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of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament  
Wednesday  
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42<sup>e</sup> législature  
Mercredi  
25 mars 2020

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 March 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 mars 2020

*The House met at 1600.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Good afternoon. Let us pray.

*Prayers.*

ROYAL ASSENT  
SANCTION ROYALE

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

**The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day):** The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020 / *Projet de loi 181, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2020.*

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SOCIAL DISTANCING  
IN THE CHAMBER

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm pleased to recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent that members present for today's proceedings be permitted to speak and vote from any member's desk in the chamber in order to observe recommended social and physical distancing between people at the present time.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that members present for today's proceedings be permitted to speak and vote from any member's desk in the chamber in order to observe recommended social and physical distancing between people at the present time. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL  
UPDATE ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA MISE À JOUR  
ÉCONOMIQUE ET FINANCIÈRE

Mr. Phillips moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 188, An Act to enact and amend various statutes / *Projet de loi 188, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I would invite the minister to give a brief explanation of his bill at this time, if he chooses to do so.

**Hon. Rod Phillips:** No, I'll address it in ministers' statements, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE

**Hon. Rod Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Premier and our government to introduce Ontario's action plan, the first step in our response to COVID-19. COVID-19 represents an extraordinary threat to the health and economy of Ontario—the greatest we've faced in my lifetime—and it demands extraordinary responses from all levels of government and from civil society, because we are all in this together. We've seen significant responses from all levels of government. On behalf of the Premier, I want to say that we are grateful for the work of our federal counterparts, and especially for the mayors, the reeves and the councillors who have reached out with ideas about what their cities and towns need to address this crisis. We are listening and we are acting. And today we'll outline additional steps to provide immediate support.

But before I begin, I want to thank those on the front lines of this pandemic: the doctors, nurses, pharmacists, lab technicians, and other medical professionals, who are working day and night; paramedics, police, firefighters and other first responders; the scientists and researchers racing to find a vaccine and treatment; the grocery and bank clerks, truck and transit drivers, sanitation workers, cashiers and cleaners, who, in a time of heightened personal risk, are showing up to do the work to make sure that the essentials that all of us need are available. The telecom workers who are keeping us connected because social distancing and social isolation is difficult—getting cut off from the world can have serious mental health impacts. We are relying on technology like never before to keep us connected, to stay in touch with loved ones, and to be able to work from home. And I'd be remiss not to mention our public servants, especially my colleagues at the Ministry of Finance. They have put in an Olympian

effort, under extraordinary circumstances, to make this update possible.

To each and every one of you, I extend, on behalf of this chamber, our most sincere thanks.

In recent weeks the Premier has been referring to the Ontario spirit: people, businesses, unions, and not-for-profits going above and beyond to support each other. Like Rome's independent grocer in Sault Ste. Marie, who, like many other grocers across Ontario, is opening early to serve seniors; or the dozens of volunteers who are packing boxes of food for the needy through the United Jewish Appeal; Garden Foods, in Caledon, who are donating fresh produce to community organizations that help our most vulnerable; and the Ontario Sikh community, who have launched an appeal for blood donors because they know donations are down. Each and every day, we hear examples of this Ontario spirit in our neighbourhood, and it is that that keeps us all going.

I'm here to speak about the first steps in our government's response to COVID-19. The Premier has been clear: We will do whatever it takes to protect the health and the economy of Ontario. These first steps include \$7 billion in urgent, direct support for people, businesses and our health care system. The plan also offers \$10 billion in cash flow support for people and businesses in this difficult time. Taken together, today's action plan provides \$17 billion in support at this time of need.

We don't yet know the full impacts of COVID-19 on our health or on our economy. That will depend on how long the pandemic lasts, how severe it is and how our businesses weather this economic storm. But our number one priority is and will remain the health and safety of the people of Ontario.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Health, our government is allocating an additional \$3.3 billion for health care over what was budgeted last year, including an urgent \$2.1-billion COVID-19 response package.

Specifically in response to the outbreak, we are immediately investing \$341 million for 1,000 additional acute care and 500 critical care beds, in addition to over 70 COVID-19 assessment centres. To keep our front-line medical staff safe, we will spend an additional \$75 million on vital protective personal equipment.

Our government has recently launched a new website, called Ontario Together, which allows us to partner with the private sector to increase the production of vital medical equipment, whether it be ventilators, swabs, gloves or masks. To address the increased mental health needs of COVID-19, we will invest an additional \$12 million for much-needed supports. In total, we'll invest an additional \$935 million in Ontario's hospitals.

#### 1610

In addition, we are investing \$124 million to support 90 transitional care projects, allowing 20,000 patients more appropriate places for care and freeing up vital hospital space.

During this outbreak, we've all been particularly concerned about seniors, as we know COVID-19 is more

dangerous for them and for those individuals with underlying health conditions. We have already implemented new active screening procedures in long-term-care facilities and restricted visits to protect our loved ones.

To increase emergency capacity and containment efforts in long-term-care homes, we are providing \$243 million in surge capacity, as well as around-the-clock screening, more staff for sanitation and essential personal protective equipment. We are investing a further \$125 million to improve the facilities and quality of care.

Mr. Speaker, I know that everyone here in this House and across the province has taken comfort from the expertise of our public health officials. Our public health officials have made the difference in terms of making sure that we understand, on an hourly basis, what is going on and what we need to do. I especially want to thank Dr. David Williams, our Chief Medical Officer of Health, and the other 35 local chief medical officers across the province for their hard work.

We have given public health units across the province certainty by maintaining their funding, and today I'm pleased to say that we will invest an additional \$160 million in increased funding for urgent public health needs. This includes investments in virtual care and Telehealth Ontario, which will free up space in our hospitals.

As this pandemic unfolds, we need to be flexible and prepared, whatever the situation. So we have set aside a \$1-billion dedicated COVID-19 response contingency to fund whatever needs come up over the course of this outbreak.

The situation is changing day to day and hour to hour. It is difficult to imagine how tired our front-line health care providers must be. Again, on behalf of this Legislature, I want you all to know that we are so proud of you, and you can count on us to make sure that you have the resources you need.

Everyone across the province is doing their part to protect themselves, their families, their communities and our health sector, staying home and self-isolating. Our business community is stepping up, as well. Distilleries and breweries across Ontario are making antiseptic hand gel. An education technology company in Kitchener called InkSmith is organizing people with 3-D printers to print scarce plastic components for important medical shields. Back Alley Burrito in Strathroy is feeding front-line health care workers and giving gift cards to first responders. We are grateful for everyone across Ontario who is showing that Ontario spirit.

As part of our plan, we are investing \$3.7 billion to provide immediate and direct support for Ontario's people and employers. It starts with those most in need.

To our vulnerable seniors, we will provide \$75 million in relief by doubling the maximum Guaranteed Annual Income System payment for six months, starting next month, in April. This means 194,000 of our lowest-income seniors will receive up to \$166 for individuals and \$332 for a couple per month to cover essential expenses. We're also allocating \$5 million to help with subsidized delivery of meals, medicines and other necessities.

Mr. Speaker, supporting our most vulnerable communities is at the heart of so much of what we must do in this difficult time.

We are investing \$52 million to expand the emergency assistance program through Ontario Works. This provides support for those facing the most serious financial difficulties.

We're directing \$148 million to our municipal partners so that they can fund charities and not-for-profits, which includes homeless shelters, food banks and religious organizations that support our communities. In fact, as we work with our municipal partners to help slow the spread of COVID-19, we will be providing nearly \$250 million of direct support to assist municipalities.

We are allocating \$26 million in enhanced support for Indigenous communities, to fund prevention and awareness efforts and to respond to the needs of remote and isolated communities.

Mr. Speaker, schools and daycares being closed has made life more difficult for families across Ontario. It's exhausting for parents to find the balance at the best of times; during these exceptional times they need some extra help. Today we are announcing that our government will provide parents direct financial support and relieve the burden we know parents are facing as a result of COVID-19. We will make a one-time payment to families of \$200 for every child under 12 and \$250 for every special-needs child, part of this \$336-million investment. Now, I know that this does not solve all the problems, but it will provide parents with some relief.

As you know, many parents are also on the front lines of battling COVID-19. These moms and dads are called to serve, and they leave their families to make sure that you and I and all Ontarians are protected. That's why we are providing around-the-clock child care for 56,000 of these essential workers, so they have one less worry when they go to work.

We're suspending OSAP loan payments until September 30, and there will be no new interest during that period. We're working with labour leaders to find ways to support apprentices in terms of gaining new skills, and we are providing \$100 million through Employment Ontario for skills training program for those whose livelihoods have been affected by COVID-19.

The Premier has promised Ontario workers that we will have their backs, and we do. With all-party support, we recently passed a bill immediately providing job-protected leave to employees in isolation or those who need to be away from work to care for children. I want to thank all the members of this Legislature for working together to pass this critical piece of legislation. I've spoken to business leaders across Ontario, and I'm heartened to hear of all that they are doing under these very difficult circumstances to support their employees. As a government, we will support Ontario's businesses.

The most pressing need for employers right now is cash flow. They need to meet their immediate costs in the short term to keep the lights on and to keep their employees at work. That's why we are making available \$10 billion to

support cash flow for people and businesses. We are cutting taxes by \$355 million for over 50,000 employers by a proposed cut to the rate of the employer health tax and raising the exemption to \$1 million for 2020. This means that nearly 90% of Ontario businesses will not pay that tax this year.

We are also providing a five-month interest- and penalty-free grace period for businesses to file or pay most provincially administered taxes. Mr. Speaker, this will keep \$6 billion in the Ontario economy. And by the WSIB allowing premiums to be deferred for six months, employers will be provided with another \$1.9 billion of relief.

My colleagues and I have been speaking to mayors across Ontario. They've told us that one important step that we could take to support them would be allowing the municipalities to defer paying school taxes. Doing this would enable them to defer collecting property taxes for residents and businesses, so that's what we're going to do. We'll defer payments by 90 days, to enable providing \$1.8 billion of urgent relief to people and businesses, while ensuring that school boards have the funds that they need.

We're also proposing a regional opportunities investment tax credit, a 10% refundable corporate income tax credit to encourage business to invest in regions that see below-average economic performance, as soon as they are in a position to do so. Our plan is providing \$10 billion of immediate relief to protect jobs and help people.

Our work to stabilize energy prices over the long term continues. We will increase funding for our energy subsidy by \$1.5 billion, to \$5.6 billion this year, providing direct relief to every family, small business and farm in Ontario. In response to COVID-19, we are going a step further.

Mr. Speaker, one thing I've heard loud and clear from people who are self-isolating is a concern over time-limited metering. That is why we are setting time-of-use electricity prices for residential, farm and small business customers at the lowest rate, known as off-peak, for 24 hours a day starting March 24—yesterday—supporting ratepayers while they use more electricity during the daytime.

**1620**

For those most in need, we're also increasing funding for the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program by \$9 million for households that are having difficulty paying a natural gas or electricity bill. In doing so, we will make sure that electricity and natural gas services are not disconnected for non-payment during the length of the COVID-19 crisis.

Premier Ford and I have been in close contact with our federal counterparts, as I know the rest of my cabinet colleagues have. We want to thank them for their work to protect the health and safety of Ontarians and for working to protect the wages and jobs of workers. This is not a time for partisan politics, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier has said, right now there is no Team Blue, Team Orange, Team Red or Team Green; there is just team Ontario. I want to thank all the members of this chamber, including the leaders of

the NDP, Liberal and Green parties, and the independent members, for working with us. We appreciate their suggestions on how Ontario should respond to COVID-19, and we are grateful that they have worked with us so we could introduce this update in such extraordinary times.

Our government is committed to protecting our economy, and our approach will evolve based on how the coming weeks and months evolve. We were elected on a promise to the people of Ontario to be good fiscal managers. That means being ready for an emergency, and that emergency is COVID-19.

We projected a 2019-20 deficit of \$9.2 billion—a \$1.1-billion improvement relative to last year's budget. Next year, the deficit will be much larger as a result of COVID-19. We project it will be \$20.5 billion. Today's plan includes historic levels of prudence, including a dedicated \$1-billion COVID-19 contingency fund, the standard \$1.3-billion contingency fund, and an unprecedented reserve of \$2.5 billion—the largest in Ontario's history. These funds are available to be deployed as the COVID-19 crisis evolves. We are confident that every dollar we invest to save a life or save a job is a dollar well invested.

Mr. Speaker, there are moments that define a generation. COVID-19 is our moment. The closed schools and quiet streets will be remembered, but eventually these memories will become more distant. But I will never forget driving on Harwood Avenue in Ajax earlier this week at 7:30 in the evening and hearing cheers from the porches and balconies—cheers for the front-line health care workers at the Ajax Pickering Hospital returning for their next shift.

Long after we've defeated COVID-19, the Ontario spirit, at home in Ajax and across Ontario, will still be there and it will still be strong. Our response as a province and as a country will shape the character of our next generation. So let us be responsible, kind, measured and determined and let us be strong. From our manufacturers who are pivoting to provide vital medical equipment to the family who orders takeout from their favourite restaurant to help keep the lights on to the young girl who calls her grandmother every day while practising social distancing, these stories give me confidence that the principles that we share across Ontario, wherever we live, will not be lost during this global pandemic. By living by these principles, we will weather this storm together.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Responses?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** As I rise to speak to this fiscal update, I am both grateful and very proud that as we face these challenging and uncertain times, the people of this great province are responding with selflessness and solidarity.

Thank you to our province's public health staff and health care workers for their courage, their sacrifice and their hard work in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Every day, they assess and test thousands of Ontarians, care for our loved ones and neighbours who are sick, and fight the spread of COVID-19 in communities across our province. I also want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the grocery store staff, the pharmacists, the transit drivers and

first responders—those who get up and go to work every day so that others can do their part and stay home. We owe all of these folks a deep and profound debt of gratitude.

Speaker, I'm so proud that people across the province are taking this crisis very, very seriously. Thank you to Ontarians for proactively following public health officials' advice, and thank you to those who are digging deep and finding creative ways to safely strengthen our communities and look out for one another.

The thoughts of all Ontarians continue to be with those battling COVID-19 and their families. We also extend our deepest condolences to folks who have lost loved ones in this pandemic. We wish them all comfort and peace during this incredibly difficult time.

Speaker, all of us in this House know that Ontarians are depending on us to get this right. New Democrats will support this bill, and we'll allow it to pass immediately, but I am extremely concerned that the provincial government's financial statement fails to put money in the pockets of people who desperately need it, and doesn't provide the help that small and medium-sized local businesses need. People have seen their incomes drastically cut or eliminated altogether, and that didn't just start today; that has been ongoing for almost two weeks. People are anxiously watching their retirement savings drain away as markets continue to falter, and all of us are worried about the most vulnerable amongst us during this pandemic. People need help. People need help now. They need the province of Ontario to step up and help them. This package does not do that. It will not help anyone sleep tonight. It will not stop businesses on the edge from falling off the cliff.

But it has to be said that in the face of this crisis, Ontarians are stepping up and demonstrating radical kindness and compassion, from picking up groceries or cooking for elderly and immune-compromised neighbours, to creatively sharing their skills to build community, like artists giving free lessons online. Some businesses, large and small, are doing their part, like Toronto's Fiesta Farms and many others dedicating hours to seniors and immune-compromised folks; or distilleries, like Black's Distillery in Peterborough and Dixon's Distilled Spirits in Guelph, pitching in to manufacture hand sanitizer for health care workers.

Speaker, we will get through this together, but now is not the time for half measures. It's time to give people the money and the help that they need. They need that money and help right away. They can't wait until the middle of April or the end of April to figure out how much money is going to be in their pocket. That money should have been in this financial statement today. They need to know that they can weather this storm.

I know that we have to meet the challenges that we face head on, and Ontarians are doing their part to do exactly that. It's time for the province to do its part. It's time for the province to step up and help people by putting money in their pockets so they know how they're going to get through the rest of this month and the beginning of the next—never mind the next possible several months to come.

Thank you, Speaker, for your attention. I look forward to the rest of the comments today.

1630

**Mr. John Fraser:** These are extraordinary times. I'd like to echo the minister's remark in thanking everybody on the front lines. The front lines just happen to be everywhere. Merci à tous ces Ontariens qui aident en première ligne.

It's not business as usual out there, so it can't be business as usual in here. It's heartening and hopeful to see the level of collaboration not only in here but amongst governments. It gives one hope.

The measures outlined with respect to health are important. If I had one concern that I could express right now, it's that the amount for personal protective equipment will likely not be enough. I know we all want to protect those people who are on the front lines, at the bedside, protecting people who we love—and maybe us.

We very much appreciate the minister's mention of mental health. I know it's not specifically in the document, but it's very clear to all of us that in the coming months this is going to be something very critical to families and individuals. They're going to want to know where they're going to get some help, and I look forward to working with the government on that.

There's time enough to talk about lessons learned. I think one of the lessons that we've learned is the critical importance of regional structures and community-based care. You can see that in this document, and you can see that in the minister's response.

The economic measures outlined in this bill are good steps forward. Expansion of GAINS and support on home energy and child care are good. We know that more Ontarians are going to need to get more money in their hands, and we strongly suggest that the government match the federal government's wage subsidy of 10%.

The expansion of the exemption from the employer health tax will be welcome for many small businesses. Most of the measures in here are deferrals of taxation; I suggest the government is going to have to do more. Putting it off is not going to help.

We'll be supporting this, but we all know there's more to do, all of us. Families and small businesses need relief, so we're here to work with you to ensure that all Ontarians get what they and their families need as expeditiously as possible.

Thank you very much for your time, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** "We're all in this together." We've heard that a lot over the last few weeks, and we as legislators have an obligation to rise to this moment. The people of Ontario have, and I want to thank the front-line health care workers and first responders. I, too, want to thank the delivery drivers, transit drivers, retail clerks, all the people working in shelters, all the people who are on the front lines, making sure life continues so those who can stay home can stay home. You have our gratitude.

Legislators need to step up. Last week, I talked about the need to quarantine partisanship, and we did that last

week. Greens will do that again in helping get this legislation through the House today in an unprecedented way, two weeks in a row. But I want to say to the government that quarantining partisanship is a two-way street. It's not only us working with the government, but it's the government working with us and listening to us, so I want to just share a bit about what people are telling me.

First of all, many of my constituents and people across the province are deeply concerned that the list of essential businesses is far too broad. I've had a lot of construction workers, in particular, raise concerns about the safety and sanitary conditions on their sites. I know the Ontario Construction Consortium has raised those concerns, and I know the Premier has as well, but I think we need to look at this moving forward and address it.

I also believe the government needs to rise to the occasion when it comes to the funding allocations in the fall economic statement. I'm deeply concerned that the money set aside for front-line health care workers is not going to be enough. People need basic income support payments right now, and small businesses, particularly our local small businesses, are going to need additional support. So as we quarantine partisanship, I want to work with the government to make sure that happens, Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time we have available for responses.

## MOTIONS

### ORDER OF BUSINESS

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding immediate passage of one bill, hearings at the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and House business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Calandra is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding immediate passage of one bill, hearings at the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and House business. Agreed? Agreed.

I'll again recognize the government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House,

That the order for second reading of Bill 188, An Act to enact and amend various statutes, may be called today, and when that order is called, 55 minutes shall be allotted to the debate on the motion for second reading of the bill, with 20 minutes allotted to the government, 20 minutes allotted to the official opposition and 15 minutes allotted to the independent members as a group, at the end of which time the Speaker shall interrupt and put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That the order for third reading of Bill 188 shall then immediately be called and the question shall immediately

be put on the motion for third reading of the bill without debate or amendment; and

That the leaders of the parties represented in the Legislative Assembly as well as independent members may file copies of letters with the Speaker, who shall cause them to be laid upon the table, containing their recommendations to the Minister of Finance with respect to the economic and fiscal measures they proposed to be concluded in the provisions of Bill 188, and such letters shall be deemed to be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That when the committees of the Legislature resume meeting, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs shall be authorized to consider the party leader and independent member letters, together with An Act to enact and amend various statutes, as passed by the Legislature today, with the first witness during such consideration to be the Minister of Finance; and

That the requirement for notice be waived for ballot item numbers 8 to 16, inclusive, in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business; and

That the adjournment debate scheduled for Wednesday, March 25, 2020, filed by the member for Oshawa be withdrawn; and

That in the case of any division on any proceeding provided for in this motion, the division bells be limited to five minutes; and

That the House shall continue to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment today if necessary; and

That when the House adjourns today it shall stand adjourned until April 14, 2020, at 1 p.m.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Calandra has moved that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House—

**Interjection:** Dispense.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Dispense? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE ACT, 2020

### LOI DE 2020 SUR LA MISE À JOUR ÉCONOMIQUE ET FINANCIÈRE

Mr. Calandra, on behalf of Mr. Phillips, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 188, An Act to enact and amend various statutes /  
Projet de loi 188, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Our world has changed in the last two weeks. No one can deny that we face and that our province and that our country face an immense challenge.

In his inaugural speech at the height of the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt spoke to a fearful nation:

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“Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment,” he said. Yet, “Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for.”

We, too, should be thankful—thankful for our brave and unceasing health care workers, our doctors, our nurses, hospital administrators and cleaning staff; thankful for our heroic emergency responders, our police, firefighters, paramedics and their families; for undaunted, everyday heroes stocking grocery store shelves, manufacturing hand sanitizer, running food banks, bringing supplies to seniors, pitching in.

I also want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your continued service to this House. Thank you to our dedicated Clerks, our Sergeant-at-Arms, translators and Hansard, to our staff and bureaucrats who have worked around the clock to ensure that government can act, and act now; and to the media, who have helped keep Ontarians informed and educated in this time when information is the most important weapon we have. And thank you to my colleagues on all sides of this House for your presence here today, and to those who cannot be here, for serving in this time of great uncertainty, for putting differences and politics aside to protect Ontarians, and for defending, even in this time of crisis, the democracy we all cherish as Canadians. Thank you.

Like everyone, I've struggled over the last few days, and I've felt anxious about the future. I've worried about loved ones, about the health of my elderly parents, the livelihoods of my friends losing jobs and going out of business, about finances and food, and I felt helpless watching the endless news of new cases and economic uncertainty.

While we can't deny that these are challenging times, we cannot forget that we face them together, that no one is alone. We face these challenges together with our families and our communities as team Ontario. It will be hard, but we will get through this time together. Ontarians are strong, and your government will do everything necessary to protect you.

From the beginning of this crisis, this government has taken swift action, and we've worked tirelessly to ensure the health and safety of Ontarians. On March 17, the government declared a state of emergency and announced an initial investment of \$304 million to respond immediately to the COVID-19 pandemic—an investment to increase hospital capacity, provide more testing, and provide front-line workers, vulnerable seniors and Indigenous communities with support.

In the eight days since then, our government has continued to act to ensure the health and safety of every Ontarian. We have worked to limit the spread of the virus and flatten the curve by closing non-essential businesses, schools and public spaces. Last week, with the help of all members of all parties, this House passed emergency legislation ensuring that no worker would lose their job for self-isolating, taking care of their children or looking after a loved one. We are working with businesses across the

province to produce much-needed medical supplies, working with municipalities and food producers to keep deliveries of food and essential products reaching store shelves around the clock, and working to ensure our children can continue their education from the safety of their home.

This pandemic has moved quickly, and the situation has changed by the hour. But thanks to the dedication of Ontario's health officials, our public service and leaders of all three levels of government, we have acted just as quickly, providing child care to front-line health care workers, enhancing screening measures, and providing immediate electricity rate relief for families and small businesses.

Today, the Minister of Finance has taken another critical step by tabling the Ontario 2020 action plan, responding to COVID-19, to safeguard the health of Ontarians and to provide support to people and businesses as we face the economic symptoms of this unprecedented health emergency. The health and safety of our people is this government's number one priority.

Today's economic statement lays out the first-phase response to ensure hospitals and public health officials have the resources they need to protect us. This government will invest an additional \$3.3 billion in the health care sector in 2020-21, including \$1.2 billion in new spending to meet the increased demand in the health and long-term-care sector, and \$2.1 billion in new measures to fight COVID-19. This investment will help us increase our hospital capacity, create over 70 additional assessment centres, increase lab testing capacity—more funding for public health units and surge capacity in long-term care. It will also include \$75 million in new spending for personal protective equipment and critical supplies for our courageous front-line workers. We will do everything we can to protect them so they can continue to protect us.

Ontarians are stepping up, Mr. Speaker. They are also doing their part to protect our front-line workers, their families and their neighbours by simply staying home. Physical distancing and the closing of non-essential businesses have been hard on people, on businesses and on our economy, but it is a vital step in stemming the spread of COVID-19.

Today our government is proposing a multitude of responsible and responsive measures to protect individuals, families, communities, businesses, industries and our provincial economy during this crisis. The \$17 billion in support proposed today reflects how seriously this government takes the threat posed by this global pandemic.

In addition to the \$3.3 billion in new health care spending, our government is proposing \$3.7 billion in direct supports for people and businesses and an additional \$10 billion in tax and other deferrals to leave more money in the pockets of people and improve cash flow for businesses over the coming months.

Our government will always protect the most vulnerable in our communities. I know that in my community of Willowdale, our seniors, and especially low-income seniors, are grappling to cope with the side effects of physical

distancing. This generation, who worked so hard to provide a better Ontario for their children and their grandchildren, are particularly at risk of infection and severe illness. Many live alone, and they struggle even under normal circumstances to safely complete daily tasks like shopping for groceries, travelling to see a doctor, or visiting family.

If passed, the Ontario 2020 action plan would provide an additional \$75 million for low-income seniors by doubling the Guaranteed Annual Income System payments. This increase would provide eligible seniors with additional funds to stock up on necessary supplies—paying for the delivery of groceries, for example, or paying for Internet so they can video-call their grandkids.

Our government is also working with our partners in the municipal and not-for-profit sectors to coordinate subsidized deliveries of meals, medicines and other essentials for seniors. We're also working with municipalities to add funding where it will matter most: providing additional funding to direct social services administration boards and service providers so that they can respond quickly on the ground to local needs.

For Ontarians with student debt, we are proposing a six-month suspension of OSAP loan repayments and no new interest, leaving more money in the pockets of young Ontarians starting out in their careers.

These measures and other new investments in our social services sector will build on the work this government has been undertaking for the past year to make life more affordable for all Ontarians.

We've lowered income tax on the lowest income earners. We've provided support for child care and dental care to low-income families and seniors respectively, and we will build on the emergency measures taken this week, like lowering electricity costs and expanding eligibility for the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program.

No matter where in Ontario you live, from Windsor to Kenora; no matter how much money you make; whether you are a senior or a teenager; living in affordable housing, a condo, a house or a farm, we've got your back.

Today our government is also proposing important measures that will support businesses and buttress Ontario's economy through the global economic uncertainty ahead. Over the past week I've been on the phone, as many of my colleagues have, with businesses of all sizes in my riding of Willowdale and across the province. They've ranged from restaurant owners to cleaning companies, accountants, manufacturers, duty-free stores and farmers. I've heard one thing consistently from every entrepreneur and every business owner I've spoken to. They've all asked, "What can I do to help the government? What can I do to help my community?" Speaker, this is the Ontario spirit that the Premier speaks about, and it doesn't surprise me in the least. Growing up in a small business family, I know first-hand that business owners are often the last to get paid. They often go without a paycheque so that they can pay their employees and keep the doors open. So in a time of crisis, the first question business owners are often asking is, "Are the people who rely on me going to be okay?"

**1650**

The threat to our economy, especially to our small businesses, is unprecedented, and we know that this threat will have monumental consequences for real people, for families. To help businesses across Ontario, our government is proposing to provide \$10 billion in tax and other deferrals to free up much-needed cash flow to help businesses bridge to better days ahead and to keep their employees in their jobs and on the payroll. Our government is proposing to double the employer health tax exemption in 2020. This change, if passed, would reduce the employer health tax for 57,000 private sector job creators and eliminate tax altogether for 30,000 businesses, adding \$350 million into our economy.

We are taking bold and necessary action to ensure that jobs are protected. By providing interest and penalty relief of five months for businesses to file and make payments for most provincially administered taxes, businesses can redirect that cash to maintaining payroll, covering rent payments and staying afloat. These measures will provide Ontario businesses with \$6 billion in needed cash flow and financial flexibility.

As Ontario's businesses are shifting to help in our fight against COVID-19, from retooling auto manufacturing plants to make ventilators and producing hand sanitizer in craft distilleries, to restaurants offering no-physical-contact food deliveries and seniors-only shopping hours at pharmacies, we in turn must do everything we can to fight for businesses.

Speaker, building a business is hard in the best of economic times. In the challenging times ahead, we must remember that behind every small business is a small business family fighting to survive and to improve their community, responsible for the livelihoods of their employees and their families, working long hours. These measures and the measures being taken by our partners in the federal government will help them weather this storm.

Speaker, growing up, my parents always told me, my younger sister and my younger brother to save for a rainy day. When times were good and their convenience store was doing well, they would save every penny they could. They knew that when times were tough, when the store was robbed or the basement flooded and they were forced to close, they would still need to put food on the table for our family.

Our government, too, has been saving for a rainy day. Over the past year and a half, we have been working diligently toward fiscal prudence and financial stability so that when the storm came we would have the resources to act, the fiscal flexibility to take extraordinary measures to help Ontarians. Well, Speaker, the storm is here, and our government will spare no expense to protect the people we serve.

Despite our physical isolation, this pandemic has brought all of us closer together. Our communities and our province have come together to help and encourage one another. In this House, we have set aside our partisan differences and united in the thing we have always shared: the desire to better our communities and to better our

province. It's why I'm hopeful that this bill, the Ontario 2020 action plan responding to COVID-19, will be supported by all members of this House, and I'm hopeful that this spirit of co-operation and multi-partisanship will last beyond our current crisis.

Our government will continue to act. We will spare no cost in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians, and we will do everything necessary to support individuals, families, communities, businesses and industries in the trying times ahead. We cannot deny the dark realities of the moment, but we must have hope. We must take solace in the Ontario spirit, see the good in those around us. We will get through this together. Know that your government is in your corner, fighting alongside you, making sure no one is left behind. Know that you are not alone.

Speaker, we know that our great province will endure. Ontario will endure. We will recover and we will prosper.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I would like to begin by acknowledging all the MPPs in the House, on both sides of the aisle. We all have a responsibility to our constituents and to all Ontarians, and this crisis is certainly going to be a test of our leadership. We all have a responsibility to rise to this occasion.

For me, as a parent and grandparent, I feel that I'm being called upon to stand tall in these difficult times. As the Minister of Finance said, this is a moment that will define a generation. Lately, I have been thinking a lot about my grandparents. They lived through the Blitz in Great Britain. I'm sure many of you have the same stories from your parents and grandparents; they probably have very similar histories. They had to guide and protect their kids in the most difficult, unprecedented times. I would suggest that we're facing those same kinds of difficult times. But they did it; and what I remember is that they did it with such generosity of spirit.

My mom and dad tell stories about how they had to ration food. There was a famous story in my family about how my grandfather ate a whole month's worth of ration of cheese on one sandwich. At the time it was horrific, but that story keeps going down through my family. So I think what we have learned from that is that we can learn lessons from the past, learn lessons on how to stand up and stand tall. And while my parents had to ration food, the thing that they never rationed was their kindness and their compassion for others. We all have said this in the House today: that we survive, and we will always survive, by looking out for those around us—our friends, our families, our neighbours and, most importantly, the vulnerable among us. Yes, this crisis is certainly a test of our leadership and it is a test of our compassion for others.

As legislators, we do have the power to be kind, to provide relief to ensure no one is left behind. What we do here as a government matters deeply. We see that governments across the world are being looked to like never before for leadership and for relief in these times. We all know that we have seen weeks of layoffs. We have people being locked down. We've seen, and made it clear, that poor and working class people will bear a disproportionately big share of the pain from the coronavirus pandemic.

As it stands, the economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis will mean difficult trade-offs for so many families in this province. Buy groceries or pay the heating bill? Borrow to pay the rent on time or miss the payment? We know that for many Canadians this has already been a reality, this has already been the norm. But it's even more so a problem looming for other people who never expected to be in this situation.

A recent Angus Reid poll just came out that said 44% of Canadians said that they or someone in their household has lost hours or work due to the economic downturn—44% of Canadians. And of those who had lost work, 62% say that they were afraid they wouldn't be able to afford groceries. So these are desperate times indeed. But it doesn't have to be this way. We don't have to accept a situation that will leave so many in this province without, especially now. In this Legislature we could have embraced some of the ideas that we put forward. We could have embraced the idea of an emergency income program, which is so desperately needed right now. I mean, we had an opportunity here to ensure that no one is left behind. But instead, we have this bill before us today.

The finance minister just told the House that this is the government's first step in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. With all due respect to the minister, I'd like to say that this is a very, very small step—a very timid step indeed. There's nothing in this bill that is giving the people who are looking for immediate relief, for direct relief—it's not here. People who have been expecting for their government to allay their fears about what they're facing—it's not here in this bill. We had an opportunity to do that, and it's not here.

**1700**

Again, with all due respect, the member from Willowdale said that this bill is bold, and I'm here to say that there's nothing about this bill that is bold. There's nothing in this bill that is extraordinary at all. This financial statement leaves so many people out. It leaves out help for families and small and medium-sized business owners—people who we know are laying awake at night, who have to go week to week to make the payroll as it is already. They're wondering how they're going to keep their heads above water, and there's nothing in this bill that's going to help them sleep at night.

So many Ontarians are at the financial breaking point, as we know, from COVID-19. On April 1, rent and mortgage payments are coming due, and people's credit cards are piling up. I know mine is; I know that my family is adding extra expenses each and every day. People are laying awake at night worrying. I know that everyone in this House is laying awake at night worrying—worrying for themselves, worrying for their families and worrying for others.

Some of us are privileged enough to have a home. Others have to worry about whether they're going to face eviction, whether they're going to have to face debts that are racking up that they will never, ever be able to pay.

We hear these stories in the House about how people have done their part. We hear all of the stories about

people who are sharing, who are picking up groceries. We heard stories about companies like Dillon's—I happen to have one of the Dillon's disinfectants that they're making. People are doing their part. They're stepping up.

I would like to say that the province of Ontario needs to step up bolder than what they've done here. This is not the kind of relief that people expected from this government.

It's funny; for a government that spent so much time talking about putting money into people's pockets—they had this opportunity now to make sure that people had immediate relief, and they chose not to do so. People were desperate for immediate income relief, and it's not here at all.

We have said that this is not the time for half measures, and I would respectfully say that this bill is that; it's just a half measure. If in fact this is the first step in this response, I'm hoping that the second step comes soon and comes big, because people are looking to us to ease their suffering, to ease their concern and their anxiety—and it's not here in this bill. It's just not good enough for folks. As I said, there's no immediate relief. There's no actual income coming to folks.

We talk about employers and small business owners, and we understand that they are the backbone of our economy, but there's nothing in there—there's no actual stimulus that will help employers keep people employed. It's not there. Small business owners are still going to have to scramble to figure out how they're going to keep employees on the payroll or, if they have to be at home, how they're going to pay them. Small business owners have not seen the kind of relief that they've been asking for. They've been promised that help is on the way. Well, we have to still say help is hopefully still on the way, because it's certainly not here yet.

The thing that we talk a lot about is the most vulnerable people in our community. There's some reference of something in here for seniors. I think it needs to be completely clear that what this government is proposing is about an extra \$80 or \$85 a month for the lowest-income seniors in our province, but only for six months. That is what this government is proposing to offer for seniors in our province—seniors who will see skyrocketing hydro bills, seniors who are struggling on a fixed income. What they're proposing is really so insignificant, and it's probably the poorest of all seniors who will qualify for this. My question would be, who did you consult with when you were talking about relief for seniors? My guess is that this is not what people who support seniors or seniors themselves would have expected.

We do know in this House that we have seen all kinds of people stepping up. We've talked about the health care workers, grocery store workers—all of these people are providing us the kind of support that we need in this time. They often say that when 9/11 happened, the people who were rushing in when people were rushing out were the true heroes. I would say that's no more true today than it was then in this province of Ontario.

We hear the stories in my hometown of Hamilton of all the kinds of things that people are doing. In Hamilton we

always say, “It’s the fire that forges the steel.” I would say these times will show that not only Hamilton but all of Ontario will be able to step up and support the most vulnerable among us.

I mentioned about my folks who were stuck in the Blitz in Scotland, and I think it’s probably a time to quote Robert Burns. So many of us on New Year’s Eve sing Auld Lang Syne; maybe we don’t know what that means. It’s a song that people sing to provide hope and reassurance and a sense of belonging and a sense of fellowship. So, I’m going to end by quoting Rabbie Burns. Hopefully, the next time we’re gathered on New Year’s Eve we’ll remember this and we’ll be singing this in much better times. Here we go—no Scottish accent:

And there’s a hand, my trusty friend!  
And give me a hand of thine!  
We’ll take a cup of kindness yet,  
For auld lang syne.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Speaker, let me first make mention and recognize and commend the Premier and the cabinet on their leadership during these troubled times. The collaboration and consideration they have shown and undertaken with the opposition parties and independents, under the direction of the House leader, must also be noted.

Speaker, unlike what happened in Ottawa yesterday, we in the opposition, and independents, received a copy of today’s legislation three hours ago to examine and to review.

However, I will continue—and I’m sure all members will continue—to examine the bill in greater detail in the coming days, and I will inform both the cabinet and the standing committee on economic affairs of any further evaluations and criticisms of the bill. It is my expectation that the cabinet and the committee will continue to show the same spirit of collaboration and permit a forthright examination by members from all parties and independents, and accept constructive criticisms at that committee.

However, there is one element of the bill that does concern me on its face, and that is the forecasts which, of course, are the foundations of all economic statements. The forecasts, to me, do not appear to square with the government’s warnings and our own observations regarding this crisis.

We have seen a significant and grave contraction with our economic activity and the greatest ever rise in unemployment. What we can’t see—none of us can—however, is the full and true duration of this crisis. The forecasts appear to me to be somewhat optimistic, and the level of both our reserves and need for relief understated. Only time will tell.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**M. Gilles Bisson:** J’aimerais faire un couple de commentaires faisant affaire avec ce projet de loi, mais premièrement, il faut remercier tous ceux et celles dans nos communautés à travers cette province qui travaillent d’une manière acharnée pour être capables d’avancer la sécurité du monde ici dans la province, de s’assurer qu’on a les services nécessaires pour être capables de demeurer

une société telle que l’on a. Ça, c’est tout le monde qui travaille dans cette crise. Si on est une garde-malade, un ambulancier, un chauffeur de taxi, quelqu’un qui chauffe un autobus—c’est tout ce monde-là. Ceux qui travaillent dans nos magasins de « groceries », c’est tout ce monde-là qui sont en train de prendre un risque pour s’assurer que nous, on peut continuer à vivre.

So donc, premièrement, sur le bord des néo-démocrates, et tous les députés de cette Assemblée, on veut dire un gros remerciement à ce monde-là. J’aimerais aussi dire que oui, il y a certains pas qui ont été pris dans ce projet de loi qui s’en vont dans la bonne direction. On ne peut pas dire que tout là-dedans est méchant. Mais, il faut dire—comment dire?—c’est un peu triste qu’on ne va pas aussi loin qu’on a besoin d’aller pour être capable d’aider le monde dans nos communautés.

**1710**

Tous les députés dans cette Assemblée—pas seulement moi—on est en train de téléphoner à nos agences dans nos comtés, aux petites entreprises, aux grosses entreprises et aux citoyens, et ils nous disent tous la même affaire. Ils nous disent : « J’ai peur que, mon loyer, je ne vais pas être capable de le payer à la fin du mois, et que je vais être dans une situation, éventuellement, où il va me falloir partir parce que je vais devoir tant d’argent là-dessus, que je ne pourrai pas le payer. »

Il n’y a rien dans ce projet de loi qui regarde comment on peut traiter cette situation. Ceux à qui appartiennent les buildings d’appartements, aussi, ont les mêmes problèmes : eux autres, comment est-ce qu’ils vont être capables de rester en place?

Les petites entreprises qui disent : « Écoute, il m’a fallu fermer ma porte à cause de ce qui se passe avec la COVID-19, et je ne sais pas si je peux rouvrir encore. » Et quand on regarde l’approche du gouvernement dans ce projet de loi, il en manque beaucoup. Il y a bien des affaires qu’on pourrait faire qui ne sont pas là-dedans. OK, on va voir. Le gouvernement dit que c’est seulement une partie des pas qu’il veut prendre. Je peux vous garantir qu’Andrea Horwath, comme chef du NPD, et que notre caucus, on va continuer à essayer de travailler avec ce gouvernement pour s’assurer qu’on mette en place ce qui est nécessaire pour soutenir ces organisations.

Aussi, quand je regarde les chiffres qui ont été mis dans ce document aujourd’hui, ce n’est pas nécessairement toutes des bonnes nouvelles pour les agences provinciales. On dit qu’on va mettre d’autre argent dans les budgets de santé et autres, mais quand tu regardes les chiffres, je pense que tu as besoin de regarder d’un peu plus proche, parce qu’il y a beaucoup de ministères qui voient que leur budget est coupé dans cette situation de ce budget, et non nécessairement augmenté. Ça, ce sont des ministères qui ont besoin d’aide.

Par exemple, on parle aux ambulanciers dans nos communautés. Par exemple, à Timmins, je parlais à Jean Carrière, qui est responsable pour gérer nos ambulances. Eux autres, ils sont en train de faire des tests de COVID-19 à la maison parce qu’ils savent que si la personne va à l’hôpital, c’est beaucoup plus dangereux que de faire le

test à la maison. Ils sont en train de donner des services à domicile pour assister les personnes de nos communautés, à Timmins, à Hearst, à aller au Tri-Town pour s'assurer que ce monde-là ont les services dont ils ont besoin, et qu'ils n'ont pas nécessairement besoin d'aller à un hôpital.

Il n'y a pas d'argent là-dedans, vraiment, pour regarder comment on peut les aider directement. Peut-être plus tard; peut-être quand on regarde les chiffres plus en profondeur et qu'on regarde ce que le gouvernement va peut-être faire dans le futur, ça va arriver. Mais je peux vous dire que nous, comme néo-démocrates, et notre chef, M<sup>me</sup> Horwath, on va pousser dans cette direction-là, parce qu'il faut assister ces organisations et autres à faire ce qu'elles ont à faire.

Je vais finir sur le point que ma collègue a fait. Ça, c'est vraiment un bon point de notre critique en matière de finance, qui dit que 44 % du monde dans cette province se trouve sans emploi. Pensez-y. Ça, c'est vraiment épeurant. Il va y en avoir plus qui vont perdre leur emploi. Et 62 % disent : « Je ne pense pas que je peux arriver, à la fin du mois. »

Quand je regarde ce que le gouvernement a mis dans ce document, est-ce que ça répond à ces besoins? Pas nécessairement. Je pense que le gouvernement a besoins de réfléchir un peu plus et d'écouter un peu plus l'opposition et notre chef, M<sup>me</sup> Horwath, et autres néo-démocrates pour arriver à mettre en place ce dont le public et nos petites entreprises ont besoin pour être capables d'arriver à travers cette crise de la COVID-19.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I'm pleased to rise, to have the opportunity to debate the government's fiscal update. I just want to say, Speaker, that there are a lot of things in this bill to support, things that I called for in a letter last week to the government: increased funding for health care; free child care for essential workers; an additional \$148 million for municipalities to distribute to food banks, shelters and other non-profits; doubling the employer health tax, which is something we've been calling for to support local businesses; and a deferral of the municipalities paying the education tax to help free up their cash flow.

There are reasons to vote in favour of the bill, and I'll put aside political partisanship and stand here together with all members from all parties in this House to move this forward. But, Speaker, I also have to say that we can't let fiscal prudence or austerity get in the way of saving lives and supporting our economy. This is an unprecedented health emergency and likely to be the biggest economic downturn any of us will experience. And so we must swiftly support health care workers in this province—and workers, businesses and everyday people. We can't let perfection get in the way of unlocking the support that people need. So right now, my biggest concern is saving lives and making sure that the people who are working so hard on the front lines to save people's lives have the support they need.

I want to thank Dr. Williams for being so blunt and honest with people about the threat we face, and the Premier and the health minister for being honest with people

about it as well. But here's the bottom line, Speaker: Over 10,000 people are awaiting a test right now. We are already hearing devastating stories from the front lines of health care workers who don't have personal protective equipment. Hospitals are setting up donation drives for masks as we speak. While it's inspiring to see businesses stepping up to fill the gaps, we need government to step up and fill the gap too. The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario today put out a plea for more support for ventilators and other essential health care supplies. So I ask: Is the \$75 million being allocated for personal protective equipment enough? How many masks and ventilators will it cover? Do we have enough here for the beds we're going to need? Are we prepared as a province for the worst-case scenario?

Speaker, we have to do everything to avoid this, and I don't believe fiscal prudence should get in the way right now. I believe that part of quarantining partisanship is to say, "We'll give the government a pass if we have a big budget deficit," because right now the people of this province come first and the front-line health care workers providing support for them come first.

Other provinces are stepping up to provide people with basic income support payments. BC is providing their residents \$1,000 a month, and Quebec, \$573 per week, in addition to what the federal government is providing. Ontario has to step up and do the same thing: provide basic income support payments for people so they can pay the rent, keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table.

I worry about renters especially, and I appreciate and thank the government for saying that they're not going to enforce rent evictions, but BC is suspending rent evictions, period. People are still receiving eviction notices, and it's anxiety-producing at a time that's incredibly difficult for people to receive those notices, even knowing that they're not going to be enforced at a tribunal. So why don't we just be clear that evictions will not happen during this pandemic, period?

Speaker, according to a recent survey, 70% of small businesses are saying that they're not going to survive, given the current economic conditions. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business is calling for an additional wage subsidy. The 10% wage subsidy that the federal government is providing simply isn't enough. Countries like Denmark are providing 75%; others—the UK—are providing as high as 80%. If we want businesses to retain workers so that when this emergency is over they have a job to go back to, I believe we have to up our game when it comes to helping businesses retain their workers.

I just want to raise one final concern before I conclude, and that is, I believe it's fiscally prudent for the government to have their contingency plans in place and to have those funds available, but I also would implore the government to work with the opposition to ensure the transparency of allocating those funds as they are needed so we can be a part of the conversations about making sure those contingency funds are allocated in a way that's most pressing in our communities.

Speaker, I want to conclude by saying that, like the other independent member, I appreciate the opportunity to

work with the government House leader, the House leader of the official opposition and the other independents to figure out how we all work together, because the people of Ontario expect us to work together. Part of working together is not only talking about how procedurally we can make things happen, but also talking about how we can deliver real solutions to people in our communities. I believe we all should have a seat at the table in helping discuss those solutions and delivering those solutions for the people of Ontario.

1720

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Ms. Sara Singh:** It's an honour to rise here today and contribute to the debate.

I just want to start off by thanking our front-line workers who have been at the forefront of this fight against COVID-19 here in the province. That includes people like our doctors, our nurses, our grocery store clerks, cashiers, warehouse workers who are making sure that goods are still getting shipped across this province and truck drivers who are working overnight to ensure that the supply chain isn't interrupted. These are all our everyday heroes, and we should all applaud them, as I know so many of us have.

*Applause.*

**Ms. Sara Singh:** I just want to express that gratitude once again.

It has been very inspiring, Mr. Speaker, to see our community come together and demonstrate these acts of unity. It has been very inspiring and hopeful for a lot of us during what is a very critical time. As we've heard from many of the speakers here today, there's so much uncertainty amidst this pandemic at the moment, and while there are some measures in this bill that we are able to support, this bill simply does not go far enough to help quell those fears and ensure that every Ontarian is protected.

I heard my colleague speak of small businesses. I too come from a small business family. I think that one of the most important things we can do help alleviate some of those pressures and stresses that those small businesses are currently facing is not tax deferrals; what they need is emergency basic income supports for their workers so that they can sleep at night and make sure that those employees can take care of whatever life is going to throw at them.

Currently, this bill does not do that. It doesn't help address the concerns around renters who are fearing eviction at this moment because they don't have the money. While their rent payments may be deferred six months, they're still going to have to make those payments. If they're unable to work and if there is no basic income, how are they going to make those payments not only now, but six months from now? We honestly do not know right now how long this pandemic is going to last, we don't know what the economic consequences are going to be in the short term or the long term. So when we have an opportunity here to take that first step to ensure that we can provide the supports that are needed—unfortunately, we just didn't go far enough. The government simply didn't go far enough.

As the opposition, we've tried to work with government members and we're going to continue to try to do that, because in this time it's very important that we try to collaborate. But as one of the previous members said, it's important that the government listen to what opposition members are raising as real concerns because we, too, are representing our constituents and these are real concerns that they're bringing forward.

Some families can't afford to buy groceries. They can't afford the necessities of life right now. That—what is it?—\$85 for seniors really isn't going to go far enough when they're not able to get out and get the supports that they need. This doesn't provide the certainty.

We spoke about the front-line heroes. Many of those doctors are raising alarm bells about the lack of personal protective equipment, not only in our health care system but for people that are shipping goods, people that are working as cashiers—those people also need that personal protective equipment. So what is this government doing to ensure that those people are also protected as they continue to serve our province so that we don't have to seize up and close those operations? Those people have families. They want to make sure they can get home, safe and protected, and frankly, the government isn't doing enough to ensure that those protections are in place or that the funds are there to help provide that personal protective equipment.

I've heard a lot of, "We're all in this together," but in order to ensure that we're all in this together, we need to make sure that no one is left behind, so I urge this government to do better and to do more.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Indeed, these are troubling times. The urgency of the moment is definitely felt in this room today from all sides of the House. We know that these are extraordinary times, but I believe that ordinary people can do extraordinary things, and we will do that in order to weather this storm.

Across Canada, individuals are making sacrifices. They are socially isolating. They're doing everything that they can to slow the spread of COVID-19. Today, the government of Canada imposed restrictions on people returning to Canada, asking them to self-isolate and making it mandatory for them to do so. This is all in an effort to keep all Canadians as safe as possible. This, too, is our task as legislators in this province—indeed, it is our moment to make the decisions that keep Ontarians safe.

I want to say thank you to those brave individuals who, every single day, stock our grocery shelves and cash out our goods. I want to say thank you to those building superintendents that keep our environments safe. I want to say thank you to the truck drivers who hit the road every day to make sure that the goods continue to move. And, of course, a big thank you to the front-line health care workers: those care workers providing home care, long-term care and community care—everyone on the front lines who is there to protect our safety.

All levels of government are taking important measures to ensure that people remain safe and that they continue to receive the income that they need during this turbulent

time and, for sure, that the economy has a light at the end of this and that it will rebound beyond this crisis. We're also working hard to ensure that the public has all of the information that they need to keep themselves and their communities safe.

The government's plan that was laid out today is the first step, a \$17-billion package that responds to the immediate needs. Things like child care, the \$200 to \$250 per child—that's going to be put to good use. The GAINS—I know it's \$85, but for the lowest-income seniors, they might be able to buy some fresh vegetables and fruits.

But we cannot afford to be complacent. A tax-deferred plan that banks on all of this wrapping up by the fall is not enough. We cannot afford to be complacent. The people in this province are depending on us. We must be decisive, we must be deliberate, and we must be clear. Delay in any measure with this virus is unacceptable. Every day matters in order to stop COVID-19.

We're suggesting that the government take immediate action to make sure that the people of Ontario have what they need. Ontario has a robust economy, and we will ensure that, beyond this, workers and businesses will stand on their feet again. But right now, we have to lay the foundation to enable our economy to get back to work as soon as possible. So we're calling on the government to double the wage subsidy that has been provided by the federal government. Let Ontario do its part for each and every worker that requires it.

We also need to ensure that our response protects everyday Ontarians and recognizes the unique challenges of the most vulnerable.

I want to speak today specifically to those in long-term care. Just last night, I received a very troubling report from a long-term-care facility in my riding. One person was diagnosed last week, and by today, two members of that community had passed away. I want to extend my condolences to the families and the workers that care for those individuals with compassion. They need our immediate attention. Testing of workers who are going into long-term-care facilities; personal protective equipment—Speaker, it should just be there when needed.

I appreciate that my hospital is doing a drive right now for the community to make donations, but that's not the job that I believe they should be doing. They should be working to make sure that everyone who needs medical supports gets the attention that they need.

We're recommending the doubling of personal protective equipment—from \$75 million to \$150 million, and more if we have to. The \$1 billion in the COVID-19 contingency fund needs to be advanced to our health care system so that people get the support that they need.

Those care workers that I mentioned—in that facility, they've stopped testing. They've stopped testing staff; they've stopped testing patients and clients in the facility. Those individuals deserve hazard pay. They deserve to get the respect that they need as our care workers.

Speaker, I believe that we will weather this storm and that we will get beyond it. The government has said that we will spare no cost in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; well, it's time for us to step up.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Calandra has moved second reading of Bill 188, An Act to enact and amend various statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, the bill is now ordered for third reading.

#### ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE ACT, 2020

#### LOI DE 2020 SUR LA MISE À JOUR ÉCONOMIQUE ET FINANCIÈRE

Mr. Calandra, on behalf of Mr. Phillips, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 188, An Act to enact and amend various statutes /  
Projet de loi 188, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

*Third reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Orders of the day.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** No further business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, April 14 at 1 p.m.

May God bless the people of Ontario.

*The House adjourned at 1732.*





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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
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Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
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Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
<b>Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)</b>	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
<b>Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
<b>Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)</b>	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
<b>Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)</b>	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
<b>French, Jennifer K. (NDP)</b>	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)</b>	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
<b>Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)</b>	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
<b>Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)</b>	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
<b>Hatfield, Percy (NDP)</b>	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
<b>MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)</b>	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
<b>McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)</b>	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
<b>Nicholls, Rick (PC)</b>	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
<b>Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)</b>	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
<b>Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)</b>	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
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Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)</b>	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
<b>Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)</b>	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
<b>Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

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Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau  
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi  
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas  
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed  
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
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Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo  
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Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch  
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle  
Joel Harden, Mike Harris  
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios  
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova  
Robin Martin  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie