

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 20B

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 20B

1st Session
44th Parliament

Monday
2 June 2025

1^{re} session
44^e législature

Lundi
2 juin 2025

Speaker: Honourable Donna Skelly
Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
Greffier : Trevor Day

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 2 June 2025 / Lundi 2 juin 2025

Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, 2025, Bill 2, Mr. Fedeli / Loi de 2025 pour protéger l'Ontario en favorisant le libre- échange au Canada, projet de loi 2, M. Fedeli

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1161	Ms. Sandy Shaw.....	1182
Hon. Nina Tangri.....	1168	Hon. Stephen Lecce.....	1183
Mr. Guy Bourgouin.....	1168	MPP Jamie West.....	1183
Mr. Adil Shamji.....	1169	Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens.....	1184
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	1169	Mr. Guy Bourgouin.....	1186
Ms. Sandy Shaw.....	1169	Ms. Lee Fairclough.....	1186
Ms. Stephanie Bowman.....	1169	Mr. Deepak Anand.....	1186
Mr. Stephen Blais.....	1174	Ms. Sandy Shaw.....	1187
Ms. Lee Fairclough.....	1176	Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	1187
Ms. Natalie Pierre.....	1178	Mr. Rob Cerjanec.....	1187
Mme France Gélinas.....	1178	Mr. Joseph Racinsky.....	1190
Mr. Adil Shamji.....	1178	Mme France Gélinas.....	1191
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens.....	1178	MPP Stephanie Smyth.....	1191
Mr. Adil Shamji.....	1179	Mr. Brian Saunderson.....	1191
MPP Chris Scott.....	1179	Mr. Guy Bourgouin.....	1191
Mme France Gélinas.....	1181	Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	1192
Ms. Lee Fairclough.....	1182	Hon. Lisa M. Thompson.....	1192
Mr. Andrew Dowie.....	1182	Mme France Gélinas.....	1192
		Hon. Trevor Jones.....	1193
		Third reading vote deferred.....	1193

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 June 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 juin 2025

Report continued from volume A.

1743

PROTECT ONTARIO THROUGH FREE TRADE WITHIN CANADA ACT, 2025 LOI DE 2025 POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO EN FAVORISANT LE LIBRE-ÉCHANGE AU CANADA

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 2, 2025, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to enact the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act, 2025 and the Ontario Free Trade and Mobility Act, 2025 and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 2, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur le Jour « Achetons ontarien, achetons canadien » et la Loi ontarienne de 2025 sur le libre-échange et la mobilité et modifiant diverses autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Brian Saunderson): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: What a pleasure it is to join all of you at quarter to six for the one-hour lead on Bill 2.

I want to start off by just saying that I started off this session—in all honesty and full disclosure, I really felt that the government would be very willing to work with us. I do want to thank the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for meeting with me, and for us having an open and honest conversation.

I think it needs to be said that all of us are in a very unprecedented state from an economic security position. We are dealing with a very volatile leader in the United States who, quite honestly, has really declared war on Ontario and Canada for no good reasons. There are no good economic strategies at play here. We all know that tariffs are a tax on economic development, and he is very willing to put his own economy at risk. I think that this needs to be very clear: We are not dealing with a rational leader who understands the complexities of the economy here in Ontario and Canada. Nor does he understand the intersections between our economies. This has been made very clear by his tariff announcements, his tariff reannouncements, his tariff recalls and his backtracking.

I think the Premier, for the most part, has been engaging in these very complex conversations south of the border. I do also want to say, I think that the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade trying to secure other contracts and build new relationships with other trading partners is a really good idea. This is where we are right now.

That said, Speaker, all of us in this province and in this Legislature—I would hope at this point in 2025—know

how damaging trade barriers can be between our provinces. That it has taken this long to certainly address some of those barriers—some of them are completely nonsensical. I think the member from Niagara Falls actually raised a question this morning to the minister stating that it defies logic why it has taken so long for us to be able to promote and support local economies, local entrepreneurs and local businesses.

We have our strengths as a province. I do want to also say that the narrative whereby if we point out deficiencies in the economy, we're being unpatriotic or unloyal to the province, is damaging. I believe very strongly—and in many conversations that I've had with the leader of the official opposition, Marit Stiles, we understand that in order to address problems, in order to address barriers, you have to be honest about where they are. There are a number of barriers that we're facing in the province of Ontario which are quite surmountable, I would say. The work before us is very real.

I am going to comment on the state of our economy here in Ontario, but first I just want to give my parents a quick shout-out—they may be the only ones watching here tonight—Allan and Sheila Wood from Peterborough. It's really good to have engaged parents who send you articles and send you commentary. I feel like sometimes they're staffing me as the—

Mr. Deepak Anand: Stalking you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm sorry. What do you want to say?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Stalking.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They're not stalking me, no. That's not the right word. They're trying to be supportive. But as seniors in Ontario, and as former public servants and a teacher in the system, they have an invested interest in us getting this right.

Bill 2, Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act: I think that there is some consensus here; there really is. We understand the gravity of the situation. We understand what needs to happen to support and protect workers; to support strong, local economies; and to ensure that we are reaching our potential as a province. I will say, with the greatest of respect, that we have a lot of work to do in this regard.

For those of you who are just tuning in, Bill 2 largely creates a framework for the government to make regulations on matters concerning interprovincial trade—which we have agreement on—specifically on mutual recognition, which we have some issues with; direct-to-consumer alcohol sales with other provinces, which we have no problem with whatsoever; and labour mobility, which could be problematic for Ontario.

I'm going to walk us through the bill, and I just want to be very clear: We want to work together to navigate this tariff threat. We have concerns that these measures are broad and far-reaching and could create unintended consequences of reduced labour rights and other important regulatory measures.

I reference this because this actually was a common theme. When delegations came before the committee, there was this one beautiful moment that I actually have never seen in all my years here at Queen's Park, where the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce basically had a common theme through their delegations. One, yes, is reducing provincial barriers, tariff barriers, trade barriers—obviously good. We need to do this.

1750

I think it's quite profound that we are in agreement with the new Prime Minister of this country, where he says we do not want 13 economies, we want one economy. And I must also say that it was very strange to hear the King of England also preface this in his comments last week.

So that is the destination. The destination is for provinces to support each other, to build on our strengths and sometimes even to address our weaknesses. And there is room to harmonize with other provinces, but we should be harmonizing at higher standards and not engaging in a race to the bottom.

We are going to try, obviously, and we did try during committee—and I will get into that, Mr. Speaker—to build some quality standards into the actual legislation. Our strategy is to show that we, of course, are willing to work with the government. There is a call across this country and within this province to meet this moment, right? But we clearly have very different ways to meet this moment.

Our goals are to protect and support workers. Our goals are to build on our strengths, particularly around research and the commercialization of that research, and to build on the innovation that's happening in this province. And if you get out to a business, particularly in the health sector—I've recently toured MIX in Waterloo Region. Elliot Fung is part of IPON, which is Intellectual Property Ontario. We have never had an opportunity, I would say, to build on the innovation and the research and the potential commercialization of that research and also the potential export opportunities to share our ideas and our innovation with other sectors. But right now, there are some serious gaps to that process, and I'm going to get into that.

Our strategy, obviously, is to ensure that nothing impedes our progress on something that people support. And people support us working together, and they actually expect us to work together, in this place. I will say that as I've been chairing the advisory council on the economic security and tariff response, we've met with now probably 20 stakeholders, from agriculture to tech to education and to forestry. I do want to say, the forestry sector in the province of Ontario—they need some serious support, and I'm going to get into some of the recommendations that they proposed to us.

So my goal tonight is truly to be propositional to the government. Bill 2 starts this process, but there is a huge uphill highway, one would say, to achieve our potential in this regard. It is important to note that this legislation would allow the government to make regulations to mutually recognize standards with other provinces. How does the province plan to prevent a race to the bottom, where lower-standard jurisdictions receive preference? What work is being done to harmonize the standards?

Actually, the carpenters of Ontario came to committee. I would say they were very fair in their discourse. They said, "Do you know what? Of course we need more carpenters in Ontario." But carpenters have a very high standard based on the trades and their education and their certification to ensure that those standards are high, so having other carpenters potentially come into the province and be able to work for six months without having that certified accreditation is an issue.

And, for me, politics is always personal. My son, Aidan, is a master electrician at the age of 26. It took him eight and a half years to reach that goal. I'm hugely proud of him. His wife—it's still weird to say that, because he just got married—is also a nurse. So these are two very skilled Ontarians who are meeting the needs of the province of Ontario. They cannot, unfortunately, at this point in time, afford housing. They're looking to start their lives.

So what I am concerned about, and what my colleagues have already articulated on several fronts, is that if we have this fluid labour mobility between provinces, what is to stop—I mean, Ontario is one of the most expensive places in Canada to rent a home, to buy a home, to find a home. Education is the most expensive. Post-secondary education is the most expensive. Our education system right now, based on the discourse between our critic and the minister this morning, is in a crisis state of affairs.

Health care is one of the major issues that draws people into a province—because people, when they're thinking of coming to work in the province of Ontario, they're looking for those basic building blocks: "Where are my children going to go to school? Is my special-needs child going to be able to access the appropriate level of care? My aging parent—will she be able to access the appropriate medical care? And will I be able to find an affordable place to start a family, to build a family, to stabilize as a family?"

What I'm concerned about on the labour mobility piece is, now that we have many memorandums of understanding with the provinces, workers that are thinking about coming to Ontario may be thinking about other places. I'm thinking also—because my son and my daughter-in-law are not unique in this situation—they're looking for the best place to start their family, to grow, to build a business, and if they can't find affordable housing, they may be looking for other jurisdictions.

Right now, Manitoba has a lot of good things going on for it. They have public power, so their hydro bills are controlled. They have a number of initiatives on housing, which is publicly driven housing—for non-market housing, for instance. So moving, potentially, to another

province that is more competitive than the province of Ontario is of great concern to me as a mother, as a legislator and as someone who really wants to be able to be in a position to draw and attract talent.

Out-migration in Ontario has been an ongoing issue now for four years. Bill 124 really did push the envelope in that regard. People looked at their lives and said, “Okay, listen. I’m a nurse. I’m stuck at 1% for three years. My working conditions have really deteriorated, and I’m looking for another place to invest my energy and my talent.”

So my message on Bill 2 is that we really have to also focus on ensuring that not only are we attracting workers to the province of Ontario, those skilled labourers that we need, but also that we’re retaining the good people of Ontario to stay here and work here.

The Premier has put out a call for nation-building projects. These are big words that perhaps we don’t fully comprehend. Nation-building projects, in my view, is not a tunnel—or a funnel, which is what I call it, because somebody was drinking when they came up with this idea—under the 401. I want to say, it does not make any sense. It is fiscally irresponsible. To hear the Minister of Transportation say that this is going to go ahead regardless of the feasibility study, which is going to take two years and cost millions and millions of dollars—like, we need to refocus as a province on how we can actually reach the rhetoric and the language that we hear from the government on creating a resilient economy.

Resilient economies need housing. We have put forward a plan to the government, our Ontario homes strategy. I have to say, Ontario homes—this is a plan for non-market housing, right? It doesn’t threaten your developer friends. It doesn’t undermine the race to the bottom on how fast you can build houses, how cheap it can be but then how much you can charge for it.

1800

Building non-market housing in Ontario is such a call to action right now, and I will say this because not only is it so needed—because we have 1,400 encampments in Ontario, Speaker. I mean, with a government that has reached—we are now at 1955 rates of home building. We are not going in the right direction, so we need to be honest about this. A tent is not a house. The only solution to removing people and ensuring that they have the ability to live a healthy life is housing. And so our Ontario homes plan is that—because what you have been doing around planning housing, off the side of your desk, is not working.

So, please, let’s be honest about where we are right now in Ontario: 1,400 encampments is a shameful mark on this Legislature, and we need to fix it.

Some of the other meetings that I’ve been having are with the agricultural sector. Agriculture is very vulnerable in this tariff war, and they’ve been very honest about how bad it’s getting.

I’m going to refer to an opinion piece by the Toronto Star. This was done by Mariana Mazzucato and Sarah Doyle, who are contributors. The title of the opinion piece is, “Mark Carney Should Take Canada’s Biggest Chal-

lenges and Make Them Open for Business,” which is really interesting because the authors of this opinion piece have really adopted the language of this particular government.

I think that we all acknowledge that we have a mandate for change. So there is an opportunity for us as lawmakers to open the province of Ontario to new innovation strategies on housing, on health care, on education, to ensure that we can actually protect ourselves.

We do need the strongest economy ever in Canada, because Ontario is the economic engine of this country. Traditionally, it has been. However, it is worth saying, and it is worth noting, that unfortunately, we now have a 7.8% unemployment rate. This is the highest unemployment rate in the country. Our GDP last year was at 1.2%. So let’s ask ourselves, why are we not generating the economic potential of this province? Let’s examine why our people are not reaching their potential, because ultimately, everything does come down to people.

Back to this article: Very clearly, it says, “Tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump threaten to shrink markets, disrupt supply chains, discourage investment, increase unemployment, raise prices and slow growth—and all this amid a long-standing decrease in business investment”—because ultimately, economic confidence also draws investment or it discourages investment.

I will say, it’s been a very emotional day here at the House. The fact that we are in 2025 and First Nations are protesting on the front lawn at Queen’s Park in opposition to Bill 5—I would say to the government members who are actually listening that Bill 5 undermines anything that Bill 2 is looking to achieve, right? Because Bill 5 creates these economic zones where laws pertaining to labour laws, to Indigenous rights, to environmental rights can be dismissed. And I will tell you that investors will be very reluctant to come into Ontario when you have a chaotic situation with this government.

It didn’t have to be this way. Not at all, actually. We have such potential in this province. I’m just going to get ahead of the criticism that when you criticize what’s going on in the province of Ontario, that you’re being unpatriotic or that you’re creating a narrative which is not helpful to the economy. What I will say to my friends and colleagues across the aisle is that we need to be honest about where we are. Government procurement in Ontario is failing businesses and local economies.

Intellectual Property Ontario, which has a budget of about \$10 million, has helped about 500 entrepreneurs commercialize to try to get into that supply chain. So \$10 million in a \$200-billion-plus budget is just superficial. It’s just superficial. Let us invest where we can find our potential as a province. But all of those entrepreneurs—I’m thinking in particular of Intellijoint. Intellijoint I first encountered through the University of Waterloo, then through the Accelerator Centre, then through Communtech—this ecosystem is there to support great ideas. Intellijoint, of course, is a more accurate, non-invasive and really more healthy way of performing knee and hip surgeries. If you’ve had a parent or a family member who’s been in that pain for like two years, bone-on-bone

pain—that’s actually, in some respects, how today felt because it was a painful day for democracy in Ontario, I can tell you.

It took 10 years for Intellijoint to get into our own health care system. You know who was buying that intellectual property and that innovation? California and three other American states. Our technology and our innovation are happening in other places, but not here in Ontario. Now, to the credit of the government, they have pilot projects. Pilot projects are the bane of my existence. If it’s working for people in California and the United States, it should be working for Ontario. Do I have your support on that?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You have it.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Give me a little love here, for God’s sake.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’m very tired.

Solutions exist. For example, the goal of ensuring that every Canadian has reliable and affordable access to nutritious, sustainable food and clean water by 2030 could be our goal right here. In doing so, we would support our agricultural sector. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been looking at procurement as a solution. Farmers are coming to the table saying, “Let us help you,” and we want them to help us. Because our grains, our soil and our practices on agriculture are the best in the world. Let’s give a pipeline for our farmers right into our education system. I really hope that the Minister of Education takes this call up. We would support it in a second.

Listen, you could pass legislation in this House in 30 minutes if you did a pipeline to our farmers, to our schools, to our healthy lunches, to our nutrition programs. These are the kinds of propositional ideas that we should be talking about right now. Not overriding Indigenous and First Nations rights, not overriding worker and health and safety rights, not overriding charter rights. It’s all a distraction. I really do not understand why the government is not laser-focused on that supply chain, those procurement opportunities and our potential as a province to really reach our potential. Because when the people and the workers in our province reach their potential, then this province will also reach its potential.

Procurement in this article, once again by Mariana Mazzucato—I’m just butchering that—and Sarah Doyle in the Toronto Star. They put forward a really comprehensive idea. The thing is, in these times of economic insecurity and crisis, where Ontario as the so-called economic engine of Canada is flailing, there is a lot of exhaustion out there on the economy. I know this because 7.8% unemployment is profound, but when you go to other jurisdictions like Windsor and you’re looking at 10%—one in 10 people in the Windsor southwest area are unemployed—this is a crisis. So we need to meet this moment.

1810

Interprovincial trade and reducing these barriers—sure, this is great. It’s one good step, and it’s something, quite honestly, that I will say publicly we are going to be supporting. Of course we are. But as this was one of the

first pieces of legislation that the government brought forward, why not aim for the sky? Why not be so bold that you just force us to say, “You know what? We’re all in”? We need to be all in, Mr. Speaker.

Just to finish this thing around the “buy Canadian,” they go on to say, “But to realize this potential, we’ll need to redesign our public-sector tools and institutions. Procurement, which can be used not only to ‘buy Canadian’”—or buy Ontarian—“but also to shape market opportunities that align with broader goals, should be first among these.”

There is the potential right here in our post-secondary institutions. If the government was so ambitious to really redesign our procurement strategy here in Ontario, we could have contracts that can stimulate innovation and sustainability.

Just on the sustainability thing: Climate change is actually a greater threat than tariffs in Ontario. At the end of the day, we might be fighting over nothing. We may be fighting over a wasteland if we don’t acknowledge how serious climate change is. We have to talk about it. There is an opportunity around the intersection here between climate change and the economy which could be a win-win situation for all of us here in Ontario.

Also, I don’t want to leave out health care. It’s incredible, because they actually said Canada and Ontario could learn from Brazil “where 30% of federal funding for school meals goes to family-run farms.” What a concept that would be, hey? What a concept, if you actually indicated to the agriculture and farming sector here in Ontario that they had a proven supply chain so that they could invest, that they could produce and that our children wouldn’t go to school hungry? Who would argue against this concept? It just makes so much sense.

Public finance obviously has an equally important role to play—our institutions around creating that stage 1, stage 2 funding for research and innovation. We need to get back in the business of supporting our businesses. It’s not about picking winners and losers; it’s about focusing on our strengths and what the economy needs.

So I do want to say, if the government had that kind of confidence in the people that are looking to improve our health care, our industry, our agriculture—if the government of Ontario had that kind of confidence, then so would private investors. This is a proven economic strategy. It’s not macro. It’s not micro. It’s everything. It builds everything into how we support our economy as a province.

Finally, Ontario has no shortage of initiatives aimed at fostering innovation, but they’re a fragmented maze that businesses often struggle to navigate. I just want to spend a quick moment talking about Supply Ontario, because Supply Ontario was an agency created by the government to create one-stop shopping. We as a province have certain needs that need to be met. We should be meeting those needs with Ontario businesses. Those businesses are ready to meet this moment. They’re waiting for the government call right now. They truly are.

And when you hear about WSIB, which is currently on strike—is it four weeks now, three weeks? I don’t know—

the cuts to WSIB and keeping workers safe tie in with Bill 2 because what we heard at committee is, "Let's not race to the bottom here on health and safety standards."

We have fought hard for a high standard of health and safety standards, and I know this personally. When I first was elected back in 2012, working-at-heights legislation had not been fully realized. Nick Lalonde, a 23-year-old young man who fell to his death in Waterloo—he was a young father, he was a son, he was a partner. I talk about him all the time.

It took almost four months of questioning from the official opposition to get the Tony Dean report actually operationalized. This is not to say that we didn't have a health and safety czar, if you will, saying that everything was great. This all stemmed from those four workers who were on the Skyway bridge who died on Christmas Eve.

We have to remember our history as a province. The fact that our health and safety standards for workers are so high is that workers died for it and people fought for it. Let me tell you, our health and safety standards in the province of Ontario are our strength. I just want to make that point very clear.

Fostering innovation has to be part of a broader economic strategy from the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. A mission-oriented approach could help with coordinating procurement, debt, equity investments and subsidies for research and development.

That leads me to what's happening on our post-secondary and education campuses. This is really educational, I think, for some members here, but for people who don't know this: The government of Ontario does invest, in some regards, in on-campus university and college research. Where we fall down is moving that research and that innovation into the commercial sector and creating local jobs here. Traditionally, the brain drain, which is the United States of America, has seen what we're doing. They've said, "Okay, the government of Ontario has bought this equipment. They've invested in the technology. They've invested in years and years of education," and then what happens is that someone else in another jurisdiction sees the hope and the potential of that innovation, and they buy it, and then we lose the jobs. We lose the jobs. We lose the economic value, the taxation value. Also, on the life sciences file, we lose the benefits of improving health outcomes for Ontario—and Intellijoint, honestly, is just one of those cases.

Boy, you have to be so resilient if you're in the innovation sector, particularly in the medical field, to get past this government to reach your potential. I want to change that. Our caucus wants to change that. Our leader wants to change that. And it's about time.

On agriculture, on health, on housing, the potential is really there. But also, when you invest in post-secondary education—just to go back to my entire theme that when you support workers and you support people to reach their potential, then the province of Ontario will also reach our potential.

I'm thinking of, actually, Donna Strickland from the University of Waterloo. Last week, at the University of

Waterloo, there was an event to honour the work of Nobel Prize winner Donna Strickland. We're very proud of this doctor. This year, Dr. Strickland is celebrating 40 years since her PhD thesis, which led to receiving the Nobel Prize in 2018. The visiting Czech and Hungarian researchers at that particular event have used her work as a basis for their own cutting-edge laser-based discoveries. They visited Waterloo last week, and they congratulated and they thanked Dr. Strickland. So good things are happening on our campuses.

Out of the 225 people who have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics, just five have been women. Dr. Strickland was third. Seven Canadians have won this prize; of those, she's the only woman. In a cutting-edge field of research, Dr. Strickland has been a trailblazer for four decades, paving the way for other women in STEM. She is an icon and a catalyst for change, showing young women in particular that gender should be no barrier to success in this area of study.

1820

This year, after Dr. Strickland received the Nobel Prize, McMaster University said that there was a 47% jump in enrolment in engineering physics, including a doubling of women in the program. McMaster's dean of science, Maureen MacDonald, said, "Sometimes that opens a window that lets students ask if they see themselves reflected in that person." What a beautiful moment.

As researchers from the European Union visit Waterloo to show their appreciation for Dr. Strickland's work, I would like to join them in paying tribute to this remarkable woman who has been a beacon of Canadian scientific excellence for 40 years.

This is the potential of investing in post-secondary institutions, colleges and research: Fostering that pipeline of innovation and ideas to commercialize the research, but also to really hold up the province of Ontario as a sector in Canada that realizes the importance of these investments.

It is worth noting that in Waterloo in particular, the community as a whole has recognized that education—because we have Wilfrid Laurier, we have the University of Waterloo, we have Conestoga College. All of these institutions are under great duress right now—financial duress. It's not unique, of course, to Waterloo region; it's across the province. So, if you're looking for a place to invest and if you're looking to create a more resilient economy, why not invest in our own people and our own talent and our own knowledge? This is something that I think needs to be explored by this government.

Now, I do want to say there have been a number of solutions that have come forward from a number of organizations as we've chaired the advisory council on economic development and tariff response, and it's indeed my pleasure and my privilege to chair this committee. But what we have heard is, "Fight back with a Team Canada and Team Ontario approach that doesn't give into division." This is one of the number one recommendations from groups across Ontario who are looking to this government to strengthen our economy, to save jobs, to protect jobs and to protect workers. Unfortunately, I will

say that while Bill 2 will be receiving support from us as a caucus, as it should, there's so much more work that has to be done.

Bill 5 undermines almost all the good work that Bill 2 is looking to achieve. This comes from several stakeholders from across the province, but there is a desire to see us create a Premier's task force on the economy with business, labour and government, and it should be multi-partisan. If you want to reduce the animosity and, quite honestly, the toxicity of this place, bring us to the table. We have members of our caucus who want to be part of the solution and who want to help the government reach their goals because all of us care deeply about our communities.

They have also asked to direct Ontario government-funded agencies to procure locally. Outsourcing to the United States should be off the table—100%. No doubt about it. Buy Canada strategies that require made-in-Ontario, made-in-Canada manufacturing. Our manufacturing right now is almost paralyzed. It doesn't help that Donald Trump also made further threats on aluminum and steel just on Friday, I believe. This cools the economy.

So people and businesses—there are other words for it, but I call it turtling. They're just honing in on what they can control. They're trying just to protect what they know. They're not looking to invest, because they're looking to see a very volatile economy that is before us.

They want to launch a buy-Ontario campaign to promote Ontario goods. This is part of the bill. We completely, 100% support this. In fact, I don't know if you know this, Speaker, but in 2021, I brought forward a bill to this effect on procurement, and it was greatly informed by our experience through the pandemic, when we found ourselves unable to meet the needs of our population on health care, on technology, on PPE, to deal with the pandemic. The government at that time—and I'm looking at a member over there who, at that point, said—and the bill was actually to diversify our procurement chain, right, to ensure that the Supply Ontario model, this one-stop shopping, which has actually seen four presidents cycle through Supply Ontario—that it was looking to see how small businesses could access almost \$21 billion worth of government services.

Instead of giving those contracts to American companies or foreign companies, let's look at the strength that we have right here in Ontario, and let's make sure that those businesses know that if they are innovative and if they are meeting our needs as a province, they can come to the table, they can apply through an RFP process which is transparent—which is one of the key pieces that I'd like to focus on—and that they can actually access these contracts, because those good local businesses that are providing services that we need as a province—because not only does Ontario have great innovation, but our services as a province are also our strength. We have a level of intelligence here on how to meet the moment, not just here in Canada but also globally. I'm thinking particularly on the environment.

They also called for us to accelerate infrastructure projects—transit, school repair, homebuilding—to keep

people working, and this is where I want to go. Just to give you a quick example: In Waterloo region, Elizabeth Ziegler school—it's a 100-year-old school. It is literally falling apart. Bricks are falling off the school infrastructure. Everything that was happening within that school was amazing: good teachers, good educational assistants, a great music program. It's a good community school. But when it starts falling apart, you have to move those 600 students out of that school.

Why would the government not consider building and repairing and maintaining our built infrastructure in the education system, like Elizabeth Ziegler—why would you not consider that to be a nation-building project? These students deserve a healthy and safe education experience. The people who work in that institution deserve healthy and safe working conditions. Those good local jobs to repair that school—and to accelerate and fast-track these projects would mean good local jobs. You can't outsource those jobs because the school is in the community. So these are good community-based projects that need the government to refocus on them, quite honestly.

The same thing goes with our health care system. I mean, who doesn't want to be able to go to an emergency room in a northern and rural community? Why would that not be part of the government's strategy as a nation-building project? Instead, we have the “funnel,” the underground tunnel. I mean, the disconnect here between the goals that are outlined in Bill 2 and the rhetoric that we hear from the government to date is downright irresponsible, I want to say.

What we need is a strong health care system which draws investments—because, you know, companies from the United States are not going to come to Ontario if their workers and their employees don't have access to health care, and those families are not going to come to Ontario if their kids can't access a quality education system.

Just to go back to Elizabeth Ziegler: 600 kids had to be removed and sent to two different institutions with portables, disrupting their learning experience, disrupting their parents' lives.

1830

Why not say to the community of Elizabeth Ziegler—and I know that there are so many others. The capital backlog in education right now is about \$15.1 billion. These are smart places to invest. You would have no opposition from the opposition for doing the right thing for students in the education system and ensuring that—the fact that 40,000 education workers left the education sector this last year is because things are so bad in our education system.

So instead of thinking about these deep-sea James Bay docks, think local, support local, buy local.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, you want a port? I know you want a port. We've never heard of this project before in the House, ever. But do you know what? Somebody pulled it out of the little magic bag and said, “Oh, this sounds great.”

The Ring of Fire, which the Liberals started—or didn't start, one could say. We often call it the "ring of smoke," because the obstacles to this particular project are profound, I want to say. For every kilometre of road that's going into the Ring of Fire—I think the estimate was almost \$50 million for every kilometre, because of the geographic barriers that exist within that project. Never mind. You're never even going to get there. Do you know why? Because you're going to end up in court, and the court system—unless Mr. Ford goes full Trump on the court system and starts electing and appointing judges.

There are serious problems here in the justice system—never mind the fact that 1,536 rapists got set free last year alone in this province because of the backlog in our justice system. So let's stay focused on the fact that—control what you can control.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I see the government; they're getting a little edgy, a little agitated. It has been a tough day for them. The First Nations called them out on the front lawn of Queen's Park. They're still out there. The drums are still going out there.

And the fact that our deputy leader was thrown out of the Legislature today—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaking truth to power, yes.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We have a different relationship with the truth, I guess, over here. The truth will only lead to that gateway drug called science. We have a different relationship with the truth over here.

It's so ironic, though, because our deputy leader—and kudos to the Speaker of the House, I want to say, for hosting Taste of the North. It's so ironic that our deputy leader, the first First Nations MPP in the history of the province to take his seat in this place, who went hunting and gathering for all of you, to dine on at lunch, got thrown out just for upholding treaty rights. This is something that, quite honestly, I've just never seen in Ontario.

Anyway, the judges are going to have a field day with that legislation. Thank goodness for the courts in Ontario, that we are going to have to rely so heavily on them.

This government has already lost 27 court cases since you've been here, millions and millions of dollars wasting on—instead of just doing basic due diligence.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, what are you going to do? Oh, yes—a billion dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars in the courts. I'll send you the documents, because I've been tracking it. Actually, I'll just make it a public document so you can point to it to say, "This is how much money we wasted while we should have been doing the good work that we actually took an oath for."

I want to say—this is an important piece—when we were in committee last week on Bill 5, I did say to the members at that time that all of us as lawmakers, duly elected legislators, in this place take an oath to serve the province of Ontario. We are supposed to serve everyone in this province. While Bill 2 removes interprovincial

trade barriers, Bill 5 undermines democratic rights. We're not gambling here in the province of Ontario. We shouldn't be gambling, especially during this time of economic uncertainty. We're looking, as the opposition, still to be propositioned on. Listen, I'm used to rejection; I have a cat. If you've ever known—I have a cat who gives me a lot of attitude. I've named it—there's several names for it; I won't go into them.

Our objectives on this side of the House, as it relates to Bill 2, are to continue to focus on strategic investments to drive growth, to strengthen and stabilize the Ontario economy by taking care of those building blocks, which is education and health care and housing. Listen, housing right now in Ontario: You cannot run from your failure on housing. It's scary. It is scary that it's so bad right now in Ontario.

If you want to stabilize the Ontario economy, why don't you just pull up that video of the Premier coming to Waterloo during the greenbelt protests and saying that every Ontarian, even you, is going to have a \$500,000 stand-alone house with a picket fence and a finished basement and three bedrooms. Where's that promise? I wish that people didn't buy what was being sold.

The commercialization of research and innovation, the potential for Ontario: I just urge the government members to really stay focused on our strengths, because we have such an amazing post-secondary sector, which is doing amazing work. It really is. We need to commercialize that; we need to invest in these people. We need to ensure that these ideas stay here in Ontario, create good jobs and also improve health outcomes. This is our potential as a province.

And then finally, improving export potential: because what was made really clear to me—the University of Waterloo and NorthGuide hosted this huge community event in Waterloo, bringing the best minds from around the world. They said procurement is the key, but you have to make sure that you have the research and the investment and that supply pipeline in order to ensure that those ideas can benefit Ontario but that we can also sell them to the world. This is something I think that my colleague across the way—I think that we share in this passion. I really do. But it will not happen off the side of your desk, and it will not happen when you are just bringing in these pieces of legislation which incite a level of disdain for our democracy.

I posted today, I really think, if Bill 5 moves forward as it is crafted, that we are seeing the demise of our democracy in real time, happening right here. If you look at jurisdictions that have brought in these no-law economic zones, especially in the deep south, where you actually have a virtual wasteland—you don't have clean drinking water anymore for those populations. Workers go to work in the morning; they don't come home at night—and only a very select few of people benefit from that kind of work.

We definitely have our work cut out for us, and I do want to say that the delegations that we've heard on Bill 2 are unified. They basically said to us, why did it take so long to remove these tariff barriers between provinces?

And now we're thanking Donald Trump for forcing us to do the right thing? I feel like sometimes I'm in a Monty Python film in this place.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Because they're new, Catherine. The government is new.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, I know.

The solutions are there. Bill 2 has our support, but what doesn't have our support is overriding democratic rights in Ontario. Why would you do this? Who's coming up with these plans in the Premier's office? Jenni is gone, last I recall. Who's cooking this stuff up? If it's just developers who are looking to cash in, you have to remember that in the oath that we took as MPPs we promised to serve all of Ontario. We promised, when we took that oath on whatever religious document you choose—I have a Christian Bible; I took an oath—to come here every single day to try to make the lives of Ontarians better, not worse.

1840

What Bill 5 has done is undermine even the good work that is in Bill 2. I mean, obviously you feel this as well, right? You've received thousands of emails. Go back to your caucus room, go back to cabinet, raise your voice, speak up, stand up for the people of this province because we can do so much better. There are so many things that we can be doing right now to meet this moment.

As the Minister of Economic Development and Trade says, we're in a war. In a war, you bring everything to that fight. Think of Shrek—the torches, the pitchforks, the fire. We're dealing with someone who is looking to find our weaknesses as lawmakers. And listen, Shrek is a lot better looking, and he's a lot more intelligent.

Don't let those forces undermine what we can do in this place. I know that there's some sharp articulation of criticism for several pieces of legislation here that I've given the House today, but, at the end of the day, we have to go back to our communities. I have to go back to Waterloo. I have to look at that ecosystem that's at the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier and Conestoga College, and I have to say, "I did everything to fight for you so that you can reach your potential so that we can have a stronger province." Right now, I can't do that, Madam Speaker, because we are not focusing on our strengths; you're focusing on division.

Reconciliation—what we saw on the front lawn of Queen's Park today was not reconciliation. It was not. In 2025, we should know better. There's an opportunity here that we're hearing, as I chair the economic advisory council, to the leader. We see so much potential and so much opportunity here. We should not be undermining our strengths as a province.

With that, Madam Speaker, I think that I will conclude my comments—just to say that Bill 2 is one step, but there is so much more work that we could be doing. We want to work with you. I just ask you not to make it so damn hard to work with you. I mean that sincerely.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I want to thank the member opposite for her comments. I listened intently, and we

agree on a lot of things. She and I both have visited many life science companies, coming from a riding that has many, many great life science companies, whether it's in biopharma or medical technologies, and when I was elected bringing that voice to Queen's Park and working together with the Premier and Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and really working hard to build the life science strategy phase one, implementing phase two, and even having a Life Sciences Innovation Fund. She spoke of Intellijoint out in her riding, which I think many of our caucus members have visited, knowing that they do great work.

My question is: An industry that's been completely ignored for decades, the life sciences industry with intellectual property in Ontario—protecting that and keeping that intelligence here, helping keep our talent here rather than let it go astray. What can you tell us about your comments on previous governments not even taking them seriously and letting that go away, your comments on what our government's done to support that industry and what more you believe that we should be doing?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's very true. I mean, we were part of the life sciences caucus, I think for maybe seven or eight years, where innovation companies came into Queen's Park. All members of that caucus heard the same things. And I do remember a Liberal cabinet minister, when we were bringing in the diabetes monitors, which saved so much money—one of the cabinet ministers said, "Why weren't we doing this a long time ago?" Well, this is kind of my point, is that the ideas are there. We need to streamline and fast-track those ideas to ensure that the commercialization of research creates the good, local jobs to benefit the people of Ontario.

The potential is definitely there. What I would like to see from this government is the same aggressive action that you've taken on Bill 5 on that file. And let me tell you, I would fully support that action. Because science does matter, facts still matter in Ontario, and our potential is hindered by our risk averseness on this file.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I was listening to your comments, and you spoke about forestry. And a lot of times, what I say in French is, "forestry, c'est l'enfant pauvre." You know, we see millions invested in automobiles, millions invested in mining, but yet, we don't see the same effort when it comes to forestry. We met with forestry because you were part of a meeting I was with, and I know they met with the government. So why don't we see the same amount of investment we see for automobile and mining when it comes to forestry and yet forestry hires a lot of people? We should be leading a lot more than we are right now. We should be at least in the top 10 and we're not. Why doesn't this government fund the forest industry like they should?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Such a good question. And this is like a passion now, because when you take the time to listen and learn from the sector, you see the solutions. We do need to remember that Espanola, 450 job losses;

Terrace Bay, 400 job losses. In January 2025, Kapuskasing Paper Mill received a \$10-million loan from the province. That \$10-million loan is not going to secure our supply chain.

So, in meeting with them, mills are looking to build biomass plants to produce energy by burning wood fibre that can't be used for paper production. They're looking for diversification for biopower plants that are not mills, that don't require the same workforce but take years to transition. Ideally, government supports would prevent more pulp and paper mill closures. We learned that our paper mills were supplying the Home Depots in the United States. Why are we not buying our own products and supporting our own industry? That's what the forestry sector is looking for: They're looking for leadership on this file. Let's meet them in that moment.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Adil Shamji: Lately, we've seen the government go to extraordinary lengths to move alcohol out of the LCBO and into convenience stores. We see that alcohol, and liquor, specifically, features quite prominently in this legislation. Can I ask you to reflect a little bit upon whether you think there are good measures here and whether they adequately protect our public agencies and liquor sales in Ontario?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for the question. The member has raised this issue here in the House. I think you have not received an answer whether or not the LCBO is actually safe. I think we have to remember that the LCBO, as a government agency, generates billions of dollars for health care and education and the coffers of the province. So why would we undermine something that is working?

This government has been very focused, like laser-focused, on alcohol liberalization. To the detriment, I would say—I mean, nobody in the province of Ontario asked for them to break a contract at a cost of \$633 million, somewhere up to \$1 billion. Why are we selling beer and wine in gas stations on the 401? Why is this a priority?

1850

Let's focus on strengthening our local economies, keeping people safe and ensuring that those revenue streams continue to support the public institutions that all Ontarians value.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the member from Waterloo. I'm going to relate to some of the feedback that I've been getting from small businesses in Whitby. What I see is an undeniable drive to succeed, and it's at the core of every business that I engage with, and the entrepreneurs as well. There's an ambition to grow, a desire to hire employees and motivation to make a difference in their communities. They're looking towards us through Bill 2 to break down the barriers that stifle growth.

I know the member from Waterloo has similar small businesses and entrepreneurs. It's the centre of entrepreneurs. And my hope would be that she, too, will agree

to break down the barriers that are stifling growth in our province.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We've said that we're going to support the legislation. We believe that reducing these barriers, these tariffs, these taxes on growth and on the economy need to happen. But you have to also understand that right now, where we are, the government has not met this moment already. For four years, we've seen consistent job losses. This is from Stats Canada. This is their survey of employment payroll and hours; this just came out on Thursday. The StatsCan labour force survey put April Ontario unemployment at 7.8%; 8.6% right here in Toronto. For younger workers, joblessness rates are substantially higher.

What we are saying to you, in a gesture of goodwill, is that whatever you have been trying is not working. You have to stop writing your own press releases and believing them, because they are not factual. We are in some dire straits right now. We actually are in a recession. Let's strengthen our local economies. Let's invest in our people. Let's protect our workers. And let's stop bringing in pieces of legislation like Bill 5, which undermine those very goals, which I believe that we share.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): A very quick question and response.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to MPP Fife for your deep understanding of the economic challenge and the solutions that are before us. I'm going to give you the last word on how, as you said a number of times, Bill 5 undermines any good that is coming from this bill. We've had our member ejected from the House for speaking truth to power. We've had thousands of people on the lawn, First Nations and their allies protesting this bill. First Nations have said that failure to withdraw this bill will spark conflict both on the ground and in the courts. I'll give you the last word on why this is so important that we get it right.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Let me just leave this with you: Strong economies are built on trust, stability and partnership. Bill 5 threatens all three. Business leaders, engineers, First Nations, environmental advocates agree: This bill invites legal chaos. Legal chaos is not good for the economy.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: It's a pleasure to rise today to debate Bill 2, An Act to enact the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act, 2025 and the Ontario Free Trade and Mobility Act, 2025 and to amend various other Acts. I will also be sharing my time with my colleagues the member from Orléans as well as the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I also want to thank my colleague the member from Ajax for his great work at committee regarding this bill.

This bill's goal is to open up trade between Ontario and the rest of Canada, and that certainly is an ambitious and worthwhile goal. I support it. But let's be clear: Inter-provincial trade matters, and I'm glad the government is finally paying attention to this very important driver of

economic growth. That is progress. But we can't ignore history. From 2021 to 2024, it was this very government that quietly increased the number of exceptions that Ontario had to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, CFTA. In a recent report, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business noted Ontario still has 23 party-specific exemptions in place. So instead of reducing red tape, this government was actually adding to it in the past few years.

As it stands, Ontario is not leading the pack; we're stuck in the middle. We rank behind Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the federal government and British Columbia when it comes to reducing barriers to trade. Ontario is often viewed as the economic engine of Canada, but under this government we've been idling in neutral; others have been moving ahead.

We know we have the second-highest unemployment rate in the country, so despite the best efforts, I guess, of this government, we certainly have been falling behind.

Let's also not forget who originally tried to lead on this very issue of free trade amongst provinces and territories. It was Premier Jason Kenney, back in 2019, who took the early steps to advance interprovincial trade reform, but our Premier, Premier Ford, actually stood in the way at that time, Speaker. I'm not sure why the Premier wasn't serious about this huge opportunity then—I'll talk more about that in a few moments—but he's certainly talking a lot about it now, and I hope it's not only for the headlines and the photo ops—which I will admit he is very good at. Back then, it was more talk than trade; let's hope this time it's more trade and less talk.

Speaker, let's rewind to October 30, 2018. Premier Ford stood in this very Legislature and declared he would "blaze a new trail" on interprovincial trade, starting, in fact, with Saskatchewan. So the province he just signed an MOU with yesterday, he actually signed an MOU with back in 2018. But he did get a big headline yesterday—again, I'll give him that; he's great at it. So, six and a half years ago, the government of Ontario signed an MOU with Saskatchewan, and according to the council that monitors progress on these matters on behalf of the provinces, the territories, the federal government, this government did make progress on one issue: They have harmonized the "wide-base single tires program," and that does facilitate easier shipments for trucking companies. But, since then, nada—nothing else, Speaker. Nothing until this recent MOU.

So I do hope the government is more committed to this recent MOU—more committed to this one than they were in the past—because it does promise mutual recognition of "a good or equivalent service or registered worker that is deemed acceptable for sale, use or work in Ontario" as long as it's "deemed acceptable for sale, use or work in Saskatchewan—and vice versa."

So, with Bill 2, the government claims it's turning a new page, and while it does not make up for seven years of inaction, delay, missed opportunity—and, in fact, as I said, adding exceptions to the CFTA—I will say this: It's better late than never. But the problem is that late has come

with a cost. It has cost the people of Ontario all of that economic opportunity and GDP growth that we could have been experiencing in the last seven years.

The economic case for action is indeed strong. Every year, more than \$530 billion worth of goods and services cross provincial and territorial borders, nearly 20% of Canada's GDP. Ontario alone exports over \$183 billion annually to other provinces, accounting for 35% of all interprovincial trade in the country. That means when we do reduce barriers, when we smooth the path for producers and purchasers, we're not just helping the economy; we're helping people. We're supporting their jobs, we're responding to inflationary pressures, we're creating the conditions for affordable growth. In a time when global instability is driving up costs on everything from fuel to fertilizer, we have a responsibility to use the tools available to make life more affordable.

1900

By working with other provinces to find efficiencies, eliminate duplication and streamline processes, we can give our businesses room to grow and give consumers more choice. We can keep people working and earning.

But let's be clear: This bill is not a silver bullet to the government's economic woes. It is not a cure-all for what is ailing Ontario's economy under this government, and the benefits from passing this bill will not happen overnight. It will take time. It will take significant effort, and it will take a plan. It takes follow-through. We know that this government has had a problem with follow-through, whether it's, again, fixing things like the health care crisis, which they continue to struggle with and still have two and a half million people without a family doctor here in this province. We have the second-highest unemployment rate in the country. It went from being the second lowest. We know that the government has a problem on follow-through and implementation. Don't forget the licence plates. They rolled out blue licence plates and spent we don't know how much money on licence plates that don't work in the dark. So follow-through and implementation—not their greatest strength, I'd have to say, Speaker.

But that's also why I return to another important topic this government can be pretty good at, which is urgency. When this government wants to get something done, we know they can get it done. Look at Bill 5: They're ramming it through committee; they're shortening debate; they are coming up with new rules in the rule book. As I said earlier today, it's like we're playing Whac-A-Mole: "If this rule is going to slow me down, I'll hit it down. If this rule slows me down, I'll hit it down." And then, of course, there's the get-out-of-jail-free card, which we know from Monopoly grants this government immunity from any harm done by the bill. We know they can act quickly when they want to. They can act quickly when it's going to benefit their insider friends. Let's look at the greenbelt scandal: \$8.3 billion in profits was on the line there. Let's talk about the unnecessary and expensive early election; they certainly acted fast to get that done. Let's talk about the inexcusable sudden closure of the Ontario

Science Centre, still harming my community and the surrounding community every single day.

But they have dragged their feet on interprovincial trade for seven years. Back then, when the cameras were rolling and the first post-election bill was needed to make a splash just a few short months ago, all of a sudden, interprovincial trade reform was making headlines, and so they were all over it. But we haven't seen the numbers. We haven't seen a business case or what the financial benefits will be to the province. We have heard the sound bites, but not the substance. We don't have an economic impact assessment. We don't have an analysis of how this will affect Ontario industries and workers, our manufacturers, our farmers, our inspectors or our service sector. I think it would make sense to understand the upside to the bill as well as the risks as we take this step and we move into provincial trade barriers.

Speaker, let me be clear: I'm not talking about delaying this bill, but I do think the government should come clean with an estimate of what they think the bill will do. Give us a number in monetary terms for the people of Ontario so that then we can measure the success too when we get all this done. It is going to take some time, but we can measure the success. Let's talk about those estimates and what the potential benefit is. The estimates do vary widely among academics and think tanks. In 2019, the International Monetary Fund estimated that removing internal trade barriers could add between \$50 billion and \$100 billion to Canadian GDP. The Macdonald-Laurier Institute went even further in 2022, suggesting the benefit could be as high as \$200 billion.

That is the number that this government is quoting: \$200 billion. That is \$5,100 per Canadian and could result in as many as 400,000 people relocating to other provinces as labour mobility improves. But people do need houses to work in, so let's not forget about that. If we want workers to move here, they have to have houses, and we know this government has fallen far short on their housing targets.

But back to the IMF here: The International Monetary Fund compared internal trade barriers in Canada to a staggering 21% tariff; the Macdonald-Laurier Institute puts the range between 8% and 22%. And Stats Canada found that consumers could be paying on average 6.9% more for goods because of the internal frictions caused by interprovincial trade barriers. So these numbers are not insignificant and they highlight the extent to which outdated and fragmented rules do cost real money and cost our economy.

But, Speaker, these are all projections, not guarantees. I think we need to get specific about which industries will benefit most, which regions might see dislocation, which workers here in Ontario may lose their jobs because of removing interprovincial trade barriers and which ones may move elsewhere to take advantage of opportunities in other provinces. So, yes, let's move forward, let's build these economic bridges, but let's do it with our eyes open—with evidence, with urgency and with the resources that we need to make this bill a success. We need it to be more than just a photo op and actually deliver results.

We must also approach these estimates, these potential benefits, with clarity and not just curiosity. RBC economists pointed out that the methods used to calculate these estimates do vary considerably. Some studies focus solely on the trade of goods, while others attempt to include services, which are far harder to measure. And many of these models do not fully account for provincial structural differences, such as geography, population density and industrial specialization. So while the overall economic case for action exists, it's not as simple or as linear as we might have been led to believe.

A key rebuttal to some of these optimistic projections comes from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which has flagged many of these methodological limitations. Their cautionary note is important. They say that some of the most widely cited studies are based on idealized assumptions that don't reflect the political, legal or administrative realities of interprovincial reform. This is hard stuff. It's very complicated. And the forecasts that assume this frictionless cooperation across provinces don't often survive first contact with the actual policy landscape. Again, Speaker, it's going to be complicated, it's going to be a lot of work, and it's hard work.

So let's be clear: There is real economic promise in tearing down these unnecessary trade walls, but what we're being offered by this government isn't a road map right now—it's just a request for trust, but not a lot of transparency. The government's asking Ontarians to believe in the benefits of this bill without offering any financial analysis. As I said, there is no business case, there's no estimate of what this will bring to the Ontario economy. So, without any clear metrics for success, it's hard to know if this bill will be successful, and I don't think that's good enough.

We've been talking a lot about accountability recently, Speaker, and how, again, Bill 5 just gives the government more power and less accountability. In the case of this bill, the government has promised extensive consultation, but we don't know yet what that really will mean in practice. Will it be weeks, months, years? Who will be consulted? How will their input shape the outcome? We just don't know. Meanwhile, the federal government is pushing for these barriers to be eliminated by Canada Day, just a few short months away.

So our government will be asking provincial regulators and agencies to do the heavy, complex, administrative work to remove these barriers, to assess what needs to change. But I haven't heard of any additional resources, funding, supports that these agencies would benefit from to do all this additional work—and I fear that could slow down the implementation of the benefits, to getting to the benefits that would come from this bill. So we need to make sure we keep an eye on that.

Even industry stakeholders are raising some of these kinds of concerns. Sleeman Breweries, for example, welcomed the direction of the bill, but did stress the need for a transparent, meaningful consultation process to guide implementation. That still needs to come. The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, another group that sees

potential—absolutely—in trade reform, has clearly stated that without investment incentives and modernization efforts, the impact of this bill could fall flat.

Let's not forget that this bill is not just a trade bill; it is, in many respects, a deregulation bill. What we are looking at here are regulations. We're talking about removing trade regulations. It means Ontario will accept goods and services, professional credentials from other provinces, if they reciprocate, regardless of how they compare to our own standards.

1910

This “deemed certification approach” has raised serious concerns from organizations that represent the people on the ground doing the work. For example, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Carpenters' Regional Council and others have warned that this model could weaken enforcement and compromise worker and public safety. I'm certainly not suggesting the government wants that, Speaker—I know they don't—but we need to make sure that we keep an eye on those things, especially in the sectors like construction, electrical work and the trades, where high safety standards really are a matter of life and death.

The Ontario Real Estate Association also raised some concerns that need to be dealt with. They're worried that under this bill, real estate agents who are licensed in other provinces could start operating here in Ontario with no local background checks or oversight from our provincial regulator. They fear that this could put consumers at risk and could undermine public confidence in one of the most significant financial transactions a person can make: buying or selling a home.

As I mentioned, there's really no timeline here. There's no clear implementation date that I've heard from this government; no sense of when the reforms will actually start helping workers, businesses or communities as we face these strong economic headwinds.

The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers—who, again, support the bill in principle—have pointed out that in their sector, licensing timelines are already pretty quick, typically just two to three weeks. And again, that allows them to do their homework and assess credentials and make sure that the person who is wanting to practise here as an engineer has the credentials they need. Their bigger concern is actually with the hidden costs: redundant assessments, overlapping requirements, unnecessary fees. These issues aren't resolved or tackled by this bill; they're simply ignored.

Really, to get the full benefit of what we're talking about here, that \$200-billion prize, we need to be thinking about these kinds of things too. If labour mobility really is urgent, then we do need urgency around these kinds of outcomes. I do think this bill lacks not only the timelines, but some of the tools that all of these organizations who are looking at all of these regulations will need in order to deliver on its promise.

Back to accountability and legal immunity: It kind of reminds me of that line in the movie, you know? “Diplomatic immunity.” I forget what movie. Does anyone

know? “Diplomatic immunity.” What's that movie it comes from?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Lethal Weapon 2.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Lethal Weapon 2—there we go.

So, immunity, Speaker: I don't think that immunity is what the government should be looking for. This bill includes a clause that effectively shields the government, gives them immunity, from most forms of legal challenge. Only constitutional or judicial review claims will be allowed. That means that ordinary Ontarians, advocacy groups, industries associations, even municipalities will have little or no recourse if this legislation causes harm. I think that's a problem. Once again, we see this government trying to avoid accountability. They want diplomatic immunity.

As the Canadian Civil Liberties Association has pointed out in other related contexts, when governments write themselves out of the legal checks and balances that underpin our democracy, it erodes public trust. This bill removes the mechanism that allows people to challenge the power of the government when the power is overreaching.

Let's talk about jobs and workers. Labour mobility and trade reform do carry real economic potential, but they also carry very real costs. In some cases, that's why we've had these trade exceptions: because we were protecting our workers; we were protecting jobs here in Ontario. Now that we're removing them, there will be job losses. There will be some gains, but there will be job losses as well. What will happen to those workers? What will happen to the people whose jobs could be undercut either by lower-cost goods or services from other provinces, or by, as I say, removing the need to do inspections and make sure regulations are in place?

Do we have enough money? I know there's some money in the budget for retraining and skills development, but it's a small number when you look at the entire workforce that could be affected by these kinds of trade barriers and removing them. We want to make sure that all those workers who are affected are able to integrate and find other jobs, either in their field or in a new field, if necessary, and we need to be deliberate about that, right? We need to acknowledge that, again, these trade exceptions were there because we were basically protecting our industries, protecting our workers. Now less protection, yes, it creates economic growth and an engine for driving productivity, but we need to be mindful of those workers who will be negatively affected as well by this.

So, the long-term benefits of this bill and removing these trade barriers, I applaud them—I want them for Ontario, I want them for all of Canada—but we can't ignore those short-term consequences, because those workers who are affected in the short-term will still be struggling with the affordability crisis that this government provided no relief for in the recent budget—no middle-income tax cut, no relief on tax bill for home heating and hydro, and no small business tax cut either.

So we need to really make a commitment to people who will feel the impact of this bill most acutely. We need to make sure that the reform generated by this bill, Bill 2, is paired with investment in domestic capacity, workforce development, and targeted protections for the sectors and communities most at risk. And it's not just our view; it has been echoed by a wide range of stakeholders from the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters to the Toronto Region Board of Trade.

Behind every stat is a person, a livelihood, a household trying to make it work, and when we legislate change on this scale, we owe it to those Ontarians to ensure they're not left behind. Let's not forget, as I said earlier, Ontario now has the second highest unemployment rate in the country, sitting at 7.8%. In this economic climate, labour mobility reform cannot be approached with a one-size-fits-all solution. In the movement of labour there will be winners and losers, and we need to make sure that we support the workers whose jobs could be lost.

Stakeholders from almost every corner of the economy agree that removing barriers is important, but they also agree it must be done responsibly, it must be done transparently and, above all, it must be done for care with Ontario workers, consumers and communities.

So the government really has once again mistaken a headline for a plan. They've rushed forward without a serious long-term strategy to strengthen Ontario's economic resilience, and now, with this bill, they're planning to eliminate interprovincial trade barriers—yes, creating economic stimulus, but it's not clear if the supports for workers will be there.

Let's just come back to those workers and people who are already, as I say, struggling to live, work and raise a family in this province. In the five years leading up to the pandemic, Ontario was a magnet for talent. We were a net beneficiary of interprovincial migration. Every single year from 2015 to 2019, more than 8,000 Canadians chose to make Ontario their home, and that mattered. That reflected confidence in Ontario's promise; a belief in a province with strong public services, good jobs and homes, and a decent quality of life.

But then came a dramatic reversal under this government. Since 2020, Ontario has been losing over 26,000 residents annually to other provinces. In 2021 alone, we suffered a net loss of over 31,000 people, the largest interprovincial outflow since 1981. Some of our members weren't even born then, I think; I'm not sure if they're in the room tonight.

This is not an abstract trend. It's the real, measurable result of a government that has had—we've had stagnant productivity growth, stagnant wages, unaffordable housing and policy decisions that fail to meet the moment. They're more focused on the tunnel under the 401 than the workers in this province. So we have been bleeding talent, and unless this government is willing to take the bold, strategic action they talked about in the budget—again, more headlines, as far as I can see—the hemorrhaging will continue.

So how could we protect ourselves, Speaker? How could we turn the tide? Well, again, as I mentioned, we

offered some of those answers in our opposition day motion. We laid out a plan, a road map, a blueprint for making Ontario more competitive, more affordable for the people who live here, and to attract people, Speaker. That would make us more competitive with other provinces who do have lower income tax rates. We proposed cutting the middle-income tax rate, which would put more money directly into the pockets of everyday Ontarians. We proposed eliminating the provincial portion of HST from home heating and hydro bills. And we called for cutting the small business tax rate in half, because when small businesses succeed, communities succeed.

1920

But under this government, more small businesses have gone bankrupt in the last year, and we have less private sector jobs from small businesses than we did just a few years ago. Right now, people are struggling. Confidence among small business owners is at an all-time low. Wages aren't keeping up, and every day more Ontarians are saying, "I'm not sure if I can stay here."

But our plan was about more than tax cuts. It was about restoring affordability. It was about saying to every worker, every entrepreneur, every family, "Ontario is still worth believing in. Ontario is still a place where you can build a life. Ontario is a place to grow."

So, Speaker, as interprovincial trade barriers may come down soon, that message becomes even more critical. We want Ontario to be a place that is attracting that talent. Lower taxes and a fair cost of living would have helped not just current residents, but workers from across the country. They would be a recruitment tool. They'd tell skilled workers across Canada, "Ontario is actually open for business and open for you." Imagine that. Imagine reversing that outflow, 31,000 people leaving our province. Imagine turning Ontario back into the destination of choice. You know, at one time people moved from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland here. Now it's going the other way.

What did the Conservative government do? They voted our motion down. They ignored the evidence. Instead of helping families, they've deepened the affordability crisis. And when people leave, they take their tax dollars with them, and that hurts government revenues.

Let's just talk for a moment about alcohol. I'm certainly supportive of opening up trade between provinces on alcohol, especially as it can create great opportunities for our Ontario wineries, distillers and our small craft brewers, who work hard in many communities across our province and are also a great potential for tourism. They've been calling for tax reform, and I am happy that they're finally getting some of that from the budget bill. But I'm concerned about what this government has planned for the LCBO and the revenues that the LCBO earns and pays to the government. They have been in excess of \$2 billion—\$2 billion. That funds our health care. But they are going down, and they're projected to go down by hundreds of millions of dollars. My colleague the MPP from Ajax asked the Minister of Economic

Development, Job Creation and Trade, during the SCFEA meetings about Bill 2, a very direct question: “Will the LCBO be the distributor of out-of-province liquor, beer and wine, and will the minister commit to keeping the LCBO public?” A yes-or-no kind of question, but the minister would not commit to keeping the LCBO as the public distributor of alcohol in the future. All he would say was, “The LCBO is the current distributor.” That doesn’t give me much confidence.

We’re watching a vicious cycle unfold, and this bill, while promising good intentions, won’t solve the problem on its own. In fact, if mishandled, it could actually deepen the cracks in our economy. Let me be clear: Despite these concerns, Ontario Liberals do support removing interprovincial trade barriers. We do believe in the economic opportunity. I was talking about this at SCFEA over a year and a half ago, about this very opportunity, and so I’m glad. I’m glad that the government is finally, finally doing something about it. They’ve had seven years. Like I say, they added trade exceptions, they created red tape, and now they’re talking about removing it. That’s good.

We do believe in making it easier for goods, services and people to move across Canada. We do believe in strengthening national unity through smart economic co-operation. But our support is not a blank cheque, Speaker. It comes with expectations, and it should for this government, too. They should recognize the responsibilities. They need to make sure that they are responsible and accountable for the consequences of the bill, for the communities it affects and the overall implementation, for the impact that these changes will have on Ontario’s workers, businesses and communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: It’s great to be with everyone tonight to debate this important legislation: Bill 2, the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act. At a time when economic uncertainty, affordability pressures and workforce shortages are top of mind across Ontario, the principle behind the bill is one, of course, that we can support: removing interprovincial trade barriers, improving labour mobility and creating new opportunities for Ontario workers and businesses.

But as always, the devil is in the details. It’s not just about what this bill promises; it’s about what it delivers and how it goes about delivering it—because if the government gets the execution wrong, it won’t lead to stronger trade or better jobs; it will lead to lower standards, higher risk and fewer protections for the people of this province.

Improving interprovincial trade isn’t just a regulatory exercise; it is an economic imperative. At a time when global trade is becoming more uncertain and international supply chains are under pressure, Canada should not be placing artificial barriers between provinces. It’s easier today to export Ontario goods to the United States than it is to some parts of our own country, and that needs to change.

Interprovincial trade accounts for over \$450 billion annually in goods and services across the country, and yet

red tape, inconsistent standards and regulatory silos continue to slow that potential. Estimates suggest that eliminating interprovincial trade barriers could add tens of billions of dollars to the national GDP. That’s revenue we’re currently leaving on the table. That’s revenue that can be used to improve our social safety net, our health care system, our education system and the rest. Ontario stands to benefit enormously from smarter, more seamless trade across provincial borders. Whether it’s manufactured goods, construction materials, professional services or agriculture, making it easier for Ontario businesses to sell across the country will help drive growth. It will help drive job creation and competitiveness. But the goal should be clear: more opportunity for Ontario workers and businesses but without compromising the standards that protect them. Now, this bill attempts to move in that direction, and we welcome that ambition, but we have a responsibility to ensure that it is done thoughtfully, with public oversight and with Ontario’s long-term interests at heart.

Now, Madam Speaker, let’s start with the core promise of the bill, or one of the core promises of the bill, which is labour mobility. Ontario should be a place where skilled workers from across Canada can come and contribute, but the way the bill proposes to do that is cause for some concern.

Under Bill 2, a worker from another province can be “deemed certified” for six months even if they haven’t met Ontario’s health and safety requirements, even if they haven’t completed the mandatory training we require of our own workers. That is not mobility; that is in fact a risk, because Ontario’s safety standards weren’t invented as red tape out of nowhere. They were born out of tragedy, out of collapsed scaffolding, out of preventable deaths, out of workers who didn’t make it home to their families at the end of the day. These are not technicalities; these, in most cases, are lifesavers. And I think we can all agree—I hope that we can all agree—that no one should be working on a high-rise in Toronto under weaker standards than the workers working next to them just because they were trained in a different province. Let’s be very, very clear: We welcome skilled workers, but we won’t accept a race to the bottom in safety. That has to be clear and there needs to be some work on this legislation to achieve that.

1930

Bill 2 places enormous pressure on Ontario’s professional regulators—in health care, in real estate, in skilled trades—while at the same time stripping away the very discretion and tools they need to do their job. It accelerates credentialing timelines—and that sounds like a good idea—but it limits their ability to request additional training or assessments. It gives them more responsibilities—not bad—but at the same time, adds no additional funding or consultation. It shields the government with sweeping legal immunity, while exposing regulators to the risk.

As my colleague mentioned before, who doesn’t want to have diplomatic immunity? It would be great to walk around in life knowing that nothing bad can ever happen to you. But that’s not realistic and I don’t think that’s what

Ontarians expect from their government. They want their government to take responsibility, especially for things like labour safety. That's a challenge when it comes to legislation.

If we want faster credentialing, let's do it the right way, with proper resourcing, collaborative implementation and guardrails that protect public safety. Because when a real estate agent, a nurse or a construction worker sets up shop in Ontario, the public rightly expects one thing above all: that they are qualified and that they are ready. The government owes that to the people of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, you can't build a stronger Canada by weakening Ontario. Bill 2 opens the door to faster trade and labour mobility—and that's a good thing. But if it means sidelining safety standards, if it means bypassing oversight, or privatizing the LCBO by stealth, then we're not building bridges, we're setting traps for the future. Let's get it right, because if done wrong, the bill risks trading away the very thing that makes Ontario strong.

As I alluded to earlier, there are some challenges with the bill as it relates to alcohol sales and the LCBO. Bill 2 also enables direct-to-consumer alcohol sales across provincial lines, something that could, in theory, support Ontario's fantastic wineries, craft breweries and distilleries. Orléans and the east end of Ottawa is home to two or three wineries and three or four craft breweries. I know they would welcome the opportunity to get greater and wider distribution. But, again, it's how this is going to be done that should concern them and concern the rest of us here in the province.

The bill grants the minister sweeping powers to direct the LCBO and the LCBO must then comply. Now, these frameworks can be created without public consultation, without debate and without safeguards. This appears to be a backdoor to privatization: It's just the government's putting a polite label on it. We've seen this government try to chip away at public assets and public resources before and I think that's in part what's driving some of the fear as it relates to the LCBO—the government's unwillingness to answer basic questions about maintaining the LCBO as a public asset, unwilling to answer questions about the role the LCBO will play as greater influence and greater import from other provinces arrives at our doorstep.

But I can tell you, Madam Speaker, the people of Ontario aren't going to let the privatization of the LCBO happen—and we're certainly not going to let it happen quietly. We support expanding markets for Ontario producers, but not if it means eroding public control, weakening oversight and threatening local retailers. There needs to be a balance there.

Certainly, we need to maintain the LCBO as a public entity because, as my colleague quite rightly pointed out, the dividends from the LCBO contribute enormously to our social safety system here in Ontario. It helps to fund our health care system, it helps to fund our education system and all the other government services that too often we take for granted. It's as a result of the LCBO that we have such amazing investment in those systems.

Buried in the bill are sections that give the government some interesting capabilities. Buried in the bill are sections

that give the government the ability to override existing laws through regulation. That's not something you see every day. They apply changes retroactively, so they go back in time. They delegate responsibilities to outside entities, and it shields itself from most legal challenges. As I said before, it would be great never to have to worry about being sued or getting in trouble, but that's not reality, and that certainly shouldn't be reality for the government.

These are sweeping powers, and they're not routine. They don't belong in a bill like this, and they certainly don't belong without proper checks and balances. Trade reform does not require unchecked executive power, but that is kind of the symbol of what this government is doing this session. They are routinely going about enhancing executive power in almost all the legislation they've introduced and in all the off-the-top-of-my-head Premier comments that get a good little chuckle that they don't like to talk about in the Legislature. It's all about enhancing unchecked executive power. Ontario Liberals are going to continue to push for transparency, we're going to continue to push for accountability and we're going to continue to push for public oversight at every stage.

You can't talk about attracting skilled workers without talking about the affordability crisis. Fast-tracking credentials is meaningless if workers can't afford to live here. If they can't afford to live here, they won't come. As has been properly pointed out, those who have been here and can't afford to live here are leaving, and they're going to jurisdictions where it is more affordable to live.

So, we need policies to address housing costs. We need policies to address the availability and the cost of child care. We need the government to invest in core infrastructure in our cities, whether that's roads or parks or emergency services or transit. Perhaps above all, we need this government to invest in public health care access, because too many Ontarians who are already here don't have access to a family doctor or primary care. If we're going to attract tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of workers to the province, that is only going to add by magnitudes challenges to that existing problem.

Ontario's cost of living is one of the highest and biggest barriers to labour mobility. It's not paperwork; it's the fact that it's expensive to live here, and this government doesn't seem to be interested in doing much about it.

If the government is serious about building our workforce, they should start by making the province more livable, not just more deregulated. What does that mean? It means what Ontario Liberals are talking about, which is tax cuts. It means a middle-class tax cut for families. It means a small business tax cut so entrepreneurs can stay in business or hire more of our neighbours in their business. It means a tax cut to put your kids in extracurricular activities. We heard during question period today the government applaud itself and pat itself on the back for its investment in sports. I applaud that investment. It's welcome and it's going to do a lot of good. But they could also offer tax incentives for families to put their kids in sports, something that this government has voted

against and has repeatedly said they're not interested in pursuing.

Trade deals always have winners and losers. We've seen it before, and it's no different in this bill. Small businesses that operate under Ontario-specific rules, whether in trades, retail or regulated services, many now face competition from out-of-province operators playing by different rules. Where's the support, where's the consultation and where's the transition strategy? We urge the government to provide an impact assessment, small business adaptation supports and reporting mechanisms to monitor who's benefiting and who's being left behind—because, Madam Speaker, if this bill simply is about trusting us, that's not going to fly. It needs transparency, there needs to be real data and regular reporting because what gets measured gets managed.

1940

In conclusion, Ontario Liberals are going to support the spirit of Bill 2. We believe in a more connected, competitive Federation. We support labour mobility and we support opportunity. But the support must be paired with scrutiny, and the bill as drafted raises serious implementation concerns. We must uphold Ontario's safety standards. We must properly support regulators. We must defend the LCBO as a public asset. And we must ensure that trade reform doesn't become deregulation by default.

We'll be looking to address these issues thoughtfully and constructively and will continue to bring forward proposals to support workers, support small businesses and support Ontario's long-term competitiveness, including tax cuts for small business, tax cuts for middle-class families and the elimination of HST from home heating and home electricity bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):

I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you for the opportunity to comment yet again on another bill today—

Interjection: Happy birthday.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: —on my birthday—on the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, 2025. I also appreciate this is the one bill that actually has been allocated the time necessary. It's also the least contentious, I think, of all the bills, knowing that we all want this to happen.

My riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore is home to over 8,000 businesses. Many are trade-exposed in the current environment. As my colleagues have said, we are quite supportive of the need to open up trade within our country. People are looking for us to act in unity on this issue and make sure that we're acting in very pragmatic ways to mitigate the potential harm to our economy and give assurances to families and businesses.

I will also say I was pleased to see that since I last debated on this bill, there have been more MOUs signed with provinces, and the federal government is really providing the leadership we need in managing the relationship with the US and our allies to develop new trade opportunities. I think the potential silver lining of this whole situation is that we will be able to move ahead

on interprovincial trade in this country, and it really feels like the right thing to do.

As we examine this bill, though, our job is to ensure that there's no unintended consequences of the new laws and how we adjust or respond to the risk to support our people and communities through that transition. I have three points to really consider when we think about that. The first is this risk of the movement out of Ontario versus bringing key human resources or businesses back into Ontario. We've heard this from a few others, and I think this is a really important point for us. Secondly, the MOUs—it's good to hear the announcements that we've got MOUs being put in place, but are they consistent? Are they consistent on standards? Are they consistent on expectations of each other and are we pretty sure that they're not going to disadvantage Ontario in those relationships? And third is really making sure that we are taking action and that we're quite transparent about the results that we see, to be sure that we're getting the benefits we need for Ontario.

The current context really matters, and unfortunately, I feel that given the current state of housing, the current state of health care, our education system, I do fear that we're far more vulnerable to some of the negative consequences—this idea of people maybe leaving Ontario because they're concerned. It might be easier for them to live in other jurisdictions than here. I think that's quite real.

I recalled before when I did this debate, I was thinking back to when I was the president at St. Mary's General Hospital. We had a lot of great businesses coming into that region, but the hospital was getting in really poor repair, and we would have businesses that would come and say, "We don't think we do want to set up here, actually." Or we might have people who wanted to work in that community, but they were concerned whether they were going to have the kind of health care that they needed. So we made a very clear case, actually, when we put in the application for the redevelopment of that hospital—which is much-needed and moving forward—that you do really need to be sure that that basic infrastructure is going to be there.

So on a larger scale, I fear in this economy, do we have the kind of foundations that we really need to draw on in this moment to keep people working in Ontario and, fundamentally, keep people healthy?

Now, again, this doesn't mean we don't move forward. I really feel that we've got to move forward. We just need to make sure that we're managing that vulnerability. And the reason I feel that way is when I think back to conversations that I've had with constituents on their doorsteps, I was pretty shocked, actually, with the numbers I did encounter who were contemplating leaving Ontario. Some were young professionals, some were working in the trades, some were parents of kids who my own kids were going to school with.

The reasons they were leaving:

They want home ownership, as they're preparing to start a family that just isn't attainable here. We've got a

bill before us on housing, and it goes a certain distance, but it certainly doesn't go as far as I'd like to see on things like affordability and ensuring the right mix of rental housing as well.

They want to be able to have predictability in their rent, and we have no way of actually really offering that right now.

Others cite the fact that they're just simply concerned about their health care here.

When I look at what people are looking for from us, they're looking for us to make life more affordable. My colleague talked about tax cuts. These are the kinds of practical things that people are looking for in these times. Anyway, it was striking, the number of times these reasons for leaving Ontario came up, and I think that they're just getting a little bit tired of tolerating.

Again, I use health care as an example: This bill will allow 16 more regulated health professionals to practise in Ontario while they wait for their registration with the provincial regulatory college—that six-month window. This has great potential to help us here, but if people are tired of working in the kind of crowded health care environments that we've got here, they may choose to go out to the east coast or they may choose to go somewhere else, and that, unfortunately, leaves our health care system even more exposed.

I guess what I'm saying is we need to act on what this bill is suggesting, but, boy, we've got to keep our eye on those foundations at the same time. Part of what protects our sovereignty is that we hold onto what makes us Canadian—our core values; ensuring that people are cared for—and I just hope that that stays as much a priority.

The second area I wanted to talk to is really about the MOUs. We've heard comments from a few others around standards and the adjustments to encourage businesses to stay. I do think, as I say, it's good to see so many of the MOUs that are required being put in place across the country and the federal government really providing that leadership that we need overall as a country.

Standards have come up consistently from several stakeholders during the committee—I was reading some of the minutes from the committee hearings. It is true; it seems that people are quite worried about the labour standards—maybe there could be some sort of a metric on understanding the implications of that—and the ability to report and track credentials, compliance and some of the safety outcomes. I'm hoping that the government is factoring that in, having heard that at committee. It's exactly the kind of process that you want to help to make things better.

There are also a few things that the budget addressed which are great, actually. We used the example of microbreweries earlier, and some of the changes that we saw that came with that bill will actually help those microbreweries in this context and for this to be successful. So at least now they'll finally have the opportunity to compete fairly across jurisdictions and, in fact, they would have maybe similar opportunities that some of the large ones

have had, especially given that they offer much more of a job-to-product ratio.

1950

I also want to just say that I'll echo the comments of the member from Orléans about the LCBO, the revenue that it does generate. We need that revenue to actually, again, manage this risk I just mentioned around health care and some of the foundations that we need to be able to rely on.

Lastly, it's really about action and transparency on the results. We are going to enable these interprovincial barriers. It sounds like there's broad support here. It's going to be really important that we know if it's working and what will be that plan to measure and be transparent about it, both the negative and the positive in our economy.

I do really hope that the government will report to the public on that. We'll adjust if it's not going exactly in the ways that it needs to be done. And what's a reasonable time frame that we can expect to see some of the benefits of the interprovincial trade? Again, this government, unfortunately—it's part of why I ran—does have a track record of making a law, making an announcement but not quite seeing the implementation through. I think in this one, again, we've got MOUs being put in place. I really, really hope that it will be actively managed all the way through.

I also mentioned in my other debate—I'm interested to know who in the government will ultimately be accountable. We know the minister that has put the bill on the table, but this is a true cross-government effort, and I'm curious to know who is that single point person who will take accountability when things go well and when things may not. Is that the Premier, ultimately? I think that we should all know who is ultimately accountable.

In conclusion, we know the threat that we're facing. We have to be part of the solution, and part of that solution is right here in front of us in this interprovincial trade bill. We need it to happen, but we also need to keep Ontario competitive as a place people want to come, not leave; businesses will want to come, not leave.

Today, in one of the other many debates that we've had today, we were commenting on the budget and what is there and what is not there. I cannot stress enough that I have a lot of concerns that some of the very basic things—our education, our health care, our post-secondary education—all of these things need to be there to really support our economy through these moments.

So, I hope that the attention will be paid at the same time that we're implementing something like this. They cannot be ignored because of tariffs. In fact, they have to be the core to our competitive edge in this moment. So, let's be sure we can be determined about the success of this bill. I will look forward to the vote and supporting it.

Again, I want to acknowledge it was nice to be able to have a proper debate on this bill. I certainly wish, there's a few in particular, I really wish that we could have some more time at committee for, but it's good to be at this place on Bill 2, that will support free trade within Canada.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member from Burlington.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: My question is for the member from Don Valley West. During their remarks, they commented on investment in workforce development. I just wanted to talk about the Skills Development Fund. Under the leadership of our Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, the skills development programming helps support apprentices, newcomers to Canada, women, young people, second careers—start to get their skills for re-employment. In my area in Burlington, we have a number of organizations that use the skills development funding to provide these opportunities. So those would be HIEC, the Halton Industry Education Council, Centre for Skills Development. Even our local YMCA provides employment services. So I'm wondering if you could maybe comment about some of the organizations in your riding that provide these kinds of workforce development services.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member from Burlington for the question. Certainly, as I mentioned, supports for workers will be really important as this bill proceeds, and hopefully the MOUs are put into action.

There are some organizations that serve my community, whether they're located there or elsewhere—TNO, WoodGreen, Skills for Change. There is a number. Certainly, I applaud their work, but I also look at the number of people who are unemployed in this province—it's at a 10-year high under this government. The programs might be good programs, and they might be helping some people, but they're not helping enough people because 691,000 people in Ontario are out of work, despite all of these programs.

Speaker, I find that really unfortunate and really shocking. I really hope that the government takes a good look and makes sure that all of these people—691,000 of them and growing, under this government—can find jobs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Listening to my colleagues, I would say that they agree that the workplace work and safety standards are an asset. They keep workers safe, they attract good jobs, and they help us build for the future. I would say that we need to continue to raise the bar when it comes to health and safety standards.

Would they agree that protecting Ontario also means protecting workers, and do you feel confident that this bill will do that?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I think there are gaps in the legislation that don't address that fully. I think it's clear that most provinces have safety standards for workers. The question is whether they are at the same level as we have here in Ontario.

As I said, we wouldn't want someone—a construction worker from, say, Saskatchewan—coming to build a high-rise in Toronto when they don't have any experience working on high-rises in Toronto and don't have the necessary safety skills to do that properly. So I do think that there are some gaps or, at the very least, absences of information in the legislation that make it hard to be 100%

confident that workers who are coming to Ontario from other parts of Canada will have the same standards and be as fully qualified as those who are trained here in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Adil Shamji: My question is for the member for Don Valley West. No one can doubt the fact that we face an unprecedented threat from our neighbour to the south, one that certainly threatens our economy here in Ontario. But I think few would be hard-pressed to deny also that this threat has come at a time that our economy is more vulnerable than ever: We have an unprecedented housing crisis, massive labour market shortages, unprecedented unemployment.

My question to you is, why do you think that it took so long to begin to take any concrete action to protect our economy and to introduce legislation like this?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to my colleague from Don Valley East for this important question.

Look, interprovincial trade barriers weren't grabbing headlines a year ago or two or three or four or five or six or seven. This government has had seven years to tackle interprovincial trade barriers. As I mentioned, this government actually added some while they were at it. Now they're removing them, and that's good.

But the member from Don Valley East is correct. We were facing economic headwinds long before the uncertainty that came from US tariffs, with rising unemployment, the second highest in the country—it went from second lowest in the country under the previous Liberal government. This government has taken its eye off the ball. They had a chance to start working on interprovincial trade barriers, which everyone knew was an opportunity, and yet they've only started taking it seriously once it started getting headlines because of US tariffs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

2000

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. First of all, I'm from Niagara, and Niagara's unemployment rates rose to 6.5% in March, up from 6% in February. Niagara, as a tourism-driven economy, is more susceptible to consequences from the ongoing trade wars, and support needs to be in place.

I know it's your birthday, so I want to wish you happy birthday. Usually on our birthdays, we love to have a nice bottle of wine—

Interjection: Niagara wine?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Niagara wine—Peller is a wonderful wine.

A lot of our residents within the Niagara region actually work for Niagara wineries. Do you see this trade war affecting the Niagara wineries, maybe? You might get a half glass or a full glass.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you to the member for St. Catharines for your good wishes on my birthday and also

for taking me down to Niagara for a few minutes, actually. I love going down to that area.

I think that there have been some changes to make sure that wineries, microbreweries and others can be competitive, if this interprovincial trade is allowed. When I talked to our local microbreweries, for example, I think that some of this will serve to benefit them and some of it will not. But this is what I mean when I talk about trying to be sure that we're keeping an eye on the impact as we go, making sure that we continue to hear from those businesses as we go and making sure that it's actually not going to negatively affect them. I mean, there are reasons why we haven't done this yet, and I'm sure people have those fears. That's why I think we've got to just watch very, very closely that this doesn't have the unintended consequences that we worry about.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Adil Shamji: My earlier question alluded to the fact that we face some pretty significant labour market shortages. I mentioned the fact that we have unprecedented unemployment, significantly worse than the rest of the country. We have housing issues. All of this challenges us to look towards ways in which we can mobilize our labour market force, create new jobs, promote more construction and more homebuilding.

I must admit, against all of this backdrop, it is potentially exciting to see that there will be some labour mobility between provinces. A major province that we border is, of course, Quebec. Given the challenges that we face in our construction sector, I wondered if my colleague the member from Orléans might comment a little bit upon the impact that this legislation might have on labour mobility in the construction sector with neighbouring provinces such as Quebec.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, certainly anyone in Ottawa, and perhaps some of the other communities that border Quebec, understands the challenges that exist today with construction mobility. Quebec construction workers can freely work in Ontario, take Ontario jobs and take Ontario contracts, but that mobility is not freely granted back to Ontario workers into Quebec. In fact, we have public institutions who award infrastructure projects to Quebec firms, and, lo and behold, in the summertime Quebec has that construction vacation period when all construction workers take two weeks off in the summertime and those public works in Ontario are actually held back.

I hope that the Premier will actually take the reverse mobility seriously and work out with Quebec, through this process, that Ontario construction workers can also work in Quebec freely so that it's not simply Quebec construction workers taking our jobs but that our workers—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

MPP Chris Scott: I'm really proud to rise in the House today. I want to congratulate the Speaker, Madam Speaker, on your tremendous milestone election as the first female Speaker in the House. I think any opportunity

we have to witness history in action is truly incredible and inspiring. You've really hit the ground running in your new role, and I want to congratulate you because I know your dedication and leadership is going to inspire a generation. As a proud father of two, I'm really proud of the glass ceilings that we've got to witness here in the House, and I just want to get that on record.

I want to move to why I'm standing today. Today is my maiden speech—inaugural speech, I guess, is what it's called now. It's my first speech in the House, officially, as the member from Sault Ste. Marie. It's a true honour and a true privilege to be here standing today, both personally and professionally in this capacity, in this distinguished chamber, representing the great people of Sault Ste. Marie.

I want to thank everybody who took the time to get out to the ballot and vote in this last election. I'm truly grateful beyond words for what your support and your trust in me mean, so thank you very much. Thank you to everybody who voted: not just the 13,100 people that voted for me, but for everybody that took the time to vote. Your vote matters, and I intend to lead and represent the community for everybody, not just those 13,000 who voted for me.

I want to also thank all the candidates who ran in the election. It takes a ton of guts. I, in a past life, worked supporting and advising elected officials in a series of governments, but until you actually put your name on a ballot and throw yourself out there in a community, you don't really know exactly what it takes. It takes a ton of guts. For everybody who put their name on a ballot and ran in this election, I want to say thank you. What you did and what you continue to do is, I think, the bedrock of our democracy. It really strengthens all of us. Being able to have competing opinions and go out there and peacefully demonstrate those at the ballot is a testament to what a great nation we live in. Your involvement makes all the difference.

I wouldn't be standing here today without the incredible support and love of my family. I want to give a shout out to my amazing wife, Coline. She's my high school sweetheart. In two days, it will be our 17-year anniversary.

Interjections.

MPP Chris Scott: Thank you. Coline's a saint. I want to thank her for her endless amount of patience, her quiet strength, her unwavering partnership. I just want to thank her for, honestly, every single thing that she does. She's constantly challenging me to be a better me, for the last 17 years. I don't know where I'd be without her, but I definitely wouldn't be standing here today, so thank you. She's the bedrock of our family. She's always keeping us grounded. She's always reminding us of what is truly important and I can't thank her enough. She really means everything to me. Coline's a saint and I don't know what I did to deserve her, but I'm going to work hard every day to keep her around.

I think the greatest thing that Coline has ever done is she's given me three beautiful children, aged four, two and one. To my three amazing kids, Clairtje, Cooper and Cora: I know it's not always easy these last couple months; you've got to share your papa with something a little bit

bigger now. But your joy, your enthusiasm, your curiosity, the interesting questions that you're always asking—they inspire me every single day. Back to what Coline does in grounding me and keeping the important things up front: It really helps me, knowing that I've got you guys in my corner. You're my driving force, so thank you.

I also want to take a minute to thank my mom, who was out there with me every single day on the campaign knocking on doors. I don't know about the rest of you guys, but up in the Soo, it was snowing. It snowed about 21 out of 28 days on the campaign. It was a tough winter out there. Snow or shine, the one thing I could rely on was my mom and my amazing campaign team, out there ready to do what needed to be done to get us the win, quite frankly. The win was at the doors. I personally had the opportunity to talk to thousands of people, but none of it would have been possible without my mom. So, thank you. She's always given me the strength and the resilience that I need to get the job done. I can't thank you enough, Mom.

2010

My path to this moment has been profoundly shaped by my family. For a while, I was raised by my mom, who was a single mom at the time. She married a fellow named Mike, who really quickly became dad to me. Unfortunately, we lost Mike a couple of years ago during COVID, way too early. But he instilled a lot of values in me of hard work, integrity, loyalty and helping the next guy in line. Without him stepping up and being part of my life, I also wouldn't be here today. I know he's looking down and proud of what we've accomplished. So I want to give him a shout-out as well.

Lastly, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to those incredible volunteers on my campaign team—my friends and my supporters—who worked tirelessly alongside me. Your passion, your determination and your commitment really moved me and is the driving force behind—even when the days are long down here or the job doesn't seem as glamorous, I think back to that campaign, when it's minus 22 and we've got the snow flurries going, and the youth and the seniors, and everybody on the campaign, just ready to give everything they had. It keeps the fire going in my belly even today, so thank you.

I do want to take a minute to talk about one special volunteer on the campaign: Connor Dunn, who was a 15-year-old, who came out—he was with me on a couple of the coldest days of the campaign—an amazing, bright young man; he's 15. But Connor wasn't like most 15-year-olds. I could tell he was a special kid, even in the short time we got to know each other. He asked some of the most interesting questions. He was always trying to hack some of the meat and potatoes you do on a campaign, like door-knocking—how to do it faster, how to do it more efficiently, how to game it so that there's little competitions inside of the competitions.

Unfortunately, on Easter weekend, Connor was struck and killed by a drunk driver. He's no longer with us, and it's a real loss to our entire community. I know as of tomorrow morning, the Long Live Connor Dunn Fund and

the sports scholarship through Sault College, to help pave the way and create more access to hockey and sports, is going live. I encourage all my friends to, if they can, please donate. Connor was the kind of kid that brought extra lunches to school. He was always trying to help kids get into sports, help his peers out. I know we're going to do really right by his memory.

The last thank you I want to give is to my predecessor, MPP Ross Romano. For a lot of you MPPs, Ross Romano was a colleague. Ross was also a lot of different things to a lot of people. To me, he was more than just an employer, though. I owe a ton to Ross. I want to thank him, because he wasn't just a mentor, just an employer; for me, Ross was a brother. He was a “break glass in case of emergency” friend that you could always call and count on, and just a great guy. I'm lucky to have had him in my life.

Interjections.

MPP Chris Scott: Yes. I got the chance to cross paths with Ross in 2017 when he was just a candidate. At my campaign office opening, he was there with me as my campaign manager. In my speech, I warned people, “I'm not Ross Romano. Ross is a lawyer, an Italian and a politician. I don't think I'm any of those things, but hopefully after today, I'll at least be one of those things.”

Interjection: An Italian?

MPP Chris Scott: No. It's not an Italian, no.

One of the things I want to leave with in thanking Ross for everything that he's done for me—which is basically everything—is that he deeply valued the connection, the brotherhood and the fraternity that was the relationship he had with all of his colleagues here. I sincerely look forward to forging and creating my own relationships and joining that fraternity with each and every one of you, including the new members. We've elected 10 new members in our caucus, including myself. I just want to say thanks to Ross, and I'm looking forward to getting a chance to work with all of you, including the members opposite, because I think we truly work better when we work together. So thank you for that.

I think Sault Ste. Marie as a riding, if I could talk about that for a second, is home to a dynamic industrial heritage forged in steel. We've got Algoma Steel as the largest employer and Tenaris tubes. These two are the cornerstone of our local economy. They've provided generations of families with stable employment, fostering a strong community tie and economic stability for the region. But in today's changing markets, there's a dark cloud coming over Algoma once again. I think we've got a real generational opportunity with some of the leadership under Premier Ford and this government to leverage the proud and resilient character of Sault Ste. Marie to attract, retain and grow new investment and forge new industry partnerships in the riding.

I think education and innovation remain central pillars to our community. We've got two great public post-secondary institutions and one great Indigenous institute right in Sault Ste. Marie. These institutions are mission-

critical to positioning Sault Ste. Marie as the hub of talent and creativity for the entire Algoma region.

The Soo has always been a community defined by its people—hard-working, passionate and fiercely loyal to each other. The spirit's evident in our community organizations, our local businesses and our everyday interactions. It's this spirit that gives me the confidence in our future—a future filled with opportunity, prosperity and strength.

During the election, I had the opportunity to knock on thousands of doors and listen to the top priorities, concerns and issues of everyday voters. It was a truly humbling and great experience for me—first time I got to do it with my own name on the ballot. I again want to thank that strong campaign team—and Ross Romano—for their patience in that learning curve.

In all seriousness, the number one issue I heard was tariffs. It's a steel town, it's a border town and we're heavily reliant on that north-south trade corridor. But even amongst those voters who had tariffs as 1(a)—let's call it—1(b) was access to a doctor. Primary care is a top priority in the Soo. I think health care means something different in northern Ontario than it does down on University Avenue in Toronto. We're literally talking about making sure the Thessalon emergency room is open if one of our kids breaks their arm at camp. We're not talking about the same thing as we are sometimes down here in Toronto.

I want to thank Minister Jones and the Premier for their leadership on the Primary Care Act and other pieces of legislation and policy that they've moved forward in short order since being elected because we campaigned on getting everybody connected to a doctor. Now we're enabling it and we're funding it. I think it's important to say what you do and do what you say, so thank you, Minister Jones.

2020

The number three issue that I heard at the doors was keeping our streets safe and clean, protecting downtown businesses, and ensuring that everybody who wants their life back has access to care to get their life back. Sault Ste. Marie is a community that, under this government, is getting two HART hubs: an Indigenous-led HART hub in Maamwesying, and a HART hub led by the DSSAB, Mike Nadeau and Lisa Case, two absolute champions who I know already hit the ground running and are doing great work to ensure that piece. I know that, under Minister Downey and this government, we're supporting our police, and we are making the changes necessary on appointments and ensuring all those things are true.

I think, locally, since the election—my election was one of the last ones to get called, and when you're actually on the ground, you've got all the white noise. It's hard to get out of that bubble, get above the fray and see what's going on. I think I got the opportunity on election day to really see a little bit about what that bigger team looks like and feels like. I want to thank a lot of the members who sent videos of their campaign war room's reaction to my election coming through. I think it was a great crash course

into what it means to be part of something bigger and, once again, I'm looking forward to working with all of you.

I think it was a hard-fought campaign. It was a really close election, and I think it was a testament and a reminder to everybody about why local elections matter and why we go out and we vote. I'm proud of everybody that was on the ballot. We ran a campaign that was high integrity. We didn't get bogged down in personal attacks. We focused on the issues that mattered most. At the end of the day, we were able to hold our heads high, accept the results and move on.

For me, what that meant is, three hours after the campaign was announced, hopping in a car with a couple of my amazing sign guys and just starting to pick up some of the over 3,000 signs that we had placed all over Sault Ste. Marie. We were able to get all of the signs picked up before the weekend was over, then came down to Toronto for MPP orientation and got to work on some of those issues I mentioned earlier. Now that we're here, I'm excited, obviously, and ready to demonstrate a little bit about me and my approach in this Legislature. I'm always going to be an honest broker, I'm always going to actively listen, and I'm always going to lead with integrity and serve humbly.

My promise to Sault Ste. Marie on election day is the same as my promise today: I will always be your unwavering advocate down here, and I'm going to fight for our shared priorities and our shared values. I commit wholeheartedly to working tirelessly for every resident of Sault Ste. Marie, not just the ones that voted for me. I think, together, we're going to face these challenges head on, and we're going to use some of these challenges to present new and exciting opportunities for the future of Sault Ste. Marie and for the future of this province.

Thanks, Speaker. I think that's a good amount.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
Questions?

Mme France Gélinas: It was very refreshing to hear the member do his first inaugural speech in this House. He talked about how much he heard about access to health care services. The Group Health Centre is a jewel in Ontario. It is something that only exists in Sault Ste. Marie. It has been there for a long time. It has helped tens of thousands. I think they're at about 70,000 clients right now. If the member wanted to brag a little bit and talk a little bit more about the good work that the Group Health Centre does for the people of Sault Ste. Marie.

MPP Chris Scott: I appreciate the question. I think you're absolutely right: Group Health Centre is one of a kind. It is unique. I've had the opportunity, I've had the privilege, of sitting down with Lil Silvano and the entire leadership team since being elected to discuss priorities and the path forward for Group Health Centre. I think it was one of the most interesting intro meetings that I've had because it was like an intro meeting in the sense of, "I'm elected now," right? I knew some of those guys already. They gave me a book about the history of Group Health. I worked with Jim Balsillie for a little while, a

pretty well-known CEO, and he always used to say that that's how CEOs learn: They learn by reading books. So when they gave me one, I thought, "I better read this."

It is an organization that has got a proud, rich history, and one that—you're absolutely right—we should shine a light on and bang the desk a little more because they do incredible work every single day to ensure that we've got a healthy community in Sault Ste. Marie.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you and congratulations on the delivery of your speech. It was great to hear a little bit about Sault Ste. Marie and the communities that you represent. Funny enough, I know a bit about the health care there, including Group Health and, of course, the hospital that you built there. I work closely with the CEO.

But I wanted to ask—it's actually one of the few places I haven't visited in this province—what is fun to do there? What do I need to go up and see? What in the outdoors do I need to go and see? You tell me a little bit more about that.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Ross Romano's pantry.

MPP Chris Scott: You definitely want to stop by Ross's for lunch or dinner, for sure.

But depending on the time of year, if you're going to come out, I would strongly encourage everybody to come visit Sault Ste. Marie at least once in their lives. It's uniquely situated between Lake Huron, Lake Superior—and just absolutely beautiful landscape all around.

If you're going to come up in the winter, we've got to get you to Searchmont to do some skiing and hopefully come up during Bon Soo so we can share the best that we've got to offer. I jumped in St. Marys River this year at Bon Soo, mostly because Ross said he did it on his first time—and it's because I made him, so a little bit of payback.

But if you're coming up, I would recommend you actually come up in the next eight to 10 weeks. That's the best time to be in northern Ontario, I think, and in Sault Ste. Marie, that's when I think we're really at our best, especially if you come up end of August, I would say, when the leaves are changing. Get on the Agawa Canyon Tour Train, take the three-and-a-half-hour train ride and learn a little bit about the history and the rich, proud Indigenous history and those that came before us. I think that's the time to come, for sure.

If you find yourself there in the winter, definitely come for Bon Soo. If you're going to come in the summer, hopefully you like fishing or outdoor stuff, because we've got a ton of great areas all around us to take advantage of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Speaker, I want to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his great remarks. You know what? I'm a huge fan of Sault Ste. Marie. It's actually my gateway to the north, coming from Windsor via I-75 in between.

I'm hoping the member can speak about what makes him miss home. I know being here in the city of Toronto,

it's a different world. On Thursday nights, I always look forward to getting home and seeing my community once again. So I'm hoping the member opposite can share with us what he looks forward to the most when he gets back to Sault Ste. Marie.

MPP Chris Scott: I think that's an excellent question. I think it goes right into my "why." The thing that I miss the most is my kids and my family.

2030

But also, the real work we get to do—I think it's easy to forget, in the bright lights of the Legislature and the surrounding area, that none of this is real. The real work is done back at home with local stakeholders, and that's where we can actually help real people and enact real change for our community.

So I think it's a few things: yes, my kids; and the ability to roll up my sleeves and do some real work.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie.

I want to start by sharing condolences for the loss of Connor. It's a tragedy that no family should have to endure, and sadly, many families do.

I'm from the south. One of the things I've learned from my northern colleagues sitting here is how critical road safety on northern roads is. We know that we have a long way to go to make sure that roads are safe for everyone in Ontario, but certainly in northern Ontario.

You must share similar concerns. Can you just share a little bit with us your hopes for improving safety for the roads in northern Ontario?

MPP Chris Scott: I appreciate the question, and I appreciate your condolences to Connor and his family.

I think, like I said, we're facing a lot of challenges in the north. We're obviously in an economic trade war, and that's causing, I think, additional pressures on a lot of our local industries in the Soo that are reliant on that north-south trade.

But as I said, I really do believe—and I hope I'm not too altruistic, but I really do believe in my heart that we've got an opportunity to take some of these challenges and turn them into opportunities with some of the public investments in public infrastructure to ensure safety, but also ensure that we are having the backs and protecting Ontario, protecting Ontario's workers, and ensuring that we're positioning ourselves so that we're coming out of this stronger than ever.

And I think any opportunity to get some investments in rail or port that helps take some transports off our northern highways is something we should definitely be looking at, especially if it supports some more east-west or global market access. Instead of being so reliant on that north-south, we should be looking at that and should be supporting that fully, both as a measure to support jobs, protect workers today, but also position us so that we're coming out of this as the strongest G7 jurisdiction—most competitive possible.

There's no silver bullet. I do think you've rightly identified an issue. I think I'll leave it at that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It is a great honour to grill the parliamentary assistant in the next minute that is left in this House.

On the contrary, I want to thank him for his leadership and work in the ministry and across the province, but I am curious. I am from, like the member from Hamilton, the deep south here in the GTHA. What are your priorities? What is a local priority you hope to achieve for your constituents?

MPP Chris Scott: I want to thank the minister for the question. The question is deeply personal for me, because I feel like I've got really big shoes to fill with my predecessor, who was such a champion at always keeping local issues front of mind.

But for me, the one thing I want to be able to leave here knowing is that I left every file that I touched and every constituent that crossed my path better than I found them. So I want to be able to be an honest broker, play hard in the paint where there's an opportunity to, and be a relentless advocate to deliver on both social and economic priorities for the riding.

I look forward to working with the minister on making that come to fruition on a couple fronts in short order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

MPP Jamie West: Congratulations to my colleague on his inaugural speech, before I get into this debate. The only thing I maybe would correct him on is that I would describe Ross Romano as a soccer fan, a soccer coach, a soccer player, then a politician.

We're here late this evening to debate Bill 2, Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act. This is about interprovincial trade, which I think is very important. One of the things we were talking about before any of us returned here after the election was about the importance with what's going on with the States, ensuring we're able to trade between provinces.

I think the general concept is good, but we want to make sure we have some guardrails where things are most effective—in terms of standards: We don't lower our standards in other areas, and that we rise them up. My background, for example, is in health and safety, and our health and safety legislation is pretty robust.

That legislation is robust because the reality is that that legislation is written in lives. You don't make laws unless someone's been either seriously injured or killed. If you look at Alberta's, for example, it's a lot thinner. I'm not saying that they didn't have tragedies in Alberta; I just want to make sure that we're not letting workers' lives be harmed.

I just read recently that there was a trench collapse that happened, I think, this evening or today. There are three workers right here in Ontario who are in critical injury and life-threatening injuries. We want to make sure that we don't have that happen. I know my colleagues agree. We want people to come home. As they say in mining, the

most important thing to come from the underground is the miner. I think that's something important.

Another important thing that I've got to make sure I say is that I'm sharing my time with the member from St. Catharines.

One of the things in this bill I was a little worried about when I first heard about it is that we have issues with health care, with a shortage of nurses, a shortage of PSWs. We have housing issues locally, across the province in Ontario. Once we open up those borders and allow workers to move more freely, I don't know if we'll be able to attract a lot of workers to our province because of what's going on here.

My kids have talked about it in the past, but my kids and their generation see owning a house almost the same as, "Maybe one day, one of us might buy an island." It isn't as achievable as it was for my wife and I, and certainly not as achievable as it was for their grandparents. That idea of paying rent and saving some money to get a mortgage just doesn't exist for these people. There are things that could have been happening years and years before today, years and years before this crisis.

My son, after he finished college, got scouted and picked up by a company in Montreal, and he ended up with a two-bedroom apartment. He wasn't looking for a two-bedroom apartment. He just couldn't believe how affordable the rent was and how low the price of electricity was. It was a beautiful place, and he thought, "Well, it's already under my budget of what I was expecting for a one-bedroom, so I might as well take the two. If my friends come visit, they have a place to stay."

He returned home because he wanted to be a teacher. He returned home and went to school. He's now working as a teacher, but realistically, I'm not sure if he'll ever be able to afford to move out unless he gets a couple of roommates. That is not a competitive advantage in our province when, right next door, you can make a much better living and raise your family. People want to be able to raise their families. They don't want to have contract and short-term jobs.

In fact, I think that as politicians, we've got to stop talking about jobs and start talking about careers. I don't want my kids to have a job. Most of my kids and their friends, they have two or three jobs. I want them to have a career. I want them to have benefits. I want them to have a pension. I want them to have wages where, after they pay for heat and hydro and put food on the table, they have got money in their pocket.

That should be what we're promising their kids. That's what my parents promised for me. That's what their grandparents promised for my parents. That's where we should be going on this.

I was talking earlier about health and safety and lowering those standards, and I want to give a local example in Sudbury. In 2011, we had a tragedy underground, a fall of ground. Basically, it buried two miners alive, Jordan Fram and Jason Chenier.

2040

I saw Jason's wife, Tracy, at the Day of Mourning. The steelworkers have a Day of Mourning every year for

anyone who was killed at our mine site. They have a list of everyone who has been killed in more than 100 years, back when it was Mond Nickel, and over the years. They list them, and every year, we remember them. Jordan's family was there—Wendy and Briana—and so was Tracy and Tracy's two kids, who I honestly haven't seen since the funeral. I remember them, just basically toddlers, touching the back of the hearse as the hearse was leaving the funeral home. Now, they're basically teens. But those kids had no idea what had happened to their dad—an absolute tragedy.

The outcome of this was that a lot of things that happened there were contraventions of the act and lot of things that were happening there were recommendations from previous fatalities that never got followed through. So, Wendy Fram and Briana, his mom and his sister—God bless them—I don't know what I would do if my son died at work. I don't know if I'd have the courage; I'd probably just be in mourning. But they wanted to make something out of this, and so they formed a group called MINES. It was basically to rewrite the legislation, get it updated, the regulations in the Mining Act. At the time, the minister was from the Liberal Party—they were the government party—and they said, "This basically isn't going to happen." But through tenacity and grit and public support, we ended up having that happen: a whole review of the mining regulations to prevent a tragedy like this happening again. It's changed how mining is done in Ontario—to try to prevent people from having those injuries.

There are stories like this all across our province, in all different industries: window washers who have fallen from a height, construction workers who have been injured, people on the highway who have been hit by cars. And so when we're saying we're going to have inter-provincial trade, what we need to do is protect their workers. As my friend Guy Shank often says—I don't think I can swear—"I hope to heck somebody is watching out for my kid where he works, the way I'm watching out for their kid right here where I work." That's what we need to be doing and standing for as legislators.

If we're able to attract some people to Ontario, I think something that the people of Sudbury would like is if we can attract more elevator repair people. I don't know what is going on, but we have an ongoing issue of broken elevators, in particular in places that have a lot of seniors living in. Place Nolin was the one last year we heard the most from. It's a seniors' complex. It's not very big, but if you're a senior and you use a walker, it's tough to get up and down stairs of three, four flights. The elevator is broken, I've heard, for several months, almost a year, I believe. It feels like a one-off, right? It's a certain part, it's something that's happening, but the reality is that Bonik Tower had it as well. That building is mostly seniors and newcomers. Those tenants, in every interview they give in the paper, are afraid of retaliation. The landlord there hands out N5 eviction notices on a regular basis, and like I was mentioning earlier, the cost of housing is so expensive and rent is so high and so expensive, where are they going to go? So they feel threatened.

That elevator, it's been broken at—Rideau Place is the newest one. In Rideau Place—same owner, an apartment building—that elevator is broken for two to four months every year.

Bonik was just recently repaired, but they don't know for how long. This is a place with seniors walking around. You've got 16 floors. They had one elevator down for two years, and then the second elevator went down for a month. You've got PSWs coming in. You have some seniors who now have injuries to their knees because they're taking stairs. You have issues getting groceries in and out of the building.

And then, just on the heels of it, I read about Centreville. Their elevator has been broken since November of 2024.

Ironically, in 2017, there was a bill to address this—that we could be helping people and ensuring that elevators could be repaired. There's a loophole in the legislation for it that we could be addressing. But I think the main thing we can do is make sure that we're having people make those repairs and taking care of the seniors. That's a major issue where I live.

I'm going to pass it off to my friend, but I want to bring it back to the issues we're having today that are affecting all of us, the things we've heard when we're knocking on doors during the election: lack of doctors; emergency rooms closing; unaffordable rent; sky-high evictions and renoventions, abuse of that power; people not being able to put food on the table; a growing number of workers every single year going to food banks. If we were addressing that over the last seven years, we would be more likely to have workers come into our province than decide to try their luck in another province. That's pretty sad.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Today I rise to speak about the urgent and unpredictable trade war crisis and to speak to Bill 2. The threat of the tariffs, the hostility, the back and forth that we're seeing from President Trump, it is leaving Ontario's economy, its workers and families in a really tough spot.

The cost of living continues to climb. Consumer goods, groceries and household items are becoming more expensive, and inflation is hitting workers and families the hardest. And this trade war is making it already a bad situation post-COVID, and I want to say, maybe even 10 times worse. Just as Ontarians and businesses have recovered, they are hit yet again out of nowhere.

Madam Speaker, we cannot allow our communities to bear this burden alone. We must invest in support for affected workers and industries. We must create provincial relief programs that are accessible and immediate. As an opposition, we have and will commit to introducing emergency funds for trade-exposed industries, protecting workers after we have already seen an increase in unemployment rates across Canada.

Now, let me bring it back to Niagara and into St. Catharines. The unemployment rate rose to 6.5% in March, and that's up from 6% in February. As a tourism-

driven economy, Niagara is more susceptible to the consequences of ongoing trade wars, and support needs to be in place. As we continue to navigate the economic turbulence caused by the trade war with our closest neighbours, it is important we recognize that this isn't a temporary inconvenience. This is a disruption to Ontario's economy. We are witnessing first-hand the vulnerabilities that come when a province is so closely enmeshed with a single foreign market—one that has chosen to impose steep and sweeping tariffs on industries that form the backbone of our economy.

Now, let's take a closer look at the automotive sector, not just as a symbol of Ontario's industry strength but a practical example of what this trade war means for real people. The General Motors powertrain plant in St. Catharines has been a pillar of employment for our community. For generations, families have relied on these stable skilled manufacturing jobs to build their lives and contribute to the local economy. Now those jobs are on the line. US tariffs on imported Canadian vehicles and components have dramatically increased costs, pushing American companies to reconsider sourcing from Ontario. These are not just numbers on a balance sheet; they are livelihoods. These are people, and these are families being affected. When a line shuts down or a shift is cut, that means groceries are not being bought, mortgage payments are being missed and local businesses lose customers. It becomes a ripple effect that devastates entire communities.

The story is the same in Windsor, in Oshawa, in Ingersoll and other parts of Ontario where the automotive industry drives employment. It's also hitting our parts suppliers, many of which are small and medium enterprises.

This isn't unique to auto. Our steel mills in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie are feeling the strain with additional 25% tariffs just announced. The construction industry is seeing budget issues because structural steel and aluminum are more expensive, and retailers across Ontario are watching customers cut back spending because the cost of goods is rising faster than wages. It is affecting the very fabric of our province.

Yet, the only way through this is together. We cannot afford to let partisanship delay the coordinated response that Ontario needs. I urge the Premier and all members of this Legislature: Let's get together. Using industry experts, union leaders and municipal officials to the table, let's craft a unified Ontario response that includes targeted economic relief, support for reskilling workers, emergency funding for vulnerable sectors and aggressive strategies that ensure we're using Canadian manufacturers and businesses effectively.

2050

In the face of this trade war, we must take this moment not only as warning, but as a wake-up call—to rethink how we grow and protect our economy. For far too long, we've grown accustomed to supply chains that stretch across borders, dependent on low costs rather than long-term resilience. We've seen everything from machinery to medical supplies produced outside of our borders, leaving us vulnerable in times of crisis.

This trade war, much like the global pandemic before it, has made it clear when supply chains are threatened, local capacity is everything. It's about insulating ourselves from unpredictable foreign policy decisions beyond our control.

Ontario has skilled workers, a rich history of innovation and productivity. We manufacture world-class steel, pharmaceuticals, consumer goods, food products and high-tech electronics. Our farmers grow the best produce. Our bakers, brewers and our butchers are second to none. Yet for far too long, we've seen Canadian-made products crowded out by cheaper, imported alternatives that send a message to business owners and consumers—that profit is more important than supporting our local economy. Now is the time to change the narrative.

If we want to understand the stakes of this trade war and what happens when we don't prioritize domestic production, we look to a company in St. Catharines, Biolyse. Biolyse isn't just another business on the map, it's a lifeline—a Canadian-owned pharmaceutical manufacturer based out of my riding of St. Catharines, with a proud history of producing oncology drugs. Biolyse represents what we can accomplish when Canadian science, manufacturing, skilled workers and compassion all come together. For years, they've provided essential medications to cancer patients, both here at home and abroad. And during the pandemic, they stepped up when local hospitals were desperate. Yet despite their capabilities, they've been left fighting a battle alone.

I have worked with Biolyse for four years now and have brought their voice to this House many, many times. Yet the company is at threat to have to move operations overseas because our procurement processes here in Ontario have favoured lower-cost foreign-made product. This is shameful.

Madam Speaker, we cannot sit by anymore and ignore Canadian players any longer. The loss of Biolyse would not just be a blow to the economy of St. Catharines and the loss of hundreds of high-skilled jobs, it would be a failure of provincial responsibility. If we lose a company like Biolyse, it means Ontario cannot rely on itself and its own investments in a time of economic uncertainty.

In the middle of a tariff war, it is so easy to say, "Support local," but where was the government two, three, four years ago when we were sounding the alarm bells and asking for an intervention to save Canadian good companies, like Biolyse in St. Catharines?

We've got real challenges: Ontario needs 26,000 registered nurses, over two million people across Ontario don't have a family doctor right now and 140,000 of them are in Niagara alone. So, Madam Speaker, helping businesses survive trade wars should not mean gutting environmental review processes for industrial products. It should not mean fast-tracking developments on protected lands and it should not mean weakening labour protections or making it harder for workers to organize or advocate for fair treatment.

Ontario businesses need support and need support now—yes—but they need support that is strategic,

sustainable and rooted in long-term stability. They need fair access to funding. They need clarity around supply chain distribution and they need help navigating across the borders. There is not any tangible examples of how this government will assist in this business.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My question is for my colleague from Sudbury. You mentioned that it can't be a race to the bottom, and of course it can't. It's the same as in my area. We're quite concerned. We want to keep our youth and we want to attract people also. But there's housing missing, the highways are killing people. We have only one obstetric in Kapuskasing, and if we lose that then we have 800 kilometres that will not have services. Even the people from Hearst can't come to Kap; they have to go to Thunder Bay.

I want to hear from you on that, because it is a huge concern for northern Ontario that we might lose our investment in our youth to replace us. With this I'm asking what is your feeling on this? Because it's quite concerning for a lot of communities.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my friend from Mushkegowuk—James Bay. The reality in northern Ontario is that, just like in every community, people love where they grew up. But what happens very often is, for work or to go to school you leave. I'll use Dr. Lyne Giroux, who was a roommate with my wife at Ottawa University. She went to Ottawa U for medical school but fought to do her placements in Sudbury before—back then it was a general hospital—it accepted placements from southern Ontario. But she wanted to come back to northern Ontario because she and her wife are from northern Ontario.

What that meant was that they knew, as they were going through a master's and a doctorate program, to move forward in life they were going to start putting roots down. They might be having kids and their kids would be making friends, or they would start making their adult friends and get settled. And even though you want to come back to the north, well, you've kind of got comfortable where you are.

We can't afford to have doctors like Dr. Giroux—Lyne has come back and is one of our skin specialists; we only have two. That's the thing we need to have. We need those resources in the north so that our kids don't leave and so we can grow the north so they can live where they grew up.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: My question is for the member from St. Catharines. My sense is that, generally speaking, you are supportive of us moving ahead with this bill. But if there's one single thing that you want to be sure we're keeping a close eye on, if we move to implementation on this, what would that be, for the people to be sure that the businesses and the people that you serve do well with this arrangement?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I think we really

have to look at the main thing, which is strengthening our economy and making sure that that is here and protecting our workers, making sure that they're safe when they go to work and they continue to be safe. Today and I guess for two weeks now WSIB workers are out on their picket line in front of my office, and I'm out there and I'm speaking to them. They protect our injured workers. We have to really make sure that we are looking after our workers, making sure that when they go to work, they are going to be safe and that they are protected.

Also, I think that we have to recruit more nurses, give them the tools they need and give them good-paying jobs. Give them the tools they need to make sure that they succeed.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, I picked up this research paper from legislative research. I'm going to read from this paper. My question is for the member from Sudbury, by the way. It says: "The Ring of Fire is a remote area of mineral discovery in Ontario's James Bay ... with promising deposits of chromite, nickel and other minerals. These minerals ... have the potential to stimulate economic development in Ontario's Far North."

"Mineral development in the Far North may provide benefits for area First Nations, including local investment, jobs, roads and other infrastructure." This is a non-partisan research paper.

2100

My question to the member is that, when you're talking to your residents and the companies—I had the opportunity to meet many of them in Sudbury. We are in a stage where there's global competition for these minerals. What is your suggestion on how we can bring these minerals quickly out of the Ring of Fire?

MPP Jamie West: I think it's a good question. There is a great deposit of minerals at the Ring of Fire. The problem, though, is that in 2018, to start with, when the Premier made comments like "I'm going to jump on the bulldozer," that slowed negotiations with First Nations treaty rights holders. He repeated it in the last election, which did not help things, again. In Bill 5—there's a giant protest out front. I don't know what's going to happen throughout the summer. None of that is helping things.

Even if you had that relationship worked out—and we should, after the last seven years—even if you did, you have to build the road, and the road is not going to be built until 2030. The government's own documents already outline this and spell it out.

So, right now, we're under threat from Donald Trump. Right now, we should be investing in local mining projects, mining projects that are closer to completion or that are brownfield already. How about expanding projects or investing in things like MIRARCO, where we can be repurposing our tailings?

There are things we can do today. I'm in favour of a long-term plan, but the crisis is right now. We need to invest in mining right now, in things that get to the table by next year, two years from now.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question to the member from Sudbury: You shared the tragic story of a family that lost a loved one in your riding. We had that all across the country. In fact, I want to talk about Ed Thomas, who is a local labour historian. He's a retired Local 5167 worker who has written a book called *Dead but Not Forgotten*, which looks at all of the workers' monuments around the world that are dedicated to those workers that were injured or killed on the job—130 monuments around the world in 22 different countries.

In Hamilton, we have one. That's where we gather every day on the National Day of Mourning, in front of this monument. When this monument was first unveiled in 1990, in a tragic irony, a worker was killed at Dofasco in the morning, and then, in this last year when we celebrated or acknowledged Workers' Day of Mourning, we were just a few short days out from a city worker, Nabil El-Ahmed, who was killed on the job—he was hit by a car.

So this is something that is still happening in the province. Many of these deaths are preventable, so I want to, as you do, make sure that Bill 2 doesn't in any way water down protections for workers in this province.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my friend. I'm always very proud that Sudbury is the home of the Workers' Day of Mourning. We actually started it in 1984, and this has become so popular that it's in more than 100 countries around the world. We basically just stopped counting it at one point. But it's very, very important. If you ever had the unfortunate experience to meet a family whose worker has been killed—we had five fatalities in my workplace in five years. It is a very difficult situation to go through. Nobody goes to work not thinking they're going to come home at the end of the day.

Recognizing that workers have died—and the expression really is to mourn for the dead but to fight for the living. That's the part that's really important. I always remind people on the Day of Mourning that, when you have that moment of silence, at the end of the moment of silence, promise yourself you'll never be silent about health and safety ever again.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'll ask the member from St. Catharines a quick question, because you talked about, in debate, the frustration a company in your riding has had around local procurement, and I hear that from businesses all the time, especially small businesses. I'm wondering if you have any advice for the government of how they could improve local procurement rules so we could actually support "buy Ontario" in this province.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the member from Guelph. What an excellent question. It's time to invest in clean manufacturing and in job training for future industries. We're finding ways to streamline the process for finding internationally trained health care workers.

The company that I spoke about was Biolyse, and it's in St. Catharines. They stood up to the plate when this government wasn't listening and when Canada needed them the most for oncology drugs.

So it has been two, three, four years ago that I've been asking this government. We were sounding the alarms, and they could have intervened and saved Canada goods and companies, even small companies that spin off, even like—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Good evening, everyone—and good evening, I think, to the night crew and some familiar faces who were here last week as well.

I'm rising today to speak about Bill 2, Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act. At its heart, it really is a bill about removing barriers, making it easier to do business, to move goods, to recognize skills and services across provincial borders. It's a step towards building a more integrated and more competitive Canadian economy.

I want to begin by saying that we support the spirit and much of the content of this legislation. For too long, we've operated as 13 separate marketplaces across the country, with sometimes, I would say, redundant rules and artificial barriers that frustrate businesses, workers and consumers alike. Ontario Liberals have long called for breaking down those barriers. We believe in the idea of one Canadian market that truly, truly does work for everyone.

While the vision, I would say, is right, the implementation of this bill will matter very deeply because this bill does give the government reasonably sweeping powers. And with that power also comes the responsibility to ensure that the implementation doesn't lead to deregulation by stealth or to unintended consequences that weaken things like worker protections or safety standards or local accountability. I think people really will be watching, and rightly, expecting this government to live up to strong standards that protect our economy and, in my view, most importantly, our workers.

Let me start by saying what really should be non-negotiable as the implementation, if this bill moves forward—and I presume its passage. Worker health and safety should be a non-negotiable for the government side and, frankly, for all of us in this House, after really hard-won safety standards that have been achieved over many years. We heard clearly from stakeholders at committee last week—like the carpenters' regional council, like the Ontario Federation of Labour—that harmonizing standards must also not mean a race to the bottom. In Ontario, safety isn't optional. We have mandatory working-at-heights training. We have other certifications. We have regulations that require registration, credentialing and oversight. Worker health and safety—I wouldn't view it with the lens of red tape. It's the reason workers return home safely to their families after a day or a night of hard work. Here in Ontario and, I think—I presume all of us in this House are proud that we have high standards to protect our workers.

Under Bill 2, yes, workers from other provinces might be able to practise in Ontario for a time period with deemed certification, regardless of whether they've completed training or not, and that can open the door to significant risk. Again, it depends on how the government side, how the ministry, how the minister implements this.

So let me be clear. We support labour mobility. We want skilled workers to be able to come to our province. We need them. But that mobility must absolutely come with safeguards. A tradesperson from another province should meet the same safety standards as someone who is trained here. Patchwork standards from other jurisdictions very well will, I think, undermine our progress or the progress that has been made over many years here in Ontario.

For example, the province of Alberta—we heard at committee last week of organizations talking about how they do not meet the same high workplace safety standards we see here. We heard at committee that workplace fatalities in Alberta are significantly higher. That's a concern.

So when we're entering into labour mobility agreements with other provinces, we've got to ensure that we're harmonizing up, not down, and that we're not weakening our standards. We're not weakening what makes it really great to be here in Ontario today. Otherwise, what does that mean for job site safety? What does that mean for liability, for workers' compensation, or the person working beside them?

2110

So the government must really clearly commit to retaining and enforcing our very good safety standards as the baseline for all workers, properly supporting regulatory colleges and bodies to help manage these transitions, as well, and rejecting agreements with jurisdictions that fail to meet our equivalent safety provisions. I think we've heard many members in this House this evening talk about worker health and safety in the province.

There are important pieces of this bill that I think will help provide employment and flexibility. Shortening the credential assessment timelines from 30 business days to 30 calendar days, for example: That can help get skilled people working faster, absolutely.

At committee, and I want to raise this in the House as well, we heard from the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. Most engineers, going from province to province, are licensed in just two to three weeks already. There isn't really much of a challenge for them in there. The real issue that I think they were facing at committee, and I think it's something for all of us in this House to take some note of, is that while this bill is going to break down interprovincial trade barriers, there is a lot more work we need to do, for example, on engineering, to help get other folks into practicing here in Ontario from abroad.

What they had said at committee—I was a bit surprised, and I think some of the members around the committee table were surprised as well—is that internationally trained engineers are now making up 80% of new Ontario licensees in the province. That's what we heard at

committee last week. So in some of these sectors, in some of these areas, it isn't necessarily just interprovincial, but it's the need of workers from abroad who want to come here to Canada, come here to Ontario, and work and start a life. So that was an interesting tidbit that we heard at committee last week that I think it's important that we hear in the House today.

We should be doing more to help those engineers and work with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers if we're going to attract global talent and meet the demands in manufacturing, infrastructure, critical materials. We've got to open the door not just faster, but wider as well.

We heard some concern from the Ontario Real Estate Association that, under the new system, realtors from other provinces could operate here during a six-month period without meeting consumer protection standards that I know that this government has done a lot of work in working with the sector to build up. It's the biggest financial decision of people's lives, purchasing a home, and imagine that, only to learn that your realtor wasn't held to our very high standards. That's not fairness. Maybe it's a loophole. Again, I think it's something that it's important, moving forward, for the record, that the government does need to pay attention to this.

The bill allows for direct-to-consumer alcohol sales across provincial borders. Now, I think there's some real potential there. There really is, I think, for Ontario wineries, breweries, distilleries to grow their consumer base and unlock new revenue. I said it at committee, and I'll say it here as well: I found it a little bit silly, going back over the years, that maybe you're visiting Ontario and, technically you can't buy a bottle of wine and bring it across the border. It kind of doesn't make sense. It's easier to bring stuff in and out of the US sometimes than it is between provinces.

I think that is something that is really important. We heard that at committee and I want to thank the wine growers in particular for speaking about how important I think this bill will be to small wineries here in the province, because I think that's what we want to be able to be doing, right? We want to be lifting up small businesses that are trying to get ahead, that are also kind of doing new things, especially in the space of wineries as well.

I had the opportunity to visit one recently in the Niagara area, just for fun, not for work or as a member of provincial Parliament. I was really impressed with the work that that winery was doing and thought, "Hey, do you know what? Maybe this is a good thing for them."

But again, on this, the implementation does matter, and we know that the LCBO, through their dividend to the province, has provided billions in annual revenue to the province. That is something that I think is important that we use, that the government uses to fund important things like health care, education and the day-to-day basic services that we aim to provide and help for residents of our province.

So my point here is that, through this—and the people are going to be watching, by the way. We can't allow a backdoor erosion of public bodies or a slide towards

privatization that will leave our public coffers empty as well and also our small producers vulnerable.

We heard from folks in the sector, in alcohol and wine and beer, that any new model does need to be simple and transparent. I appreciated hearing that from them and the perspective that they had. And I think, when asked the question, there was general agreement and understanding that, well, the LCBO does provide a valuable benefit to the people of this province. I mean, I like it. I find it quite convenient for myself, when I'm going out and purchasing, whether it's some coolers or beer or wine or spirits. And the conversations that are going to take place moving forward really do, in my view, need to happen in the open, in the public, not behind closed doors. The people are watching on this.

Now, the bill does leave a lot to regulation. It leaves a lot to agreements with other provinces. Without coming back, it gives cabinet the power to define what a reciprocating jurisdiction is, to override some statutes and apply rules retroactively. Those are pretty sweeping powers, so it is going to require, I think, some strong oversight. We need clear reporting mechanisms.

It was really fascinating—and I think my colleague from Waterloo said it in her opening remarks as well. I think we both found it quite fascinating, in some ways, that we saw labour, that we saw manufacturers, that we saw commerce all coming together and saying that we need to be working together, we need to be consulted and we all need to be playing a part in this together.

And it's not in the bill, but I do think that we should be looking at public reporting around credential timelines and outcomes, compliance with health and safety standards, impacts in small businesses and regulated professions, what revenue impacts there might be from alcohol sales as well, and progress in interprovincial agreements.

I know we're all trying to move, really, at light speed, and there's a lot to do, and I do commend the government for taking this up as, I think, their first substantive bill in the Legislature. I think there is generally broad support for reducing and eliminating interprovincial trade barriers, but the devil is in the details, right? So we need to be transparent with Ontarians about the risks, the benefits, the outcomes of this. I know the data may exist in some different ways. We've got to make sure that it is pulled together and looked at publicly, and maybe people in the ministry will be doing that.

Speaker, we also, though, I think, need to recognize a contradiction in the bill's goals. I think our intention here is trying to attract more workers through labour mobility. But the challenge here is that we've got an affordability crisis in this province, a pretty big one, that may actually drive those same workers away and our workers here to other provinces in other jurisdictions where, frankly, it's easier to buy a home, it's easier to rent, it's easier to pay the bills with similar wages.

Housing costs in the province have skyrocketed. Rent is unaffordable in many urban centres and in rural areas as well. Home ownership is increasingly out of reach for young people and new Canadians and workers, and we

heard at committee last week that a skilled trade person working here—it's actually still pretty hard. It's pretty hard to buy a home—and making a pretty good wage. So we're witnessing that trend of families leaving Ontario, wondering if they do have a future here, not because they don't necessarily have job opportunities—although I know we have some challenges right now in that as well with the unemployment rate—but also because they can't afford to stay here.

We heard from labour and business together that the cost of living is a serious factor influencing mobility. It's not just about kind of recognizing credentials or cutting red tape; it's about whether people can find a place to live, to raise a family and build a future here in Ontario. So if we don't become a place where wages don't match housing costs, where child care is unaffordable and where infrastructure doesn't support growing communities, even the most streamlined mobility regime is still going to fall short at the end of the day. And we risk training people here and having them leave and go somewhere else, to other provinces, where their dollar is going to be stretched a lot further. So we support Bill 2's goals, but it must be part—and this is the part that I think is missing right now—of a broader strategy that includes real investment and action on housing to put shovels in the ground now, not in three years or four years. Yes, we've got to create the conditions for the future. We've got to get shovels in the ground on housing now. We've got to have real housing affordability for people looking for places all across the housing continuum.

2120

There's a lot of talk about cutting red tape. Well, there's been seven years to cut some of that red tape associated with housing and it's not that much easier to build now than it was seven years ago. Expert reports that have commissioned the same recommended solutions. This really is, in my view, tied into the bill, because if we don't make Ontario affordable, if housing is out of reach for people, they will leave to another province where the cost of buying a home or even renting is much more affordable.

We heard recently on TVO, actually—our nice public broadcaster here in Ontario—a developer that builds in many jurisdictions around the world: Ontario is still the most costly jurisdiction to build in, with the excessive taxes and fees that we see and the longest approval times for new housing.

We've got a shortage of workforce housing, as I was mentioning—housing attainable for working people. Our housing crisis is impacting nurses and teachers: people who are paid by us, in some ways, if you think about it, who are making a good wage, and it's not working for them. So it's not a secret why people are leaving Ontario. We've got great recreation opportunities, absolutely—we really do have a fantastic province—but it's out of reach and it's unaffordable for so many.

When the rules of the game change, so do the winners and losers of it. Ontario businesses have been operating under a certain set of rules, but now with those rules that could very well shift as interprovincial trade barriers come

down, business owners are going to need time to adjust, to rethink their strategies and find their footing in a new and evolving economy. We've seen this before with free trade and breaking down those barriers. There are going to be, I think, some winners and losers in there.

I will say, while the government hasn't always gotten it right on some things, I do think they've shown a willingness, especially in the context of the trade situation with the US, to try to support businesses affected by changing US policy towards Canada. We are going to have some impacts, as well, around this, so that's going to need to be applied in the same context here. We can't afford to leave people behind. We didn't see it with the bill here, but real material support is important there as well.

One of the most striking things that we heard at committee was manufacturers, labour groups, commerce—

Hon. Mike Harris: Your suit is very striking.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: It's nice to see another member of the late crew here tonight.

But we've seen the value of manufacturers and labour groups and commerce associations and harmonizing standards as long as it's done right. I think that message was really clear at committee last week. I think it was a good message for all of us to hear there. This alignment now should be an opportunity to build consensus, to consult meaningfully and design now what that implementation plan looks like.

We did hear at committee that some, especially from the labour side, weren't really consulted. They weren't brought along, and that, I think, is a bit of a shortcoming here with this piece of legislation. It speaks to some of the pattern that we've seen of pushing through, or trying to push through, legislation without properly engaging those who might very well be most affected by it. So labour, in my view, does need to have a seat at the table. Sometimes I know there are inconvenient truths that might come along with it, but it's important that the government does hear what those are as they consider how to make this work for everyone here in the province. Anything less really risks losing that trust and the co-operation that we need to make this bill work.

Speaker, we support the bill. I think I do so with a bit of caution and a clear message to the government, as well: You'll have the tools to make interprovincial trade work for Ontario. You've got to prove that you can use them responsibly. That is a concern, and that means protecting worker safety, that means avoiding a race to the bottom and that means engaging folks who need to be consulted as part of the process and, in my view, keeping the public sector strong and accountable as well. We deserve a competitive economy, just not at the cost of health and not at the cost of safety and security for the people who have the privilege of being able to call Ontario home today. So my message is, let's get it right. Let's get it right for workers, for businesses and for our future.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member for his comments and for his support of this bill. In 2012, the federal Conservative government of the time passed Bill C-311, which removed the federal prohibition of moving wine across interprovincial borders. Many provinces changed their regulations to allow that—BC, Nova Scotia. But Ontario, under the previous Liberal government, did not. Was that a mistake?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I think that's a good question. I try to answer questions somewhat directly sometimes. I think governments of all stripes have made mistakes around it, quite frankly. I think I wish there probably was more foresight around it. I've always viewed myself as someone where, something like that, I think it makes sense that you'd be able to pick it up and move it across. I think as we study what this government will be, I'm sure there will be mistakes there. I'll leave it at that. How's that?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mme France Gélinas: The member mentioned that it's important to listen to workers, to listen to businesses, to make sure we move ahead in a way that is a gain for everybody. We know that in Ontario, we have strong workplace health and safety standards. That is an asset. We try to protect our workers. We try to make sure that there are safe jobs for them to do, keeping workers safe. It makes it easier to attract workers to do that job.

So do you feel confident that there is enough in this bill to make sure that as we trade with the other provinces, those workplace safety standards do not go a race to the bottom, but a race to the top to make sure that everybody follows the strongest health and safety standard possible? Do you feel confidence that we have this in this bill?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I appreciate the question of my colleague from Nickel Belt. In the bill, to be very frank, no. We don't see that in the bill. I think there is a lot of trust that is going to have to take place moving forward around this. In side conversations, do I have a bit more confidence? Yes, I would say, through some of the side conversations that I've had with members on the government side.

But I think, as I said, the devil is really going to be in the details of that implementation. There is going to be a lot of trust. But what I will also say is there's also going to be a lot of people watching when it comes to this as well. I think any erosion for our very strong health and safety standards in this province is going to be a life-changing mistake for someone on the job site.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: My colleague from Ajax just said it again: People are watching. He said that before, in the context of the LCBO. There seems to be some concern about the public coffers and the billions of dollars that have been used in health care because of the LCBO. I'm wondering if you could answer: Are you afraid that this government might be on the road to making a mistake

when it comes to the LCBO, and are you satisfied with any answers that you've had to that question so far?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I thank my colleague from Toronto–St. Paul's for the question. I think there is a worry that this government—it's not through this bill necessarily, as it's not going to get rid of the LCBO at the end of the day. But I have a concern that I'm not sure that the government is committed to keeping the LCBO public.

We didn't hear any definitive response from that at committee when the minister was there. There was a bit of a duck and a dodge around the question. So I think that time will tell in terms of what happens there. I do think that through the bill, there will be an opening of direct-to-consumer sales from other provinces and needing to come up with some sort of tax regime, because each province, they do it differently in terms of how they deal with alcohol—and we have a very complex part of that here in this country.

2130

I'm not sure this government, frankly, is committed to keeping the LCBO public based on what I've heard. Maybe their opinion will change—I don't know—but that's what I've heard so far, frankly.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the member opposite for his comments. We sit on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs together. We heard from 14 delegates on the day of hearing about Bill 2, and a lot of that was dealing with the aspects of the bill that require reciprocity, so that's labour mobility, mutual recognition and the consumer direct sales of alcohol.

My question to the member opposite deals with the first one, which is the elimination of the party-specific exemptions. In Ontario—we're the largest player in interprovincial trade—we do over \$326 billion in interprovincial trade every year, which is about 28% of our GDP, and we've seen interprovincial trade grow by \$75 billion since we took office in 2018. So my question to the member opposite is, does he support us leading by example, eliminating the party-specific exemptions and opening up our markets so that we can enhance that trade?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: The short answer is yes. At the end of the day, it's something that we, as Ontario Liberals, campaigned on as well: to eliminate interprovincial trade barriers. I do think it is a bold move, to move forward and say we are going to essentially get rid of our party-specific exemptions. I think there are other provinces there that are afraid to do it. Hopefully, some of them will follow what we're doing here in Ontario and what other provinces are trying to do as well.

I think the other piece—and I didn't get into it in my remarks, but there is an aspect of federal leadership that is going to need to come into this as well. We saw the first ministers meet today. It seemed as though, generally, folks were getting along, more or less, across the country. But I think in terms of implementation and how do we

harmonize some of these standards, how do we enhance worker health and safety, and how do we make it easier to trade—I do think the federal government is also going to need to play some leadership there from a facilitation role and helping provinces move along. We're a lot bigger here in Ontario than some of these other provinces, so I think it could be very much a challenge for some of them. I'm very keenly interested to see what's coming out on the federal side of things as well.

The member opposite is absolutely correct on the impact to trade and the impact to our GDP. We can make products more affordable for people, and we can grow our economy through interprovincial trade, absolutely.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you to the member from Ajax for your presentation. A labour shortage is very important for a lot of ridings; in my riding, it's 60% francophones. The labour shortage is not only in health care—it is huge in health care, of course, but it doesn't stop at health care.

I'd like to hear from you: Do you think the government is meeting the moment when it comes to francophone labour shortages? Because it is a huge thing in a lot of ridings.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I appreciate the question, and it's a good question. My previous background was in public education. When it came to francophone workers, that was actually a big challenge that we had, in recruiting and retaining qualified French teachers, for example. That's something that I think could impact many ridings. That's my own experience that I think I can speak to.

In terms of meeting that moment—I've heard from many of my colleagues in this House—I don't think the government is meeting the moment there. I think the gap is getting worse. It's not getting better, quite frankly. So while not directly with this, we do have other provinces as well where there are francophone populations. But I can speak to what I know, and in education, it's a big challenge. Quite frankly, there's a lot more that we need to be doing in that area.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): A quick question and response. Question?

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today this evening to speak to Bill 2, the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act. I just want to say, Speaker, when Donald Trump put forward these ridiculous tariffs, I put forward a number of solutions to protect Canadian workers, Canadian jobs, Canadian businesses—things like an investment tax credit to help unlock the investment that was frozen by the threats from south of the border or supporting direct investment to protect workers and companies affected by the tariffs. Two ideas I put forward that are relevant to this bill were diversifying trade partners and removing interprovincial trade barriers and to have a “buy Ontario” strategy. So, while I have some concerns about some limitations and some holes in this bill, especially when it

comes to some of the regulatory unknowns, I will be supporting this bill because I do believe it moves us forward in helping to reduce interprovincial trade barriers and boost our economy. It will improve labour mobility in the province.

I want to extend the government a bit of grace, even though I'm going to raise some concerns on this, because I'm encouraged by the MOUs that Ontario has signed with other provinces. I certainly think that we want to show strength through unity to push back against Trump's tariff threats, and I'd like to see Canada meet the July 1 deadline the Prime Minister has put forward.

I wish the government would extend the same graciousness when it comes to Bill 5, which is actually dividing Ontarians at a time when we should be coming together like we are around Bill 2. So I hope the government listens to the thousands of people who were on the front lawn today and the tens of thousands of people who have been raising concerns about Bill 5.

Schedule 1 talks about "buy Ontario." If we're going to buy Ontario, we need to fix the procurement process that freezes out too many Ontario companies, and we need to protect the farmland that feeds us so we can grow the food here in Ontario that people in this province want to buy.

Schedule 6 raises some concerns when it comes to making sure we don't have a race to the bottom when it comes to worker health and safety standards. Others have talked about the fact that we have higher standards when it comes to things like working at heights in Ontario, and we don't want to see that undermined here.

We've also had nurses raise concerns about making sure that we have the qualifications in place for nurses, and that when we talk about attracting nurses from other places, we actually make sure they have good working conditions when they come to Ontario so they stay in the profession when they move here.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the comments that we heard moments ago, but I would like to ask the member opposite to clarify himself. Earlier this evening, at the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus, I heard you say specifically you actually like this bill. I would like to ask you to share with the House tonight what it is about Bill 2 that you like.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. Like I said in my debate remarks, and I will repeat once again now, I will be voting for this bill, and one of the reasons I'm voting for this bill is because we do need to reduce interprovincial trade barriers to help boost our economy. Like I said in my debate remarks, even though I raised some concerns about this bill, I'm going to support it because I think we need to show strength through unity to push back against Donald Trump. I wish the government would show the same desire to have unity when it comes to Bill 5.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

M^{me} France G  linas: The member talked a bit about procurement, and I agree. Earlier on my colleague talked about Biolyse and how, although they manufacture injectable cancer drugs, oncology drugs, they were not able to break into the Ontario market. British Columbia buys from them, but Ontario doesn't because Ontario has procurement that is always for huge amounts. How do you see procurement changes that would make sure that every innovator, every business that produces something that is useful in Ontario is actually able to get into the Ontario market?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's questions. I've heard over and over ever since I've been elected around the concerns people have, companies have, especially smaller businesses, being able to access public procurement in Ontario. For those of us who were here during the COVID pandemic and happened to be on the committee where businesses testified to us all summer of 2020, almost every delegation from a business said they struggle to be able to sell to the Ontario government because the procurement rules are so difficult to navigate, especially for small businesses.

I think one of the ways we can make it easier is to have a one-window approach for them, and another way is to make sure that we buy in different quantities so we can support large businesses from Ontario and small businesses from Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Question?

Hon. Trevor Jones: I thank the member for Guelph for his comments. It's all the more appropriate that we're debating Bill 2 tonight when it's Local Food Week in Ontario. I'd like to know if the member for Guelph can share—because this bill, if passed, will encourage interprovincial trade. It will let Ontario showcase its economic might through agriculture. Can the member for Guelph share a local agribusiness, a start-up or a store or a farmer's market from Guelph that he might want to highlight as this week is Local Food Week?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. There are many I could share today, but the one I'm going to talk about is GoodLeaf. Anybody seen GoodLeaf? They're a vertical farm, south end of Guelph—fantastic product. When we think about opening interprovincial trade barriers, it's the kind of company that literally started in a little, tiny, almost garage and has now grown into a factory-sized production that can export across Canada and around the world. That's the kind of local food company that I believe this bill can support as we open markets across Canada.

At the same time, I just want to say that, all those great food producers out there, I know we all love them across the aisle. For those who are doing cash crops, livestock, cattle, things like that that require larger land masses, let's make sure we protect the land that they grow their food on, that contributes \$50 billion to Ontario's economy, over 875,000 jobs, so they can all take advantage of removing interprovincial trade barriers.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Fedeli has moved third reading of Bill 2, An Act to enact the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act, 2025 and the Ontario Free Trade and Mobility Act, 2025 and to amend various other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Third reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
Orders of the day.

Mr. Steve Clark: No further business.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2144.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt

Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Donna Skelly

Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,

Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

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

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

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

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