit levels to meet the needs of the community, and it would ensure that our housing goals and our housing targets also include affordability targets. This is a strategy that's been used in Manitoba and other jurisdictions, and we think this is the best effort that this province could use to effectively eliminate chronic homelessness in the next 10 years.

### TURN DOWN THE HEAT ACT (EXTREME HEAT AWARENESS), 2025

#### LOI DE 2025 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION AUX RISQUES POSÉS PAR LES CHALEURS EXTRÊMES

Ms. McMahon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to proclaim Extreme Heat Awareness Week and to promote public awareness of extreme heat issues / Projet de loi 29, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sensibilisation aux risques posés par les chaleurs extrêmes et visant à sensibiliser le public aux enjeux qui leur sont liés.

**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 member wish to briefly explain the bill?

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** I would love to. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since you all have great memories, you would remember me introducing this bill last Parliament, and so I am just reviving it and resuscitating it this time. It basically proclaims the first week in June of each year to be extreme heat awareness week and also asks the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, whom I have a good relationship with, to publish information on a government website about extreme heat issues.

As we all know, we're in a climate emergency. It has not gone away. We want to keep our residents safe. With extreme heat issues, there can often be many fatalities. We do not want that to happen. This is a way to mitigate that, and I would be honoured to have your support.

## PETITIONS

### FERRY SERVICE

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I have a petition titled "Save the Gardiner Ferry." Some 32 kilometres north of Cochrane, on Highway 579, is one of Ontario's only surviving cable ferries, and it serves the municipality of Gardiner. It was put in in 1966 and not maintained very well since then. It was closed a couple of times last summer. They put it in the water, they took a little girl to school on that ferry and then they closed it again. Then the OPP had to force it to open.

These people are serviced on Highway 579 in northern Ontario, and they're in danger of losing their connection. The replacement was going to be a very poorly maintained logging road—maybe. That's the story in northern Ontario: When there are resources to be taken out, oh, everybody says, "the strength of the north," but when the sawmill closes, they try to close the road. That shouldn't happen.

Everyone should see the Gardiner Ferry. It's a great place. I've got a lot of names in this petition, and I fully, wholeheartedly support it. Save the Gardiner Ferry.

### ENDANGERED SPECIES

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** This is a petition from many parts of the province regarding Bill 5. It is calling on the government to withdraw Bill 5, to preserve the Endangered Species Act and to not, for example, put excessive, discretionary, unchecked decision-making power into the hands of government ministers.

I'm very happy to sign this petition and submit it on behalf of constituents from across the province.

1510

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** This is a petition with over 1,000 signatures that were collected by people in Guelph over the weekend at a rally. The petition raises serious concerns about Bill 5, especially concerns about overriding Indigenous rights, environmental protections, labour laws and democratic oversight. The thousand people who signed this petition are calling on the government to withdraw Bill 5 and protect our rights.

I'm happy to sign this petition and ask one of the pages to bring it to the table, Speaker.

## SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** I bring this petition today to raise social assistance rates. As we all know, our social assistance rates are well below the poverty line here in Ontario. This is calling for a doubling of both Ontario Works and ODSP so that people have the income that they need to survive.

I fully support this, gladly sign it and send it down with page David.

## COST OF LIVING

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I'm happy to rise today to table this petition with signatures that were collected by Ms. Barbara MacKenzie of Ottawa West–Nepean. This is a petition about making life more affordable because many of my constituents are struggling with the very high cost of rent, skyrocketing home prices, the difficulty of affording groceries and other necessities. My constituents are asking that the government take urgent action to address the affordability crisis by tackling the housing crisis, building new homes, raising wages for workers, taking on price-gouging gas and grocery corporations and investing in public health care rather than selling it off.

I sincerely thank my constituents for their activism on this issue. I wholeheartedly endorse the petition. I will sign it and send it to the table with page Calvin.

## UNIVERSITY FUNDING

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** This petition comes from my constituents in Kingston and the Islands. It is regarding universities. One thing that the signers of the petition point out is that universities drive economic growth and future prosperity. It is no accident that all supercomputers are on university campuses. Even industrial users come and take advantage of all the talent and the capability at universities to make the most of supercomputers. The petition calls on the Ontario government to raise Ontario universities' base operating funds to the level recommended by the Blue-Ribbon Panel on Financial Sustainability in the Post-Secondary Education Sector.

## PHARMACARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Christine Seguin from Azilda in my riding. They're called "Pharmacare." Basically, access to prescription medication is an essential part of health care. The current programs that exist in Ontario still leave many Ontarians facing high costs and barriers to access. Frankly, Speaker, no one in Ontario should be forced to choose between paying for their medication or putting food on the table or gas in the car. There are too many gaps that force people to skip medications, putting their health at risk.

They signed these petitions because they would like the government of Ontario to show leadership and bring forward a pharmacare program where everybody would be covered based on their needs, not on their ability to pay.

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

## SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I'm pleased to rise today to table a petition on social assistance rates. I want to thank Dr. Sally Palmer of McMaster University for her indefatigable work in collecting signatures to call on this Legislative Assembly to raise these rates, because the rates are so low that people can barely survive on them: \$733 a month for an individual on Ontario Works. That has not increased for years, while we have seen rents and grocery prices absolutely skyrocket. People who are living on ODSP have received a measly 5% increase, which doesn't actually address what the cost-of-living increase has been.

The petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly, in light of the fact that the CERB program demonstrated that a basic income of \$2,000 per month was the basic standard people should be able to count on in Canada, to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition, will add my name to it and send it to the table with page David.

## ENDANGERED SPECIES

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** This petition is also from people across Ontario and it's a slightly different petition regarding Bill 5. The petitioners say that the Endangered Species Act has been instrumental in protecting Ontario's biodiversity by providing science-based assessments, automatic species listing and comprehensive habitat protections. They call on the government to withdraw Bill 5, maintain the Endangered Species Act and ensure that economic growth does not come at the expense of biodiversity and ecological integrity.

## ASSISTIVE DEVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Nellie Lanteigne from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. It's called "Modernize the Assistive Devices Program."

The Assistive Devices Program is essential for the independence, the dignity and the well-being of people living with long-term physical disabilities and critical for them to navigate their daily lives. The Assistive Devices Program has many devices that are not covered. For most, if they are covered, they are covered at 75% of the cost. You still have to come up with 25% of the cost. But many of the new assistive devices that allow people with disabilities to do things that they couldn't even dream of before are not on the list.

One of the ones that I get the most complaints about is hearing aids. Why is it that there are new technologies for hearing aids that allow people to finally hear clearly, to be able to be in a crowd where they're able to hear when people talk rather than background noise, but the government only gives \$500 per hearing aid? That's it; that's all. They would like the government to review, but when they do their review, they would like the government to include the voices of people with disabilities so that they have a better understanding of what is needed.

I would love for the Assistive Devices Program to be brought up to date. I will sign my name to it and ask my good page Calvin to bring it to the Clerk.

#### UNIVERSITY FUNDING

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** This petition comes from my riding of Kingston and the Islands. The petitioners note that universities nurture informed, equitable and democratic societies. Many of the signers of these petitions must have been the students who lined up for an hour or so to vote in the last provincial election. They are calling on the Ontario government to raise Ontario universities' base operating funds to the level recommended by the government's own Blue-Ribbon Panel on Financial Sustainability in the Post-Secondary Education Sector.

#### GARDE D'ENFANTS

**Mme France Gélinas:** J'aimerais remercier Erick Yves Joseph Brunet de Blezard Valley dans mon comté pour ces pétitions : « Un avenir pour les services de garde d'enfants en Ontario ».

La plupart des garderies à but non lucratif en Ontario sont obligées de limiter les inscriptions en raison de la pénurie de personnel qui aggrave l'écart croissant entre la demande et la disponibilité des places en garderie. Les experts estiment qu'en Ontario, on a besoin de 65 000 nouvelles travailleuses—surtout des femmes—en garderie pour répondre à la demande de services de garde à 12 \$ par jour. Sans un financement adéquat et une stratégie pour recruter du nouveau personnel, c'est très difficile, alors que la demande pour les garderies continue d'augmenter.

On sait tous que pour que les gens puissent participer dans le milieu du travail, il faut des garderies. Ce que les gens veulent, c'est vraiment d'établir immédiatement une commission consultative des travailleuses de la petite enfance pour s'assurer de formuler des recommandations

pour comment soutenir la main-d'oeuvre, les recruter et les retenir dans le système en vue d'une amélioration des conditions de travail.

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer et je demande à Mayukh de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

#### CANCER TREATMENT

**Mme France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Linda Armstrong from Lively in my riding for these petitions, and they're called "Coverage for Take-Home Cancer Drugs."

I must say that cancer is still a very scary diagnosis for many, many people, but many cancers can be treated. Many cancers are treatable. They become a chronic condition, or they're cured completely. Why? Because we have new medications, we have new treatments for cancer. Lots of these medications are take-home cancer drugs. You might have had your diagnosis at the cancer treatment centre, went through chemotherapy or radiation therapy, but now you can go back home, sleep in your own bed, eat your own food, and take home cancer drugs.

1520

But many people can't afford the drugs that would keep them healthy, that would keep them cancer-free.

Did you know, Speaker, that British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec all cover take-home cancer drugs? There is no reason for Ontario to not do the same. People being able to go back to work faster, to go back to the economy, to what they want to do, pays for those drugs really, really quickly. The Ontario government has to look at this.

We just had a budget. Take-home cancer drugs were not in the budget, but that doesn't mean we cannot hope for the government to do the right thing.

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

#### HIGHWAY SAFETY

**Mme France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Rachel Emond from Hanmer in my riding for this petition called "Make Highway 144 Safe."

Highway 144 is a highway that links Sudbury to Timmins. The concerns on this highway are multiple. The first thing is that it is the only highway in Ontario that does not have a shoulder, so you are driving the speed of a highway on a very narrow road. There are tons of trucks. Whether it be trucks coming from the multiple different mines, whether it be trucks coming out of the bush through the logging industry, there are always a lot of trucks. There are also a lot of animals. Not this time, last time—I went last Wednesday; I didn't see any moose, but I saw a bear mom. But the time before this, I counted seven moose sightings on 144, where you have to stop, but you don't know if the truck behind you is going to stop also.

People want Highway 144 to be made safe. They want the government to organize a round table with representatives from the Ministry of Transportation, the police, ambulance, the tow truck operators, the shipping compan-

ies, the mining companies, the school bus drivers, and other road users to find solutions to this dangerous highway.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2025

#### LOI DE 2025 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ AU NIVEAU MUNICIPAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 14, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 in relation to codes of conduct / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto et la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités en ce qui concerne les codes de déontologie.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Further debate?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Ottawa Centre, a former city councillor in Ottawa—and kind of ground zero for a lot of this legislation. I'm going to let them talk about that.

It's a fairly technical bill, a lot of the aspects of it, and it has been a long time coming.

I want to start off with talking about the importance of the bill. Really, it's a bill to make the municipal arena like other workplaces in Ontario—one that's protected with legislation and rules that make it safer for everyone, and primarily safer for women. That has really been the focus of this legislation, which has been in the works and been consulted on since before 2021. As I've been the critic since 2018, I've been kind of present through that entire process.

I want to start out, before we get into the technical aspects of it, by reading into the record a letter by a friend of mine who's also a councillor in Niagara. Her name is Haley Bateman. Haley wrote a letter to Pelham Today, a small local paper in my area, and it's entitled "Why Municipal Councillors Must Not Be Above the Law: It's Non-Partisan and It's Time." I thought she provided a really interesting perspective that represents the perspective of many of the women I've talked to who are really concerned with making municipal politics safer and more welcoming for women. I think we all want to—that's a goal that we all want to happen.

Haley said, "I have a varied background in advocacy and in politics. I am currently a councillor for the Niagara region, representing the city of St. Catharines. I ran with one thing in mind—to make it better for anyone who comes after me. The political arena is a difficult place to be, still, it can be hugely rewarding if you can draw people in with opposing views. We all know that our representation is not poised in support of equity and that makes political discourse much more difficult.

"Since 2009, I have been part of a collective (of mostly women) advocating for workplace violence and harassment legislation. It's hard to believe that this has only been law for only 14 years. Bill 168 came into force on June 15, 2010, to protect workers from violence and harassment. This was an incredible moment for survivors of violence and it was a profound shift for accountability and this legislation undoubtedly saved lives. The bill outlines stiff penalties for all employers in Ontario who fail to meet their new responsibilities and duties under the law. But there is a gap. We knew it then and we know it now: Municipally elected officials are exempt from this law.

"There is no amount of workplace violence or harassment that could allow for a councillor to lose their seat. That speaks to the power of elected officials.

"The disparity between an elected official and their staff, municipal staff or residents in the community that they serve is so significant that allowing our governments to operate this way undoubtedly serves a purpose to those with the power to change it.

"This legislation is vital to the safety and well-being of those working in municipal government, and it's vital to a healthy and democratic space for us all to continue in. We have heard in our advocacy from every party, everyone on all sides of this debate, that it needs to pass and it needs to be done so to restore integrity to the positions we hold, working on behalf of our community.

"I have met with hundreds of people regarding this legislation. There is overwhelming support for our province to pass this legislation. Face to face, the men are supportive. At the council table or when the Legislature is in session, many men are either silent or they speak 'carefully' about their concerns. I say 'carefully' because they don't want their gentle criticisms to be taken out of context. They have real concerns. Like, how can we prevent claims made only to discredit a councillor or the ever-popular frivolous and vexatious complaints?

"The pendulum swings as their need to publicly oppose workplace violence and harassment legislation is the clearest evidence we can get that we are on the right track to creating the change we desperately need to see.

"If we want a better democracy, we are going to have to demand it. If we want a community that represents our needs, values, and experiences, we need legislation that holds municipality-elected officials accountable for workplace violence and harassment."

That was a letter from Haley, and I want to thank her for that and also for her travels to Queen's Park over the last three or four years that this has been discussed. I'll get into that timeline eventually.

I'd also like to thank Emily McIntosh, who is kind of the leader of the group Women of Ontario Say No, made up of survivors of violence and harassment in the municipal arena. They have been here over and over again, over the years, pushing for this legislation.

We're all in favour of this legislation. There's really only one sticking point—one thing that, even after we all support this, we're really going to push to change in committee, and that is around the removal of councillors.

I think we all agree that we need a better system of integrity commissioner training and all of those things that are contained in this bill. But the legislation that is before us goes against what almost all stakeholders are saying, which is that the final decision to remove a councillor should go to an independent judiciary and should not come back to council for the final say, because of the politicization of the process in colleagues deciding the fate of a councillor. That's the real point I think that will be up for debate. I don't think there's anyone in this place who is going to oppose this legislation. It's needed. Everyone agrees with it. But we need a discussion around that point because if we can come to an agreement on that, we would have one of those rare pieces of legislation where everyone on all sides of the House and all the stakeholders would be in agreement.

**1530**

There are some statements I want to read into the record from Women of Ontario Say No, that they sent. A lot of them couldn't be here; they work, obviously. We weren't sure when the debate was going to occur, so they sent me some comments, and I want to read those into the record.

They said, "Now is the opportunity to make meaningful systems changes. Impactful, meaningful change does not happen in isolation. We encourage government to listen and incorporate the feedback of key stakeholders, such as AMO, AMCTO and OMAA"—the municipal managers.

"What is introduced should not be the bare minimum. This legislation needs to be the very best it can. We encourage government to include:

"—workplace discrimination into the interpretation of violations of the codes of conduct;

"—ensure a trauma-informed approach, including whistle-blower protection;

"—include a duty to report;

"—scrap the role of council in voting on the determination of removal of a councillor after the recommendation of two" integrity commissioners, which is what I just mentioned;

"—ensure a process whereby claims of egregious harassment will be prioritized; and

"—required IC training and councillor commitment to adhere to the code.

"Whether or not it is known to you, someone today affected by this legislative gap is watching this debate with keen apprehension and hope.... They are counting on this government to use its best judgment, which is the ability to listen, learn and modify the proposed municipal integrity act to ensure the best interests of Ontarians and those that represent them are honoured. This will not be achieved by introducing what is easiest, but by accepting that good governance requires more work and a grounding humility to create legislation that strengthens confidence in our democratic form of governance—the most important foundation we have."

Those are the comments from Women of Ontario Say No. I know that they will be part of the committee process moving forward, and I would really encourage the government to listen to what they have to say, as well as many of

the organizations that all of us have gone to in consultation to create all of the many forms of this legislation that have come forward.

I will go through the timeline, just to kind of demonstrate how long this legislation has been out there and contemplated and discussed and consulted on.

In 2020, Ottawa's integrity commissioner found that Councillor Rick Chiarelli committed serious misconduct involving sexual harassment against three women, recommending the maximum penalty of a 90-day suspension for each instance, which was unanimously approved by council. Despite the seriousness of these findings, Chiarelli refused to resign, and there was no provision in the law allowing for him to be removed. These issues have been out there for a long time, but that was kind of where the ball started rolling for a serious push for legislation. I know my colleague from Ottawa Centre is going to talk more about that and, as a former Ottawa councillor, their experience in Ottawa with those issues.

In late 2020, Ottawa NDP MPP Joel Harden tabled a motion calling on the government to change the law to allow municipalities to remove members of council who have been found guilty of serious acts of misconduct, including sexual misconduct.

Then, in March 2021, no doubt in response to growing pressure stemming from the Chiarelli case, which was ongoing, the Ford government launched a consultation into strengthening municipal codes of conduct. The current House leader, who was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing at the time, I have to say, did quite a good consultation. I was involved in that. All the parties were called. There was an online conference. The direction of where the government was headed was shared with all the parties. There was really kind of a good, well-intentioned, cross-party effort to come up with some legislation.

In late 2021, the Ford government briefed the NDP and other opposition parties on the upcoming bill that would address the lack of consequences for serious misconduct by municipal councillors. The bill would have allowed a municipal integrity commissioner to apply to a judge to remove a councillor who had been found guilty of serious misconduct, harming the safety of others.

So the government originally, in 2021, was headed down the road that we're all trying to get the government to right now.

The bill was never tabled. We're not sure why. It was an internal decision that was made, obviously, in the upper ranks of the government.

A year later, Global News reported that the promised legislation had been quietly scrapped, according to FOI documents it had obtained.

So that's what happened. We're not sure what happened in the backrooms, but it was scrapped. But we continued on.

In March 2022, the member from Orléans—who I'm sure we'll hear from this afternoon or this evening—debated his Bill 10, which would allow councils to direct their integrity commissioner to apply to a judge for a determination whether a member of council has breached

the code of conduct or workplace policies with respect to workplace violence or harassment, and if so, a declaration that the member's seat is vacant. The bill passed second reading but died when the election was called in 2022.

In August 2022, the same member tabled Bill 5, which was largely similar to the previous Bill 10. But this time, the PC MPPs voted it down—the same legislation—when it was debated on May 31, 2023. The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity claimed—and we would dispute this—that the bill would give integrity commissioners the power to remove a council member, taking power from councils and making integrity commissioners more powerful than a judge. In fact, the bill from the member from Orléans would require the integrity commissioner to apply to a judge for removal only if directed by council to do so. It would be a judge who would determine whether removal was justified through a judicial process—as opposed to the current Bill 9, which would not involve a judge or judicial process at all. So this is really the point of contention that we're going to be talking about for this debate and into committee.

Pressure for change continued to build in 2024, with more than 200 local councils, municipal councils endorsing a resolution championed by the advocacy organization I mentioned earlier, the Women of Ontario Say No, who have understandably become increasingly frustrated by the lack of action on the matter. That's a pretty impressive effort—for a group of volunteers to go out there and get 200 local councils to endorse a resolution.

Prior to June 2024, The Women of Ontario Say No met with me in my office. They were frustrated and asked that we put forward another bill. So I tabled Bill 207, which was a private member's bill, to hold municipal councillors accountable for workplace harassment and serious misconduct, including a provision allowing for a judge to remove a councillor. So we're still pushing for that judicial process.

**1540**

There was a consultation that happened, and my approach has always been—and many government members will know—to try to work with the government first, and if that's not possible, then we'll move into a more adversarial process. But certainly, I reached out to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who's the current Minister of Education, and started a discussion. We did the best we could, I think, to work together, and I know that we consulted with the same organizations, such as the municipal managers. I know that we both consulted with the Ontario Integrity Commissioner, David Wake. As a matter of fact, by coincidence, we happened to show up on the same day and passed each other in the elevator when we went to talk to him about the bills.

So the government was putting together legislation, but I was also putting together a private member's bill because AMO was coming up, and, because of the delays in the past, we wanted to make sure that the government was going to move forward with legislation. This was now four years into the process, and nothing had happened.

We went to AMO, we did some PR and the minister did his PR, but my bill, Bill 207, was never debated because the election was called in 2025. But the government did table Bill 242 on the very last day of the 2024 legislative session, at a time when the government was angling for an excuse to call an early election. That bill appears to be very different from the bill that was presented to myself and the New Democratic Party and the Liberals in late 2021, but that bill died on the order paper when the 2025 election was called.

Speaker, that's the interesting history of this bill through over four years, legislation that, quite frankly—and I'm going to go through my private member's bill, which was put together with consultation and with legislative counsel over a period of only three months, and it was almost identical to the government's legislation. It took the government four years. But here we are, and we have a bill that is good, except for that one point of contention about the removal of a councillor.

The Integrity Commissioner of Ontario—and, by the way, the point that was really positive working with the minister was reorganizing the provincial system of integrity commissioners. We had talked about creating a board of integrity commissioners that answer to the Ontario Integrity Commissioner, and those discussions were good. We agreed on everything, and that has, for the most part, found its way into this legislation.

Ontario's provincially mandated system of local integrity commissioners has been described—and I remember the former minister describing it as the Wild West, with no oversight and inconsistent standards across municipalities. Most municipal integrity commissioners are private contractors that work for several municipalities at once.

In September 2024, our Ontario Integrity Commissioner, David Wake, submitted recommendations to the government about how to improve things. He also read my private member's bill, consulted with both the government and the opposition, and came out with—I believe there were nine recommendations. They create a single, standardized code of conduct for all municipalities, which is something pretty much everyone agrees with. Training should be required for integrity commissioners, councillors and municipal staff.

There was one story at the time, a municipality that—actually, the entire council had to be removed by the minister, and the integrity commissioner of this small northern community was the CAO of the small northern community next door to that one. That's the kind of thing that was going on, so clearly the system needed to be reformed. He recommended that we:

- require each municipality to provide accessible information that identifies its integrity commissioner, the scope of jurisdiction and contact information. That wasn't even being done;

- maintain a registry of all municipal integrity commissioners;

- integrity commissioners should have access to a central database of all completed inquiries. Imagine that:



All the integrity commissioners in Ontario were not even communicating with each other;

- establish a standard process for integrity commissioner investigations, because that was all over the place. They're investigating with different methods and different standards; and

- consider a centralized or regional system to assist smaller municipalities manage costs. That's an important one because that's not in this legislation, and that will undoubtedly come up in committee because there are smaller municipalities that have some real difficulty in paying for the cost, depending on the issues that they're dealing with.

He recommended that we require integrity commissioners to submit a public annual report so they would be accountable, and establish a requirement for proactive financial disclosure because, amazingly, that wasn't happening. You're dealing with integrity commissioners, and there wasn't the transparency that you'd expect to promote integrity.

So a little bit about this bill: You'll see that it has most of the components that the Integrity Commissioner recommended. This bill repeals the authority of municipalities to develop their own codes of conduct and set their own terms of reference for their municipal integrity commissioner, complaint investigation protocols and reporting procedures. Instead, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may prescribe a standard code of conduct and standardized integrity commissioner investigation processes, so it standardizes things across the board.

This legislation does establish a process for removing a council or local board member, following an inquiry by the municipal integrity commissioner concerning a potential breach of the code of the conduct. This is the important part that you're going to hear about over and over again and I'm sure will be debated, and you'll hear from stakeholders in committee. The process is that after completing an inquiry, the municipal integrity commissioner may send a recommendation for removal to the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario if they believe the member has contravened the code of conduct; if it's on a matter of a serious nature resulting in the harm to the health, safety or well-being of persons; and if the existing available penalties are insufficient to address the contravention or ensure it's not repeated—those penalties are reprimands and suspensions.

Upon receiving a recommendation for removal from the municipal integrity commissioner, the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario then conducts an inquiry to determine whether the criteria for removal have been met. They may consider, among other matters, whether the contravention negatively impacts public confidence in the ability of either the member to discharge their duties or the council or local board to fulfill its role. It's unclear, Speaker, whether the second inquiry would be a *de novo* hearing, which is starting again from scratch, or simply a review of the first local integrity commissioner inquiry.

If the criteria for removal have been met, then the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario reports back to council

with a recommendation for removal. If the criteria have not been met, the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario refers it back to the municipal integrity commissioner. If it's referred back, then the former process continues.

But if the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario makes a recommendation for removal—and this is where it gets even more complicated, and it's a very high bar—within 30 days of receiving the recommendation, council votes on whether to approve the recommendation. So removal of a councillor would require the approval of all the members of council except those with authorized absences and the member who is the subject of the inquiry.

#### 1550

If council votes to approve the recommendation, the member's seat is declared vacant, and the member is disqualified from being a member of council or a local board for four years.

If council does not approve the recommendation, the member shall not receive any penalties. That is an important point. It's a very high bar, and there's no way to go back to the member receiving lower penalties. This is a real flaw in this legislation.

Regulations can also be made requiring the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario to provide prescribed training or education to municipal integrity commissioners, which is very important and was in my private member's bill as well. Regulations requiring municipal integrity commissioners to provide other training can also be made as well. Those are really the points that are going to be debated over the next number of months in committee, and we look forward to that debate.

The bill is identical to Bill 241, which was tabled by the government, as I mentioned, in 2024 and died when the election was called. It provides a mechanism for removing council members who have committed serious misconduct, such as sexual harassment. As I mentioned, advocates such as Women of Ontario Say No have long sought such a mechanism. The Ontario NDP has long sought such a mechanism. Currently, the only mechanisms for such removal are a judge's finding of a conflict of interest under section 9 of the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act or imprisonment that results in a council member missing three successive months of council, which obviously is inadequate.

Speaker, in a democracy, the bar for removing an elected official from office should be set high, but requiring a unanimous council vote will set the bar too high. An unethical councillor would only need one "no" vote to avoid any serious penalties for serious misconduct.

Making council rather than a judge the final decider on removal also risks politicizing the process or allowing the appearance of politicization. That's what almost everyone is arguing. You can imagine, rather than going to an independent judiciary, the final approval comes back to council to make a decision about their colleague, and they could have very well been witnesses and involved in the inquiry to begin with. That's not workable.

I'm not completely sure why everyone else on one side pretty much agrees that an independent judiciary is the

way to go, but the government, for some reason, continues to argue that it should go back to council. They're going to find, when we get into committee, that almost no one agrees with the government on this point. People will say how great this bill is, but when it comes to that one point, that's what the evidence is going to show. Almost everyone agrees that it should go to an independent judiciary as the final step.

This bill would require the completion of two inquiries by two integrity commissioners before council can then vote on whether to remove a councillor that has breached the conduct of code on a serious matter—we're talking sexual harassment or assault—that has resulted in harm to the health, safety or well-being of a person. My colleague from Ottawa Centre is going to talk about some more details about the kind of harm we're talking about. We've had, through the process, women here from Women of Ontario Say No who are survivors of harm that has happened in the municipal arena.

When deciding whether to send council a recommendation for removal, the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario would need to consider the risk that a single council member might reject their recommendation, whether in good faith or bad. The Integrity Commissioner of Ontario might decide not to make a recommendation, even if fully convinced of the serious nature of the councillor's misconduct. It puts the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario in a precarious position.

This is just enabling legislation. This bill could make things better or worse or do nothing at all, depending on the government's subsequent regulations, as with any bill.

This bill would ensure consistent municipal codes of conduct and enforcement and should increase ethical standards for municipalities with weak or dysfunctional accountability systems. That's why the majority of this bill is so good and should be supported. This was a top recommendation of Ontario's Integrity Commissioner in the September report, which I referenced, to the Premier on municipal accountability systems. But consistency could also risk lowering standards for municipalities with strong and functional accountability systems, as Toronto's integrity commissioner has argued.

Back to my discussion of late 2021, when I was briefed, along with other parties, by the ministry on a government bill to strengthen municipal accountability and allow for the removal of a councillor: Bill 9, interestingly, seems to be very different in some respects around the removal of councillors from what was presented.

The 2021 bill would have allowed municipal integrity commissioners to apply to a judge—that's the bill that came from this government; somewhere along the line they've changed their mind, and we don't know why—to have a councillor removed if their inquiry finds serious misconduct. In contrast, this bill would require the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario to conduct a second inquiry, as I've mentioned.

The 2021 bill would require a judge's decision to remove a member of council. With the current bill, removal would be decided by a unanimous council vote.

Again, one councillor could turn the whole thing on its head.

The 2021 bill included provisions to allow councils to delegate the power to impose penalties to the municipal integrity commissioner, rather than being decided by council. This would have addressed the municipal managers' recommendations that the accountability regime should avoid the appearance of politicization. Unfortunately, with what is in this bill, that's exactly what's going to happen.

The 2021 bill from this government included provisions to allow councils to recover prescribed costs of an inquiry from a member of council if misconduct is established. The current bill has no such provisions. Previously, the government thought, "Well, we should be able to recoup costs from the member." For some reason, that has been removed.

The 2021 bill would still allow councils to impose existing available penalties in addition to whatever the judge decides to do. The current bill would limit councils' choice to either removal or no penalties at all—a serious issue with this bill.

So we can see that there are some serious changes that have happened from 2021 to now. We're not sure why that bill was dropped, and we're not sure why some of these changes have actually come about that have weakened this legislation.

Bill 9 also does not include provisions for a central registry of municipal integrity commissioners or a central database of all completed inquiries—two things, as I mentioned, that Ontario Integrity Commissioner David Wake recommended in his September 2024 report. And there's no provision to help smaller municipalities manage costs, as was recommended.

Speaker, I want to briefly talk about, before my time is up, the private member's bill that I proposed. There was some misunderstanding that it was somehow similar to the bill that was proposed by the member from Orléans. There were some similarities in the fact that it dealt with the removal of councillors, but it went much further in adopting the consultations that I did—and the government, to be fair, did as well—with the municipal managers, with AMO and with others.

#### 1600

There were requirements relating to workplace violence, workplace harassment and workplace discrimination that were added to codes of conduct. My bill had a requirement to review codes of conduct and establish a framework of codes. It was added to both acts, and that's something that I talked about to the former minister, who's now the education minister. We seemed to agree on it, but it did not necessarily find its way into this bill.

One of the most important things is that the Municipal Act was amended to require the minister to establish a board of integrity commissioners. This is something I talked to the Ontario Integrity Commissioner about in some detail: "What kind of system do you set up?" We seemed to agree, and the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario agreed.

I thought the former minister agreed that the best way to do that was to set up a board of integrity commissioners that had a common education, professional requirements and that were all part of one board, and that board was used by all municipalities of Ontario and then reported to the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario so things were standardized and normalized. There were professional standards, there was training, and that would have fixed a lot of the problems we were seeing in Ontario with the rulings that were coming out. So I'm a bit confused as to why that was not completely followed through on as well.

Before I hand things over to my colleague, I would just remind folks—and I know a lot of that was technical. I wanted to get that out and on the record, but this is really about making municipal workplaces to the same standards that all workplaces in Ontario are at.

Before working in the not-for-profit sector, I used to do a lot of health and safety work. I was a steelworkers president and a business agent for the service employees union, and a lot of my work was around harassment in the workplace and making workplaces safe. Anyone who has done that work knows that employers have a responsibility to create a workplace that's free from harassment for everyone.

For some reason, as my friend Haley Bateman pointed out in the letter that I read at the beginning, that bar is much lower for municipal officials. You would think it should be higher. We're supposed to be leaders.

As a two-term councillor myself, I know there are all kinds of situations that can be dangerous for folks and unwelcoming, especially for women. It's our responsibility as a provincial government to make sure that we have some responsibility to our workplaces that they're free from harassment and are more welcoming and safe for women, because I think we all want to make sure that more women get involved in politics because that will make politics better and it will make our communities better.

Thank you very much, Speaker, and I will hand things over to my friend from Ottawa Centre. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre.

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** I rise here today to add a personal account to this matter. I want to thank my colleague from Niagara Centre for his introduction to this, and also my former colleague from council and the member from Orléans for first raising this here in the Legislature.

Municipal government is meant to be accountable, responsive and close to people, but during my time on Ottawa city council, I unfortunately saw first-hand how broken our accountability system truly is. Municipal government is the level where we're closest to people. It is where we listen, it's where we respond and it's where we are most directly accountable to the communities that we serve, but what I learned over time is that municipal government can also be the level most vulnerable to abuse with the fewest tools to stop it.

I rise today in support of Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act, because I lived through a failure of account-

ability that no municipality and the people that it serves should ever have to face again. I served on Ottawa city council alongside Councillor Rick Chiarelli, a man whose conduct toward women in his office and in his professional role should have disqualified him from public office. But because of the loopholes in the Ontario municipalities act, it didn't. And despite a damning integrity commissioner's report, despite the courage of women who came forward, despite a vote of condemnation by council, Rick Chiarelli remained in office. While myself and my colleagues chose—we chose—to stand through entire council meetings when he sat down so that we were not taking a seat at the table he was at to show solidarity with the women he sexually harassed, he still sat in the council chamber. He drew a public salary, he kept his title and his power, and we were left telling survivors, "We believe you but our hands are tied."

Let me tell you what that looked like, Speaker. In 2019, multiple women, mostly young women, either working for this councillor or applying for jobs in his office, began to speak out about the inappropriate and degrading things they had been subjected to during job interviews and terms of employment. These were not isolated or ambiguous incidents; these were calculated, repeated abuses of power. These women came forward with deeply disturbing stories. They describe being asked if they would go braless at public events. Some were questioned about their sexual activity, while others were told to wear low-cut tops or short skirts to attract male attention at fundraisers. They were taken to bars and other spaces where the sexual harassment and abuse they were subject to became unspeakable. They were warned that they would encounter "creeps" online and were told not to complain about it. This is all on the public record. Some were even told their future political careers could be threatened if they didn't go along with what was being asked of them.

These were not rumours. They were formal complaints investigated thoroughly and professionally by the city of Ottawa's integrity commissioner. Those investigations found that Councillor Chiarelli had repeatedly violated the code of conduct and had created a workplace culture of fear, exploitation and sexual harassment. He was found to have demeaned women, abused his position of trust and undermined the integrity of public office. Yet, after all of that, the harshest consequence available to council was a 90-day pay suspension. We applied it again and again—the maximum penalty the law would allow—but it did not matter. He came back, he voted and he remained a councillor until the end of his term.

Speaker, I want to be very clear: The only reason Councillor Chiarelli eventually left office is because he chose not to run again—not because of what he did, not because of the harm he caused, but because he decided it was time. That is the loophole that Bill 9 must finally close. While we require a clear, high-threshold process to remove municipal councillors from office in cases of serious misconduct, Bill 9's requirement for unanimous support from other elected officials creates a scenario where this very matter could go unpunished again, where

we once again tell women that “we are sorry, but.” If an integrity commissioner finds that a councillor has engaged in behaviour that harms the health, safety or well-being of others and that a pay suspension is not enough—and this is confirmed by a judge—they should be able to recommend removal.

**1610**

This isn’t about punishing unpopular views. It is not about policy disagreements. It is about real intended harm. It is about restoring public trust in our local governments. It’s about making sure that survivors are no longer asked to carry the burden of coming forward, only to be told that there’s nothing we can do. It cannot be politicized.

The personal cost of inaction is something that I saw and felt during my time on council. I knew at least two of the women who came forward and to this day, I feel a deep shame for not being able to act in a more deliberate way that removed their abuser and allowed them to heal.

We heard stories of these women who came forward, not just of what happened in the councillor’s office, but what happened afterward. They were harassed online. They were accused of lying. They were retraumatized again and again, because every time he walked into that council chamber, every time he voted, it sent a message that, “We do not believe you enough to act.” Some of these women were barely in their twenties. Some wanted to work in politics or run for office themselves, and they were told through our silence, through our legal inaction, that this was the price of entry. Speaker, it’s just not acceptable—not in politics, not in government, not anywhere.

Rick Chiarelli’s case was shocking, but it was not unique. Across Ontario, there are growing calls for better tools to address harassment and abuse in local government, because we know that these dynamics exist in many councils, and they often go unreported or unresolved. What makes the Chiarelli case different is that it was so public, so well-documented and yet, the system still failed. It showed every other councillor in Ontario, every aspiring young leader, every city staff member, that the rules protect the abuser and not the people who are harmed.

This bill must demand, “No more.” We owe it to the women who came forward in Ottawa and to all of those who have not been able to use their voice, not just to hear them, but to act. We owe it to every municipal staff member and constituent in this province to ensure their elected officials are held to the highest standard. We owe it to the future of local government to set clear boundaries around acceptable conduct and clear consequences when those boundaries are violated. None of us want to sit through another term of government watching someone continue to wield public power while we all stand by, legally powerless to remove them. I do not want another young woman to ask, “Why did he get to stay?” and have to answer, “Because we didn’t have a law.”

Today we have a chance to pass this law. Councillor Chiarelli should have been removed from office. That is not a controversial opinion. It is a fact that is rooted in evidence, in law and in basic decency. What was controversial—what was appalling—was that there was

no mechanism to remove him, and that is why this bill, Bill 9, is so critically important. But we must get it right so that it gives us a tool that we should have had years ago. It tells survivors that this province, this Legislature—all of us—takes misconduct seriously, and it affirms a basic truth that no one is entitled to hold public office. It is a privilege, and if you abuse it, you should lose it.

Speaker, this bill represents a turning point in how Ontario approaches municipal governance. By providing a transparent, rigorous process that balances due process with accountability, it can restore faith in public institutions. It can send a clear message to anyone who holds office that your behaviour will be scrutinized, your conduct will be judged and you will be held responsible.

This is about the integrity of our democracy. It is about the respect we owe to every person who walks into a city hall expecting to be treated fairly and safely, and it is about ensuring that public service remains a noble pursuit free from fear and intimidation. All I urge is the government remove the condition for unanimous approval by elected councillors and instead accept the findings of an integrity commissioner and a judge, and I urge all members of this House to support Bill 9.

When this story first broke, we all looked at each other; we had been neighbours up and down that hallway for years. I knew Councillor Chiarelli for almost 20 years, and I still challenge myself to this day about what I should have known, what I may have known, how I should have acted and how I let young women down, women who, today, continue to have to heal themselves because we were silent.

We know it happens every day in workplaces everywhere, but when it happens in a public space, when it happens at city hall with an elected official who has been investigated by an integrity commissioner, where young women have braved public scrutiny and come forward to tell us what happened to them—and it did not start all of a sudden; it had been going on for years—we owe it to every young person, to every woman in this province to make sure that they are kept safe with the power that we have.

I just hope that we can finally say to the women who came forward, with action and not just words, that we believe you, we know what happened and we, collectively here, are going to do something about it. We are going to ensure that your daughters and your daughter’s daughters have the protection they need, that public-office holders will be held to account and that you do not have to come out in a public newspaper but you can come out to an integrity commissioner, you can come out in your workplace and you can be safe and free from harm.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Question?

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to both my colleague from Niagara and my colleague from Ottawa Centre for their remarks. I think I heard that they’re going to be supporting this at second reading, to take it to committee. I am hopeful that the opposition members do that so we can take it to committee and continue this important work.

1620

I know they have some concerns around this legislation—specifically, around wanting a judge to decide when a council member is removed after both integrity commissioner reports.

However, my question is to the member from Ottawa Centre—and I appreciate her sharing her personal experience with this place. We in this assembly, under the legislative act, can censure and expel, in very rare circumstances, a member of this place. Why would you not expect that as well from our municipal colleagues—which this bill proposes, with the unanimous vote condition?

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** Thank you for the question.

There are two issues with it going back to a council. One is the unanimous support. One person on an entire council can decide that that councillor should not be held responsible, and then there will have been nothing that can be done to censure the member. Also, it politicizes—the removal of a councillor becomes very political. As I said, municipal councils are very, very close to their community. They are embedded in their community. They don't all leave their city and come somewhere else. So I think that the notion of politicizing that kind of decision will not continue to make people—women, in this case—feel like they can come forward and be ensured that it will be a decision that was taken by an integrity commissioner and a judge, and not to be politicized.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Question?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** The previous mayor of Ottawa said—I found a quote in the newspaper, and it's quite poignant—“his vulgar and disgraceful behaviour towards women, the integrity commissioner's report speaks for itself.” He brought shame to the city, and it became a national story.

These kinds of things are very serious, and I think when we don't get legislation right, the public believes that we're creating laws to protect ourselves. So can the member speak to how can this be non-partisan and show that politicians are just not above the law and are going to be treated like everybody else, should they break the code of conduct?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** It's an excellent question.

We're all going to vote in favour of this legislation—it's very important—at second reading, and it's going to go to committee. So the way that we can do exactly what my friend suggests is by having a meaningful committee process and listening to the women who will come forward, like from Women of Ontario Say No, survivors; listening to professionals in the municipal arena, like AMO and the municipal managers of Ontario, and other organizations that will come forward and give their advice. What the government will find is that they will advise that the best way to go is to have an independent judiciary make that decision.

To my friend's earlier comments—censorship and removal are two completely different things. We're talking

about removal of someone from office, not censorship. So that is a very serious decision. It should not be politicized, and it should be made by an independent judge.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Question?

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Thank you to both of my colleagues for your very thoughtful comments on this important issue.

I particularly want to say to my colleague from Ottawa Centre, thank you for sharing your experience. That was incredibly moving and emotional. I do want to say, as well, sorry to you—that you were put in that position by the lack of legislation and the lack of guidelines in the province of Ontario.

I'm a resident of College Ward, which meant that while all of this was going on, Rick Chiarelli was my city councillor. I can tell you that my neighbours and I did not feel represented by Rick Chiarelli. His values were not our values. And it was as frustrating to us as it was to those young women that he could not be removed and we were stuck with Rick Chiarelli as our voice at the municipal level.

I'm wondering, did you hear from any other residents of the city of Ottawa about the impact on them of having a representative like Rick Chiarelli, who didn't represent their values?

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** Thank you for that question.

Yes, I think it is important to lay out the effect this had on our city. I know that it was, as you say, a national story. People heard about it across the country. But on our city, it was a real stain, and on our municipal council, it was a real stain.

For the people of College Ward he represented—we heard from them time and time again that they weren't represented, that these were not their values. Again, it goes back to questioning yourself and wanting to know what kind of person you put into public office. Yes, we most certainly did hear—and people were frustrated that it became his decision not to run and to remove himself, and not our decision.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** I recognize the member from Whitby.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Speaker, and through you: My question is directed to the member for Niagara Centre.

He spent part of his speech talking about the robust consultation that took place, with AMO, as an example, and NOMA, ROMA. The legislation that's before us has strong checks and balances and a clear focus on restoring the public trust. That's based out of that robust consultation that did take place.

I don't recall specifically any of those municipalities, including my own—and we have eight municipalities in the region of Durham—raising the notion of a judge as part of the penalty process and how that would flow.

So I'd like the member for Niagara Centre to talk about, out of that robust consultation and his discussions with municipalities, perhaps in his area—did any of those

municipalities raise the prospect of an inclusion of a judge, and in the course of discussing—

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Response?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** In terms of consultations with individual municipalities, I would refer back to the resolutions that were passed by 200 municipalities, I believe it was, through an effort of Women of Ontario Say No. Through those discussions, there were a lot of those individual municipalities that did discuss that subject. To be fair, there were a variety of opinions. I think that the opinions I was talking about in consultations were from the professional organizations, from the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, and those kind of higher-level consultations where almost all of them—I can't think of anyone who recommended going back to a council, but certainly the large majority were in favour of going to an independent judiciary as the final step.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** I recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It's interesting—because my question is specifically for the independent judiciary. Could you explain to us what would that look like and how that would give residents confidence that the process is fair?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** There are different systems that could be implemented, but I think the most common explanation that I've heard is that there would be the normal process; it would go through the individual integrity commissioner. If it's of a very serious nature, it would then be referred to the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, who would make a determination. But as an extra step after that, the final determination would be to a member of the judiciary, who would look over the entire process as kind of a sober second thought to the Ontario Integrity Commissioner. So you'd have all of those eyes right up the chain on the issue. It would not be going backwards to council, to a bunch of colleagues, to make that determination.

1630

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Further debate?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** It's an honour to rise to speak in support of Bill 9 this afternoon. I'll be splitting my time with my colleague from Beaches–East York.

As I said, I do rise in support of Bill 9—a support that comes with gratitude, reflection and a call for even bolder action.

Let's begin with a simple truth: This bill is long overdue. For too long, municipal governments across Ontario—from small towns to major cities—have operated in a policy vacuum when it comes to holding elected officials truly accountable for things like harassment, abuse and misconduct. The current system fails victims. It protects abusers. And it weakens public trust. Bill 9 begins to change that. It creates, at last, a process, however narrow, to remove mayors and councillors who commit serious violations of their code of conduct, and to that, I say: finally. But it has taken too long.

Many in this chamber will know that the bill directly builds on legislation that I have introduced twice before—the Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act—first as Bill 10, which the government supported unanimously before the 2022 election, and most notably as Bill 5, which the government defeated after the 2022 election. The Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act was born out of outrage. It was shaped by conversations with survivors, and it was driven by a belief that no woman should have to work in fear—and certainly not have to work in fear in her own city hall.

Bill 5 would have empowered integrity commissioners to go further—to apply to the courts directly for removal in the most serious cases. Bill 5 had teeth. It had urgency. And it had something that we shouldn't forget today: It had momentum from real people on the ground who made it impossible to ignore. Hundreds of municipalities supported Bill 5 and called for the government to pass it into law. That broad support from communities across Ontario wasn't abstract; it was rooted in real experiences, in real failures and in real harm. Few cases illustrate that more directly than what has happened in Ottawa.

For those of us in the room and those who may be paying attention, to truly understand why this legislation matters, why Bill 9 is so necessary, we need to look no further than the city of Ottawa.

In 2019 and 2020, a group of courageous women came forward with disturbing allegations against my former colleague and our colleague from Ottawa Centre's former colleague Councillor Rick Chiarelli. These were not vague complaints. They were exceedingly explicit, detailed, consistent and corroborated accounts from brave, capable, and professional women—women who simply wanted to serve their community. They described job interviews where they were allegedly asked if they'd be willing to wear revealing clothing. They described pressure to attend public events without undergarments. They described being propositioned in exchange for access or advancement. We're talking about trips to strip clubs to spy on political enemies, offers of oral sex or insinuations around it. This is what we're talking about, and it's important to say it out loud so that everyone knows exactly what we're talking about. This wasn't just harassment; it was the calculated exploitation of power dressed up as political opportunity. When they spoke out, the system failed them.

The integrity commissioner in Ottawa did launch an inquiry, and it was slow and it was cautious, and it was under enormous public pressure. And months later, the findings were very, very clear. Two separate reports concluded that Councillor Chiarelli had violated the city's code of conduct. The reports cited multiple credible complainants. They described his behaviour as manipulative, coercive and harmful, and they recommended the maximum penalty allowed under the law: a 90-day suspension of pay. That's it—no removal from office, no disqualification from future service, no formal recognition of the harm done to those women. Any other employee in any other work environment in Ontario would have been immediately suspended, and when the report came out,

they would have been terminated. No one can argue against that. If you work in a library, if you work in a bakery, if you work at a school, if you're a police officer, if you're a teacher, if you're a nurse, you would have lost your job.

Councillor Chiarelli remained in office, and after the suspension of pay was over, he continued to draw a salary. He continued to bank and build pensionable service. He attended meetings on behalf of his community and, presumably, on behalf of the city. He was casting votes—votes that are important to determining the future of the city of Ottawa and his constituents, while the women he harmed were left to deal with the personal and professional fallout.

I want to be absolutely clear about this: The women he harmed left their jobs—most of them left working at city hall altogether. At least one moved out of the city completely. Their reputations were questioned. Their integrity was challenged. And yet, the individual responsible faced no meaningful consequence.

Madam Speaker, this wasn't a grey area. It wasn't a misunderstanding that can sometimes happen. It was a profound, profound failure—a failure of policy, a failure of leadership, and a failure of justice.

As I said before, if an unelected staffer had behaved this way, they would have been fired. If someone who works for you right now behaved this way to another one of your employees or the employee of a colleague of ours, you would ask them to not work for you anymore. If a teacher, a police officer or a nurse had done this, their licence would have been revoked. But an elected official? They're shielded by the very system that they abused. That's not leadership. That is impunity.

Another thing that's important for us not to forget: Everyone knew it. The councillors knew it. The media knew it. The public knew it. The women who came forward knew it most of all.

This is why I introduced Bill 10—to close the accountability gap, an accountability gap that protected Councillor Chiarelli and left his victims without recourse.

That is why residents in Ottawa and people from across Ontario have demanded change.

That is why we debate Bill 9 today. We cannot allow ourselves to call this a mere procedural improvement. The bill is a direct response to a real-life failure that hurt real people and nearly broke their faith in the system.

So to the women who came forward, I say thank you. You should never have had to endure what you did. You should never have had to fight so hard to be heard, but because you did, the province is finally taking steps to ensure it doesn't happen again—or, at least, there are consequences if it does. Bill 9 is your legacy. And this House and our province owe you more than words. We owe you action—which I hope we will do at the end of this debate.

Madam Speaker, in the last day or two, I've had a chance to talk to a couple of victims in Ottawa. I asked them to provide me some statements that I might read in

the Legislature, and so if you bear with me for a moment, I'm going to do that now.

**1640**

Nancy Cairns is one of the victims who came forward, and also came forward publicly with her name, and this is a quote: "Thank you for the opportunity to share a few words—and for bringing this legislation forward."

"I left the office where the misconduct occurred nearly 10 years ago. I came forward almost five years ago. And I am still healing."

"That should tell you something."

"The trauma wasn't just in what happened—it was in the silence that followed. In the cost of telling the truth. In the slow, painful process of trying to find accountability."

"Municipal councils are the front lines of democracy. They must be safe spaces—for staff, for members of the public and for council colleagues alike."

"Harassment, bullying and abuse—whether or not they meet a criminal threshold—erode the trust we place in these institutions and in the people elected to serve within them."

"This bill is an important step, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Let's get this right. Accountability must be more than a standard we react to—it must be a culture we actively build."

"That includes a clear, non-political process that ensures a safe and respectful work environment—and removes those who perpetrate abuse, just like in any other workplace in Ontario."

"I urge you to keep listening to stakeholders, including survivors. To keep pushing for policies that reflect the real cost of silence. And to create systems that protect people before the damage is done."

"Because no one should have to choose between their career and their safety."

"Thank you."

That is from Nancy Cairns, who previously worked for Councillor Chiarelli.

Now, another of Mr. Chiarelli's victims has also sent me a short statement to read. Stephanie Dobbs, again, was one of the women who first came public and also came public obviously with their name: "I would first like to express that I am filled with hope and gratitude that the government has moved ... to reintroduce legislation aimed at addressing this very serious and embarrassing shortfall in our current legislation."

"It has been over five and a half years since I came forward about the abuse that my former co-workers and I were subjected to by our former employer."

"Collectively, we provided a plethora of evidence and witness-corroborated testimony for hours upon hours at a time to ensure we did everything by the book."

"After all of this, our abuser was given the equivalent of a metaphorical slap on the wrist compared to the irreparable damage he perpetrated against dozens of young women, not to mention the damage to the reputation of our nation's capital and public trust."

"But this is the reality of our current legal framework, and abusers like my former employer know this."

“We have fostered an environment that emboldens those who are morally bankrupt by operating under the assumption that they will act ethically in the absence of meaningful consequences when they do not. No one stands behind a system that enables this.

“It demeans and belittles the positions that all of you here today have worked hard to earn and makes a mockery of our beautiful country by undermining our faith in all levels of government and elected officials.

“Over the years I have heard promises and strong words across all levels of our government and political affiliations acknowledging this problem and the need for change.

“This is not a partisan issue, and it should not be treated as such.

“The implications of doing so suggest motives that are difficult to confront, but increasingly hard to dismiss.

“Over and over, I have seen different iterations of this bill submitted, only to be allowed to die on the floor or struck down using arguments undermined by rhetoric that distorted its objectives and misinformed the debate.

“That being said, Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, restores a sense of optimism that I am hesitant to embrace.

“While the bill represents a step toward strengthening local governance, it must be noted—with significant concern—that the provision requiring a recommendation from the Integrity Commissioner to be sent back to council for a unanimous vote undermines the very principles the government has long claimed to uphold.

“This mechanism risks politicizing a process that is meant to be impartial and non-partisan.

“If the goal is truly to ensure accountability and prevent abuse, then this clause must either be amended or removed.

“Leaving it intact not only weakens the bill’s integrity but also contradicts the government’s stated rationale for opposing similar legislation in the past: that such processes could be misused for political gain.

“This bill represents progress, albeit with room for improvement. But as we all know perfection is often the enemy of progress and in this case, change has been long overdue.”

As I said, that is from Stephanie Dobbs, one of Councillor Chiarelli’s victims.

I want to thank both Stephanie and Nancy for sending me those statements.

Madam Speaker, we often talk about the role of elected officials, integrity commissioners and advocates in pushing for accountability, but in this case, we must also recognize the essential role of journalism in bringing truth to light. In the case of Ottawa, it was the investigative work of journalist Joanne Chianello that helped break through the silence. Through detailed reporting at the Ottawa Citizen and then CBC Ottawa, she gave voice to the women who had been harassed, pressured and demeaned. She connected the dots. She named the problem. And she refused to let the story fade into the background. Without her work and without the bravery of the women who did speak to her, there’s a very real chance that the misconduct would have remained hidden, with the

harm unaddressed and the pressure for change nonexistent. That is what journalism is supposed to do: It’s supposed to speak truth to power and protect the public interest.

So to Joanne and to all the journalists who continue to shine light into the dark corners of our institutions, I want to say thank you. Your work has made a difference, and Bill 9 is part of that long, long legacy.

Madam Speaker, it’s truly unfortunate, but Ottawa is not the only place where the system failed. It’s not an isolated incident—far from it. There were serious issues of harassment and abuse in communities across the province—as I said, in big cities and small towns alike—too many, frankly, to name here this afternoon. The sheer volume of these problems and complaints shows that the gaps in our municipal accountability laws led to real consequences for real people. That’s why this bill is so very important and so long overdue.

One of the most important and perhaps under-appreciated aspects of Bill 9 is the move toward standardization of the codes of conduct across Ontario. For too long, each municipality has operated with its own set of rules—its own expectations, its own definitions, its own disciplinary thresholds. That patchwork approach has created confusion, inconsistency and, in some cases, injustice. What was considered a serious offence in one community might be considered a minor one in another. One integrity commissioner might investigate a complaint thoroughly; another might dismiss it without explanation. And while the rights of victims varied from town to town and city to city, those accused of misconduct often benefited from this grey area. That’s not accountability. That’s arbitrariness.

By giving the province the authority to prescribe a consistent, province-wide code of conduct, Bill 9 finally brings some clarity and fairness to the system. It means every municipal official, whether they serve in Toronto or Timmins, Hamilton or Hearst, will be held to the same ethical standards. It means the public can expect the same level of protection, no matter where they live. And it means victims won’t have to consult municipal bylaws to figure out what happens and what actually counts as misconduct.

#### 1650

A councillor in Brampton should be held to the same behavioural expectations as a councillor in Brockville. The mayor of Sudbury should face the same consequences for harassment as the mayor of Mississauga. That’s just basic fairness.

Just as importantly, Bill 9 also mandates training and education on those codes because accountability should start with understanding. This standardization won’t solve every problem, but it will lay a solid foundation. It replaces a patchwork with a clear, common standard, and that is a meaningful step forward towards restoring trust in municipal government across Ontario.

As we work to build accountability for those in office, we must also begin to ask a more fundamental question: Who should be allowed to seek office in the first place? In provincial and federal elections, political parties play an



essential gatekeeping role. They vet, they interview and, occasionally, they disqualify.

Most would not allow someone recently convicted of a serious criminal offence to run under their banner, but municipal elections don't have that safeguard. There are no political parties. There is no vetting. There are no background checks. A candidate can be under active criminal investigation facing criminal charges, even recently convicted, and still run for office. This isn't just a loophole; it's a failure to protect the public trust.

Municipal councillors and mayors control multi-million-dollar budgets and billion-dollar-budgets in our biggest cities. They hire and fire staff. They vote on major developments, on zoning, on enforcement, on issues of public safety and policing and community well-being. Shouldn't we expect, at a minimum, that those entrusted with that power meet a basic standard of legal integrity?

So perhaps it's time to consider a new requirement: that all municipal candidates submit a criminal background check as part of their nomination package, and that anyone recently convicted of a serious offence, particularly crimes involving fraud, violence, harassment, abuse or those that compromise public safety or personal responsibility, be barred from running for office for a fixed period of time. It's not about punishment; it's about public confidence, and it's about sending a clear message that elected office is not a refuge from accountability.

Bill 9 is about addressing misconduct once it has happened, but real reform also means making sure we don't knowingly elect individuals who pose a risk to those who work with them or to the communities that they are meant to serve. If we are serious about restoring public trust, then we cannot stop at discipline. We must start with expectations before the first vote is even cast.

The stories from Ottawa, the dysfunction in Brampton, the allegations in Hamilton, in Barrie and beyond were, unfortunately, not isolated. They weren't altogether rare. They weren't even surprising to those who have worked in and around municipal politics, especially women, because for far too long harassment and abuse have been whispered about in the hallways and ignored in council chambers. The same names came up, the same patterns repeated and the same excuse was given: "There's nothing we can do."

But a group of women across Ontario refuse to accept that excuse. They're staffers and councillors, former candidates and community leaders. They saw the failures of the current system and decided to fight for change. They launched a campaign, unapologetic in its name and unrelenting in its purpose, The Women of Ontario Say No. What started as a statement of solidarity became a movement for reform. They wrote letters. They published op-eds. They spoke to media outlets across the province. They delegated at town councils, city councils, committees and public forums all over Ontario. They built coalitions across party lines and across levels of government.

Critically, Madam Speaker, they made Bill 5 a household name even after it was defeated. They were clear, loud and consistent in the message: no more 90-day

suspensions; no more impunity for elected officials; no more systems that silence survivors and shield perpetrators. They took this issue out of the backrooms and onto the front pages. They forced political leaders—all of us—to confront a truth we could no longer ignore. While the system may have failed them before, they never gave up on fixing it for the next generation.

That is what public service looks like: not for the title, not for the office, not for votes, but the courage to speak out when it's hard and the persistence to keep going even when the system says no. Today we're debating a bill that wouldn't exist without the continued pressure of The Women of Ontario Say No. Their advocacy was essential and their stories gave it urgency. Their persistence helped bring us to this moment.

Again, to them I say thank you. You turned outrage into action and you've already changed the culture of local government in Ontario. Let's honour their work, Madam Speaker, not just with words, but with laws that protect, respect and empower those who have been left vulnerable for far too long.

I want to be honest for a moment about what Bill 9 is and what it's not. Yes, it is a meaningful step forward. Yes, it will help future victims find some semblance of justice. Yes, it is a stronger framework than anything currently in place. But no, it is not bold enough. The threshold for removal is too high, the standard is too narrow and the bar for accountability still stacked in favour of the abuser, not the abused.

Now, we should not remove elected officials from office lightly. There is a Latin saying. I believe it's "Vox populi, vox Dei." "The voice of the people is the voice of God." We must take that voice very seriously. But when serious, repeated, harmful conduct is proven; when the penalty of a 90-day pay suspension is not only inadequate but insulting; when a councillor remains in office while his victim leaves their job, leave their community and leaves their career behind, then that's not justice, that's not democracy—that is a failure.

As I said, I support the bill, and we will certainly be supporting the bill. But we do believe the process to remove someone from office should be stronger. Requiring an integrity commissioner's recommendation, then a second integrity investigation by the provincial commissioner, and then a unanimous vote of council minus the accused, without any absences—no one can be absent from the vote—is a very, very steep hill to climb. It means that in practice, even if misconduct is confirmed, a council could still shield its own member.

Now, many of us in this room have served on municipal councils, or we've served in this chamber, for quite a long time. When you work with people for that long a time, it's inevitable; you become friends—if not socially, then at least collegially at work. You inevitably develop biases amongst yourselves. It's nature. It's human nature. How can you reasonably be expected to then levy an unbiased vote?

**1700**

In municipal councils—I was there for 10 years; we have other colleagues who were there—the easiest way to

get out of the vote was to go use the washroom, was to get up and grab a muffin or a coffee, because absences aren't recorded. That single act would stop someone from being removed from office. If someone doesn't have the courage of their convictions, if they don't want to be awkward with someone that they've known for a long time, if they don't want to have to deal with the good old boys at the coffee shop tomorrow morning, they step away to go to the washroom. That's not justice; that's a bar that is far, far too high.

Now, I've heard that that would never happen, that there would be too much public pressure, too much media attention. But let's keep something in mind: Not every city has the media landscape of Toronto. Not every city has an investigative journalist like Joanne in Ottawa—even Joanne in Ottawa doesn't work in journalism anymore, Madam Speaker. We've seen what's happened to local journalism in our big cities, let alone our small towns and our rural communities. I'm sure all of us would agree. Those of us who have been around municipal politics have seen decisions that are made because of friendship. We've seen strategic backroom deals to help our friends on council achieve whatever political success. That's why in Bill 10 and Bill 5, I had proposed a clearer route. Let the local integrity commissioner apply directly to the courts—not to politicians, to independent, non-partisan judges, and let the judge make a decision based on evidence, based on the ability of the accused to defend themselves.

It is, in fact, the same process that is already written into law around municipal conflicts of interest. We just duplicated that process. The integrity commissioner investigates if there is a problem, and it rises to that level—it goes to a judge. The judge hears the case. The judge makes the decision. It is a higher standard of fairness, Madam Speaker, and it has a lower risk of obstruction.

It's not too late to consider improvements to Bill 9. It's not too late to get us back to that better process. I am encouraged to hear that the intent and the goal of the minister is to have robust committee hearings should the bill pass second reading. I hope that during that process, the members of the committee, members of the government and the minister will hear from victims, hear from legal experts, hear from municipal experts in clerks' offices and city halls across the province about making the process to remove someone from office more fair and, frankly, probably more transparent as well.

So, Madam Speaker, obviously we're debating a change in a rule around municipal governance, but it's not just a municipal issue. It's a workplace issue. It's a women's safety issue. It's about how we define leadership, accountability and respect in public life, and if we allow elected officials to get away with this kind of behaviour—the kind of behaviour that would cause anyone else in Ontario to be terminated—then we degrade the institutions that we all serve.

This chamber has seen its share of partisanship, but I hope that there will not be any partisan politics played around this. There should not be any partisanship around basic human decency.

Let me close with this before my colleague from Beaches–East York takes over: Bill 9 is not perfect, but it is progress. It is a sign that survivors were heard. It is a recognition that the abuse of power has no place in public office. And it's a signal, finally, that the laws of this province are beginning to catch up with the values of its citizens.

So to every survivor who spoke out, we see you, we believe you, and we're here today because of you. To every member of this House, let's pass this bill. Let's improve it at committee where we can and let's never go back to a time when silence was the only response.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazzell):** I recognize the member from Beaches–East York.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Good afternoon, everyone. I am so honoured, always, to stand in this House, especially for such an important bill as Bill 9, and to represent beautiful Beaches-East Yorkers and all Ontarians.

The insidious issue of workplace abuse in public office did not start this year or last year. It long predates any of us sitting in this Legislature. My colleague the member from Orléans passionately put forth this motion back in 2021, with Bill 260, Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act. He then reintroduced it in 2022 for the third time.

The member from Orléans felt compelled to stand up for victims who have suffered abuse from public officials, especially after what he witnessed in Ottawa. His bill proposed to amend the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act to:

“The amendments require the code of conduct for municipal councillors and members of local boards to include a requirement for those councillors and members to comply with workplace violence and harassment policies.

“The amendments also permit municipalities and local boards to direct the integrity commissioner to apply to the court to vacate a member's seat if the commissioner's inquiry determines that the member has contravened the code of conduct by failing to comply with the workplace violence or harassment policies. These applications may not be made during regular elections.”

Unfortunately, this government had voted for his bill before an election and then voted against the bill after the election.

I remember the night my colleague from Orléans introduced his private member's bill and spoke to it. The victims and supporters from Women of Ontario speak up were here in the chamber, and they had come quite a distance, some from Ottawa, some from elsewhere. You could hear a pin drop, basically, as well as the member's voice. And then it came time for the vote. The victims were in the chamber. They were sitting over there, and I remember, before we did the vote, a Conservative member came flying in the chamber, sat down and, on a voice vote, boomed out in a baritone voice against the bill—and was laughing, actually. I felt sick about that. The victims were crying afterwards. I thought maybe that member did not

understand what was going on in the chamber or did not know that certain bill, but it was terrible that that private member's bill was voted down and the victims had to witness that. Thankfully, now it has come back, and the government has seen the light on that. I appreciate that. I'm just sad that that incident had to happen at all.

We have all heard the stories and pleas from the victims and had hoped that we could have helped put an end to this unnecessary suffering through the passage of this solid, initial bill from my clever colleague from Orléans. I look forward to supporting this legislation, and I hope that my words and those of my colleagues here today form the basis of valuable amendments that will ensure the bill achieves its stated purpose. Everyone deserves to go to work feeling safe and knowing for certain that they will not be victimized by their co-workers. That is a right. I will always stand up loudly and unapologetically for that right.

My two terms at Toronto city council for ward 32 familiarized me with the invaluable work of the city. City council and the city of Toronto staff determine how effectively and efficiently our city works. Our city and its staff intimately impact our day-to-day life, from the homes we wake up in, to what day we organize our garbage outside, to our commuting options, to libraries we choose to venture into for our next book to read, to the recreational activities we pick our children up from after school.

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Municipal rulings pervade everything we do. Key to determining the tone of our city's function is trust in our government, trust between members, trust that council and boards are spaces free of harassment and discrimination, trust from the public that members will not let biases cloud their decision-making processes, trust that the public will be able to depend on the members' steady presence and continued advocacy in council and trust that officials will be held accountable for their actions when they shake public confidence or violate codes of conduct.

Unfortunately, however, this has not always been the case. Our cities have suffered numerous high-profile scandals that mar Ontario's reputation and its ability to influence and facilitate collaboration on a broader scale. Importantly, it forever impacts the victims who have had to live through these horrific experiences.

The code of conduct for our cities should be modelled at the top. As government officials, we consistently demand that our colleagues across the aisle get the basics right. Well, the right to a harassment-and-discrimination-free workplace is a big one.

After reviewing the code of conduct, many people are left feeling surprised that behaviour—behaviour which we would hope flows from a common knowledge, common courtesy and fundamental decency and respect towards fellow human beings should not have to be legislated or monitored. It should simply be expected. Unfortunately, we have seen time and time again that this is not the case.

We know that, currently, in the city of Toronto, there is a case before the courts with a councillor from Scarborough.

We've heard of the case in Ottawa at great detail.

There was a councillor from Pickering we know who had a 180-day salary suspension after the OPP investigated criminal allegations which were brought by city council. She is said to have bullied three local constituents on social media; called herself a "modern-day slave" after getting her pay docked; promoted homophobia, homophobic remarks and transphobic remarks; denounced Black History Month; appeared on a far-right podcast etc.

There was a councillor in Mississauga who received a 60-day salary suspension when it was determined that he was guilty of keying a fellow councillor's car over and over again in the parking garage. Imagine how fearful that woman was.

A councillor in Hamilton received a 75-day salary suspension for his bullying.

There was a deputy mayor in Vaughan who received a 90-day salary suspension after he had nine clauses of violation in the city's code of conduct.

A councillor in London—30-day suspension for bullying, yet again.

A mayor in Gananoque—80-day salary suspension for abusive, aggressive and offensive sexual jokes and tones.

A 90-day suspension for a councillor in North Bay—and the mayor of Kamloops also.

I could go on and on and on. It's terrible. You're elected to public office, and you should be held to a higher bar.

Consequently, I support the move towards the prescription of a mandatory code of conduct for councillors and local boards. If you did not need the code to begin with, use it as a helpful reminder, and if you do need the code, study it hard.

The bill facilitates the insertion of the role of the Ontario Integrity Commissioner to oversee serious violations, provide training and education to local integrity commissioners and recommend the removal of elected officials in serious cases. This is a much-needed and beneficial amendment. The Integrity Commissioner of Ontario will provide impactful oversight that was previously missing.

While the core of this legislation establishes accountability that all communities should come to expect from their public officials, there remains room to augment this role. Part of what makes Ontario such an amazing province is its rich tapestry of communities. Each municipality is truly unique. While Toronto's main issues may consist of expanding transit and expanding bike lanes, Tweed may need bridge maintenance. Consequently, the prominent issues, interpretation of the severity of issues, and understandings of conduct norms and serious deviations from it may vary. This bill should standardize the code of conduct to ensure our public officials are held to the same criteria across the board. Simultaneously, Bill 9 should also consider our municipalities' differing priorities and needs.

With offices of the newly appointed actors in this process based in Toronto—the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario and the Minister of Municipal Affairs—we must ensure that codes of conduct, training to support its fulfillment and guidance to judge severity of its defiance

are not Toronto-centred. It is imperative to ensure that beyond mandatory training, additional education opportunities in subjects of interest or in behaviour that is not up to standard can be requested and swiftly delivered, and that instructions used to guide sentencing decisions are relevant in the context of that municipality. The common manifestations of abuse in the context of Toronto, as we've seen, may differ from those in Orléans or Thunder Bay. Accordingly, the markers that integrity commissioners need to be attuned to so they may interpret intentions, actions and consequences correctly and dispense justice differ. The goal of this legislation cannot be merely to centralize our integrity operations. We must improve these investigations and decisions so they offer prevention and have the most impact in the given context.

Aligned with supporting the strength of prevention and impact, we should consider reviewing the potential implications of discharging the duty to recommend during an election period, as laid out in section 160.0.1(3) in schedule 1 and section 223.4.0.1(3) in schedule 2, as well as the related limitations that another inquiry may not commence until six weeks after voting day. While the procedure is standard, the ministry and Integrity Commissioner should consider when legislation offers this limitation. It risks delaying addressing potential misconduct in a timely manner, or at all. After an election, the applicable staff and members who may have been involved in various capacities—whether that be as the accused, a witness to the abuse or a supporter of the victim—may cease their involvement with the council or the board, and potentially their willingness or ability to participate in the inquiry.

Additionally, the limitation may permit the member under investigation to be re-elected and enjoy the privileges that come with that, despite potential misconduct. There is a large body of research documenting the hesitancy of abuse survivors to come forward due to long processes, frequent delays and re-traumatization. Paired with the government's long track record of skirting accountability and failing to act in accordance with calls from Ontarians—demonstrated by the greenbelt, bike lanes and Ontario Place—every available opportunity to facilitate fair and timely investigation should be made in special instances of an investigation during an election period to keep with the bill's purpose.

Importantly, however, the most concerning part of this legislation lies in the high threshold for voting on a member's seat vacancy. The bill demands that all members of council, other than the members referred to in subsection (3) who are excluded from taking part in the vote, vote in favour of the recommendation.

This section lays out the necessary prerequisites for voting on a motion to vacate the seat of a member who has engaged in misconduct.

The default for council is a majority vote—not unanimous.

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Moreover, it is rare that all members of council are present, between events in their riding, meetings with stakeholders, engaging with constituents and, at times,

personal obligations. Absences happen often. There have been, over this current session of Toronto city council, 700 absences to various meetings so far. While this would not pose an issue, normally, one absence could kill all of the work of a whole investigation. We do not want that to happen. Whereas members could previously abstain from a vote, their simple absence without a qualified reason could result in an abuser continuing their term and communicating the message to the victim that the trauma they endured and the bravery they showed by coming forward was not enough.

While this criteria normally would not hinder council proceedings, these conditions now serve as an unnecessary barrier to achieving justice for victims and safe working conditions for local leaders and their staff.

Municipal legislation shapes our lives, so it is immeasurably important to ensure that the individuals making this legislation are of upstanding character and capable of making decisions that prioritize the safety, trust and well-being of the public. If they cannot or refuse to actively participate in the creation of a discrimination- and harassment-free workplace for their immediate environment, whom they see and interact with every day, it should be called into question if they are able to do so for the broader public, whom they may not know.

In theory, Bill 9 lays out all methods of ensuring accountability on paper—hopefully augmented by the valuable contributions offered by all of my colleagues today, the bill will achieve accountability in practice.

So I am happy to support this bill. I thank everyone for their heartfelt conversations today. And I look forward to passing it.

I'd also like to continue to give a super shout-out to my colleague from Orléans, who was steadfast and did not give up on reintroducing the bill over and over again—and mostly to the Women of Ontario Say No, who were so brave and courageous. Finally, finally—thank you for waiting—it is happening.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakovec):** Questions?

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** I want to thank the two members, but especially the one from Beaches–East York.

You mentioned the councillor in Mississauga. She was my former councillor in Mississauga, in ward 2. She resigned in 2022 after she was a victim of harassment and vandalism by other councillors. She said at the time that Mayor Bonnie Crombie failed to prevent this harassment, failed to properly investigate after learning about the harassment, and failed to provide a healthy and safe environment. The Toronto Star wrote that Crombie was silent and failed to show leadership at the time. So I want to give the member a chance to comment on that and how Bill 9 will help in harassment, moving forward.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** From the beginning, in my conversations with the now House leader, with the previous Minister of Municipal Affairs, the current Minister of Municipal Affairs, and the New Democratic critic, we have endeavoured to ensure that an issue as serious as this was treated in a non-partisan fashion. Respect in the

workplace, protecting women and protecting decency should not be a Liberal priority or a Conservative priority or a New Democratic priority—it should be the priority of everyone.

Honestly, after what has been a fairly cordial debate, where I believe we are going to have virtually unanimous support for this legislation—for this member to degrade the debate in this fashion this afternoon is disrespectful and leads me to be fearful of what their intentions, moving forward with this process, might in fact be.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic):** Further questions?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I have appreciated the thoughtful debate today as we're talking about holding elected officials accountable and ensuring that there is a process that is unassailable, that justice can actually happen.

We've heard some words in this space about women being believed. It's a tough time to be a woman these days, because women generally aren't believed.

To have a process where there is a third party, an outside authority, outside of the council, feels very important. My question is about the stakeholders who have written—you shared their words—who are calling for that. Why do you think this government, so far, is not believing those stakeholders?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** As I said, I don't want this issue to be a partisan issue. I really don't want to assign a partisan or ideological point of view to someone's perspective on this.

Stakeholders have said that an independent process is the best. Victims have said that they would trust an independent process that was overseen by a judge.

Every elected official I speak to, except for those in this chamber, has said they don't want to have to make that decision about a colleague of theirs who they have worked with for years—in some cases maybe had breakfast with and gone to their homes for dinner with. You just don't want to have to do that.

A judge has the legal training. They have the impartiality, and they have, already, the responsibility to be able to make rulings on all sorts of issues like this. That's the best place for this decision to be made.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Question?

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Thank you to my colleagues.

I want to give a special shout-out to the member from Orléans. Being a man and taking that issue at heart by tabling a bill not once but twice and then leading off the debate on this important issue—to me, means a lot. And it should mean a lot to all the women. Women, typically, stick together and we fight the good fight, but having the men on our side in that good fight is actually an incredible support. So thank you to the member for Orléans.

Because you have talked at length on this issue, having tabled your bill twice—and you alluded to that in your previous response. This bill could be made better. Of course, we are going to be supporting the bill, but it could be made better with a better process. I feel that there is

some failure in this bill that may not yield the results that we are looking for. Can you speak to that, please?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Yes, I think the process that is the same or at least similar to that which exists already today in municipal conflicts of interest would be the best approach. This is the approach that we tried to articulate in Bill 5. It is an approach I believe even the government drafters of their earlier versions of legislation approved of, and it was an approach that received the endorsement of over 200 municipalities over the last number of years.

Have the integrity commissioner do an investigation. If there is a problem and that problem rises to the level of needing to be removed from office, refer that to a judge so that a judge can hear the case, so that the accused can defend themselves. A judge will make a decision based on the facts. That is the best process.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Question?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** My question is to the member from Orléans. I want to thank him for his presentation, to begin.

I'm on process again, and I want to talk a little bit about the suggestion of including a judge as part of the process. We know, out of our experience with municipal conflict cases, it's a long time to acquire a judge to hear a municipal conflict of interest. We know also that it's expensive—it could be expensive to the municipality to incur as well. As a consequence, there's a length of time also before a judgment is heard, and then subsequently a potential appeal.

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I want to hear a little bit more about the process and the inclusion of a judge.

My friend will know that out of the submission from AMO to Minister Flack—

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** I recognize the member from Orléans.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** As my friend across the way will know, while Minister Flack is a relatively new minister in this file—and I commend him for bringing this legislation back so quickly in this session—this process started long before his tenure in the office, and there were many deputations about this issue before Minister Flack was minister, first of all.

Second of all, justice is expensive. If the goal of justice was to save money, we would let decisions be made by the mob, but we don't.

We have a process so that people can defend themselves and so that an independent expert in the law can make a decision on (1) if the thing actually happened and (2) if it rises to the level that we should undo the results of an election. That's important. That shouldn't be something we do easily. Let's have experts make that decision—not a group of politicians who, frankly, as we have all experienced, may have ulterior motives when those decisions are being made.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Question?

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to my friends from Orléans and Beaches–East York.

Through my experience in various roles in work or volunteer organizations—I've had roles where I would get the reports of harassment investigations. In those investigations, sometimes what you would see is very surprising.

In this process—and I know we don't want to remove people from elected positions, because it's important. I'm curious if the bar may be set too high, in terms of the unanimous vote—that no one can be absent from the vote, that you need to have multiple investigations—either too high or just the process simply being so long that the term ends. When you see the results of these investigations, when they're not favourable—someone's life was affected there. I'm just wondering about your thoughts about that.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Certainly, the process stops and should stop during an election. We don't want this kind of tool to be weaponized for politics. I'm 100% supportive of that.

I think a judge is the best position to make a determination quickly, to ensure that whatever expense may have already been incurred by the integrity commissioner to investigate can actually have a reasonable response—and have an expert make a judgment on that. I think we should all agree that judges are legal experts.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Michelle Cooper:** Speaker, my heart goes out to the women who have had to endure this disgraceful behaviour. That is why it is an honour to rise in this House to speak in support of Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act, 2025. This legislation is not only timely; it is necessary. It reflects a growing consensus across Ontario that our local governments must be equipped with the tools to lead ethically, govern transparently, and be held accountable for those standards that are not met.

We are here today because the people of Ontario expect more from their elected officials. They expect fairness. They expect integrity. And they expect that when those expectations are not met, there will be a clear and consistent process to respond.

The Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, is our response to that call. It is a comprehensive framework that will strengthen the foundation of local governance across the province. It is a bill that recognizes the importance of local leadership and the responsibility that comes with it.

Speaker, municipal government is where democracy is most tangible. It is where residents interact with their elected representatives—not just through ballots, but through everyday life. Whether it's a zoning decision, a snowplow route or a community centre renovation—municipal councils shape spaces where people live, work and raise their families. Because of this proximity, municipal leaders are often the first point of contact for residents. They are the ones who hear concerns at the grocery store, at the hockey rink or at the school drop-off. That closeness is a strength, but it also demands a higher level of accountability.

When a resident sees their councillor acting with integrity, it builds trust in the entire system. But when that trust is broken, the damage can ripple far beyond a single

incident. It can erode confidence in public institutions and discourage civic participation.

This legislation is about protecting that trust. It is about ensuring that every municipality in Ontario operates under a fair, clear and enforceable code of conduct—one that reflects the values of the communities they serve.

Currently, each of Ontario's 444 municipalities is responsible for developing its own code of conduct and appointing its own integrity commissioner. While this approach has allowed for local flexibility, it has also led to a patchwork of policies and procedures that vary wildly from one community to the next. This inconsistency has real consequences. It means that similar cases of misconduct can be treated very differently depending on where they occur. It means that residents in one municipality may have access to a robust accountability process while those in another may not. It means that elected officials themselves may be unclear about what is expected of them. That is not fair. And that is not sustainable.

The Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, addresses this issue directly. It enables the creation of a standardized code of conduct that will apply to all municipalities. This code of conduct will be developed in consultation with the municipal sector to ensure it is practical, relevant, and reflective of the diverse realities of Ontario's communities. By establishing a consistent ethical foundation, we are not only improving accountability, but we are also supporting elected officials by giving them clear guidance and expectations.

Speaker, this legislation is not about catching people doing the wrong thing; it's about helping people do the right thing. It is about helping people create a culture in which ethical leadership is the norm, not the exception.

One of the most important features of this bill is the introduction of mandatory training for all members of municipal councils and certain local boards. This training will be more than a formality. It will be substantive, ongoing, and designed to help elected officials navigate the complex ethical challenges they may face in office. It will cover topics such as conflict of interest, respectful workplace conduct, and the responsibilities of public office. It will also provide practical tools for responding to complaints, managing difficult conversations, and maintaining public trust during times of controversy.

By investing in education, we are investing in leadership. We are giving elected officials the tools they need to lead with confidence, clarity and integrity. And we are sending a message that ethical leadership is not optional; it is essential.

While municipalities are the level of government closest to the people, they do not operate in isolation. They are part of a broader democratic system, and they deserve the support of that system when it comes to upholding ethical standards. That is why this legislation strengthens the role of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario. Under the new framework, the provincial commissioner will provide training, guidance and independent review of serious cases. This centralized support will help ensure

that investigations are conducted fairly and consistently, regardless of where they occur.

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It will also provide smaller municipalities with access to expertise and resources they may not have in-house. This is about levelling the playing field; it's about ensuring that every community, large or small, has access to the same high standard of ethical oversight; and it's about reinforcing public confidence. When residents know that there is an independent, impartial body overseeing the process, they are more likely to trust the outcome.

Accountability is not about punishment; it is about responsibility. It is about creating a culture in which ethical conduct is expected, supported and reinforced. This legislation helps build that culture by clarifying expectations, standardizing processes and ensuring that all municipalities have access to the same level of oversight and support.

It also ensures that when misconduct does occur, there is a clear and fair process to address it, a process that is not arbitrary, a process that is not political, a process that is grounded in principles and guided by due process. This is how we build trust. This is how we strengthen democracy.

The Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, is not just about fixing what's broken; it is about building something better. It is about creating a system that works not just for today, but for the future. It is a system that respects local decision-making while ensuring that all Ontarians are protected by the same ethical standards, it is a system that supports elected officials in doing their best work and it is a system that gives residents confidence in the people who represent them. This is what good governance looks like. This is what leadership requires.

Accountability must be more than a principle; it must be a practice, and that practice must be fair, consistent and rooted in due process. The Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, introduces a clear and balanced approach to enforcement that reflects these values. Under this legislation, the removal of a member of council is not a decision taken lightly. It is not a tool for political convenience. It is a serious measure reserved for serious violations, those that cause harm, undermine public trust and cannot be addressed through existing penalties.

The process is strengthened to ensure fairness at every step. It begins with an inquiry by the municipal integrity commissioner. If they determine that the conduct in question meets the threshold for removal, the matter is referred to the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario for independent review. Only if commissioners agree that removal is warranted does the matter proceed to council, and even then, the decision must be unanimous among all eligible voting members of council. This ensures that removal is not only justified, but also supported by the full body of local representatives. It is a safeguard that protects the integrity of the process and the legitimacy of the outcome.

This approach ensures that the most serious consequences are reserved for the most serious breaches. It also

ensures that the process is not arbitrary but guided by clear criteria and independent oversight.

Transparency is essential to public confidence. When people understand how decisions are made and when they see that those decisions are fair and consistent, they are more likely to trust their institutions. The Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, enhances transparency at every stage of the accountability process. It requires the complaints, investigations and decisions to be documented clearly and communicated openly. It ensures that residents have access to information about how their elected officials are held to account. It also reinforces the role of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario as a source for independent oversight by centralizing certain functions such as training, guidance, and review of removal recommendations. We are ensuring that all municipalities benefit from consistent expertise and standards. This is especially important for smaller municipalities, which may not have the same resources as larger cities. By providing centralized support, we are levelling the playing field and ensuring that every community, regardless of size, has access to the tools needed to uphold ethical governance. Transparency also means clarity. It means that elected officials know what is expected of them and that residents know what to expect in return. It means that when misconduct occurs, there is no confusion about how it will be addressed.

Passing legislation is only the beginning. Implementation is where the real work begins. That is why the government is committed to working hand in hand with municipalities to bring the Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, to life. The new framework will come into effect for the next term of municipal councils in 2026. Between now and then, we will engage in meaningful consultation with municipal leaders, integrity commissioners and community stakeholders. We will listen, we will learn and we will adapt. We will also provide the tools and resources municipalities need to succeed. This includes training materials, implementation guides and access to expert advice. We recognize that every municipality is different, and we are committed to supporting each one in a way that reflects its unique needs and capacities. This is not about imposing a one-size-fits-all solution. It's about building a shared foundation, one that respects local autonomy, while ensuring that all Ontarians are protected by the same ethical standards, and we will continue to monitor the system once it is in place. We will evaluate its effectiveness, gather feedback and make improvements where needed, because accountability is not static. It evolves just as our communities do.

Ethical governance is not the responsibility of any one individual or institution. It is a shared responsibility, one that belongs to every elected official, every municipal staff member, every resident who participates in civic life. This legislation is a reflection of that shared responsibility. It is a recognition that we all have a role to play in upholding the values that define our democracy. And it is a commitment to ensuring that those values are more than words. They are actions, policies and systems that make a real

difference in people's lives. We know that most municipal leaders serve with dedication and integrity. They work hard. They care deeply. And they want to do what is right. This legislation is not about punishing the many for the actions of a few. It is about giving everyone the support they need to succeed and the accountability they need to maintain public trust. It is also about empowering residents: When people understand how their local government works and when they see that there are real consequences for misconduct, they are more likely to engage, to participate and to believe in the system.

The Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, is not just a response to past challenges. It is a vision for the future, a vision in which every municipality in Ontario operates with the same high standards of integrity, transparency and accountability. It is a future in which residents can trust their local leaders, knowing that there are clear rules, fair processes and meaningful consequences when those rules are broken. It is a future in which elected officials are supported in their roles, trained to meet the demands of public service and held to the standards that Ontarians expect and deserve. This vision is not abstract; it is practical. It is achievable and it begins with the passage of this legislation. It is also a vision that reflects the values of Ontarians—values like fairness, respect and responsibility; values that transcend partisanship and unite us in our shared commitment to good government.

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Speaker, the Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, is a landmark step forward for local governance in Ontario. It is thoughtful, balanced and rooted in the values that unite us as a province. It provides a clear and consistent framework for ethical conduct. It strengthens oversight and enforcement. It supports education and leadership. It is a healthy democracy.

I urge all members of this House to support this legislation. Let us work together to ensure that every community in Ontario is served by leaders who are accountable, ethical and committed to the public good. Let us send a message that in Ontario, integrity matters; that we expect our elected officials to lead with honour; and that we will stand behind them with the tools, the training, and the trust and integrity they need to succeed.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Question?

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** Thank you to the member for that. A lot of what you said was really quite important and needed to be put out in public.

Just going back to the process for removing someone from council, I wonder if you could imagine a scenario where the bar was too high, and after, someone who had bravely come forward was not able to move on because the abuser, in fact, wasn't sanctioned and there were no consequences. Do you see a scenario where that could happen, given that this bill requires unanimous consent from council?

**Mrs. Michelle Cooper:** Thank you for that question, member. I respect the process. I respect the process of what we have here, and I thank you for that question.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Question?

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for your words and thank you to all the members who spoke today and shared many stories—stories from victims as well. I want to thank the government for bringing this forth. I think it's a very important bill.

During my time at women and children's issues, I had the opportunity to hold consultations across the province and talk to victims, talk to many municipalities, municipal associations, and heard their stories and their feedback. I know MPP Blais and I spoke a lot during that time about the work that we were doing and that you were doing as well.

I just wanted to ask the member, how will this proposed legislation support municipalities that have been calling for change in the integrity system for years?

**Mrs. Michelle Cooper:** Speaker, our government has listened and we are now delivering. Municipal leaders, integrity commissioners and the public have all voiced concerns over the inconsistencies that exist between local codes of conduct and accountability processes. Since our 2021 consultation, and with further direction from the Ontario Integrity Commissioner in 2024, we've heard a clear and consistent message: Municipalities want stronger, clearer and more enforceable rules that apply equally across this province. That's exactly what the Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, will deliver.

We're proposing to implement a province-wide municipal code of conduct, establishing consistent rules for elected officials in every community on issues like harassment, discrimination, conflict of interest and ethical behaviour. No more confusion about what is expected of municipal leaders; this will provide confidence to the public and clarity to councils.

We're also introducing a standardized investigative framework for integrity commissioners, including clear timelines and training requirements.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** Question?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I want to thank the member from Eglinton—Lawrence for her presentation this afternoon. As you know, I am supportive of the bill, but for one small piece. I did observe in your presentation that you said something—I believe it's going to be a direct quote, but it's going to be pretty close if it's not: "When residents see an independent, impartial process, residents are more likely to trust the outcome."

Given that that is your position, why do you believe that a group of partisan politicians is better positioned to make a decision about removing someone from office instead of an independent judicial expert?

**Mrs. Michelle Cooper:** For too long, Ontario's municipal accountability system has lacked consistency. Each of our 444 municipalities has operated under its unique code of conduct, developed locally in each one, with its own integrity commissioner processes. The result has been a patchwork system where residents across Ontario have



experienced different standards of transparency and accountability, depending entirely on where you live.

With the Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, our government is taking real, meaningful action to close that gap. We are proposing a standardized municipal code of conduct, one that applies to all municipalities and certain local boards.

We're also putting forward a uniform investigative process for integrity commissioners. This includes clearly defined standards for training timelines and reporting. That means the same ethical expectations for local leaders whether you live in Toronto, Thunder Bay or Tilbury.

But we're not stopping there; we're also proposing stronger penalties for serious misconduct.

**The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell):** I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** I think everyone can agree that a standard code of conduct has been asked for, for many years, by our municipal partners. AMO is supporting it, as you know. That being said, there's been some great debate, and I appreciate the debate over the threshold of the unanimous support by council to remove a member of council.

That being said, the debate can go on, and I'm not sure we'll ever perfectly agree. We'll have to see, if the legis-

lation passes, how it works, and if it doesn't work as well, we can always amend it and change it down the road.

But importantly, I think this legislation can be a deterrent. How does the member think this legislation can prevent future problems at local levels to prevent local code of conduct violations?

**Mrs. Michelle Cooper:** The goal of this legislation is not only to respond to misconduct, but to prevent it from happening in the first place. We're doing that by focusing on three pillars: clarity, consistency and education.

First, we're establishing a standardized municipal code of conduct that means that every elected official in Ontario will know before they take office what the expectations are, what the rules are and how they will be held accountable. We're removing ambiguity and replacing it with clarity. That helps prevent missteps born from confusion or inexperience.

Second, we're proposing a consistent and fair investigation process across the province. Integrity commissioners will hold standardized timelines and procedures supported by training and guidance. That improves fairness and increases public trust. Thank you.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

*Report continues in volume B.*







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

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt

Speaker / 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	
<b>Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)</b>	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
<b>Bresee, Ric (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Cerjanec, Rob (LIB)	Ajax	
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)</b>	Willowdale	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
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	
<b>Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of 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
<b>Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)</b>	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
<b>Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	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
<b>French, Jennifer K. (NDP)</b>	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	
<b>Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)</b>	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
<b>Hazell, Andrea (LIB)</b>	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)</b>	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
<b>Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)</b>	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
<b>Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)</b>	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	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
<b>McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)</b>	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
<b>McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
<b>Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
<b>Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister 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	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, 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	
<b>Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)</b>	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	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
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
<b>Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)</b>	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
<b>Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	