

Wednesday, May 14, 2025
(Bill 17/Housing, Supply Act & Budget)

Housing

Mr. David Smith: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Families in Ontario want a safe and affordable place to live. They want a chance to own a home. But for too long, the previous Liberal government let costs rise and delayed growth. They didn't act. That is why our government is taking action. We are cutting the red tape, we are building faster and we are working with cities and towns to get shovels in the ground. Our new housing legislation will make it easier to build roads, bridges and homes. It will help builders work faster and help people find a place to live.

Speaker, can the minister share how this new legislation will help us to build more homes and support our economy?

Hon. Rob Flack: I think everybody knows we're facing economic headwinds from the Trump tariffs to the attacks on jobs in Ontario. We all know that it can't be business as usual. That's why we're pro-acting, Speaker.

In Vaughan this week, I introduced Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act. And what's it doing, Speaker? It's creating the environment, the conditions, to get housing built.

We're providing tools to our municipal partners, like key critical infrastructure. The Minister of Infrastructure announced \$400 million more to provide our municipal partners with getting key infrastructure in the ground. That's on top of the already \$2 billion we've invested to support their need to get shovels in the ground.

Speaker, I was proud to stand there with the association of municipalities, Ontario home builders, BILD, RESCON, LIUNA and more. Why? They're all in support of our plan. In unison, together, everyone achieves more. It takes too long to get shovels in the ground. We're going to change that.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. David Smith: I want to thank the minister for the great work he's doing within the ministry.

For too long, the previous Liberal government let costs rise and delayed growth. That is why our government is taking action. We are cutting red tape, we are lowering costs, we are making it easier to build. With this legislation we will help builders put shovels in the ground faster. More homes mean stronger community, good jobs and a secure future for Ontarians.

We are also supporting critical projects like long-term-care homes to get built. This means our seniors get the care they deserve.

Can the minister share how these changes will help us build more homes and keep life affordable for Ontario families?

Hon. Rob Flack: As I said in my initial response, it takes too long and it costs too much to build a home in this province. That's why we are not waiting, Speaker. We're acting; we're pro-acting. That is why we deferred DCs until occupancy, again, helping our home builders get shovels in the ground, enabling key cash flow to get the job done. That is why, to the member's question, we eliminated DCs in long-term-care homes—eliminated them, Speaker. And that is why we're making it easier for schools to accommodate growth.

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It takes too long to get shovels in the ground. That is what this act is going to improve. We're going to make it more affordable for people to buy a home and keep the dream of home ownership alive in this province for generations to come.

Supply Act, 2025

Ms. Mulroney moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025

Ms. Jessica Bell:

Another submission that was introduced in the pre-budget consultations is a submission by Fix Our Schools. Now, Fix Our Schools is one of many organizations—this one is led by parents—that are very concerned about the state of Ontario's public schools right now, and you can see why. From when the Conservatives first got into power to the present day, we have lost about \$1,500 per student, when inflation is factored in, to our public schools, and we can see the impact of those cuts every day. We have buildings that are not in a good state of repair where we have issues with boilers and HVAC systems. We have flooding. Schools are too hot in summer; they're too cold in winter. The windows need to be replaced. The playgrounds are not up to a standard where it's easy to play in them. There are a lot of issues. There are also sometimes issues with air quality and ventilation, issues with the drinking water. As most parents know, in Toronto, you cannot drink the drinking water in many public schools because of the high concentration of lead in the pipes, which means most parents out there fill up their kid's drinking water bottle in the morning and remind their child not to drink from the tap at school because of the high rate of lead. That is the reality of our school buildings today.

Fix Our Schools wrote us a report. They submitted it to the pre-budget consultation committee to call for some action on these issues. They're asking for some very practical things. Every publicly funded school in Ontario should be "safe, well-maintained, healthy and provides an environment conducive to learning and working." What they are calling for is a commitment from this government in the upcoming budget to uphold a standard of good repair, which means investing that \$16.8 billion that is needed to repair our schools, making sure they are energy-efficient, well-maintained, safe, with good ventilation and heating and cooling.

What we have seen, and Fix Our Schools makes reference to this, is that the government has consistently provided less funding, year in and year out, for school repairs, and what that has meant is that the capital repair backlog is growing—instead of shrinking, which is the direction that it should go into. And the reason why I think it's useful to talk about schools and investment is that we're in a situation where we're facing some pretty significant economic threats from down south. Trump is behaving in a way that is chaotic and vindictive. He is intent on creating economic uncertainty and economic harm to Canada, which is why it has never been more important to have the government leverage its resources to invest in infrastructure and job creation opportunities to ensure that Ontarians remain employed so we can tackle our rising unemployment rate. And when we think about that goal, investing in schools is a very practical way to achieve that because when we invest in schools, we are keeping people in the trades employed, and we're also addressing a social challenge, which is making sure that our schools remain in a state of good repair. So I appreciate the Fix Our Schools report and all that you have had to say in that.