

Road safety

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Speaker, families across Ontario are doing their best to make ends meet. The old Liberal carbon-tax cash grab made gas, groceries and housing all cost more. Now on top of that, they're being hit with unfair speed camera tickets. These cameras were supposed to make our streets safer. Instead, they have turned into cash machines for municipalities.

We have seen the reports. One camera in Brampton issued over 32,000 tickets in just three weeks. Madam Speaker, that's not safety; that's a money grab. Ontarians want safer space, not surprise fines.

Can the minister tell this House what our government is doing to stop these cash-grab cameras and stand up for drivers and families across Ontario?

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you to the great, hard-working member from Brampton West for that important question.

The days of cash-grab cameras are numbered. We've seen what's happening in Brampton and Toronto: thousands of tickets just from a handful of cameras. That's not slowing people down; it's hitting them in their wallets.

Our government is focused on real solutions to reduce speeding and keep streets safe, not on sending tickets weeks after the fact—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: We've asked municipalities to pull these cameras, and if they don't comply, our government is ready to take action. Since day one, our government's been focused on keeping costs down for families and businesses. We've scrapped tolls, frozen driver's licence fees, eliminated licence plate stickers. We've cut the gas tax while the Liberals want to support the carbon tax. We fought against the carbon tax, Speaker.

Now we're standing up for drivers again: no more surprise tickets, no more revenue schemes, no more cash grabs, and we're going to make sure that we put safety first under this Premier's leadership.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for that answer. Parents in my community want drivers to slow down when passing a school. A hidden speed camera doesn't stop speeding when it happens. All it does is send a ticket weeks later in the mail. In some cases, drivers were even ticketed before they entered the reduced speed zone.

When municipalities see the number of tickets go up, you would think that they would use that money to make roads safer, but instead too many are just collecting the cash. Parents don't want revenue tools; they want real safety.

Can the parliamentary assistant explain what steps our government is taking to reduce speeding and protect our children in school zones?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you again to the member from Brampton West.

Under the leadership of our Premier, we've taken real action to reduce speeding and improve road safety. We want all of our children to be safe. They shouldn't have to worry about a flying car passing by their child's school.

That's why our government is proposing new measures that will prevent speeding when it happens. This includes supporting municipalities with traffic-calming measures such as speed bumps and warning signs.

It's clear cameras are not reducing speeding, but they are raising cash for municipalities, and the cash isn't being reinvested in speed-calming measures. We've heard the member from Brampton West talk about thousands and thousands—30,000—speeding tickets issued off one camera in Brampton, over 75,000 tickets off of one camera in Toronto.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: We're going to make sure that the money is invested where it should go, and that's protecting our children, protecting our youth and installing these traffic-calming measures. That's what we're going to do.

Youth unemployment

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Youth unemployment is at 22.2%, the highest in a generation, but instead of offering solutions, this Premier told young people to work harder.

At our NDP youth jobs round table, we heard the truth: Too many young people are chasing too few jobs. One worker told me, "I've sent out hundreds of applications and can't even get an interview." This isn't a work ethic problem; it is a jobs problem.

My question is for the Premier: When is this Premier going to stop blaming youth and start building real career opportunities for them?

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

Hon. David Piccini: We've heard from the Premier: over a million net new jobs created under this Premier's leadership, who stands up for Canada, who stands against a President who's launched a war on our key critical sectors.

But he doesn't stop there. He looks at bringing in manufacturing through creating a low-tax environment. He looks at creating meaningful pathways into the trades. Why? Because for the first time ever, we're building hospitals. We're building highways. We're actually building public transit.

We launched our Level Up! skilled trades career fairs, exposing youth to meaningful opportunities in the skilled trades. More youth today than at any point in modern history have signed up for an apprenticeship for a rewarding career. With one in three skilled tradespeople retiring in the next decade, now more than ever we need to make those investments. That's exactly what we're doing.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. According to the Labour Force Survey, between 2019 and 2025, Ontario unemployment rates among teens aged 15 to 19 climbed from 14.9% to 22.2%. This means nearly one in four teenagers in Ontario's labour force is now unemployed. Speaker, these are recession employment numbers.

This is very serious; we need a Premier to take this seriously. Youth are desperately trying to find jobs, but they are losing hope. Where's the plan to incentivize youth hiring? Why haven't you expanded work-integrated learning?

To the Premier: Where is the damn plan to protect these workers in Ontario?

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Withdraw.

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

Hon. David Piccini: Like I said, this Premier is laser-focused on creating those meaningful pathways for youth. We recognize that we're not immune from global uncertainty. Our country is not immune from that, but when it comes to standing up for our country, it's this Premier. Youth know that when it comes to getting from A to Z, they need to get on public transit. It's this Premier making those investments.

When it comes to jobs in AI and tech, it's this Premier creating a competitive climate in which to bring those manufacturers, those companies here. We have a life sciences sector boom, Speaker, thanks to investments from this Premier.

We're going to continue working hard to create those opportunities. We welcome ideas to get youth into meaningful employment. That's why we launched the Level Up! career fair, Speaker, and I've seen some of those members opposite attend it. These are the things we've got to do to show youth there are pathways—there are pathways today that lead into jobs—and we're never going to stop working hard for those youth.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Seeing there are no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

Respect for Taxpayers Act (Haldimand County Trustee Vacancy), 2025

Mr. Calandra moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to vacate the office of the member of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board who represented Haldimand County between July 8, 2024 and July 15, 2024

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Would the minister like to briefly explain the bill?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The bill really is quite a simple one. It would, for all intents and purposes, fire the trustee who, along with a couple of other colleagues, went to Italy between July 8, 2024, and July 15, 2024, and spent thousands of dollars in doing so. That was money that was taken

out of the classroom, taken away from students. The trustee named is refusing to pay back the money that he spent on, for all intents and purposes, what is a vacation. This bill—really quite simple—would fire that trustee for refusing to pay back the money that he owes to parents, students and teachers.

Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy

Mr. Aris Babikian: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 in relation to codes of conduct /

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Shall the report be received and adopted?

Twelve members having stood in their places, we will now have a 30-minute report-stage debate on the motion for the adoption of the report on the bill as amended, pursuant to standing order 38(b). In this debate, each recognized party is allotted eight minutes and the independent members are allotted a total of six minutes.

I recognize the member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Over the summer, committee packed up and hit the road. They went to London, Niagara Falls, Barrie, Ottawa and Thunder Bay, listening to residents, integrity commissioners, municipal staff and survivors of harassment. They came in good faith. They told their stories. Some relived trauma they had spent years trying to put behind them. They believed their government was listening. But after all that testimony, after all of that travel, after all of that taxpayer money, one thing became crystal clear: The government never intended to change a single word of Bill 9. The hearings weren't about consultation. They were a cross-province photo op, a waste of time, a waste of money and, frankly, a waste of hope.

Bill 9 pretends to fix municipal accountability. It talks about serious cases and stronger codes of conduct, but the fine print tells a different story. Cabinet "may" prescribe a code of conduct—not "shall" prescribe or "will" prescribe; it "may" prescribe. There's no real guarantee of a single standard. It's optional. It's window dressing.

And the so-called ultimate penalty, the removal of a councillor or a mayor from office: That decision is left to the very same council colleagues—the friends, the allies and the political partners—of the person being accused. And not just a vote—not a majority, not even a two-thirds super majority. It requires unanimous consent. Every single colleague—nobody can be absent. One friend, one political buddy, one member of the old boys' club, can block accountability. Under Bill 9, if you can find a single friend, you can keep your seat, no matter what you've done.

Let's be honest about what that means. Many of us here have served in municipal politics over the years. It can be a tight circle—small towns, close relationships, favours owed. When the worst behaviour happens, too often it's inside that same circle. And Bill 9 hands the keys of discipline to the same insiders who already protect each other. That's not a code of conduct.

That's a code of silence. Bill 9 protects the good old boys' club, not the people who work for them.

We heard loud and clear from witnesses. Integrity commissioners told us this unanimous vote is almost an impossible threshold. A partner with one of the biggest law firms in municipal affairs in Ontario, Aird and Berlis, called it fatally flawed. Democracy Watch called it a kangaroo court. Survivors called it a betrayal. Even the integrity commissioner of Toronto warned that the structure will water down stronger local regimes and block justice for victims.

Imagine working in an office where your abuser keeps their job because their best friend down the hall refuses to vote them out. That's what Bill 9 creates. That's not accountability. That's impunity.

Ontario didn't need another summer road show to learn this lesson. We already had the solution on the table. It was called Bill 5, the Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act. That bill would have made every councillor subject to workplace violence and harassment policies, just like everyone else. Then, if an integrity commissioner found serious misconduct, it could be referred to a judge, and a judge would make a decision. An independent court could vacate the seat and bar the person from running again. That's real accountability. That's an independent, transparent, survivor-centred process. But the government voted it down. Then they copied parts of it into Bill 9, but they removed the parts that actually mattered, the parts that gave it teeth. They took the body of Bill 5 and stripped out its soul.

Let's talk about this summer tour a little bit. Five cities, dozens of witnesses, thousands of kilometres travelled, tens of thousands of taxpayers' dollars spent—not a single change recommended by the members of the government who sit on the committee; not a single amendment accepted to fix the bill's biggest problems. This government must think that they're perfect.

Everywhere committee went, people asked the same question afterwards: "Why are we here if they've already made up their minds?" The media called it out. The Pointer called it, again, "a kangaroo court." TVO said it was a waste of everyone's time; I believe there was an op-ed in the Ottawa Citizen to the same effect. They're right.

If you're not going to listen to people, then why don't you just stay in Toronto? You don't need a summer road show to believe that you're perfect. Don't drag survivors and staff across the province to relive their trauma for a bill that you won't change.

Interjections.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Madam Speaker, they can heckle over there; they can call it what they want. But you can't call it accountability when the accused gets to stack the jury.

The cost of doing nothing to address this kind of harassment and abuse isn't, and shouldn't be, measured in committee travel expenses—although for a government that's so proud of its pretty bad financial record, one would think they would try to avoid wasting taxpayer dollars. The cost of doing nothing is measured in the staff who quit, the expertise and the passion our cities and towns lose out on, the residents who lose faith, and the survivors who decide it's safer to stay silent. When those people look at Bill 9, they see a system still run by insiders, still governed by silence, and still stacked against accountability. They see a government protecting the good old boys' club, not the community.

Bill 9 leaves the fox guarding the henhouse. It says to every councillor and mayor, “Don’t worry. As long as your buddies have your back, you’re safe.” It tells every staffer who has been bullied or harassed, “We believe you, but only if your abusers or friends agree.” And it tells taxpayers that their government is more interested in protecting insiders than protecting integrity. That’s not accountability.

The people who came to those hearings deserved a government with the courage to stand up to the club, to not bow down to it. They deserved a law that says no one, no matter how well connected, is above the rules. Accountability should not depend on who you drink coffee with or go for a beer with.

The government had a chance to fix this bill, to replace politics with principle, to replace friendship with fairness, to replace the backroom with the courtroom, and they blew it.

Madam Speaker, real accountability doesn’t come from unanimous votes or summer road shows. It comes from courage, and, unfortunately, this government hasn’t shown any.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Furter debate?

Mr. Jeff Burch: It’s a pleasure to have an opportunity to rise and speak to this.

I appreciate my colleague from Orléans. We’ve both put forward legislation since 2021, when we first started discussing this issue. They were both voted down.

I think the government, on their third try, came forward with legislation that most people in the province recognize as completely inadequate.

Last session, we had all kinds of bills that were time-allocated and rammed through the Legislature. This was actually one where the government decided, “We’re going to have committee hearings across the province.” And I welcomed that because there were flaws in the bill that needed to be fixed. So they spent thousands of dollars, as my colleague mentioned, travelling the province, seeking input on the bill, and ended up changing nothing. The government ignored advice from experts and stakeholders and voted down our key amendment, one that we and most stakeholders all agreed on: that a non-political process to remove municipal councillors by judicial review is needed. Asking city council for a unanimous vote to remove a colleague guilty of egregious acts will not work. The process needs to be fair, it needs to be objective, and it needs to be evidence-based. Why pay for community consultation if you don’t listen to anyone?

All kinds of questions came up, not just the question of removal of a councillor. Will requiring a unanimous council vote following two inquiries by two integrity commissioners finding serious misconduct set the bar for removal too high? Almost everyone agreed that, yes, it will.

Why is the decision on removal being left to council and not to a judge, as AMO and others have recommended? If politicians, not a judge, are deciding whether to remove another politician, is there not a risk of politicizing the process, or at least creating the appearance of politicization? As someone who served two terms on a city council—as many of my colleagues have municipal experience, we all know that it’s a politically charged environment, and expecting a unanimous vote of a city council and all members having to be present is not a reasonable bar when you’re trying to protect people in the municipal arena from egregious acts of sexual harassment and assault. It’s just not reasonable.

In 2021, the NDP—myself—was briefed on a bill that included a provision allowing a judge to remove a councillor found guilty of serious misconduct. Why did the government scrap that bill and abandon the principle of judicial review and then come forward with a bill that was completely inadequate, then hold committee hearings across the province, and then ignore the advice from everyone?

Former Ontario Integrity Commissioner David Wake recommended that Ontario establish a central database of all completed inquiries. There's no such provision in this bill. Will it be created via regulation? We just don't know. That's something that came up in our conversations while we were travelling the committee.

David Wake also recommended that the Ontario government help smaller municipalities manage costs, something smaller municipalities asked for. There is no such provision in this bill.

Does the government intend to provide additional financial support to help smaller municipalities manage the cost of hiring an integrity commissioner?

These and many other questions were not answered, despite being brought up by many municipal stakeholders throughout those presentations.

Just in case the government decides to time-allocate this debate and not provide us time to speak about the input that we received in committee, I want to make sure that certain things are on the record.

We heard from the president of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, Ms. Danielle Manton. She said they understand “the need for a high threshold when removing an elected member of council from office, but we do think that the government could consider a voting threshold of two thirds of council, as AMO has also proposed.”

So there you have AMO, representing 440 municipalities across Ontario, and the organization representing the municipal clerks and managers across Ontario making a suggestion based on what all of their members have told them, completely ignored by the government.

They went on to say, “To actually have an integrity commissioner matter go through two independent accountability officers, only to then put the onus on that council, who is also meant to collaborate and be united in some of their decision-making where possible—it's very difficult for a council to show up and have to have a unanimous vote on something that is actually affecting one of their own members. So I do think that looking at a threshold of two thirds of council would be something that we would recommend.”

That's a recommendation that the government could have accepted.

Kathryn Desrosiers, a municipal councillor in the town of Alymer, said, “The prospects of being removed through a subjective or politicized process, without due process, could discourage women, young people, and equity-deserving groups from stepping forward to serve. Rather than strengthening democracy, this could inadvertently narrow it.”

Michael Di Lullo: “I'm here on behalf of the Ontario Municipal Administrators Association....

“You must remove politics from the most serious decisions. Bill 9 currently proposes that removal from office be subject to a vote of council. That's not good enough. It risks retraumatizing victims and turning serious misconduct into a popularity contest. We believe

removal should be a legal decision, not a political one”—something that everyone agrees to, something that the opposition parties agree to and were willing to support in committee.

The Association of Ontario Road Supervisors: “Previous versions of this legislation propose a judicial review process, which added a layer of independence and safeness. That safeguard is missing from Bill 9.”

On and on and on, we have delegation after delegation suggesting that the government take a look at the suggestions of opposition parties, of AMO, of municipal managers across Ontario to come forward with a fair, evidence-based process that will protect folks at the municipal level from serious and egregious acts of misconduct. But the government has ignored this over and over and over again.

So we would join our colleagues on this side of the House asking for the government—it’s not too late. They can make changes. They can take a look at this. They can listen to the advice of all of the groups, all of the stakeholders, like the Women of Ontario Say No, who depended on this government and on this committee to come up with a bill that actually protected women and other persons in the municipal arena from these egregious acts of misconduct. The government has failed on this. We, as the opposition, are asking them.

It’s not too late. Listen to what we’ve said. Listen to what the stakeholders have said and make the changes that are necessary to protect folks at the municipal level.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Welcome back, everyone. It’s great—

Interjection.

Mr. Matthew Rae: My colleague from Beaches–East York is already heckling me, Speaker. I haven’t even started.

It’s great to be back in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, this very historic building. It’s great that the members of the third party wanted to hear little old Matt Rae, speak today. I guess they missed my voice at committee.

I know some members were at committee this summer, and I know it has been talked about at length about how the committee travelled. As my colleague mentioned, it went to Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Whitby, Niagara and London.

Obviously, with all committees, colleagues, as we all know in this place, you can still submit—even if you’re not able to; we all have very busy lives—feedback to a committee through the committee process, whether it’s written form or to the Clerk directly.

It’s an important process of our democratic system—having committees and travelling those committees. We travelled extensively.

It was a little disheartening hearing the member from Orléans saying that committee is a waste of time. I know I don’t view committees in that aspect.

Committees are meeting today, doing important work.

Government estimates are coming up. I know our ministers are looking very much forward to sharing the good news that our government is doing, making those investments in communities across Ontario, not just downtown Toronto, ensuring that we're investing in Thunder Bay, Niagara, London—Ottawa, even. A new deal in Ottawa—unfortunately, the members of the third party voted against that new deal.

Interjection.

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's shameful, I know.

I was very shocked to hear the members opposite say that committee was a waste of time. I know we heard extensively from AMO, the northern municipalities, rural Ontario, as well. There was a lot of great feedback through that process on this piece of legislation we are debating here today.

Interjections.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Speaker, they're still trying to drown out this really reasoned debate on a Monday afternoon in October, ensuring that we're here debating legislation, as the people of Ontario elected us to do—on this legislation we're talking about today. I'm assuming we're all going to agree that it should be reported back. For the vast majority of things, we report back to this House with very little fanfare. It is part of the process and procedure in this place.

Really, today, we're talking about the Municipal Accountability Act. We heard through that committee, and even before, that many groups had brought forward ideas on how to improve accountability and, really, safety and codes of conduct in the municipal workforce. We have 444 municipalities across Ontario, and this, unfortunately, is a challenge in many of them.

Our government has been listening. I know Minister Flack, myself, and many others of my colleagues and members of the opposition, both parties—even the independents, I believe, attended AMO and heard from our municipal partners about some things we can do to improve accountability and the codes of conduct for our municipal staff and our municipal colleagues, ensuring we have good governance in Ontario.

Good governance is part of our country's foundation, colleagues. It's part of what our country was founded to do. They saw what was happening south of the border—similar to what's happening now, I would argue—and didn't want any part of that. They wanted good governance over 150 years ago now, colleagues.

This is a continuation of that, working with our municipal partners to ensure that they work in a safe environment. It has been talked about at committee and before this bill was brought forward, for many years now. But what was talked about was how it was councillor and councillor—I also heard, in my own role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, about how it's also staff to staff and staff and councillor as well.

So it's ensuring that we're encompassing all people who work in our municipal side of things, whether it's the staff or councillors, ensuring that we're there to support them and the important work they do.

We have an ambitious plan to build Ontario—\$200 billion in infrastructure spending over the next 10 years. That includes hospitals, roads, bridges all across Ontario. As I mentioned, our

government ministers will be doing estimates at committee, talking about some of those good investments across Ontario, ensuring that we're continuing to invest in those communities.

I know we're entering a municipal election next year, and we're going to ensure that we continue to work with our municipal colleagues and that they are supported, whether it's the historic amounts of—

Interjections.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I know.

They just keep interrupting.

I need to pause. I'm going to take a drink.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Mr. Matthew Rae: It is a municipal election next year—and yes, there will be a municipal election next year. Bonnie Crombie may be running for the mayor of Mississauga again—I'm not sure, but to be seen.

I was going on my line of thought there around the additional OMPF funding we're providing to our rural and northern municipalities, which is very important to them.

This piece of bill was another example of us working with our colleagues, listening to that feedback; ensuring we're establishing a standard code of conduct for all municipalities—for every mayor, councillor, and member of a local board is held to the same ethical standards; creating a consistent and province-wide framework for integrity commissioners, something we heard former commissioner David Wake recommend to our government. What we have heard from our municipal colleagues is very important.

I know the minister and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing continued to do that important work, even over the summer, and introduced mandatory training for elected officials, building upon that training that is already offered to our municipal colleagues, but ensuring that those individuals who may be deciding to potentially throw their hat in the ring for mayor of Toronto or mayor of any other city is—

Interjection.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Maybe the member from Beaches–East York is going to run for mayor.

Interjection: I'd vote for her.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I'd vote for the member from Beaches–East York to be mayor, and I know who her councillor is.

Ensuring the mandatory training for elected officials—outside of the larger urban centres, this is a part-time role. Many of my colleagues on the municipal side served in those rural or northern municipalities. They have other responsibilities and other jobs, professional lives. Not everyone is a policy nerd like myself and understands Robert's Rules of Order or anything else—so it's ensuring they understand those aspects.

The bill that we are debating today—and really, I'm always happy to talk about municipal codes of conduct and those important aspects with our colleagues of all parties—is creating the

conditions and good framework for good municipal governance, something I think all of us can agree on and something we can all agree to strive for. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will continue to strive to do that, to ensure that we are working with our municipal colleagues, all 444 of them, and ensure that we're there to support them—as we have for the past seven-plus years. And we'll continue to do so.

With that, Speaker, I'd like to conclude my remarks this afternoon.

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

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: A few weeks ago, I wrote a newspaper column describing how governments deliberately create or exaggerate a situation or a problem so they can implement a predetermined solution taxpayers might not otherwise accept. The conclusion to that column was "Today, the school board trustee, and tomorrow, the municipal councillor. It's a slippery slope toward the demise of democracy, and as taxpayers, we will not know what we had until it is gone." That's how I view Bill 9.

Yes, Bill 9 will enable the creation of a new standardized code of conduct, mandatory code of conduct training for members of council and local boards, as well as an integrity commissioner inquiry process that would be consistent across Ontario.

As we've heard this afternoon, it all sounds great until you realize the key pillar of the legislation creates a mechanism to remove council members from office if they're found to have committed "egregious" acts. What is the definition of "egregious"? That's where things get a little scary in a democracy, and this should be highly concerning to all of us.

Imagine a vindictive government that doesn't like the way things are unfolding in a municipality and decides that they're going to get rid of some of the people around the table.

Looking at local politics in my riding as of late, the sentiment amongst my constituents is that local politics is being manipulated by a higher force.

Despite hearing from many elected officials and key stakeholders, this government refuses to make changes or amendments where the final decision to remove an elected official would be up to a judge. Municipal councillors should not vote on whether to eliminate a colleague from council, given that they're not judges and their colleague was elected by taxpayers—only the taxpayer should decide at the ballot box in the next election. That's how democracy works.

According to Grimsby councillor Veronica Charrois, language contained within Bill 9 is dangerously vague and open to subjective interpretation. "Without precise definitions, this clause could be exploited in politically divided councils," Charrois told the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy during hearings on Bill 9. "For example, in my case, a high volume of minor or politically motivated complaints could be misconstrued as constituting harm." That's true.

I appreciated Charrois's final words on the issue at committee: "Bill 9 should aim to enhance ethical conduct in municipal government, not to empower political factions to remove dissenting voices. I fully support the principles of accountability and integrity, but these must be balanced with fairness, due process and safeguards against political weaponization."

Over the past several weeks, I've been contacted by several municipal mayors and councillors who are fed up with the broken system. Many have expressed that they are financially drained

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from attempting to defend themselves and are now paralyzed by fear as they sit around the council table waiting for the next complaint.

Bill 9 will not fix the kangaroo court in place currently, because this bill is fatally flawed.

I'd like to add that municipal elected officials also are not protected or backed by a professional regulatory body, the way a lawyer, doctor or police officer might be. You can see how this becomes a problem when an elected official might make an error simply because they did not know and were not trained appropriately.

We need to reform the broken and unethical practices of municipalities. However, Bill 9 continues to politicize the integrity process rather than depoliticize it. I cannot help but wonder if this tinkering is this government's deliberate creation of a crisis to usher in more centralized power and decision-making. If this government really wanted to fix the problems, it would do better in listening and not just use committee processes as window dressing.

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

The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy reported the following bill, as amended: Bill 9, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 in relation to codes of conduct.

Mr. Babikian has moved the adoption of the report. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1330 to 1335.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, please take your seats.

Mr. Babikian has moved the adoption of the committee's report on Bill 9, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 in relation to codes of conduct, as amended.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 58; the nays are 30.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.