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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 June 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 juin 2020

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us pray.
Prayers.

ANNUAL REPORT AND STATISTICAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled:

The 2019 annual report and statistical report from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 27, 2020 on the amendment to the motion relating to certain House proceedings and committee business.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I do want to say before I begin this morning that there's a lot of stuff going on in the world right now. It's pretty frightening what's happening south of the border. There are a lot of people in pain down there; there are a lot of people in pain up here. Some of it has to do with history. Some of it has to do with what's happening right now—the pandemic, violence. I think it's just important for us to be mindful of that as we go through debate and question period today. It really strikes me that our problems seem small in comparison with the problems that we're seeing south of the border, but we have them here too. We can't deny that. There is a lot of pain associated with racism and the history of the country and our province. That pain is still real and we need to address that. We need to face that. We need to look at that. That's the only way we can get reconciliation. I just wanted to begin by saying that.

Motion 77: I don't mean to be trite, but it's the mother of all time allocation motions. I have never, ever seen anything like it.

So, juxtaposed to us discussing continuing the state of emergency this afternoon, it's like there's an emergency on these five pieces of legislation, which I don't fully understand. I'll go back: I think we worked very co-operatively together in the first 10 to 12 weeks, and I appreciate the work that we did. I understand that some parties were more co-operative than others, but that's irrelevant right now.

We are rushing through pieces of legislation—and I've been on the other side, so I know how that happens. I know what happens when we rush through pieces of legislation. They aren't as good as they could be.

I do respect the government's need to get things done. That's why they're here. We're all here to get things done. But I just look at, for instance, Bill 184: Why, when people are suffering, when renters are suffering, do we pull out a bill that talks about evictions? I don't really quite understand that. I don't know why we're pulling out a bill, Bill 175, with regard to home care, when the whole landscape in health care is shifting. This pandemic has exposed to us some things that I think we knew were already there about how vulnerable we were because of the way that we've organized our health care system. I don't see the rush. I think what would have been a better way for us to do this was to have a discussion about these bills, about which ones and why the government felt it important to bring them forward.

I look at things right now like essential caregivers. Quebec has moved to make sure that essential caregivers can get into a long-term-care home, a hospital, a group home, because they're essential to their loved ones or their brother, their sister—their care. We really haven't done anything to address that other than to say, "We should do that." Quebec has come forward with a plan; Manitoba has come forward with a plan. I don't know why we're not discussing a plan in here. Why would the government—right now it would seem to me the thing that's really important is there should be a caregiver bill of rights. There should be a caregiver bill of rights—not because it's the nice thing to do and we just want to go and visit. They're not visitors. Caregivers are just that: They're caregivers.

When I looked at what the government has programmed and what they're putting forward in comparison to what we need to do right now, I have a real challenge understanding the urgency with which we must pass all these pieces of legislation, when there are other things, like universal masking. It's just not good enough for the Premier to stand up and say, "You know what, you should all wear a mask. It's the right thing to do." No, you actually have to have a plan. You have to communicate that to people. You need to communicate to people that you're wearing a mask because you're wearing it for other people. You actually have to make sure that people who can't afford masks can get masks.

You have to have a plan, just like you do for PPE, to get universal masking with reusable masks. There's no plan. There's no discussion of that here. That is critical to

our recovery, not just a recovery from a health perspective, but it's critical to our recovery in the economy. We're doing nothing about it other than to say, "You should wear a mask." What about the people who can't have a mask? Any discussion of that? What about the people who need the mask most because they live in conditions that are close and tight in apartment buildings, in townhouses, in public housing? Why aren't we doing that?

I don't understand. I don't understand why there's this urgency on all of these bills. I think it's out of sync with the state of emergency and the things that we need to be doing to prepare for the second wave, because there is going to be one. It's going to happen. We should be doing something on universal masking. We should be able to figure out what we can do for caregivers, how we can help caregivers do what they need to do for their loved ones. It's a very serious issue, and it's just not good enough to say, "You can do this." We actually have to work with our partners, our hospitals, our long-term care, our group homes, all those places, and tell them, "You need to do this."

I don't want to take too much more of the Legislature's time. We didn't need to do this. We could have time-allocated some of these bills if the argument for doing these bills was valid. I think there probably are some in there. The government needed to articulate that; they didn't. Maybe somebody will articulate it in the questions and responses. There are more important things for us to be dealing with.

I believe we're still in a state of emergency. The government needs those powers to be able to react. But we can't be doing something else at the same time that's driving another agenda, because we're going to miss the mark—and especially in a hurry. We're going to come out with pieces of legislation that we're not going to be happy with. I know because I've seen it before. So it's not a wagging of the finger; it's, "I know how this movie plays out." I know that when we're in a rush, we don't do our best job. We're in a rush, and we don't need to be. We need to be focused on those things that are important to Ontarians right now.

0910

Commercial rent evictions—sorry, I'm going off now. Commercial rent evictions: It's not good enough to say, "Hey, you kids, if you don't behave, I'm going to come upstairs and there's going to be a big problem." You've got to do something. Does the tiger have some teeth? It's not good enough to say, "You know what? If you don't do that, I'm going to get you." You say, "If you don't do this, here's what I'm going to do." It was an empty threat. Those are the things that are concerning Main Street: not-for-profits that can't pay their rent; small businesses that can't pay their rent getting evicted. Those are the things that we need to be dealing with.

I can't support this motion, I won't support this motion, simply on the basis that it's not dealing directly with the things that are most important and critical right now to all Ontarians.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: As always, it is a privilege and an honour to be able to rise in this House, in this temple of democracy, and speak to the issues that arise, and, of course, representing the good people of Niagara West. It is a privilege and an honour to be able to speak also following the member from Ottawa South.

I wish to begin by echoing the comments from the member opposite at the beginning of his contribution to the debate this morning with regard to what's going on in society right now. We see turmoil. We see the impacts of decisions that have been made over hundreds of years, over decades, and the consequences that that has also in terms of the impacts on people of colour. We see the need to be able to stand forward, to move forward, and to not just empathize with those who are struggling, but also to be willing to take up their voice and be a voice for those who need people and need allies in this.

So I want to echo the words of the member opposite when it comes to seeing, both south of the border and in our own country, the fact that there's always more work to be done to call out racism, to be an ally to persons of colour across Ontario and Canada, and to do what we can to create a more inclusive and accepting society, specifically one that recognizes the inherent dignity and worth of every individual. I want to thank the member opposite for beginning with that.

The member, though, in his address I believe failed to come—when he spoke about some of the issues that we're dealing with in front of the Legislature and with the motion at hand, the importance of being able to, as my mother used to say, walk and talk at the same time. The reality is that as a Legislature, as a government and as a system of democracy, it's important that we be able to deal with issues that are immediate, the issues that come up over the course of time. I think no one, at the beginning of 2020, could have anticipated what we have seen this year turn out to be from, of course, the COVID-19 situation, as well as a number of other difficulties and challenges that have faced not just society but families and individuals.

When we talk about society and culture, we're not just talking about people in this broad, esoteric sense, but really people on the ground level who are feeling the impacts. That's, of course, very, very important, that we, as a government, deal with those things as they come up. I will speak a little bit later in this address, and also hopefully this afternoon have the opportunity to speak about what our government is doing in working in collaboration with other partners—both in other sectors of government, both within this chamber and outside of this chamber, both within the chambers of municipal governance and the chambers of federal Parliament.

It's also important that we be able to move forward with important policy items that have come before this House and that we will have the opportunity to debate over the course of this summer, to be able to move forward in those areas—so of course responding, reacting, engaging with the issues of the day as they arise, but also thinking proactively and thinking longitudinally about what sort of challenges are coming in the future and what we must do

to deal with those challenges. That's why I think it's important, as we have these conversations this morning within this House, that we think about the issues of the day, but also think about the issues of tomorrow and how we're going to be dealing with those.

One of the things in the reality of an elected office such as the ones that many of us hold is that, although people might not realize it—and I'm sure those who watch today on the Internet or perhaps on their television later this evening will appreciate the fact that many of us do speak. We rise and speak to the issues that come up in this chamber. But there's also a lot of mundane work that is done by members of this House.

The history of Parliaments and the history of elected officials as servants of the people is a long one—and I have a bit of a history here—going all the way back to the origins in Rome and the origins of councils in Norway and in the Middle East, gathering to gain counsel from those who have been selected from communities to be able to speak. I would say the fundamental role of us as members of provincial Parliament is representing our constituents' concerns, our constituents' issues, and of course being advocates for the needs of our constituents as they come up, as well as speaking to the values that we need to see across society.

The reality is that a great deal of our work is very mundane. People see the speeches. People might even watch some of the committee work. But a great deal of the work we do as elected officials is dealing with the day-to-day issues that come up within our constituencies to assist people when it comes to being able to access government services, when it comes to being able to ensure that we have adequate public services, when it comes to being able to ensure that people are supported and that they're able to pursue a better life for themselves, their children and future generations.

What we're discussing today, although I believe very, very important, I also recognize, perhaps, the mundanity of the discussion that we are having around issues of, for example, Bill 156, ensuring agricultural security, or when we're discussing Bill 175. These are very, very important issues, but as the members opposite have spoken about, there are a great deal of things going on in society as a whole that can be looking for our attention. We can give those issues attention and deal with those issues. But simultaneously, we have to proceed with the agenda of the House, an agenda that was put forward now already two years ago, when we were selected by the people of Ontario to govern this province.

Over the past few months, we have seen COVID-19 and some of the impacts of that terrible virus, and of course the economic consequences of it have taken up the vast, vast majority of our time. That is completely not just understandable, but I believe beneficial for the people of this province, that we've had to deal with a pandemic that didn't come with a playbook, as I say in some of my virtual round tables, trying to hear from constituents in various sectors. So although we don't have a pandemic that came with a playbook and have had to move very quickly,

hearing from the opposition, hearing from the third party—although, I suppose, it's technically not a party—the independents who represent a third party, hearing from those important players within our system. We also have to realize that there are issues that need to be advanced to make sure that we're able to help with those day-to-day experiences.

We talk about, for example, the importance of agri supply. We talk about the importance of maintaining our food supply chain. I want to just give a huge shout-out to all those, first of all, who are working in all the essential businesses—we recognize our health care workers, we recognize our doctors, our nurses—but also those who are essential in so many other ways when it comes to ensuring our supply chains are well-managed. I'm thinking, for example, of our truck drivers; thinking of people like my siblings who work in agriculture, on farms across the Niagara region, across the country; and other people who are doing work that, in and of itself, can be considered “mundane,” but is so important to make sure that we have a functioning society and make sure that people have food on their table.

Similarly, when we think about the work that our essential workers are doing within health care, whether it's doctors or nurses, or those who are working as PSWs or recreational therapists, whatever that work might look like, we have to realize that they're not working in isolation; they're working within a particular system. And so one of our duties as elected officials is to do what we can to try to improve that system. That's what I believe, of course, Bill 175, the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, provides. It provides support for those essential workers who are working in difficult situations, often, with pressure, both psychological as well as physical—and even the emotional impact and burden of being in those positions.

0920

Those who are working in agri-food, from the truck drivers to the farmhands to the suppliers to the feed mills, need to ensure that they have security, and one of the pieces, of course, in Bill 156 is—Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.

When we think about the impacts of the pandemic on our supply chain, we all have the memories of going back into our stores and of seeing empty shelves. Of course, toilet paper was the one that everyone talked about, but there were a lot of other impacts. That's because we have a very tightly streamlined food supply chain that needs to ensure it has protection.

The bills that will come before the House this summer that we're going to be debating, including Bill 156, which is in the motion, as well as Bill 175, really are connected, because we live in a society where each and every person is so integrated into our economy, is integrated into those supply chains that make up our food security, that make up our health care system. We need to make sure that we're doing what we can as elected officials to pass legislation that ensures we're strengthening those systems, that we're doing what we can to provide better care where and when we can, to provide food at more affordable rates.

Of course, one of the things we talk about is food security and the impact that food insecurity has for people psychologically, mentally and physically. One of the realities is that the cost of food is also tied in with the ability to produce food safely.

Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, also ties into food security because of the fact that when you have higher costs, that is carried along to the consumer, and that is carried—often, the greatest impact is felt by those who are food-insecure, who might not have as much of an ability to put food on their table.

If we don't bring forward legislation like Bill 156, if we don't bring forward legislation like Bill 175, we are in fact creating challenges within that very system that is meant to support, that is meant to provide, that is meant to be an aid to some of the most vulnerable in our society. That is why I believe the motion that we have before us today is very important.

Speaker, I was going to speak a little bit about the history of parliamentarism. It's quite a history. You and I have chatted about this, as well—the history of both this institution and, of course, our Westminster democracy as a whole. We share some similar loves of Churchill and others and we've had some good conversations about that.

The reality is that in our modern system, I believe it's even more important that we ensure we do have sittings such as the ones we're having this morning, where we can ensure we have not just the Zoom call that so many of us have become very, very well acquainted with, but we're able to ensure that we have that, I'm going to call it "ambience"—that might not be quite the right word—the charge, the electric static of democracy that we have in a place like this where we're able to have the interactions. I can make eye contact with the member opposite. I can make eye contact with my colleague from the constituency next door. We can engage, perhaps non-verbally, but also, after this discussion, after our contributions, we can walk over and have conversations. Maybe those happen less frequently now with social distancing. But still, it creates that ability to connect in a way that Zoom calls, in a way that having virtual Parliaments, such as we're seeing from our federal counterparts, who are trying to push that option, simply do not have. I think that's really why there's such a strength in this House where we're able to engage with each other, not just through this debate. I know that this is one of the most public-facing aspects of the work that we do, and it's a very, very important task. I would be very convinced of that. It's important that we have this. But so much work also happens when the camera is off, or not even off—it's moved on to my next colleague who will also be speaking to this legislation; it's moved on to a member of the opposition.

The speeches that we have here in this House are recorded for posterity. And the ability that we have to articulate the importance of the issues that we're bringing forward is going to be read, is going to be reviewed, for a great deal of time to come. I was going through some of the research about the history of Parliament and the great tradition that we have of meeting at many different times.

I know many of us have become perhaps a little bit used to the parliamentary tradition of September to June, following a bit of the school year. That, of course, for hundreds and hundreds of years was not the case. The history is quite different.

I was flipping through some of the online journals of the House of Lords in the UK, the House of Commons in the UK from 1617 to 1707. You're reading the speeches, the Hansard of people who have passed, obviously, but whose work created the foundation of what we can work with today—who created the clay, who created the playdough, if you want to call it that, of our modern democracy, which we now have this great responsibility to deal with with care.

The assertion that I would have is that we can't simply say, as we deal with COVID, as we deal with also the challenges that we're seeing in society right now—and coming to terms with the consequences of racism and trying to deal with that—we can't just say that these are the only issues that we have to be able to work on. They're very important issues, but we also have to be able to deal with those other issues: from Bill 175, ensuring we have stronger health care; food security, to make sure that we're able to ensure that we have access to safe, clean, affordable food for every member of our society. Those are also tied in. Those are important. The only way we can make sure that we get those things moving is by sitting this summer.

That's really what the crux of this particular motion is. This motion creates the ability for us to have debate over the course of the summer for several days a week in order to make sure that we're able to move through our legislative agenda. I know my colleagues on this side of the House are very eager to do so. I've heard from some of the members opposite when we debated this motion as well last week, and I know that the independents, one of whom spoke prior to me, also are interested in making sure we can move this forward.

We're not doing this to have checks on a box. We're not doing this so that we can say, "You know what? We passed this many pieces of legislation." We're not doing it so that we can say, "We debated this many hours." No, we're doing it so that this chamber, this place, this centrifuge of democracy, is able to do its work meaningfully. We could all sit in our basements if we wanted to and do it on Zoom, but we wouldn't have that interconnectivity that we have here. We wouldn't have those free-flowing discussions that we have, whether the cameras are on or whether the cameras are off. And that's valuable; that's important. That's work, I believe, that is needed now more than ever. So I'm very excited, over the course of this summer, to come back to this chamber and to hear from my colleagues in government, in opposition, who have meaningful contributions to make.

I know that all members in this House represent constituencies that are quite large; I believe approximately 100,000 on average. I know there are some—I have spoken with some of my colleagues who have upwards of 140,000 just because of the significant growth in their ridings, because of the changing demographics and seeing

huge surges. We have others, perhaps—I'm at 96,000; I'll be at 100,000 pretty soon—that might have a few less. But within those particular constituencies, there are important issues that our staff are dealing with every day, that we have to interact with and have the privilege of serving every day. It's important that we bring those back centrally as well. Because I can write an email. I mean, we can all write an email, we can make a call, we can leave a voice mail, but that's not the same.

That's why being here today, speaking to this motion, I believe will create the ability for us to move forward with the way democracy is intended. That means having fulsome debate. That means having conversations about the challenges that may come up, the challenges that we're already dealing with, and thinking ahead to what will be coming in the generations to come. So I want to thank the members who are speaking. I want to encourage them to bring the voices of their constituents into this place.

I've had the great privilege of working with so many people in my riding, so many people who have reached out who have concerns about COVID, who have been encouraged to see that so many people are working together, from Dillon's distillery in Beamsville, to the Village of Hope food bank in Vineland, to the Grimsby Benevolent Fund in Grimsby, to the downtown improvement area providing face shields, Stanpac working with the firefighters in West Lincoln to make deliveries, to Fonthill Legion delivering thousands of free hot meals to vulnerable seniors in the community. There have been so many amazing organizations that have stepped up to the plate, that have shown what it means to be a community. But they know that their government needs to support them, and that's exactly what we're doing.

0930

This motion gives us the ability to be able to debate the issues that are coming forward, to be able to support those organizations in our community. It gives us the ability to go to our counterparts at the municipal and at the federal levels and say, "Here are the contributions of our members representing 14 million people across this province, representing 14 million voices."

And no, we can't echo every single one of those voices perfectly. That's one of the realities of, again, the system we live in. Again, Speaker, going back to one of our shared individuals, Winston Churchill: He said that democracy is the worst type of system of governance except for all the other ones. That's very true. We're not perfectly able to reflect every single one of those 14.5 million voices, but we have the duty to try. We have the duty to think of those 14.5 million people and to do what's best for them today, tomorrow and into the future.

I know my colleagues are going to speak extensively about the contents of the legislation that's coming forward. I will be speaking again later this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to doing so. But for now, I wish to thank you for your indulgence, I wish to thank the indulgence of the House and I look forward to hearing from the next speaker.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would rather we not be having this debate, to be quite honest, Mr. Speaker. It was said earlier by the previous speaker from the independents that there was a fair amount of co-operation that was going on between the parties for the last number of weeks, dealing with various things that this Legislature had to deal with. Some of it we weren't happy with, but we understand that we are in a particular situation where things need to be done and we need to figure out ways to move forward. So we were not oppositional, as the official opposition, to any of the measures that the government brought forward. In fact, we helped the government pass those particular things in a timely manner, with some debate—because it's always been the view of New Democrats that you have to have some debate on issues that come before the House. We should not as a rule just be rubber-stamping things.

So the government was trying to do a couple of things. First of all, they want to have the ability to have a session during the summer, because normally the House would end at the end of this week. The government needed to have the House sit in June, July and possibly August. We understand that; we have no problem, as New Democrats. We're prepared to work whenever this House has to sit. We will be here, and we will do what has to be done. So that's not the issue.

If the government wanted to have a summer session, we would have been amenable to having some sort of a motion that could have been brought to the House, and there would have been very little debate as to that particular motion. We're fine with the House sitting in the summer. That is not the issue. We've done that before. However, the motion goes way beyond that, and that's the reason why I wanted to get up and speak this morning.

The government House leader came to us and said there were a number of things that he was proposing. Some of them have found their way into this motion; some have not. But one of the things that he wanted us to agree to is that there would be no private members' debates during the summer session. I think that's wrong, because all members of this House have the right to introduce a bill, which we still can do under this motion, but you will not be able to have your item called if your ballot number comes up.

All members of this House have been working diligently in their constituencies in order to help people in their community deal with this pandemic. Out of those experiences, we've actually developed some ideas. Constituents have come to us and said, "Hey, what about this? What about that? What about the other thing?" I know that a number of members on both sides of the House have wanted to put those particular ideas into legislation to be brought to the House, because we know how this place works: Members get an idea, they develop a private member's bill, they bring it to the House, and if it's an idea that the government supports, the government will vote for it but very seldom pass it. They'll just pick it up and put it in their own legislation, which achieves the same thing. We're fine with that. We understand the government wants to take some credit so they'll bring it back and put

it into their own legislation. But we can't do that because of this motion. This motion is going to prevent all members of this House, government or opposition, to be able to have a debate on a private member's bill when their ballot item comes up. That's not the way that the Legislature operates and should operate.

If you take a look, my earnest colleague who spoke earlier spoke of Winston Churchill, and he's right. Winston Churchill was an interesting individual, to say the least. But one of the things—and in fact, I read that in a book that you gave me, Mr. Speaker. I had read this before, but I read it recently about a year ago when you lent me that wonderful book on Winston. One of the things that Churchill understood was that the executive had its authority but it needed to be guided by the Legislature, and the Legislature had to do its job.

Even during the Second World War, when things were going terribly in 1939, 1940, 1941—things didn't turn for the Allies until about 1942, 1943—there were debates in the House of Commons in England—mind you, closed debates—where members were able to come and be briefed by the ministers as to what was going on. They were able to ask questions and they were able to propose solutions. It allowed a way for Britain to basically fight its way through that terrible ordeal called the Second World War, because the best of all of the ideas is what went forward when it came to government legislation. Yes, some of those bills back then—there might have been some private members' aspect to it. But the government was able to hear the ideas, the ideas from all sides of the House, to listen to what had been said, to contemplate what was said and, if necessary, to pass that bill or bring that bill forward in their own legislation.

During the pandemic, I've got to say, I don't care who sits on the other side. The government doesn't have all the answers. It's not a fault of the current government. The reality is that no government can think of all the angles, and that's why we have a democracy that sends people to the House so that you can have the voices from Timmins, from Chatham, from Oshawa, from Ottawa, from different parts around Ontario where citizens have talked to their elected representatives, have given them ideas, and those members come to the House and propose the ideas either through statements or questions or, yes, Mr. Speaker, through private members' bills.

This government said no at those meetings that we had by Zoom—because we didn't do any face-to-face meetings during this particular pandemic. If we ever go back to having House leaders meetings, I would imagine we'll be doing them by Zoom still. But the government was not interested in having any kind of discussion that included having private members' hour. All of a sudden the government sort of went dark on us and decided that they were going to move this motion without telling us that the motion was coming, never shared this motion with us and just sprung it onto the House. Well, it's their right. I'm not going to argue the government can't do that. They have a majority. They will be judged at the end of a four-year term as to did they dispense government in a way that is

satisfying to the public. And the public will decide if this was a good or a bad move.

But I'm suggesting, and I will make the argument leading up to the next election, that this is a very bad move. Because members of this House, as I said, are all working hard in their constituencies, listening to constituents, talking to administrators and staff and long-term-care facilities, home care, hospitals, grocery stores, cab companies, car dealerships, you name it; we're talking to these people, and they're telling us things that make us reflect on "There's a good idea of something that we should do."

One of the things that was brought to my attention, one of the bills that I would have liked to have brought forward is a bill that deals with people who are custodians in apartment buildings. Did you know they're not paid minimum wage? Even if you add up the money that they get for their particular rent subsidy—sometimes the rent is counted as part of their wages—they don't even get minimum wage. They're all currently having to make sure that their buildings are clean; they're having to clean them much more often than they normally do; they're having to keep an eye on things; they're having to make sure that people are following the directives of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. They're working hard in order to make our homes and those apartment buildings safe, and we're not even paying them minimum wage.

0940

You've got PSWs who have been underpaid for years, and now you've got custodians who take care of buildings who don't even make minimum wage. There was one idea that came forward from a couple of the custodians who approached me about this—because I always assumed that they made minimum wage. When you added up their hourly rate and you added their apartment rent and put that all together, I thought it came up to minimum wage. But it doesn't. That's just one idea.

There are a number of ideas when it comes to the issue of dealing with how you reform our long-term-care/home care/hospital system. Public health care has served us well over the years, but there are some failings, and we see that in the long-term-care sector. Much of that has been raised in this House on this side for years now. I remember Shelley Martel was the minister—well, she was minister at one point—was the health critic, and we started raising the alarm bells during the Harris days with regard to hours of care in long-term-care facilities. And more and more over the years, we saw the hours of care that each resident got diminished and the amount of service and support that you got in the community diminished.

When we were government in the early 1990s, we had moved the entire home care sector into the public system. Everything had been moved over to the public system. And there was a reason for that: We wanted every dollar that you paid in taxes to go to making sure we could provide services at home so people didn't have to go into long-term care.

We had people in all of our communities who were getting 60, 80 hours a month plus, in order to be able to remain in their home. That has been cut over the years by

both the previous administrations, under Mr. Harris, under Mr. McGuinty and Madam Wynne, and this government, and we have not moved to address that. If we're going to fix the long-term-care system, we need to fix the home care system.

But back to the motion: The motion essentially says that no member of this House, no individual member of this House, will be able to have a private member's bill debated, and that's wrong. The government doesn't have all the ideas.

The other problem we have in the summer session is that it's an extension of the spring session, which means to say there's no opposition days unless there is unanimous consent. Again, one of the mechanisms that the opposition has to be able to move forward by giving ideas outside of question period and debate and meetings with ministers etc. is opposition days. Do you think the government is going to say yes to an opposition day motion from the New Democrats on anything during the summer session? Unless we have something that says, "Doug Ford is a great and benevolent leader," they're going to say no—I can't use that word. I'm sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Yes. I'm going to ask the member to continue to refer to other members by their ministerial title or their riding name.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry, I want to talk about the Premier. We'll just leave it at that.

The point is, we're going to be in a very bad situation after this week. The government will be the only one that can actually bring something to the floor on how we deal with this pandemic and have it debated for consideration. I just think that's so wrong. It's so wrong.

We need to listen to the public. Like all of you, we meet with our chamber of commerce task force on a weekly basis. I think every member is doing that in the House—along with others. Labour councils and others are doing the same.

One of the things we talked about yesterday was how in the city of Timmins, we've been very, very lucky that everybody has been working together towards the same sort of direction in dealing with this pandemic. Citizens of Timmins have done a really good job of following the directives of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and, as a result, our amount of infections has gone from being the highest per capita in northern Ontario at the beginning of the pandemic to where we haven't had one now for about two weeks. We haven't had a single infection in two weeks reported. That's because citizens are following the directives, but it's also because there's leadership at the mayor's level, at the business-side level, labour-side level, MPP and MP—everybody's on the same page, following the direction of our Chief Medical Officer of Health. As a result, people are doing the right thing.

My God, even I went out and bought masks. You know how hard that is? You'll never find a politician of our vintage, Mr. Speaker, who wants to hide their face, right? We're constantly trying to stay out in the public. But I understand the directives of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and it's not about protecting me, it's about making

sure I don't make somebody else ill. That's really the situation.

So I just say to the government that to move in the direction that we will have no ability as individual members to be able to propose to the floor of this House items to be debated on how we deal with this pandemic is just wrong. That's one of the very reasons we're voting against it.

The other part of this is that the government has decided that it's going to move essentially a time allocation motion within here to basically program all of the legislation they have on the order paper out of the House. Whatever is in committee, whatever is in the House, it's all going to get dealt with and all going to get passed. This tells me, Mr. Speaker, and you've been around as long as I have, the government is doing that—because originally they told us up until June 6, if the House went to the 6th, we would deal with only pandemic issues, right? That's fine; we agreed to that. We think that was a wise decision and something we should have done.

But the government broke its own agreement, because now they've brought a motion forward that has nothing to do with the pandemic. It has to do with moving their agenda. And they're doing it in the portion of the sitting this spring when we're supposedly all in agreement that we're only going to deal with the pandemic. The government can't even live up to its own agreement. They're the ones who came to us and said, "Will you agree to this?" We went away and talked to our people, and we said, "Fine." We're actually the ones, as New Democrats, who said, "We're fine with what you're doing as long as we just deal with the pandemic issue."

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I need to interrupt the member. Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I recognize the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: We wish the debate to continue, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The debate continues. I recognize again the member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, the government, when they came to us during the beginning of this pandemic, we had said to them, "We're fine with all of the things that you're asking to do—extending the emergency order, doing the emergency legislation related to the pandemic that needed to be done—but we shouldn't be dealing with the government agenda." The government agreed to that and said, "Okay. Until the end of the spring session, we won't do any of that."

Well, the government broke its own agreement by moving this motion last week in the House and having it debated this week. We're still in the spring session. It's not as if they couldn't have done this—if they would have said they wanted a motion for the House to sit in the summer, New Democrats would have agreed. We have no problem

with the House sitting in the summer. But there needs to be an opportunity for independent members, and not just independent members but members generally, to be able to propose, and they're not doing that in this particular motion.

So the government is essentially time-allocating all of the business that they now have in committee, a lot of which has absolutely nothing to do with the pandemic. Are they good or bad bills? That's for the public to decide and for us to decide at third reading in the ways that we vote, Mr. Speaker. But the government had given its word that they would not be doing any of that until we got into the summer session.

I've got to say to the government that I'm disappointed. We need, in this particular time, to be working together. We're not out of this pandemic, Mr. Speaker. We look across the world where infections are starting to pop up again in different areas. We just heard about the farm community in regard to 120 infections that were just reported this week. We saw what happened in New Brunswick. We're seeing what's happening in other countries around the world. We're not out of this yet.

The thing that we need to be careful of is how we open up our economy. I think all of us are very much wanting to make sure that we can open up our economy, but we need to do it in a safe way. That's part of what could have been debated in the House here, because I'm sure that members would have come forward with ideas about, if this ever happens again, having some sort of mechanism that allows us to deal with this in a much more transparent way.

So far, the public, I think, has been generally supportive of the Legislature when it comes to the bills that we have passed up to date because they understand that the government needed to give itself the ability to extend the emergency powers that they have to deal with the pandemic. I think that, generally, the public was supportive of those things.

But the public is not going to be supportive once they start looking at what this government is doing inside this motion by blocking the ability of individual members to bring bills before the House for debate, by extending the spring session into summer, which means that there will be no opposition days unless the government agrees, and that the government time-allocates a number of bills that have nothing to do with the pandemic. So I just say to the government across the way, this is a wrong-headed move. The government would be wise to accept the amendment that was put forward by our deputy House leader, Ms. Sattler from London, in order to be able to deal with parts of this motion, that could have made it a little more palatable, and a big part of that is dealing with the whole issue of private members' bills.

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Mr. Speaker, I think it's an unfortunate step that the government has taken. I hope that the government will take the time to think about accepting the amendments that we have put forward—and that we make this House do what it should do, and that is, all members of this House

on both sides have a valuable contribution to give to Ontario when it comes to how we continue through this pandemic, get out the other side, and build the systems that allow us to fix the current problems within our health care system and to better prepare us in the future for what could be more pandemics in the future. I think we would be well served to listen to all members of the House—and not to say that the cabinet are the only ones who have all the ideas and the only ones who can bring anything forward during the summer session. I just think that's the wrong thing to do.

With that, I thank you for this time in debate.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be here today, along with our colleagues on both sides, and discuss motion 77.

The people of Ontario expect the Legislature to continue to function. The summer sittings allow the government to introduce important legislation as may be required to help Ontario recover and rebuild in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The government believes that question period must continue during this time to facilitate the constitutionally important responsibility of the opposition to hold the government to account.

Today, we are debating the motion tabled by our government to authorize standing committees of the Ontario Legislature to begin virtual studies on the following bills:

—Bill 156, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, which will be studied by the Standing Committee on General Government;

—Bill 161, Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, which will be studied by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy;

—Bill 171, Building Transit Faster Act, which will be studied by the Standing Committee on Social Policy;

—Bill 175, Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, which will be studied by the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to particularly focus on Bill 171, Building Transit Faster Act.

Before I do that, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the transit workers out there working day in and day out, throughout this pandemic.

And especially, before I thank the front-line workers, I want to give a shout-out to unsung heroes: the truck drivers of this province. They are ensuring that they are stocking the shelves at the supermarkets. They are ensuring that we get food throughout this pandemic.

And of course I want to thank all the front-line care workers for their dedication and for their hard work during this challenging time.

Mr. Speaker, as Ontario's parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I have had the opportunity to speak with people and organizations from all corners of Ontario. Prior to the pandemic, I had the opportunity to do a four-day northern Ontario driving tour to discuss the ways our government can get Ontario moving and keep our roads and highways safe. People want to be able to get around more easily. They want more choices, more

convenient transportation options. And that's why it's important to study this bill, the Building Transit Faster Act, at the Standing Committee on Social Policy, even during this difficult time, Mr. Speaker.

In my riding of Scarborough–Rouge Park, I regularly hear from unhappy commuters who live in an urban community with limited transit options to connect people with places where they need to go. We need a safe and a reliable transportation network that helps people travel easily within their community, but also provides seamless connections to large city centres and economic hubs.

Our government understands that a safe, efficient and connected transportation network is the foundation of a healthy and prosperous province. Getting to your destination shouldn't leave you stressed or angry by the time you arrive. Whether it's during the pandemic or post-pandemic, it is important. We need to keep our people and goods moving efficiently and fast.

For too long, the families, neighbours and communities in our ridings and right across the GTA have been stuck waiting for past governments to deliver transit options that address the productivity-killing congestion we face, but those days are over, Mr. Speaker. Since Premier Ford unveiled the historic GTA subway expansion plan last April, our government's foot has been on the gas. The legislation that Minister Mulroney introduced, the Building Transit Faster Act, is proof that our government is done waiting and we are taking action now.

Our government is committed to building a world-class transportation network for the GTA that will boost economic growth and relieve congestion and get people to work and home to their loved ones faster. Our government is building better public transit and transit infrastructure, delivering faster service and putting people first by making public transit an attractive, affordable and low-stress alternative for individuals and families.

Mr. Speaker, we are making the single largest capital contribution to new subway builds and extensions in Ontario's history and creating a truly integrated regional transit plan. To do this, we are taking a new approach to the way we think about and deliver major transit projects. And that's why it's important to have this motion 77 to authorize the Standing Committee on Social Policy to study Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act.

The old way of doing things led to costly delays again and again, and it's time to look forward. We need to do things differently, and that is what this legislation is all about and that is why it is important to discuss and study this bill in the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

I'm pleased to say that if this Bill 171 passes, the Building Transit Faster Act will cut bureaucratic red tape and break down the roadblocks that have held up projects in the past. It will help us meet our ambitious timelines for our priority subway projects and deliver the transit network that people desperately need.

Our government has made cutting red tape a priority in everything we do, and this proposed legislation is a great example of how doing that can make a huge difference. By cutting red tape and redundant, outdated steps in the transit

delivery process, we stand to save years in the delivery of our priority rapid transit projects, while still respecting property rights and negotiating in good faith.

While we are determined to eliminate roadblocks that cause delays, we are also committed to maintaining a collaboration-first approach with our municipal partners and stakeholders. As Minister Mulroney has explained, there are six key challenges that this legislation and the supporting regional changes address.

There are four projects that are very exciting for the people who live and work right here in the GTA. We are delivering the largest subway expansion in Canadian history, increasing the length of the current system by over 50%. With the new partnership between the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto, we are delivering a unified plan to modernize and expand our subway network.

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People need to get home to their families quicker, and everyone deserves to enjoy all that the GTA has to offer. Our plan will help people get around more easily so they can spend less time travelling and more time doing the things they want.

Another important reason, even during this pandemic time, that we should study this bill in our standing committee is because this bill has a historic investment—I'm very proud to be part of the government that has this historic investment—of a \$28.5-billion subway expansion.

This subway plan is now endorsed by the province, Mayor Tory and city council. It's realistic, attainable and deliverable. It will bring subway infrastructure to new neighbourhoods across Toronto, Markham and Richmond Hill, and it will make a huge difference in the lives of families and commuters all across the GTA.

To respect physical distancing, the government will seek to continue the agreement among the parties and independent members to limit the number of members in the chamber at any given time and to allow members to sit, speak and vote from any seat in the chamber. Similar to that, having these studies in committee will enable that we fast-track, enable that we don't delay these important bills. That is why I'm proud to stand here today to debate motion 77 and especially this bill, Bill 171.

Now, I want to point out a couple of key infrastructure projects that we are working on, on these four priorities.

Number one, I want to highlight the Yonge North extension. If we continue the process to pass Bill 171, the Yonge North extension will be delivered by 2029-30. It will extend the TTC's Line 1 to major employment centres in the cities of Markham and Richmond Hill. It will stretch from Finch station to Richmond Hill Centre and will provide a much-needed transit connection to York region. Plus, it will maintain direct subway access in the downtown core for thousands of commuters and open up new destinations in York region for Toronto subway riders.

This will also help Etobicoke neighbourhoods. They will enjoy increased transit access with the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension, which will also enable future expansion into Pearson International Airport. Finally, our

city is within reach of a subway system that directly connects to an international airport—a real benchmark of a world-class city.

Finally, something that I'm particularly excited about is the Scarborough subway extension. If we continue this legislation and continue the study in the standing committee, this project will finally bring a long-awaited subway line for the residents of Scarborough by 2029-30. For too long, Scarborough has been treated as second class when it comes to rapid transit. The people of Scarborough deserve a subway, and more than just a one-stop subway. Under our government, it's happening, and as a proud resident of Scarborough, I couldn't be happier. Together, these projects will transform Toronto's subway network into one that people can be proud of for generations to come. That means more than lines on the map; it means real, tangible benefits for people across the region.

More subways and a more connected network mean people can get where they need to go faster and more reliably. In this time and age, instead of riding on a crowded bus, thousands more people will be able to hop on a subway and get where they're going in minutes. That makes it easier and much less stressful to get to work on time, to get to appointments, to school etc. Making transit more convenient and lower-stress means more people will choose it as an option every day.

These four new subway projects will get thousands more people on transit and help reduce congestion on roads. That's especially important when you consider the one million-plus people who are expected to move into the GTA in the next decade. Less congestion means less time wasted sitting in traffic and fewer greenhouse gas emissions. It will cut down on billions in lost productivity costs each and every year. These projects will give thousands of people more direct access to rapid transit near their homes and workplaces. This will vastly improve the quality of life for the people who live and work in these areas.

Plus, with connections to other subway lines, with surface routes and the GO network, these projects will make getting around the region a much more seamless experience. New neighbourhoods and destinations all over the city will be reachable by rapid transit, including some of the city's premier tourist attractions, such as Exhibition Place and the Ontario Science Centre. That's great news for families. The people of Toronto will finally have a transit network they can be proud of and will no longer be looking at other major cities and their neighbours with jealousy.

Thousands of people across the city will be able to get to their job faster and more reliably, and thousands more will be able to walk out of transit stations and be at their workplace within a matter of a 10-minute walk. The projects will create new job opportunities in neighbourhoods that are currently underserved by transit, and these new subway projects will generate billions in economic benefits. This is an incredible achievement, one that we can all be proud of.

Our plan to build transit faster, if passed, will provide reliable connections and complete travel experiences sooner

to support healthy and sustainable communities. We are focused on building transit practically and responsibly to get shovels in the ground sooner. In order to get shovels in the ground sooner, we need to study this bill and we need to study this bill in this standing committee. Our plan is building faster, and that's why, even during this time, we are discussing motion 77.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the question be put now.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Thanigasalam has moved that the question now be put. I understand there has been six hours and 55 minutes of debate on this motion so far and 21 members have spoken to it. I've reviewed some of the precedents, and I'm satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House at this time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Don't test me.

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 that the question now be put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, this vote will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 10:15 this morning.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1015.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M. Gilles Bisson: Durant cette pandémie, il y a beaucoup de monde dans nos communautés à travers l'Ontario qui ont travaillé d'une manière acharnée pour être capable de donner les services nécessaires à la population, les services nécessaires à ceux qui ont été malades faisant affaire avec la COVID-19. On le sait, dans le secteur de santé, dans nos hôpitaux, dans nos centres de santé communautaire, dans les bureaux des médecins, dans les maisons d'hébergement de soins de longue durée et dans la communauté, il y a beaucoup de monde qui travaille d'une manière assez importante pour nous donner ces services.

On regarde particulièrement ce qui s'est passé dans certaines maisons d'hébergement. C'est vraiment tragique, qu'on a eu cette situation, et c'est quelque chose qui n'est pas une surprise. Je pense que la plupart de la population, s'ils payaient attention à l'Assemblée pour assez longtemps—vous allez savoir que les néo-démocrates ont soulevé ces questions de combien de services par heure auxquels chacun de ces résidents ont droit.

Si on va faire des changements à ce système, je crois que ces changements doivent être faits en collaboration avec tout le monde dans cette Assemblée et avec la population. On a besoin de regarder comment ajouter des services domiciles, pour s'assurer qu'on donne l'option aux personnes qui sont capables de rester à la maison avant d'être envoyées à une maison d'hébergement.

Et avec ça, monsieur le Président, je vous remercie pour cette déclaration.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I would like to recognize that many people in our province are deeply hurt, frustrated, outraged and saddened by the violence that has occurred across American cities over the past week. In particular, Black communities in Ontario have expressed sorrow and despair over historical and modern-day slavery and racism.

Although the United States has been the centre of international attention, we recognize that in Ontario we must do more to address how racism impacts our society today, from the justice system to the education system to the child welfare system and much, much more. I have heard voices in the Black community who have made calls to me, who have shared their views on social media and who have spoken to our caucus, and I want to thank them for their honesty and their openness.

This includes business leaders like Farley Flex and advocates like Jamil Jivani, and it makes me think of individuals in my riding of Barrie–Innisfil, like when I went to the Black Women in Business event and there were community leaders such as Claudine Cousins, the CEO of Empower Simcoe; Stephanie Gourlie, the owner of Discount Granite Plus; and Shelly Skinner, the owner of Shelly Skinner Events. I think of Shak Edwards, who organizes Cure Courts every year, a charity basketball tournament to raise money for mental health and help youth cope with mental illness. All of these leaders speak up, and they want to speak up to elevate and lift those around them to reach their full potential, whether they be women in business, a community advocate or an athlete in our community.

Our government is committed, Mr. Speaker, to doing our part to address community concerns, and will continue to engage with community voices calling for a more just society.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I want to begin by acknowledging the thousands of front-line workers across Windsor-Essex who are showing up for our community every day throughout the pandemic. They are working long hours, making sacrifices and putting themselves at risk. I can't thank them enough for their contributions.

Yet the government's pandemic pay program has shown my community that not all front-line workers are

being considered equal. So many people who put themselves at risk every day are not being recognized with pandemic pay. I've been contacted by many workers in high-risk environments who have been left out. However, Premier Ford says that no one else will be added to the list, making workers feel as though the line has been drawn which separates those the Premier feels are deserving and those he deems unworthy.

1020

For those individuals who are eligible, there are issues, as well. The Premier refuses to make pandemic pay retroactive to the start of the state of emergency. Some eligible workplaces still haven't heard from the government at all, and ultimately, no one has actually received pandemic pay yet, even though it was announced in April. They're still waiting for the recognition that they deserve.

Some workers told me that they had to quit one or more jobs at retirement homes and long-term-care homes because of the government's order to limit movement between workplaces. While this was important to stop the spread of the virus, it means that some folks who put in hard work in high-risk environments and were then forced to quit will not receive pandemic pay for the time that they put in.

The bottom line is that Premier Ford continues to call front-line workers heroes, yet he's excluding people and delaying the recognition they deserve. Worse yet, many of these workers were already underpaid part-time employees cobbling together an income through several jobs before the pandemic. This Conservative government did nothing to help them then, and they're failing to help them now. These workers deserve so much better.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, the global pandemic has challenged all of us. Our lives have come to a grinding halt. Many people have lost their lives, more have become sick, and even more have lost their jobs and livelihood. Yet across Ontario, beyond the numbers, beyond the terrible headlines, there are countless stories of compassion, co-operation, innovation and enterprise.

During this tough time, I was able to witness a ray of hope, in the form of organizations like Sai Dham, Seva Food Bank, Malton Women Council, Malton Masjid, Jame Masjid, Superfan Nav Bhatia Foundation, Ram Mandir, Saigon Park, Yogi Divine Society, YMCA of Greater Toronto Area, United Sikhs, Canada India Foundation, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, My Indians in Canada Association, Care4Cause, Punjabi Food Seva, Sew and Save, and many other organizations that have come forward to help the community.

"Ontario spirit" is the name Premier Ford has given to the actions of companies in competition coming together to build ventilators, elected members working together above party lines, organizations and individuals donating cash and in kind to help those in need, retirees coming back to work to pick up the baton and join the battle. Across Ontario, volunteers have gone above and beyond

to help, from neighbours doing grocery runs to sewing circles making masks, to restaurants sending food, to children creating colourful thank-you notes. That is the Ontario spirit.

Tough times are a test time. To every single Ontarian, I want to say thank you for inspiring me, and thank you for your Ontario spirit.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's an honour to be here today. First, I want to thank our first responders and those on the front lines, during this crisis and the global pandemic, around the world who have been protecting our communities.

Indeed, COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerabilities that we have as a society, has laid bare those inequities that we know exist and continue to exist.

Speaker, if anything, we know now that we are only as safe a society as the most vulnerable among us. As we learn more about the effects of COVID-19 and how it fragments our society, we only have to look at those who produce and provide us with safe nutrition: our farm workers, and specifically our migrant farm workers who are now at the epicentre of this outbreak. We are seeing that happen across and around the province. Those are issues that we could have and should have addressed through regulation in this House and at the federal level, to offer them the same protections that other workers around the province have and continue to have, that have kept them safe: access to PPE; the ability to self-isolate; clean, affordable—and accessible living standards. Those are basic fundamentals that are putting not only them but our entire society in peril.

Speaker, we can do better. We must do better. These are the issues that this House has to be determined to address. I truly hope that we endeavour to do that.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Norman Miller: I want to thank the many individuals, businesses and service clubs across Parry Sound–Muskoka that are helping us get through the COVID-19 pandemic. There are way too many to list, but I would like to mention a few.

The Parry Sound Rotary Club, from the beginning, partnered with Sobeys to deliver groceries, and the Bracebridge Rotary Club donated grocery gift cards to families in need.

The Lions Clubs have donated to our food banks, and the Goodfellows Masonic Lodge and Waubuno Shrine Club made a large donation to the West Parry Sound Health Centre.

Muskoka Brewery has produced hand sanitizer for the hospital and others.

The Muskoka Builders' Association raised more than \$100,000 for our hospitals and food banks.

Various restaurants have provided food for our health care workers.

Noveltymann embroidery in Huntsville and West Parry Sound Health Centre Auxiliary have put their sewing skills to use, making masks, while the Parry Sound Sewing Centre produced gowns for the hospital staff.

True North Printed Plastics has been making face shields, while Huntsville High School student Caden Leadston has 3D-printed ear savers for our health care workers.

Tim Horton Memorial Camp donated all their food to the Parry Sound Harvest Share food bank.

Deerhurst Resort donated their supply of PPE to Muskoka Algonquin health centre and perishable food to the Huntsville Table food bank.

These are just a few examples of how people and businesses around my riding are showing the Ontario spirit and supporting their communities through this difficult time. As things reopen, it's our community's turn to show support for our local businesses. I encourage everyone to shop local as much as possible to help our local businesses recover.

COMMERCIAL TENANT PROTECTION

Miss Monique Taylor: During this pandemic, I have heard from many small business owners in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. They all did the right thing and closed down during COVID-19, but now they're afraid that their businesses won't survive this pandemic.

Yesterday, I spoke to Christena, a small-business owner who runs a dance studio. Her landlord owns 60 commercial properties and is refusing to buy in to the program, and not only that, he's raising her maintenance fees by 30%.

I also spoke to Teresa, who owns several hair salons. She understands that she needs to stay closed to help stop the spread. But the federal loan that she was able to receive only provides her with one month's worth of rent for her businesses, and she is uncertain when the beauty industry will be able to operate again.

Ontario needs to do more to help its small businesses. Tax deferrals just mean that they have to pay down the line. Without a commercial rent subsidy or commercial eviction programs, we are going to lose small businesses that make our community vibrant and livable. It's time for the government to listen to small businesses and take real action to help them weather this pandemic.

ST. JACOBS FARMERS' MARKET

Mr. Mike Harris: This week is Local Food Week here in Ontario, a time to celebrate the agri-food producers and farmers that work so hard to feed our families.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the farmers in my riding have been working overtime to help keep our plates full of delicious local food. My family is always looking for ways to buy local food. One of our favourite summer activities is visiting the St. Jacobs market, which you will know very well, Mr. Speaker. It's in the township of Woolwich, right in the heart of Kitchener–Conestoga.

While the market is typically in full swing by now, like most local attractions and retailers, things are looking very different this year.

I know that I was not the only one who was excited to hear that the St. Jacobs market received the green light to be able to reopen on June 4. We will once again be able to enjoy some of the best that Ontario has to offer.

The market has been supporting their vendors and working with the region of Waterloo public health officials and municipal leaders during this difficult time, and I want to commend them for this. Physical distancing measures will be in place as well as additional cleaning and sanitation protocols to keep both vendors and customers safe.

St. Jacobs market is a staple of summer in my riding, and I am grateful for all of those who have worked hard to develop this plan. I look forward to being able to stop by and support our local vendors very soon in Waterloo region.

RÉPONSE À LA COVID-19

COVID-19 RESPONSE

M. Stephen Blais: J'aimerais profiter de cette occasion pour dire à quel point je suis fier des membres de la communauté et des travailleurs de première ligne à Orléans, qui sont forts et résilients. Chaque jour, je suis inspiré par leurs incroyables gestes de gentillesse et leur dévouement à s'entraider.

Le Rendez-vous des aînés francophones d'Ottawa a poursuivi son précieux rayonnement communautaire en offrant une programmation virtuelle aux aînés francophones d'Orléans. Il s'agit d'un excellent exemple d'un organisme essentiel qui utilise la technologie pour continuer à établir des liens avec les populations plus vulnérables.

Organizations like the Orléans community resource centre and the Eastern Ottawa Community Resource Centre provide vulnerable families with the support they need every day and especially during this recent crisis.

The recent Together, Apart virtual concert saw thousands of residents come together online to enjoy local music and raise valuable awareness and money for these important community organizations.

1030

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the events of this last week have cast a dark cloud across our community, both here in Ontario and across North America. But in that darkness, I continue to be inspired by the work of local sports organizations like the Orléans Bengals Football Club. Their outreach programs have been recognized by both mental health advocates and municipal leaders for the positive impact they have in the community. The Bengals are now putting the focus of these efforts to combatting racism, leading the way to eradicate racism amongst our youth before it takes root by embracing diversity, inclusivity and love. I want to thank them for their community

leadership and ask everyone to "Be a Bengal, Not a Bully."

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Stephen Crawford: We know these are very difficult times for everybody. There are shining examples in the Oakville community of people doing great work, helping our community and those who need some help, and this needs to be recognized.

Since COVID-19 began, James Montague has been organizing meals to seniors homes as well as drive-bys for Special Olympians. The idea behind the birthday drive-bys was to show support and love for someone while respecting physical distancing.

For the past four weeks, Zumin, a local real estate company, has been coordinating with local food companies to deliver food to front-line workers, whether they are paramedics or work in retirement homes, the Kerr Street Mission, Halton Women's Place, among others.

Oakville resident and realtor Shawn Fang, along with the Oakville Chinese community, has coordinated and helped donate thousands of N95 masks and other PPE supplies. Their outstanding work is going to the Oakville hospital, Halton police and Ian Anderson House, among others.

Arthouse is a Halton charity that has been enhancing the creativity and the positive well-being of children in Halton for over 11 years. COVID-19 has dramatically affected lives of Arthouse families and kids' access to school breakfast programs and after-school programming. Kerr Street Café, a local business very close to my constituency office, is helping Arthouse by providing meals to families in need through the Arthouse program.

Finally, I would like to also acknowledge there is actually an anonymous Oakville physician who has donated \$200,000 to local food relief efforts.

We should thank these people for all their great work. It's the Ontario spirit.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our member statements for this morning.

VOTING

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the government House leader has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I am seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting the voting procedure today and tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice respecting the voting procedure today and tomorrow. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, for any recorded division today and tomorrow, members may rise and be counted from the public galleries.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that, for any recorded division today and tomorrow, members may rise and be counted from the public galleries. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just before we go into question period, we realize the Premier may be held up, so we're asking unanimous consent to stand down our leads.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bisson is seeking unanimous consent of the House to stand down the lead questions from the official opposition. Agreed? I heard a no.

DECORUM IN THE CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for oral questions this morning, I seek the indulgence of the House to make a brief statement.

Since the declaration of emergency in the province of Ontario due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, this House has sat eight days, including today. By and large, these sitting days have been characterized by an exceptional degree of co-operation by members on both sides of the House, setting aside partisanship and working together. In the 30 years I have been privileged to serve here, it has been unprecedented. At times, I thought the Speaker's position might even be declared redundant, such was the harmony that existed in this House. Thank you for making my job so much easier.

We have asked the people of Ontario to sacrifice much in our collective effort to combat and contain the deadly virus. Their lives have been upended by COVID-19, but they have shown endurance, resilience, courage and their belief that we will get through this together, and that Ontario will emerge from it stronger than ever before. And we will.

The people have listened and responded to your leadership. They have a renewed sense of faith and trust in all of you, which you have earned by your compassion, your hard work and your willingness to work together across party lines. Just as we have since March, in the coming weeks and months, they will be looking to us, their elected representatives, to chart the course forward for the province, whether we serve on the government's side or whether we serve on the opposition side of the House. While we won't agree on many things, we can strive to ensure that the words and expressions we choose to use in debate, the tenor and tone of that debate, and the strategy and tactics that we employ are worthy of the sacrifices we've asked our constituents to make.

You have entrusted me to serve as your Speaker, and I am asking that you keep this in mind at all times when you are in the chamber. As has been said so often of late, extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. Let us

continue to show respect for one another and let us continue to make the people of Ontario proud of their provincial Parliament.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before I begin my first question to the Premier, I think it's important to acknowledge the pain and anger and anguish and frustration that is unfolding around the United States as well as around the world with the murder of George Floyd, and the protests against anti-Black racism that are everywhere, and also acknowledge the loss of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, a young Black woman with mental health issues whom we lost last week. I'm hoping her family can get the answers that they deserve.

Earlier this morning, I spoke with yet another family coping with devastating loss following the death of a loved one in our broken long-term-care system, this time at Royal Rose Place in Welland. Tammy Coutu wasn't informed that her grandmother had contracted COVID-19 until hours before her death. Like thousands of others, Tammy is demanding answers.

The Premier has not only refused to call an independent judicial inquiry, but last week Tammy learned the government maintains a list of high-risk red homes, but refuses to tell families which homes are on it. Will the Premier tell Tammy today whether the home where her grandmother died was on that list?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond on behalf of the government, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. Our government has been clear that our number one priority is to the residents and long-term-care staff in homes that are affected. The well-being and safety of residents and staff is a commitment of our government.

Fighting fiercely against COVID-19, we have taken tools and measures on an ongoing basis, and we've acted swiftly to assess and make sure our homes are protected as much as possible. We have done that.

The red homes are a priority, and we work with Ontario Health, our Ontario public health system, hospitals and the emergency teams that are going in on an ongoing basis to help our long-term-care home staff. We have a sense of urgency, and that's exactly what we have been doing all along, and our government is transparent.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My supplementary is also to the Premier. This weekend, families in Vaughan were shocked to learn about a COVID-19 outbreak at the Woodbridge Vista Care Community, a long-term-care facility that was operated by the same corporation currently facing

lawsuits following the armed forces report into extreme neglect at their Altamont facility. Staff at Woodbridge Vista say they have no confidence in the management's ability to handle the crisis. They're pleading with the government to take control of this facility. The Premier thus far has refused. Will the Premier tell staff and families of residents of the Woodbridge Vista facility whether that home is on the government's secret list of high-risk red homes?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for your important question.

When we look and assess the homes, there are many eyes to determine how we are going to help these homes. It is a collaborative effort that we use. When the process is taking a very long time for the homes to be able to stop the spread of COVID and contain COVID, when it's taking longer than we anticipate, that is a moment in time when we determine it is necessary to have a mandatory management order. We've worked with hospitals to help with that.

1040

This is a collaborative effort, but when it comes right down to it, our government has said that everything is on the table. We will do what is necessary to shore up these homes. I've said before that COVID-19 has a devastating impact on long-term-care homes. We've taken measure after measure and used all tools possible to address this. We will continue to do that, to help to our homes and our residents and staff.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My final supplementary is also to the Premier. Last week, the Premier said this: "You deserve to know what I know as Premier." That's what he said: "You deserve to know what I know as Premier." But the reality for thousands of families is that they've been left in the dark. They're unable to visit their loved ones, unable to get basic information about what's going in inside the homes where their loved ones reside.

The government has refused to commit to an independent judicial inquiry, and now they're refusing to even reveal which homes are dangerously unsafe. Why is the government so unwilling to expose the failures inside these for-profit facilities?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question.

Our number one priority is the safety and well-being of our residents in long-term care, and the staff and their families. It is a guiding principle that we have consistently adhered to during this whole process. This is a war with COVID-19, there is no doubt—globally, nationwide and in our province.

In terms of how we address issues with licensees, an application to change a licensee on any home is looked at with rigour. We address those issues. An independent commission will allow us to move and advance the needs of long-term-care residents, their families and staff.

Communication is a key part of this, and the homes that have come in and had assistance from hospitals are doing much better with that.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, but I have to say that nothing at all that has happened in terms of oversight of long-term care in this province has been done with rigour for decades. Nothing has been done with rigour.

The government's own website says that the resident quality inspection, or RQI, is a comprehensive, unannounced, systematic and detailed review. Because they are unannounced, private care home providers can't sweep problems under the rug when the inspectors arrive.

Last year, they only completed nine RQI inspections—nine inspections for 626 long-term-care homes. By the way, in 2020 this government has conducted zero thus far—zero RQI inspections in 2020.

This government knew in January the potential for this virus to hit our long-term-care homes and knew it was a big possibility. Why did they not complete a single RQI inspection in long-term care leading up to the pandemic?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question.

There is need for absolute clarity in terms of the inspections. Our government has been committed to making sure that the safety and well-being of our residents in long-term care is the priority. Our ministry conducted almost 3,000 inspections. These were not notified inspections; these were random inspections.

We've had public health risk assessments of all of the homes. Public health goes in and does food inspections and kitchen inspections. Our hospitals have done IPAC assessments. We are making sure that many eyes are on these homes.

We also anticipated that with the coming of COVID. We knew that we needed to take action to make sure that we had as much support for these homes as possible, and that's exactly what we did.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My supplementary is back to the Premier, Speaker. The government has had a secret list of which are the most problem-plagued homes in the province. The former government called them "high-risk." As we know, this government calls their secret list "red homes." They knew which homes were the most at risk for problems, but they still didn't do an annual RQI inspection in them. Worse still, in the first three months of the year they did nothing—nothing at all—to prepare these so-called red homes for the pandemic. They didn't stockpile PPE. They certainly didn't ensure that they had hired enough staff.

Does the Premier still think it's unacceptable that his government didn't conduct a single comprehensive resident quality inspection of long-term-care homes in the crucial months leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. To be absolutely clear, there were almost 3,000 inspections. There were annual inspections. There were public health assessments. There were IPAC, or infection prevention and control, assessments. There were ongoing assessments. Looking at how we could maintain the safety of the people going into the homes was paramount. We were working with Public Health Ontario, Ontario Health and Ontario health teams, looking at how we could make sure our homes were supported, so this is something that has been ongoing.

COVID-19 requires us to adapt quickly and to be responsive, and sometimes to adapt our processes, which is what we've had to do. We've done it consistently in anticipation. To say that on February 3, with guidance; March 11, with essential visitors; active screening; all the efforts that we've made in terms protecting homes—it's been ongoing, it's been swift and it's been decisive. We need to be absolutely accurate on this information.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It has been nothing at all like swift, and it has been nothing at all like decisive. In fact, it has been quite the opposite, which is why we've had over 1,600 deaths in long-term care as of this date.

Eatonville Care Centre in Etobicoke is in the Premier's own backyard. It's a privately operated home that hasn't had a thorough resident quality inspection since 2017. In the last two years, it's obvious that problems that inspectors had long identified have even gotten worse. This is the type of facility that should have been thoroughly and randomly inspected annually, but this government refused to undertake thorough RQI inspections across the board.

In April, we joined the front-line health care workers calling for the government to take over the management of Eatonville, something that took them six more weeks and the death of 11 residents to finally do. Why did the government fail to inspect and handle the serious COVID-19 outbreak at the Eatonville facility?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care to reply.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question.

Our government is committed to the safety and well-being of residents. There have been almost 3,000 inspections. There have been annual inspections. There are public health assessments. There are food inspections. These are ongoing. Many eyes have been on these homes, which is exactly why we took the measures that we did to bring in the Canadian Armed Forces, understanding that these homes were under siege by COVID-19. This was, leading up to this point, also a collaborative approach, to make sure that our staff in our long-term-care homes had the support that we could provide.

But above and beyond that, COVID-19 was taking a toll. That is why we moved decisively to bring in the armed forces at our homes' time of need and the province's time of need, and that's what we did. Eatonville has been supported. Trillium hospital is in there, has been for

weeks, and this will continue. The mandatory management orders will be ongoing until we can get these stabilized.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. But I have to say, this government has been very slow and very indecisive. If the homes were under siege by COVID-19 and the siege was successful, it was because this government did not protect the vulnerable residents in long-term care.

The Rose of Sharon Korean Long-Term Care Home has been a vital provider of care, and the only facility in the province dedicated to the Korean community. They haven't had a single case of COVID-19 infection, which is why the community is worried. The government has received an application to transfer ownership of the home to Rykka, one for the for-profit private providers who operate two of the worst-infected homes in the province, at Eatonville and Hawthorne Place.

Will the government do the right thing and stop any transfers of licences of long-term-care facilities to private, for-profit operators during this pandemic?

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: As I've said numerous times, our government has taken swift action and decisive action for our homes and used every measure and every tool possible.

In terms of the case that you're mentioning, an application to change the licensee on this home has been received by the Ministry of Long-Term Care. But a change of licensee goes through a rigorous examination, and that will be the case in this situation. No final decision has been made. But let me assure this House that all considerations will be examined.

I want to take the opportunity to say that many of our homes have managed heroically during this pandemic that has affected long-term-care homes across the globe with devastation that is unprecedented. Some 70% of our homes right now are not in outbreak, and we're moving in a direction of support and improvement. I hope that all of you will collaborate to support our long-term-care homes and help them get what they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is my final supplementary. That would make eight questions. I'm hoping the Premier can answer this one.

The community has reason to be worried. Things are so bad at Eatonville that the military actually had to be called in to try to save residents, after countless people died and many more were infected by COVID-19. The community doesn't want to see a private, for-profit operator with a record of COVID outbreak to take over. They don't want to see that happen to their home. There should be no expansion of for-profit long-term-care homes during this crisis, and there should be no expansion of for-profit long-

term care until all enquiries and all investigations are completed in this province.

Will the government stand with the Korean community and refuse to transfer the licence of the Rose of Sharon facility to this for-profit agency?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: As I said, a rigorous examination of this issue will be ongoing. We will make sure that it is a thoughtful process and adheres to what is required for this home and for the residents. The safety and well-being of residents and staff is our government's number one priority. That's exactly why we've been working on across the board with public health, Ontario Health, Ontario health teams, an integrated system to make sure that well-being is supported in our homes.

No doubt, the homes have been struggling, some of them. But if we look at the data, resident cases are at the lowest number since April 15. Staff cases are at the lowest point since April 20. As of May 31, there were 19 homes in red, and in the first week of May, there were 34 homes. So we are making substantial progress.

These efforts must be ongoing, and I hope that you will be part of the solution. Please be part of the solution.

ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I'm proud of our government's prudent, scientific-based approach when it comes to handling this pandemic. Our aim has always been crystal clear regarding the protection of the health and safety of the people of this province while supporting businesses and entrepreneurs, who are the backbone of the economic success in Ontario.

The people of this province have seen this success demonstrated in the phase 1 reopening framework, thanks to their commitment to following the health and safety protocols in place regarding physical distancing measures.

Could the Premier please share with the Legislature what new operations our government has announced to allow our constituents to enjoy the outdoors, while staying safe and practising physical distancing?

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you to the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry for the question.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A hard-working member.

Hon. Doug Ford: He's one of the hardest-working members. Thank you for that.

Our province continues to fight the spread of this disease and we have seen real, positive results. We've seen positive results on the expanded testing, on the tracing, making sure that the public is informed. And I've got to thank the 14 and a half million people in this province who have co-operated and listened to the protocols of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. That's what allowed us to look at stage 2, about regional opening across this province.

We're going to come up with some answers for that over the next few days, but the number one priority is to make sure that the people of this province stay healthy. We're going to base that on health and science. We aren't going to base it on people out there saying, "Open up," or

people protesting outside saying, "Open everything up," because it wouldn't be safe. We're going to do the safe and responsible thing and listen to the medical professionals and listen to the health team. That's how we're going to open up.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Premier, this is great news, and I know that many of my constituents, along with the rest of Ontario, are very happy to hear about more and more operations restarting. The ability to see a movie with the family or practise batting skills once again is a positive activity that many of my constituents greatly appreciate.

Further, providing more and more outdoor options for people, especially as the days become longer and the weather becomes warmer, is great for people wanting to get some exercise.

Speaker, can the Premier please share with the Legislature the potential next steps our government would consider for potential phase 2 reopening of the economy and the province as we move forward?

Hon. Doug Ford: As we've consistently stated, any decision will be based on science and health. Further, I'm not prepared to take unnecessary risks when it comes to health and safety. Because of the strength of our new testing program in place, and encouraging results, we are now comfortable with asking our officials to look at a regional approach for staged openings. This will be one option that we consider as we move to stage 2.

This is one option that we're putting on the table. We're only able to do this now because we're getting great testing results. We're expanding it right across the province. We're looking at hot spots, Mr. Speaker—areas in the GTA and even parts of Toronto—because there's a tale of two provinces here: There's the rural area, where we haven't seen the spread, and then there is the urban area, where we've seen the spread. So we're going to do the responsible thing and listen to our health professionals.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier, Speaker. Last week, the Premier indicated that he was going to get tough with private, for-profit long-term-care operators, yet at the same time he revealed that James Schlegel, the CEO of Schlegel Villages Inc., a private, for-profit long-term-care chain, was a key member of the Premier's Incident Management System Long-Term Care Table. Through his various corporations, Mr. Schlegel has donated upwards of \$50,000 to the PC Party since 2007. This includes a donation of \$20,000 to the Minister of Health's leadership bid.

Does the Premier think that it is appropriate for one of his most generous party donors, with a stake in private, for-profit long-term care, to have this important role?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm looking at the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you, Speaker. This pandemic has hit homes of every type of ownership. We

know that the capacity in our long-term-care homes was at 99%. It was a long-standing issue. As well, the staffing was in a crisis leading into the pandemic.

We were addressing both of those things leading into this pandemic. We were making progress, progress that had never been seen before, after almost two decades. Many of you sit here, and you were in a position to make those changes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Official opposition, come to order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: —as an opposition supporting the Liberal government of the time.

So let us deal with facts. Let us deal with the truth. We know that boardrooms play an issue; they are an issue in this. Our capacity was an issue. The staffing—and also regional, looking at where the outbreaks—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The supplementary question.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Among other things, the table that Mr. Schlegel sits at is tasked with making decisions about staffing, access to personal protective equipment, and oversight of long-term-care homes, including the ones that Mr. Schlegel owns and operates.

Speaker, the Premier has not invited any nurses or front-line staff onto this decision-making group, even though their leadership and insights have saved countless lives throughout this crisis. They're good enough to work in these places but not good enough to offer their expertise to make these places better.

1100

Speaker, I heard the long-term-care minister say that everything is on the table. But of course, with this government, not everybody is at that table. Why has this Premier made a space at the table for prominent PC donors who own some of the very homes that he makes decisions about?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: It is no secret that the Ministry of Long-Term Care has consulted across the board to understand the issues that were so badly neglected for many years. We say Ontarians have questions, and we want to answer those questions. Our long-term-care sector and those who work on the front lines also have information that is helpful to us. We need to understand from all corners what we can do to improve the situation. We need to be listening, we need to acknowledge and we need to find solutions. That's going to take all of us. The problems in long-term care are bigger than—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The Minister of Long-Term Care will take her seat, please. The member for Essex will come to order. The Premier will come to order.

Start the clock. I recognize the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: The problems in long-term care have been long-standing. It behooves us all to work together to get the information we need and to listen to our sector, the front-line workers and beyond. That is exactly

why we are having an independent commission: to be able to have public hearings, to have a public report—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

The next question.

COMMERCIAL TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you've stated quite clearly, "The people have a right to know what I know." I agree. However, you seem to have forgotten that democracy is a two-way street. For it to function properly and effectively, you need to know what members know, and what they are hearing from their constituents.

Unlike your cardboard cut-outs, Dale Moore is a real person. He's worked all his life. He's contributed to society. He saved diligently and had a dream to own his own business. He was set to open his business on March 17, the day you shuttered his dreams and turned them into a nightmare.

Dale's financial capacity has been exhausted. He faces financial ruin under your state of emergency. Dale is one of thousands of unseen tragedies of your government. Premier, why do you insist on creating more tragedy for the people who voted for you?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond on behalf of the government, the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite talks about people's lives. I think, more than anything, that is what this emergency motion and this extension are all about.

We are trying to do the right thing, and that means that we are going to extend the declaration of emergency. We can tweak it. We can remove it as we see the numbers go down. But let me be clear, Speaker: This is about protecting people's lives. That's why we're doing it, that's why we continue to do it, and that's why you will have the opportunity this afternoon to debate it fully. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier: For 13 weeks, you've frustrated the members of this House from participating in and voting—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay, the member will take his seat. The member will take his seat.

The member knows full well that he makes his comments through the Chair and not making direct accusations across the aisle. Address your comments through the Chair.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The executive powers of the unelected are shrouded in darkness and hidden from view, and from their ivory tower they cannot see what we all see.

Like Dale, Erin owns a business, is raising two children, has a mortgage to pay, has food to put on the table, and spousal support payments. Erin's business is also shuttered, but must still pay the rent, the business and the property taxes.

Speaker, the Premier has placed Erin in an untenable position. He has destroyed the dreams and hopes of many people in Ontario. Will the Premier end this ongoing tragedy and permit members of this House to be involved—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The question to the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to answer the member: What we've been doing for 13 weeks—I don't know what you have been doing; I've been working 18 hours a day, around the clock, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. I am doing everything I can to help small businesses, to help families get through it, to fix the procurement program, to see the cracks in this ship that were left over from the previous government and propped up 98% of the time by the opposition here. That's what we're doing.

We're being transparent. I'm out there every single day telling the people what I know and what we are doing to fix it. I am proud to say that we finally, finally, after a lot of work, have the procurement system going on the right track. We have enough PPE for everyone across this province. We're expanding the testing. We're expanding the tracing. We're coming up with a great tracing platform, as well. That is what I am doing. I can't even see straight in the morning because I'm up all night helping people, fixing the problems and returning phone calls. That's what I'm doing.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question today is to the Premier. Yesterday marked the third anniversary of the Anti-Racism Act here in Ontario, an act that committed the government to the following:

- establishing a three year anti-racism strategy;
- implementing the collection of race-based data across ministries;
- organize and conduct ongoing public consultation to provide the public with reporting; and
- create an anti-racism campaign for our education system.

This government has failed to implement even one of these pieces within the act. Premier, the first question I asked you in this Legislature almost two years ago was, "Do you believe systemic racism is real?", which you failed to answer. I'll ask you again. Do you believe that systemic racism and anti-Black racism is real? If so, what are you going to do as the Premier of this great province to combat these forms of racism?

Please, have the decency, Premier, to answer this question. You owe it to so many people here in Ontario, as the leader, to answer it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Solicitor General to reply.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I was very honoured when the Premier appointed me the Solicitor General. With that responsibility came the Anti-Racism Directorate.

The work that we have been doing—to reflect the Premier's comments yesterday, there is nowhere in Ontario where hate and antisemitism and anti-racism is appropriate. We are working together on that. The Anti-Racism Directorate continues to do excellent work, across ministries. We've already talked previously about how the Ministry of Health has proactively chosen to trace race-based data when it relates to COVID-19 issues.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Anti-racism isn't appropriate?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know, I understand that the member opposite is agitated, is frustrated, but frankly, so are many of us. We need to make sure that we get this right. We need to allow—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The supplementary question, member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the 627,000 Black people in this province are heartbroken. We've all seen the images of George Floyd and how just devastating it is, who died on the streets at the hands of being detained and restrained by police.

Incidents of racism happen in Ontario, in this province. Years ago, in Scarborough, Patrick Shand was restrained by a security guard, and he too said, "I can't breathe." Moments later, he stopped struggling and he died. A coroner's inquest did change the laws here in Ontario and provided additional training for security guards.

My question, Premier, is that Indigenous, Black, people of colour want to live in this province, not just appropriately, but actually free from racism. It is their right. They want the full enjoyment of all the systems in education, in justice, in society, in the economy. They want to know that their children will not die at the hands of police or anyone else. So my question to you, Premier, right now: Will you tell the people of this province that you are going to be taking concrete steps to eliminate anti-Black racism and racism in all its forms in this province and restore full funding to the Anti-Racism Directorate and the—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Premier to reply.

1110

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: What we saw down in the United States, what happened to Mr. Floyd—it was nothing but disgusting, what happened. There's no room here in the province for racism, not under our government, not under me as Premier. I think my friend over there knows that I've always stood up—my family has always stood up for the Black community, anyone in the minority community. We have zero tolerance for racism—zero tolerance.

We're going to move forward. We're going to support the Black community and every other minority community here, because we are the most diversified province, jurisdiction, anywhere in North America. That's why 99% of us, we all get along. There are always bad apples. There are always bad apples, no matter what profession it is. But I can tell you, the Black community knows I have their

back, and I'll always, always have their back. And you know it, and you know it.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is to the Premier. This weekend over 5,000 people from across the GTHA marched for Regis Korchinski-Paquet and against anti-Black racism, and I was honoured to march along with them. They know that Ms. Korchinski-Paquet's death is not an isolated incident, but part of a pattern of Black deaths that include D'Andre Campbell in Brampton and countless others. They are calling for an independent investigation into Regis's death, because people do not trust that the SIU in its current form will bring justice to her family and the community.

How will the Premier ensure an independent, public investigation and justice for Regis when his government refused to adopt the core recommendations from Justice Tulloch's report and has removed measures to make the SIU more transparent and accountable?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I completely understand why family, friends and community are wanting answers and demanding answers, and they have every right to do that. But I will not make assumptions and jump to conclusions. We need to let the independent SIU do their job. The ability for them to independently investigate this very critical incident is, frankly, what the Paquet family needs, what the community needs, what the policing community needs. We need to let the SIU do their job, without any kind of suggestion of interference politically from your side or our side. Please allow the SIU to do that independent work now so that we can have the answers that the family deserves and we need to know.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. We are hearing from people across the province devastated by Ms. Korchinski-Paquet's death and demanding an independent investigation into what happened. They know that when a Black Ontarian or their family calls for help during a mental health crisis, it should not result in their death. For justice for Regis, for her family and Black communities, there must be a full, transparent, independent and public investigation, and steps must be taken to address anti-Black racism in all our institutions.

The Premier could start by restoring the funding to the Anti-Racism Directorate that he gutted and investing in community by funding culturally responsive Black mental health services. Will the Premier commit to making that investment today?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: If I may remind the member opposite and individuals listening, the SIU reports are public. The investigation is independent. We need to allow them to do that work. The independent, arm's-length civilian oversight body that investigates deaths, serious injuries, allegations of sexual assault that occur in

circumstances involving police and civilians—allow them to do that work.

To be clear, again I will say the Anti-Racism Directorate has not had any funding cuts. They continue to do excellent work, and I wish that the members opposite would actually embrace what they're doing across government to ensure that we have what we need in the province of Ontario for all Ontarians.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Stephen Blais: Mr. Speaker, the financial impact of COVID-19 on Ontario's municipalities is real and it's staggering. Ontario residents rely on municipalities to provide critical services each and every day, and COVID-19 is crippling their finances. Mississauga is projecting a \$100-million shortfall. In Ottawa, they're burning \$1 million a day. And here in Toronto, the capital of our great province, they're projecting a loss of \$1.5 billion. This will mean tens of thousands of Ontario residents are laid off and residents will see massive increases to property taxes and bus fares.

It should be clear to everyone that no economic recovery is possible without a solution to the municipal financial crisis. We've called for the establishment of a \$4-billion emergency fund. Municipal leaders are pleading for help.

My question is to the Premier: When will the province provide direct operating support to Ontario's municipalities?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Finance have been working very closely with our federal partners to bring forward a program. We were very clear in saying that we need assistance from the federal government for our municipalities. Yesterday, I believe, the federal government did advance some funds that had already been committed. That's a good start, but as the Premier said, we need significant additional funds. Many of the municipalities had already accounted for the funds that were released by the federal government, that had been previously delayed by the federal government. They've already accounted for that in their budgeting.

As we've said, we are going to need some additional help from the federal government. I think this is something that you've heard from municipalities not only in Ontario, but across the country. Our Premier and the Premiers across Canada have been asking for the federal government to do a bit more to help us on this, and we wait anxiously for that additional support.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Mr. Speaker, Toronto's mayor has said that there have been a lot of encouraging words, and I think we've just heard some more, but of course encouraging words don't pay the bills.

Ontario's large urban mayors are projecting a \$415-million revenue loss in transit for April to June alone. Without provincial leadership, big cities will have no choice but to slash bus routes and raise bus fares. There will be no economic recovery in Ontario if our big cities don't get back on transit, and transit will fail without provincial leadership. The federal government has said that they'll be there to support provincial leadership in supporting municipalities and public transit.

To the Minister of Transportation: Will the government guarantee that bus routes won't be cut and fares won't go up because of their delay in providing support to transit?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I thank the honourable member for his question.

We've been very clear from the outset that we were going to need the assistance of the federal government in the pan-Canadian response to the COVID-19 crisis. They have been very good partners to this point. But I think the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Ontario association of municipalities have been equally clear that they need additional support and assistance from the federal government.

When he talks about transit and transportation, the honourable member will know that the government has made a significant commitment to transit and transportation across the province of Ontario—almost a \$30-billion commitment. There are a number of projects that have been awaiting approval of the federal government when it comes to transit and transportation through the Canada infrastructure program. We made limited progress yesterday when the federal government finally released monies that had already been committed.

But I agree with the member, there is more to do. This government is ready to do more, and we will do it in cooperation with our federal partners, as we have throughout this crisis.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. The military's account of what went on behind the curtain at Orchard Villa long-term-care home in Pickering is awful. The families of Nina Watt and Paul Parkes and George Morrison are just a few of the almost 80 grieving families wanting to know what happened at Orchard Villa. The city of Pickering is calling for an investigation. Some 5,700 have signed an online petition. There are lawsuits and a call for a criminal investigation.

Families of Orchard Villa wrote to the Premier: "Today we are asking you to begin an independent public inquiry as soon as possible ... we do not want an independent commission where information is controlled and stones can be left unturned."

Paul's daughter, Cathy, implores us to "lift the roof off these homes and let us all look inside together ... We need a public, judicial inquiry, we need those who are still alive

to be taken care of now, we need the end of for-profit long-term-care homes in Ontario."

1120

Will the Premier abandon his commission and launch a real public inquiry to lift the roof off of long-term-care homes and let us all look inside together?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: I am committed, as the Minister of Long-Term Care, and our government is committed to transparency. That is why is an independent commission with public hearings, public input and a public report is absolutely critical to making sure that we get to the bottom of this. This is an expedient way forward.

Our government had been making progress on addressing the redevelopment and the capacity issues in long-term care that had been so long coming, so ignored, so neglected for over a decade. There are people in this chamber who sat and were supportive of the previous Liberal government's neglect of this sector.

We are transparent. We are moving forward. We will encourage public input. We will absolutely move forward with an independent, non-partisan commission.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Humber River—Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My question is to the Acting Premier. The recent report on long-term-care facilities by the Canadian Armed Forces revealed horrifying conditions experienced by vulnerable seniors in the midst of this pandemic. For months, the official opposition has been calling for the immediate takeover of all unsafe long-term-care centres, and so the imminent takeover of Hawthorne Place in my riding is overdue but welcome. But it shouldn't have taken a horrifying military report for action.

Following a conversation with North York General's CEO and senior staff, I'm confident that they will bring immediate relief, but I am concerned that they are not being granted the scope or ability to publicly report on their findings to bring lasting change when they leave.

Will this government commit to ensuring that the findings of all taken-over LTCs are made public, and will they immediately move to take over all unsafe LTCs here in Ontario?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for your question. I want to make sure that all Ontarians know the loss of their loved ones must not be in vain. The problems plaguing long-term care for decades—it goes back decades. Now is the time that we can make a difference, all of us collectively, everyone. We all have to contribute. Part of moving forward with the solutions is to understand the problem. That's exactly what we're getting to the root of.

The Canadian Armed Forces—I am tremendously grateful for them. They came in Ontario's time of need, when our homes were struggling. We are now emerging from this. Those homes that are still continuing to struggle in containing the spread are getting mandatory management orders.

To be clear, the government doesn't manage long-term-care homes. We are getting assistance from hospitals. This is an integrated approach. We must use the expertise available, and we will continue to support our homes, our residents, our staff and families.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. Speaker, the good people of the Canadian Armed Forces confirmed what families and workers have known for ages: Our long-term-care system is broken, and seniors are suffering.

William, a retirement residence worker in my riding, told me, "What amazes me is that people are acting as if this was a new thing! This hell has been going on for decades."

Julie, a LifeLabs courier, said that what she sees in long-term-care homes is "maddening and saddening.... There didn't seem to be enough staff to properly care for people."

Staff shortages and senior neglect are not new issues; they go back to Conservative privatization of long-term care. The Liberals upheld and continued that privatization. It's just part of the Lib-Con leagues playbook.

Speaker, why is the minister pretending that they just realized our long-term-care system is broken when workers and families have been begging the government for help and sounding the alarm for years?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: The member is accurate about the staffing crisis; there is no doubt. That had been going on for many years. Our government was committed to addressing and fixing these issues, which is why there was a dedicated ministry created for long-term care. In less than a year, we had already begun to address long-standing issues in this sector, including redevelopment and building capacity, that had been ignored and neglected by the previous government, supported by the opposition—also staffing an expert panel to understanding how we move forward with this.

Our government was committed, is committed and will be committed. We will make progress on this; we will advance long-term care. The system was broken, and we are here to fix it. And I ask you to please be part of the solution. It's going to take everything we've got. We have an aging population. We had dire conditions leading up to COVID. We need everyone to work together to solve this massive issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you, Speaker. Through you, my question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. With all due respect, if the minister did not know, she didn't do her job. And if she did know, she still did not do her job.

Minister, it is not just workers who are raising concerns about a broken system; families across the province have been saying the same thing for years now.

One of my constituents, Pamela, pulled her mom out of long-term care back in March to try and help keep her safe,

and she was assured that the spot would be safe. That spot has now been pulled, and her mother, who suffers from dementia, is back at the bottom of a three-year wait list.

Speaker, it's clear that this long-term care system was broken long ago. But will the minister commit to an independent judicial enquiry that will allow the citizens of Ontario to understand where governments went so wrong, and what steps are needed to fix this?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. I first want to clarify the issue surrounding your constituent. If someone is removed from a home to stay with family or other support, they do not go to the bottom of the list. They will be prioritized. So I want to clarify that.

In terms of the public input for our independent commission, I want everyone to understand with clarity that there will be public hearings. There will be opportunity for public input. There will be a public report.

The issues that were long-standing in long-term care: We were running to catch up, knowing that an aging population was at the door, understanding the years of neglect by the previous Liberal government, and understanding that societal values need to change. We were running to catch up with staffing assessments, with looking at capacity, an integrated system with health, and understanding how all this comes together and how we were going to solve hallway health care.

We were running as fast as we could, and then COVID bit us. Here we are today. We want you to be part of the solution. Please work with us. This is bigger than all of us.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, we were all very deeply disturbed by the Canadian Armed Forces report on the conditions of five long-term-care homes in this province. Yesterday, the Ontario Ombudsman announced that because of that report, he will be conducting his own investigation into the government's inspection of the province's long-term-care homes. We all welcome that.

Speaker, through you, my question for the Premier is this: When did the Minister of Long-Term Care first make the Premier aware of these conditions in these five homes? And what led his government to ask for help from the Canadian Armed Forces?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for the question. The Ontario Ombudsman is welcomed in this process of delving into what happened over a period of time, not only during the crisis but leading up to that crisis. We are working with public health, Ontario Health, Ontario health teams, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and all across the board to understand how we could support our homes, looking at the integration that was necessary to do this.

I also look back on the years leading into this. The member himself was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, so he would have

knowledge of all the existing issues and how the imperative was for our government to fix those issues.

We called in the Canadian Armed Forces when we knew that our homes had exhausted every other possibility and our support was exhausted. They needed help, and that's why we called them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question?

1130

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I'm trying to understand the sequence of events that informed the government's decision to call in the military. Ontarians want to know that their parents and grandparents who are in long-term-care homes don't have the same things happening there.

Ontario only fully inspected nine out of 626 long-term-care homes last year; waited a month to raise the pay of the lowest-paid workers in long-term care; waited a month to prevent workers from working in more than one long-term-care home, allowing the disease to continue to spread; and then wasted tens of thousands of tests that could have been used in long-term care.

Speaker, through you: What impact, if any, does the Premier believe these delays had in these five homes and, in fact, the dozens of homes with double-digit deaths across Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question.

I think the delays were over 15 years where the long-term-care sector was neglected, where capacity was not built. Instead, the government chose other priorities. It did not recognize the absolute devastation that would occur by ignoring the needs of an aging population. That was the previous government that did that.

The inspections, looking at the almost 3,000 inspections that we've had as well as public health assessments, as well as the RQIs, as well as all the different eyes that were in our homes to assess—we know that our government was active and decisive, and making sure that every tool and measure could be used.

It is hard to make up—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The next question.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday was the first of the month. Once again, tenants who lost income during the pandemic are unable to pay their rent, through no fault of their own.

This government is allowing landlords to continue to threaten tenants with evictions during the pandemic, and as the province opens up, we can expect the Landlord and Tenant Board to resume eviction hearings soon as well. Tenants feel vulnerable and threatened.

Will the Premier cancel all eviction notices due to the pandemic and deliver rent relief to make sure that hundreds and thousands of tenants don't lose their homes?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, as you know, the government has been working very closely with our federal partners on this very issue, whether it's commercial rent relief or, indeed, on the residential side. We hope to continue this close collaboration because, ultimately, we want to make sure that not only are residential and commercial tenants protected but, when we start to move out of this COVID nightmare and back to opening up the economy, we want everybody to be able to participate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Commercial tenants are being evicted because they did what the Premier ordered them to and shut down during the pandemic. The commercial rent relief program isn't working because it was left up to landlords to decide if they wanted to take a rent cut.

Yesterday, the British Columbia government announced a ban on commercial evictions, and additional supports for commercial tenants who are not able to be helped by the federal rent relief program. This Premier could do the same thing. Will he sit back and watch landlords shut down more businesses, or will he step up and support the NDP plan to save Main Street?

Hon. Paul Calandra: As the member will know, the Minister of Finance was in front of the Standing Committee on Finance just yesterday and was asked a very similar question to this. I'll reiterate what said. He mentioned that the program was a little late in starting—and it was—partly because of the fact that our Minister of Finance was so aggressive in making sure that the program was made bigger so that more people could participate in that program. But to suggest that it's not working when it's only been less than a week that it has started I think is jumping the gun a little bit.

I am very confident. We've heard that there has been a very robust uptake on the program. The Minister of Finance said yesterday that we will continue to monitor the program to make sure that tenants are protected, because, ultimately, we want the economy to roar back so that we continue to be the engine of the Canadian economy.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Attorney General. COVID-19 and the need to practise physical distancing has forced the suspension of most in-person court operations in Ontario. While absolutely necessary in order to protect the health and safety of our front-line workers and all Ontarians, it is critical that access to justice continues across the province during these challenging times.

Can the Attorney General please tell this House what our government has done to ensure that adjustments are made throughout the justice system to adapt to our new

reality and stay operational during this public health emergency?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you to the fantastic member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who does such a stellar job in his riding and around the province. We’re working together with our justice partners. Nothing is more important than the health and well-being of Ontarians, and that stretches across the justice system and those who interact with it daily.

When the pandemic began, we worked right away. We got into it, and we tried to minimize disruption as people needed to continue to access the system for a whole variety of needs. We modernized the system by 25 years in 25 days. There is no question that we moved quickly. We moved quickly with our justice partners. We moved quickly with the Solicitor General to make sure that we weren’t transporting prisoners and that we were doing remote bail and remand by video. We made financial commitments—\$1.3 million in laptops, VPNs and digital recording devices. I brought forward the legislative changes to conduct hearings virtually, and we’ve implemented e-filing capabilities and quick action to allow virtual witnessing of wills.

We continue to do a lot of work—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. We have time for a supplementary question.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the Attorney General. I know that your commitment to updating Ontario’s antiquated justice system predates the current public health emergency, but it’s clear that your office and your judiciary have been hard at work expediting the modernization of our justice system during this public emergency.

I know that there are many people in my riding who are excited about the changes that have been made to allow for virtual and remote proceedings to streamline and move processes online. It is helping to make the justice system easier, faster and more affordable for people to access.

Can the Attorney General please tell this House if we can expect to see these positive steps towards a justice system fit for the 21st century continue even after the public emergency has passed?

Hon. Doug Downey: I can tell you that even before, we were trying to identify areas for modernization. The justice partners have been fantastic. Whether it be the chief justices of the Ontario Court, Superior Court or the Court of Appeal; the Ontario Bar Association; the Federation of Ontario Law Associations; the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers; or SABA, the South Asian Bar Association of Toronto, all of our partners have joined together to find a better way forward.

The answer to your question is yes. We will continue our efforts to bring Ontario’s court system into the 21st century, with concrete action for the first time in memory. We’re going to continue to make investments in transformational technology, modernizing existing processes, providing more services, moving them online and expanding access to justice.

Ontario’s justice system will become a leader and will emerge from this crisis more resilient and better prepared to respond to future challenges.

DEFERRED VOTES

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on government notice of motion number 77 relating to certain House proceedings and committee business.

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

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to ask the members to take their seats, or any seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The members need to take their seats.

On May 27, 2020, Ms. Khanjin moved government notice of motion number 77 relating to certain House proceedings and committee business. Mr. Thanigasalam has moved that the question now be put.

All those in favour of Mr. Thanigasalam’s motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hogarth, Christine	Piccini, David
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Sylvia	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Kanapathi, Logan	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Khanjin, Andrea	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Crawford, Stephen	McDonell, Jim	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Miller, Norman	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	Nicholls, Rick	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	Walker, Bill
Harris, Mike	Phillips, Rod	Yakabuski, John

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to Mr. Thanigasalam’s motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthur, Ian	Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom
Bisson, Gilles	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Blais, Stephen	Hillier, Randy	Taylor, Monique
Burch, Jeff	Horwath, Andrea	Vanhof, John
Coteau, Michael	Karpoche, Bhutila	Yarde, Kevin
Fraser, John	Kernaghan, Terence	
French, Jennifer K.	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 54; the nays are 19.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're in the midst of a vote. Ms. Khanjin has—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):—moved government notice of motion number 77 relating to certain House proceedings and committee business.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm advised I can recognize the member for Timmins on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that having all of these members in House is against, I think, what should be done in a public health crisis. It is not a good idea. I don't know why the government is doing this. We have agreed to how many members on this side of the House have to be here. The fact that the government has to bring all these members in, I think, is a contravention to what good sense should bring—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I thank the member for his intervention, but I do not find that he has a valid point of order.

Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 77 relating to certain House proceedings and committee business. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be another five-minute bell.

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote? I heard a no.

Call in the members. This will be another five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1153.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The members need to take their seats.

Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 77 relating to certain House proceedings and committee business.

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

Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	Walker, Bill
Harris, Mike	Phillips, Rod	Yakabuski, John

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthur, Ian	Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom
Bisson, Gilles	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Blais, Stephen	Hillier, Randy	Taylor, Monique
Burch, Jeff	Horwath, Andrea	Vanthof, John
Coteau, Michael	Karpoche, Bhutla	Yarde, Kevin
Fraser, John	Kernaghan, Terence	
French, Jennifer K.	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 54; the nays are 19.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: I beg leave to present a report on The Fair Hydro Plan: Concerns About Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Value For Money, 2017 special report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Fife presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

On April 17, 2019, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts held public hearings on the special report—The Fair Hydro Plan: Concerns About Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Value For Money—on the Fair Hydro Plan led by the Ministry of Energy.

The committee endorses the auditor's findings and recommendations, and presents its own findings, views and recommendations in this report. The committee requests that the ministry provide the Clerk of the Committee with the written responses to the recommendations within 120 calendar days of the tabling of this report with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, unless otherwise specified.

I would like to thank with appreciation the officials from the Treasury Board Secretariat, Ministry of Finance,

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hogarth, Christine	Piccini, David
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Sylvia	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Kanapathi, Logan	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Khanjin, Andrea	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Crawford, Stephen	McDonell, Jim	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Miller, Norman	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	Nicholls, Rick	Tibollo, Michael A.

Ministry of Energy, Ontario Financing Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee, and the staff in the legislative research service.

We look forward to this committee being able to sit once again.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Fife has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, pursuant to standing order 7(d)(iii), the House shall continue to meet past 6 p.m. until midnight on Tuesday, June 2, 2020, and on Wednesday, June 3, 2020, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that, pursuant to standing order 7(d)(iii), the House shall continue to meet past 6 p.m. until midnight on Tuesday, June 2, 2020, and on Wednesday, June 3, 2020, for the purpose of considering government business. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On division.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EXTENSION OF EMERGENCY DECLARATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Speaker.

Whereas an emergency was declared by order-in-council 518/2020 (Ontario Regulation 50/20), on March 17, 2020, pursuant to section 7.0.1 of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act; and

Whereas the emergency was extended past the end of March 31, 2020, for a period of 14 days by Ontario regulation 84/20 of March 30, 2020, pursuant to subsection 7.0.7(2) of the act; and

Whereas the emergency was extended by resolution of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for a period of 28

days on April 14, 2020, pursuant to subsection 7.0.7(3) of the act; and

Whereas the emergency was extended by resolution of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for a period of 21 days on March 12, 2020, pursuant to subsection 7.0.7(3) of the act; and

Whereas the period of the emergency may be further extended only by resolution of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, pursuant to subsection 7.0.7(3) of the act; and

Whereas the Premier has recommended that the period of emergency be extended for 28 days;

Therefore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario hereby declares that the period of the emergency is extended past the end of June 2, 2020, for a period of 28 days.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 78.

Further debate. To lead off the debate, the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Before I begin my remarks, I want to start by echoing the comments that Premier Ford made yesterday about the news we've seen across the United States and here at home. I want to be clear that our government has absolutely zero tolerance for racism, hate or discrimination in all its forms. I know that this sentiment is shared right across Ontario. It would be wrong, though, to think that racism and hate are problems that only affect people elsewhere, or that we could relegate Ontario's fight against racism to the history books. We can't, because we know that this is a real-life problem and that our neighbours and friends experience it every day, and it must stop.

Our government has shown its determination to put an end to hate in our communities, but we know that there is more to do before everyone in our province can feel safe, and feel safe as they should. As the minister who leads Ontario's Anti-Racism Directorate, I can guarantee that we will continue to work with you to ensure that everyone who calls Ontario home can feel at home, no matter their background, race, language or religion.

It is an honour to be in the House today to open the debate on the extension of the provincial emergency declaration. As Solicitor General, my ministry holds responsibility for emergency management in Ontario, including operating the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre. Additionally, the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, which is Ontario's emergency management legislation, also falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

I would like to begin by thanking the legislative staff again who have made it possible for members to assemble safely and to continue our work in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. I also want to thank colleagues on each side of the House for their personal efforts to travel here and be present, all in the spirit of public service.

For the last three months, it has not been business as usual in the province of Ontario. During these unprecedented times, we have witnessed extraordinary efforts by the people of Ontario. They have kept us fed, ensured the flow of essential supplies, made sure that the lights stayed

on, kept our community safe, and maintained the medical front lines. They have been the brightest light during the darkest days of COVID-19, and they are the reason why we are so far along our path to recovery.

The COVID-19 outbreak is the largest global health threat seen in decades, and Ontario has not been left untouched. COVID-19 has forced us to re-engineer our lives: staying at home, practising physical distancing and caring for our loved ones under the most difficult circumstances. Over the past three months, our strength has truly been tested. Ontarians have risen to the challenge and have been doing their part in the fight against this deadly virus.

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We launched the Ontario Together portal to encourage businesses, innovators and entrepreneurs to submit proposals to help in the fight against this deadly virus. Ontario Together not only protects our front lines in the fight against COVID-19, it is providing the template to ensure that Ontario never again will have to rely on other countries for the supply of PPE and other life-saving equipment during a medical crisis—fulfilling a promise made by our Premier.

We have also launched a partnership with Spark Ontario to support the province's first bilingual volunteer hub, connecting volunteers with community organizations that support vulnerable Ontarians. The spirit of volunteerism that is evident in all Ontarians is especially strong during this crisis, which is why I'm pleased that over 5,400 users—I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker; 54,000 users—and counting have visited the Spark Ontario website to learn how they can volunteer. Over 3,500 civic-minded Ontarians have signed up to volunteer, and over 141 community organizations have registered for volunteer matching.

Today, volunteers are supporting seniors, people with disabilities and others in need as they stay home during the COVID-19 outbreak with food delivery, shopping for supplies, running errands, providing remote mental health crisis support and tutoring our children. Volunteers are also mentoring seniors on technology to ensure they are connected online, as well as providing mental health support to both seniors and people with disabilities by writing letters and poems. This level of support demonstrates the power of the Ontario spirit at work, coming together for a single purpose: to beat COVID-19.

Since the beginning, our government has taken strong action to combat the virus and limit the spread. On March 17, we took the important step to protect Ontarians from the threat of COVID-19 by declaring a provincial emergency through the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act upon the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. An emergency declaration gives the government a platform to quickly implement and enforce time-limited orders to keep our communities safe, assist our front-line workers and reduce the burden on our health care system. Since enacting the emergency declaration, our government has issued more than 40 such emergency orders. Those did not happen overnight. They were implemented gradually, and as necessary, as we identified new

ways to fight the spread of this deadly virus and maintain normalcy where possible. For example, these include the redeployment of staff in a number of settings to assist on the front lines of the battle against COVID-19, as well as an allowance to have wills and powers of attorney signed digitally in order to respect the public health guidance around gatherings.

The framework provided by the declaration of emergency also allows us to amend some emergency orders in response to the changing situation. Think of it like a dimmer switch rather than simply turning the emergency order off and on. We have already started easing some of the restrictions put in place through emergency orders as part of our government's road map for reopening Ontario. We will be easing more restrictions as our collective efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 continue to see results.

But this fight against COVID-19 is far from over, Speaker. We took these extraordinary measures because we must offer our full support and every power possible to help front-line workers in the health care and other critical sectors to contain the spread of COVID-19. It is critical that we continue to do everything we can to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health, safety and well-being of all Ontarians, which is why there is a motion before this House today to extend the provincial emergency until June 30.

As members know, an initial declaration of emergency lasts for a period of 14 days, at which time it can be extended by the Lieutenant Governor in Council once for a further 14 days. After that, a declaration can be extended for additional periods of no more than 28 days with the approval of the Legislature.

With the consent of the Legislature in April and May, the declaration of emergency has been extended in increments, most recently until June 2. The government is now asking the Legislature to consider extending the declaration of emergency for an additional 28 days, to June 30.

Speaker, none of us have taken these decisions lightly, whether it was to declare an emergency or to press the pause button on non-essential parts of the economy, and today's motion is no exception. We have asked a lot of the people of Ontario, and Ontarians have responded in more ways than we could have asked. I want to thank Ontarians for the role each and every one of them has played in this fight thus far. And I want to assure them that by extending the emergency order, we are providing a framework for the gradual and safe reopening of the province.

That time is on the horizon. Consider all that has been accomplished to support Ontarians since March 17 and the complete shutdown of all non-essential businesses: an emergency order allowing for doctors and medical staff to be rapidly redeployed to potential COVID hot spots; and an emergency order ensuring that Ontario hydro rates were charged at a flat rate, no matter what time of day it was used.

An emergency order paved the way for yesterday's announcement by the Premier and the Minister of Energy

to implement a new COVID-19 recovery rate for those usually paying time-of-use rates. The previous emergency order limiting gatherings of five people or fewer has been amended to allow those religious organizations that want to safely conduct worship from their cars to do so.

The province is starting to cautiously and safely reopen. Industries are starting to return to operation. Stores with street entrances are opening. Ontarians are visiting garden centres, as well as enjoying our province's golf courses, marinas and provincial parks. In the spirit of that gradual provincial reopening, some emergency orders have not been renewed at this time, including the emergency order that prohibited recreational camping on crown land.

Soon, assuming that key public health trends continue in a downward direction, we will be in a position to reopen more of the province. I'm not here today to tell you what that reopening will look like or how long it will take.

Nonetheless, by establishing the framework to continue responding to the changing landscape of COVID-19, an extension of the emergency declaration is an essential piece of reopening the province and ensuring the safe and orderly return to a fully functioning economy.

Ontario's collective fight against COVID-19 is being guided by a number of considerations, including the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, our COVID-19 command table and the government's framework for reopening our province. It continues to be supported by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, which has been publishing sector-specific health and safety guidelines for those businesses that have already opened and those that are preparing to return to business. There are over 90 sector-specific guidance documents released to date.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the human toll that this battle has already taken on Ontarians in the form of death and serious illness. It has also impacted our daily lives, as well as our businesses and our communities.

It is said that all politics are local. Every member of the Legislature has seen the brutal cost of COVID-19 in each of our ridings and the high price being paid by our constituents. We have taken the calls, read the emails and have been inspired by their determination to see us through.

Across Dufferin-Caledon, for example, the much-loved farmers' markets have been cancelled or delayed opening, a reality across many communities due to the ongoing physical distancing requirements. Cancellations like these are challenging, both on the vendors who rely on them and for our communities who shop local. Recognizing that impact, our government has committed to working with the agri-food sector to support them in transitioning to an online business model and leverage new online opportunities.

Through a \$2.5-million targeted fund, along with our federal partners, we are providing grants to eligible agri-food businesses of up to \$5,000 to bring their businesses online, as well as a cost-sharing grant to develop e-business opportunities on a larger scale. That's just one way in which our government has been working to address

the impacts of COVID-19 on our community and adjust to the new COVID normal.

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As I've said, Speaker, it's clear that the fight is not over. There is much more to be done to stop the spread of COVID-19 and help Ontarians rebuild their lives and livelihoods from the disruption caused by this pandemic, which is why extending the declaration of emergency is so important.

The 40-plus emergency orders that have been issued since March 17 are the levers that the government uses to limit the spread of COVID-19, protect Ontarians, give support to medical staff and other front-line workers, and gradually reopen the province in a way that does not jeopardize the recovery. The emergency declaration provides the framework to support these levers.

I also look forward to the day when all emergency orders can be lifted and the emergency declaration ended. That day is coming, Speaker, but we're not there yet. As long as Ontarians, especially our seniors and the most vulnerable among us, are at risk, we must use every tool at our disposal and take any action necessary to fight this virus. We must move carefully and cautiously to ensure we don't put anybody at risk and remain ready to rapidly respond to any potential outbreaks or a surge in cases, especially now, as we travel along the slow and gradual road to reopening Ontario.

Speaker, these are extraordinary times. In our province's history, the people of Ontario have triumphed through two world wars, the 1919 Spanish flu, the Great Depression and the SARS epidemic. But much of our population has never had to endure a crisis such as the one we are facing today and the unprecedented measures that have been taken to reduce the spread and keep all of us safe. By requesting an extension of the emergency declaration, we are acknowledging that the adjustment and personal sacrifices we have made must continue to be made for a little bit longer, and we must not lose sight of what we are fighting for. History has taught us that during times of extreme adversity, Ontarians pull together and come out even stronger. We shall do so again.

To limit the spread, protect our front-line heroes and to return Ontario to prosperity, I ask the members of the Legislature to support the motion to extend the declaration of emergency today. I can think of 14.5 million reasons to do so.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say at the outset that we will be supporting the motion by the government to extend the emergency orders.

We know that many citizens in Ontario wish that was not the case. Many citizens would love to see things just go back to what they were before this whole pandemic, but such is not the possibility, given what we've seen since this pandemic has started and what we're seeing now as we start to lift some of these restrictions. Case in point, and I'm sure we'll hear from some other members on this, is what's happening in the Haldimand-Norfolk farm area in regard to—I think it's 160-some-odd workers who have

tested positive on this particular—I think it's an asparagus farm. That tells us that we're still in the contagion outside of institutions. This is happening in the community. When you see those kinds of numbers, those are pretty sobering.

We also saw what happened last week in New Brunswick, where New Brunswick was leading the charge. They were doing well when it came to citizens in that province following the directives of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and doing the things that need to be done in order to keep citizens safe. It took one person, in this case a doctor, who decided to go visit or do whatever he did when visiting somebody in Quebec. He came back to his province, and now we've got multiple infections in that province, so it tells you just how dangerous this is. One person having an infection and going back into a family, going back into a workplace, going back into whatever, could, quite frankly, reverse the gains that we've made as Ontarians to get where we are now.

I think all of us were really encouraged when we started seeing the numbers drop in Ontario from an average of around 450 per day. At one point, we were down in the 200s. I think we were all going, “Oh, jeez, we've turned the corner. This is starting to look really good.” Where I come from, in Timmins—Timmins was the one place in northern Ontario that had more cases per capita than anywhere else in the north. We had some pretty serious struggles trying to deal with all that that entailed, everything from the PPEs—as the minister knows, because how many phone calls did you get from all of us on PPEs? And thank you. We're not where we would like to be, but we're a lot closer to where we need to be as a result of all the various interventions that were done on behalf of the emergency workers and others in the city of Timmins. The same is true, I think, for all of my colleagues in northern Ontario who had to deal with this, and my colleagues from the south.

But my point is, we were so encouraged when we were seeing the numbers down in the 200s and we were thinking, “Boy, we've really, finally turned the corner.” And over the last week or so, as we've opened parts of our economy, rightfully so—we need to try to figure out what the adjustment is in order to open the economy and allow people to get back to some normalcy of life and get the economy going—some measures have been taken in order to be able to open the economy. For some, it's not enough; for others, it's too much. That's the rub of this whole thing. Unfortunately, we're seeing the numbers go back up again.

I realize that the spike—the 460, I think it was, today—some of that is those reported cases in Haldimand-Norfolk, I'm sure. But still, we're seeing community infections at a rate that is not comfortable for the people of Ontario. I think we really need to try to find the balance, and I'm hoping the government certainly is wanting to go that way.

As I said this morning in debate, Mr. Speaker, no government—I don't care what the colour and stripe—has all of the ideas. That's why the Legislature serves Ontarians well when it comes to bringing all of those ideas to

the floor so that we can have a discussion about how to best respond to this particular pandemic. As I said this morning, part of the way we do that as individual members, outside of the members of cabinet, is to bring private members' bills to the floor and have a debate. Those are important legislative measures that we take in order to inform the government.

As the government utilizes its powers that are conferred on them by this House, they need to also be informed by this House as to what some of the measures that they should take would look like. I don't think any one member, including any one minister of the crown, has all the answers. I think this is a much more complex and huge issue to really understand. There are a whole bunch of different layers and a whole bunch of different points to how we need to respond, first, to the pandemic to try to keep the pandemic going in the right direction, which is down; how we care for people in the system—long-term care, home care, hospitals and people at home who are recovering; and how we deal with the economy. That's why we need to rely on each other as members, to be able to say, “Well, here's an idea. I have”—as the member from there or the member from here, wherever you might be—“an idea about how the government could respond to this pandemic.” Not giving individual members the right this summer to have an opportunity to introduce a private member's bill—which we can still do, because any member could introduce a bill—and to have it debated when your ballot item comes up I think is rather unfortunate, because I think it limits the amount of participation that we could have had in order to do this.

I would just say to the government across the way that it's a little bit like what Brian Mulroney said years ago: “What are you afraid of?” Why would you be afraid to have a debate on a private member's bill in the middle of a pandemic? If a member of this House, on either side, gets up and does something that's grandstanding in a private member's bill, I can tell you, the mood of the public—you know as well as I do—won't accept that. I think the public is looking for us to be thoughtful and to be non-partisan. Yes, at times, the Tories and us are going to have our disagreements, and that's fair, because we have two different points of view about how all of this should be dealt with. But for the government to not give all members of this House the opportunity to have debate on a private member's bill I think was just a wrong decision. I think it demeans the House and it demeans the rest of us. “Demeans” is not the right word; I shouldn't use that word. I think it lessens what the House can do, not demeans. It lessens what the House can do. I think that's rather unfortunate.

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For example, in the emergency orders, the government could be dealing with a number of things. Obviously, the one that's at the top of everybody's mind is what's going on in our health care system. There are some good examples in our health care system of things that have gone well.

We're fortunate in the city of Timmins. We have a number of retirement homes and a number of long-term-

care facilities at which we've all had outbreaks. The Golden Manor and Extendicare each had an outbreak. In both cases, there was a swift response by the Porcupine Health Unit and the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We tested everybody, including staff. We found out what the issue was. We then took measures in order to be able to try to contain and, finally, we went the 14 days and it was contained.

Eventually, at both Extendicare and the Golden Manor, they were able to lift them from being in a quarantine state. They're still quarantined, but they are no longer declared as having an outbreak. The same thing happened at St. Mary's and at the Spruce Hill Lodge, which are two retirement homes of the many retirement homes we have in the city of Timmins. The same steps were taken by our public health unit.

So, yes, there are some good things that have happened, and we should be thankful that we do have a public health care system, but I think the direction that the government is going—and that's why it's so important to have these debates—is in the opposite direction of what our public health care system should be doing.

There's currently a bill that the government time-allocated in the House this morning that is going to give the ability to the government to further privatize part of our home care system. We should be going completely in the opposite direction. That's where New Democrats have an opposite view to what Liberals and Conservatives believe when it comes to who should be the deliverer of those services. That's a fair debate. The public falls on both sides of those issues. I understand that. But as a New Democrat, as a social democrat, I believe that every dollar that people pay in taxes shouldn't go to profit when it comes to health care; it should go directly to service. That's the first premise.

The second premise is—and we know this by looking at the cost of the private system versus the public—that the public system can deliver far more services for the same money than you can in the private service. A good example of that is our friends to the south in the United States. If you look at the United States—I told this story in the House before. I have a friend of mine whose husband became ill while in Florida and had a 10- or 12-day stay in the hospital. By the time he went through the ICU, then to a stepdown unit and finally was released, the bill, between the doctors and the hospital, was \$560,000 or \$540,000 for that stay. I asked my friend to give me a copy of the invoice that the insurance paid, and I gave it to our local hospital at Timmins and district. The same service, medical, all-in, is \$27,000. You can't compare that. It's not even apples and oranges. It's like a sun-and-the-moon kind of thing. It's just a better bang for your buck when we deliver certain things in the public sector.

Should everything be in the public sector? Absolutely not. I don't believe the mining sector should be in the public sector. There's a number of businesses that are far better suited to being run by the private sector in regard to what they do best, but there are certain things that government is very good at. One thing that the government is good at—the government is we, the people—is delivering

services such as health care. That's been proven time and time again.

The third reason that I think it's important that we do this in the public sector is that we have a much greater control on the management of those facilities and those services. The case in point is what's not happening in some of our long-term-care homes. Some of our long-term-care homes, especially the older private ones—what we're hearing from the staff, what we heard from the Canadian Armed Forces and what we're hearing from families is, quite frankly, horrific. The public is in a much better position to be able to know with confidence that the system is being well run if it is run under the public system. Why is that? Because it's much more transparent.

At the end of the day, the buck stops with the minister; the buck stops with the cabinet. The buck stops with this House, so as the government uses these emergency powers—I understand why they have to do it, and again I'll say that we will support the motion, because we believe it's important that the government continues to do vigilance when it comes to protecting citizens in this province of ours. When it comes to the spread of COVID-19, we need to make sure that we do things right. If there's one thing that we've learned in this pandemic—and it's a very expensive lesson—it's that things can go very wrong without the proper management and without the proper oversight about how we run our system and the proper policies of how you run the system.

Unfortunately, we've lost—what, now?—1,600 seniors. What's the number? I'm just looking to my colleagues. I may be wrong on the number, but we've lost far too many seniors. These are our parents, our aunts and uncles, our other family members, neighbours and friends who are the ones who have paid the ultimate price of how the system has failed them. Some of the stories that we hear are just absolutely heart-wrenching, and it crosses party lines in how we accept that. We all, on both sides of the House, don't accept what's going on. I've heard the Premier speak at press conferences about how that's unacceptable, and I agree with the Premier; it is unacceptable.

Here's what's also unacceptable: how we respond to it. If the government thinks that moving in the direction that they are in that bill that they've currently got in the House that was time-allocated that will move to a more private system of home care, the government is going in the wrong direction. A full, public judicial inquiry should be part of what informs us on what needs to be done in our health care system.

It doesn't mean to say that you can't do some things now. There are things the government has to do. The government has already taken control of some of our long-term-care facilities, and rightfully so. If I had a family member in one of those facilities, and the government wasn't moving in order to protect my loved one, I'd be—what would you do? As a citizen, you feel powerless, other than calling your local MPP or the Premier's office or whatever to take some action. I believe that the government needs to be informed about how you make those choices, and you need to be informed by debates from this

Legislature, the work that we do in committee, and the work that a full, public judicial inquiry can bring to the subject and fully inform us about where we go.

One of the things that we also have to think about, and I think it's one of the things that's normally at the end of the line when it comes to long-term care, is that we really, really, really need to think through how we strengthen the home care system. Just expanding beds in the long-term-care system isn't going to fix this problem. Do we need more beds? Yeah, I understand that. I went through that crisis in Timmins, and we still have that crisis to a degree. We managed to increase, I think, about 70 beds in the city of Timmins when we did the expansion, and that helped us reduce the waiting list somewhat. But the way that you reduce the waiting list—Mr. Speaker, you know it as well as I do—is that when a family member of yours, or a family or a friend, is able to live independently at home with supports from home care, that means that they don't have to take a spot in a long-term-care facility.

We really need to, as part of our discussion about how we reform our system, look at how we expand and we make a better public home care system. That includes things like making sure that PSWs are properly paid. A good friend of mine, Darla, is a home care worker in Timmins, and she's prolific on Facebook. If you're not following Darla, you should be. She is constantly out there advocating on behalf of PSWs and seniors whom she represents, along with many other PSWs in our community and across Ontario. When you look at the posts that Darla puts up every day—she is having to do a lot and she's putting herself at risk for very little money—you say to yourself, “They're not doing this for the money; there is no money, right?”

It was like my good friend the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane said the other day—I was watching him on TV, even though I was home nursing myself from a bad cold, which I still don't have a voice from, but that's a whole other story. The cold is good; I've been tested and I'm negative, so it's all good. It's not a recent issue. It's not as if, all of a sudden, this became an issue. This has been around for a long time, and PSW wages should have been dealt with a long time ago. We're having a crisis in our health care system as a result of not getting enough PSWs in our long-term-care system and in our home care system and in our hospitals.

The graduation classes in our colleges across Ontario are diminishing. They're saying, “I really like this work. Boy, I'd really like to be a PSW because it's a great way of helping people in our community.” But are you going to do it for 15 bucks an hour, 17 bucks an hour or 18 bucks an hour, if you're lucky? You can do other things that make far more money. You can go sling beer—if a bar was open—and make far more money than a PSW does, or you can work as a waitress in a restaurant. You can do a whole bunch of things and make far more money doing that, with a lot less stress, not having to be in the position that PSWs are right now, and get paid a fair amount of money.

1340

We need to have a proper process by which we look at the long-term-care system—not just from the institutional

side, but also from the homes sector. We need to look at that—about how we move, as much as we can, as is possible and affordable, into the public sector. There should be no further expansion in the private sector. One of the things this government can do is to just place a moratorium on any expansion in the private sector until we've looked this over. The government has to admit—because I heard the Premier say so—that what has happened in our long-term-care system and a lot of those private homes is completely wrong. At the very least, there should be a pause put on any expansion in that sector until such time that we make up our minds about how we're going to reorganize it.

The emergency powers that the government gives itself are important ones and are necessary ones to be able to deal with what's going on now and where we're going to have to be a little bit further on down the line.

I can report back to the House, and I imagine it's the same for all of you in all of your ridings—because all of us, quite frankly, haven't had a day off since, what, 12 or 14 weeks ago. You're at this all day. You're at this all evening. You're at this all weekend. You're on the phone, you're on Facebook, you're on emails, you're on Zoom calls and Microsoft Teams and all those other wonderful mechanisms we have to communicate with all kinds of people. One thing that has really come through is, people are more concerned about their safety than we may give them credit for. People are really concerned: “Be cautious. Do not rip off the band-aid and open up the economy overnight, because there's a real danger as to what happens.”

One of the issues in northern Ontario—I know I'm going to get Facebook messages on this, but I'm going to raise it anyway, and that's the opening of crown land. A lot of people in northern Ontario feel that crown land should be open and that's it. You can do things more safely, taking your individual camper, going somewhere on crown land and putting your fishing rod out in the river or the creek. It's true; that can be done. But there are others who are much more cautious in their approach, saying, “If we open up and they don't open up somewhere else, like a regional opening, that means everybody from other regions is going to come into the Parry Sound—Muskoka riding or my riding up in Timmins.”

My point is, there are people on both sides of this. There are some people who say, “Let it happen.” There are other people who say, “I'm much more concerned about my safety.” The point I'm making is, these decisions are not easy ones for governments to make. I understand that. Again, that's why I think it's important that we utilize the Legislature to help inform us on what it is that we're going to do.

I said it this morning—again, a good book I got from my friend the Speaker. We were having a chat about a year and a half ago. We're both readers of history. We were talking about Winston Churchill, and he lent me this book. I read it and passed it on, I think, to my good friend the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane. It was striking, because in the middle of a world war—

Mr. John Vanthof: The Will of the People.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The Will of the People is the name of the book. Yes, it's a very good book, actually. It's a good, easy read.

The point is that in the middle of a war, when things were going terribly—I hope he gave the book back.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, I outed you. Sorry about that, friend.

You were wondering where the book went to; right? I'm sorry, Speaker; it's my fault.

In the middle of a war, Winston Churchill understood that they were better as a group than they were individually, and so he allowed Westminster to continue sitting. Of course, they had closed sessions because some of these things they couldn't talk about publicly. But all of the details of how badly things were going at the beginning of the war up until about 1943 or so—they were reporting in the House and there was discussion. And the government informed its decisions on what to do based on the mood of the House.

That's what this place is all about. That's what this House is all about. This House is not just a place for the government to bring their ideas by way of legislation or motions and utilize it as a way of rubber stamping what they believe.

Yes, there are times when governments with majorities will do some things that the public and the opposition will be upset about. And that's the system that we live in. But you would at least hope there's an opportunity to have the discussion so they can pause and listen and then make their decision. If we inform the government in the best possible way that we can by way of bringing ideas from citizens that we represent, how can the government go wrong? This should be a bit of a no-brainer. The government should be able to, on its own, listen to what people have to say on both sides of the House and say, "You know what? That's not a bad idea from the member from so-and-so. Maybe we should bring a bill forward. Maybe we should have initiatives of some type to deal with that."

Again, I think it's just a very bad thing for us to do, not to give this House the ability to fully participate in the discussions that need to happen, that inform the government's decisions when it comes to policy or legislation.

The other thing through these emergency powers is the discussion in regard to the speed of the opening. Again, I've got people in my constituency, as you do, and their voices have to be heard. Some of those voices feel that the economy should just open, and whatever we can do to open up the economy more quickly and with less restrictions the better.

But I'll tell you: There's a whole other side that don't feel like that. As I was saying earlier, it's really struck me, because I just assumed, thinking, well, as this thing goes longer and longer, people are going to have less and less patience and they're going to say, "That's enough of this. I'm done." Right? But I've actually been pretty taken aback to the degree that people haven't done that. Some people have. In fairness, that's their right as individual

citizens. Citizens have the right to express their views in a lawful way. But when it comes to how many on both sides, I think there are far more people—I think the minister will agree with me—who are asking us to be more cautious in our opening about how we come at this, and to look at the science and rely on the science and the advice that we get from those people who understand pandemics more than I do or than you do and us collectively as politicians do.

So it's a tough decision that the government has to make in regard to this entire issue about what to do around the speed of the opening and what needs to be open. But I think we're well served if we do take our time and get it right. Because the danger is—and I think the minister understands this fairly well—that if we get it wrong, it's going to be worse for the economy and worse for our citizens in the longer run. Imagine that we got it wrong and the infection rates started going through the roof again. Well, then the government is going to be in the position of having to close things down, and probably more severely. Nobody wants to be in that spot. We all know what that means, and that's not something that people want.

So again, we need to be cautious. We need to be thoughtful. We need to be safe. We need to think about how you do this in a way that keeps the public safe.

The other thing is that—and I'm not a scientist, and I'm sure there are different opinions on this. But right now we're in the summer, and logic just tells me that your amount of infections—because there's less flu in the summer, you would think it would go down. You're less apt to get a flu in the summer than you are in the spring, fall or winter. But again, like I said earlier, some of the numbers we've been seeing over the last couple of days are rather scary, because at a time when there should be no flus—well, not no flus; there should be diminished flus—we're seeing those numbers go up again. And again, if we don't get this right, what are we going to do this fall when the flu season does come back?

So this is a really tough position that we all find ourselves in, not just here in Ontario but across the world. And I think we can look at other jurisdictions and try to learn from them about how they did things in order to deal with their contagions and to try to minimize those contagions and who's got the right mix of doing things. I think there are some examples there of what we can do and what we shouldn't do. I'm not going to pick which country to follow or not follow in this debate. That will be for another time.

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Again, I understand—because we have people who are upset with the government because of these emergency powers. I understand why, and it's their right as citizens to feel that way. Everybody in a democracy has the right to express their feelings, as long as they do so in a way that follows the law and doesn't do harm to others. But again, we've got to remember why we're doing this. We're doing this because we're trying to contain a pretty serious pandemic that, if left unchecked, is going to really play havoc not just with the economy but play havoc with the lives of people across Ontario, Canada and the world. So I think that's an important thing that we need to keep in mind.

Just a couple of other things that I'd like to say—I know that some of my colleagues would like to get on, so I will at this point announce that I will be sharing my time with anybody who wants the other 30 minutes, rather than a 20-minute spot. That will probably help somebody else. But there are a couple of things I just wanted to say very quickly.

The first thing is, the government has to listen to the House. What we see, to date, is that the government is not listening to the House. We need to make sure that when using the emergency orders, we do so in a way that is informed on the best possible decisions from the experts out there. The government has done that in most of the cases, but not all of the cases. Our leader today raised the issue of what's going on in some of those long-term-care facilities. I know the government cares as much as anybody else about what has happened there; it's not a question of not caring. But certainly we've got to get this right. We need to look at how we reform our health care system in a way that takes into account what has happened and, more importantly, says, "Let's not have that happen again."

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing the rest of my time with whoever on our side is interested in doing it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I now recognize the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in this House, particularly on such a day when we're debating whether to extend the emergency declaration powers of the government. It's not a surprise. We are going through the biggest health issue, one of the biggest world events that people of my generation—probably the biggest—have ever been through. We've not been through a world war. This is a very, very serious time. I'd like to touch on a couple of issues as I go through here, and a couple that are not as serious or some celebratory.

Today is Local Food Week, a week that we talk about. Usually, in other times, we would all do statements and we would do them about all the great things that farmers do—and they do great things, during a pandemic too. But now that we think about Local Food Week, I think something else that COVID has also brought much further up in people's minds—and I'm a farmer by trade, so I had an honest job before I became a politician. But it's not just farmers. It's not just mom and pop with the pitchfork and the two little kids who bring our food. We have to realize that. COVID has shown us that, because many of us have never even thought about the people who work in meat-packing plants or in food-processing facilities, or right now the temporary foreign workers who are also struggling with COVID across the province. That's something that COVID has woken up in all of us, and something that we all have to realize because there are a couple of questions coming from that.

Is the food processing industry, and the agriculture industry, especially prone to COVID because of working conditions and living conditions? That's something we need to look at. I'm proud to be a farmer, and I'm proud of the food that's on our table. But maybe there are a few

things that we need to look at to stay proud of that, because some of those things are happening in Ontario. We need to take a real, serious look at the working conditions of all the people who work in—all politicians do this, and I do it too: "All the jobs that are in Ontario are created by the agri-food sector." But some of those jobs have proven to be very dangerous when COVID happens and when a pandemic happens. People who stock our shelves, people who work in grocery stores, who work in distribution centres, are at a greater risk. That's something that we need to look at and to deal with.

I've been in this House for close to a decade—that's why I'm so great—and each year, because I'm the NDP's designated farmer, because I'm a farmer, I talk about all the great things farmers do. Until this year, I don't think I've ever talked about somebody who works in a meat-packing plant. They are every bit as much our agri-food sector as the farmer, because without the person working in that meat-packing plant, I challenge you to get that steak—without the people in the processing facilities, without the people delivering. We have to now realize, and the one thing that we have to—this pandemic, when it slows, and hopefully we beat it—that we just don't go back to business as usual, because some of the conditions that those people work under, for the pay they're getting, is not sustainable. I'm not opposed to temporary foreign workers, not at all, because you need to get the job done. But the fact that in meat-processing facilities you see people working under conditions that, quite frankly, we wouldn't work under—we have to realize that. Hopefully, when we celebrate Local Food Week next year, we haven't forgotten and we haven't just gone back.

Again, I'm not here to attack anyone. I know a bit about processing, specifically meat processing. It's a tough industry, and it's worldwide-competitive. So if your costs are a lot higher than America or Brazil or somewhere else, you're not going to sell your product. We just can't regulate ourselves out of this one. It's not going to be that easy.

I'd like also to talk about small processors. They play a vital role in our society. I've stood here lots of times talking about small processors and how there should be a ratio between risk and regulation, because one of the reasons we've lost a lot of small processors is that sometimes—and I am not preaching to lower the level of food safety; not at all. But sometimes the regulation doesn't equal the risk, and that sometimes drives small processors out. And now we've realized how important small processors are.

But on the flip side, we need the big ones too. You can't just expect that we're going to build I don't know how many small abattoirs to change the whole system. That's likely not going to work. I'm focusing on meat, but it's the same with all processing. We need to look at how those workers can be protected on the job and we need to ensure that their work is valued enough that their living conditions when they get home are spacious enough and safe enough that they don't contract COVID or another disease like that. COVID has laid our problems in long-term care

bare—and if I don't run out of time, I'll get back there. It's laying a lot of working conditions bare.

1400

The other question that the outbreaks in the agriculture sector prompts is: Is it specific to agriculture or is it just because agriculture was an essential service? It is an essential service; we all need to eat. Some of us eat fairly well. But is it something that's coming to other workplaces as well? Is it just a canary in the coal mine? We need to think about that. We've seen big outbreaks in agriculture and in the processing sector, but it has been running all this time. As we bring other sectors back where people work in close quarters, are we going to see and are we taking—and I hope the government is—are we looking at what that is showing us or are we just looking past it, trying to get things open? It's very serious.

Before I switch off of agriculture totally, I've to get back to—to make sure that we have a processing sector and make sure that we have the things that we need in this province, I think it has become very evident that, especially with PPE, we need to be more self-sufficient where we can be self-sufficient, and the government needs to look at the programs we have now that work. I have preached this so many times in this House, and I'm going to do it again: Risk management for the agriculture sector is something that I don't understand why this government hasn't moved on already. They've promised to. We're in the middle of a pandemic. There has never been a better time than now. This isn't a hand-out; this is an insurance program against market risk. Farmers have never faced more market risk than now. The government of the day promised to pay 40% of this program. They broke their promise, and this government continues to break that promise.

I'd like to switch more to the emergency declaration itself. As my colleague from Timmins spoke—and I'm sure that every member of this House—I know many of you personally, but I'm sure that everyone has spent the last, since this declaration was declared, talking to the people you represent, because that's our job. We learn as much as we can from the people we represent, who do incredible work in all their sectors, and we bring their stories and their lives to the floor of this House. And that's hopefully how we change, whether it's trying to force the government or, as a government, introducing legislation—how we try to make people's lives better.

If there's one issue with the emergency declaration that is, quite frankly, driving my people crazy—for I have a lot of mom-and-pop tourist operators who have cabins, who have campgrounds, who have cabins and campgrounds and a little marina—all kinds of them, right? They fell through most of the cracks in the federal monetary programs, and that's a whole other issue. We're not in the federal House. But what's driving them crazy is the lack of accurate information.

The emergency measures and the business line, I've got to say—and I've spoken to a couple of ministers this morning—it's a travesty. You read the intent of the measures, and whether you agree with them or not, as we speak

today, I believe, judging on my discussions with the two ministers I discussed, the intent of the emergency act right now is that short-term rentals in cabins and campgrounds are off the table, are still closed. Yet I have had operators call the emergency hotline and have the emergency hotline—if it's a hotline; I don't know—explain the emergency measures and tell them that they can open, based on what it says.

When I asked the ministers, they said, “Well, you know, it's kind of a dicey situation.” It's financial life and death for these people. It's financial life and death. For me to have a minister tell me, “Well, yes, there are problems with the hotline”—wait a second. If we're discussing something about emergency measures and a minister tells me, “Yes, well, you know, we've just got kids on the hotline. That's why they're giving the wrong information,” okay, wait a second. Hold the phone and fix that. Fix that now—now. Because people who have fallen through all the cracks are wondering if they're going to make their next payment or feed their kids—and we are at that point with tourist operators. They're desperate. So they call the emergency hotline and they say, “What about this and this?”

“Well, based on that, you can open.” And they're gone. Boom.

When you actually look at the measures, all-encompassing, they're not. They shouldn't be opened. But they can call an emergency hotline from this government and boom: They're game.

So what happens? What happens if one of them gets charged? I'm sure everybody's going, “Oh, no, no. They'll never”—one of my camp operators called the emergency hotline, challenged the operator and asked to speak to the supervisor. She was told, “Oh, we don't have a supervisor.”

“I want to speak to the manager.”

“Oh, we don't have one of those either.”

Again, we are in a pandemic. This government—and I'm not saying you shouldn't have done this, because we are going to vote for this today—has made the decision to close businesses, and these businesses are hanging on every word. Every word. When the Premier holds a press conference, they hang on every word, as I do. When they call an emergency hotline, they hang on every word. And when they get different information from that emergency hotline than I can get from the minister, you have got a serious problem that has to be fixed right away. On behalf of the camp operators across northern Ontario, that has got to be fixed right away. I talk to camp operators a lot. I'm sure there are other businesses that have exactly the same issue.

I'll give you another example, a camp example—and I have no financial interest in any camp of any kind. When it was announced that if you had a seasonal camp, you could have access to it, I got all kinds of calls: “Are we open or are we not open?” To me, if the owner of the campground gives you access, that access could be 2 o'clock in the morning or 2 o'clock in the afternoon, so to

me, you're open. But we had to make several calls to determine whether those camps were open or not.

Again, when people's financial lives are hanging in the balance, why can't you spend a few minutes and actually write these things in English or French or I don't care what language, but write them direct so people can understand them? Don't say, "You will have access to." What does that mean? It means something different to everyone. And sometimes, I wonder if actually, that is the purpose. That shouldn't be the purpose, because people depend—people depend—on what the government says.

1410

One of the biggest issues that our office had to face was when the Premier told people not to pay their rent. I don't blame him for saying that, but he should have qualified it the next day, saying, "If you've still got a job, if you've still got an income." People who were on government programs heard that and said, "The Premier says that we don't have to pay the rent, and we're not paying it." Those people are going to get evicted when this is all done, again, because they hang on every word. That means you have to make sure that every word is—I'm not saying "not accurate," but people hear what they want to hear. So you have to make sure that what they hear is the truth.

I'm going to shift gears again, and this is going to be a tough one for me. I can't imagine what people are going through who've lost a loved one due to COVID in long-term care. I can imagine a little because other people have lost loved ones too under crazy circumstances because of COVID, and I'm sure everyone in this House has probably been touched, as have I.

We always joke—the Minister of Agriculture and myself are related. The minister, during this pandemic, has lost two sisters, and one of them was my mom. I'm sure this has happened all over, and one of the hardest things—and I think this is going to have a long-term impact on many—is not being able to be with your family to grieve. I was very fortunate. The home opened up so I could be with my mom when she passed, but we couldn't have a funeral. I'm not a huggy person, but the one time you want to hug somebody is—and this is happening all over, and I think that is going to have a big-time, lasting impression.

On that, I'd like to talk a little bit about long-term care. We've all had experiences with long-term care. We've all read the military report. We've often stood in this House and talked about long-term care. I was talking to my wife a couple of nights ago—I talk to my wife a lot since I'm home all the time. We need a public inquiry, because governments of any stripe, if you have a commission, the terms of reference and the scope and the commissioners are picked by the government, regardless of stripe, and there is a good chance they might not be objective. The government also needs objectivity. I think probably the government needs it, in this case, more than the opposition.

A lot of people say, "But, you know, John, this has been going on for years." Some people are angry at us: "Why haven't you changed it?" I say, "Well, we bring it up as much as we can," but you need—and we have that now—

the government thinking about it, the opposition thinking about it, the press thinking about it and the people thinking about it. They all have to be thinking about it at the same time, because if you're not thinking about it at the same time, it doesn't get done. And when everybody is thinking about it at the same time, you need to do it right. I'm urging you that a public inquiry will benefit the government as well.

The one thing that I was talking to Ria about—the member for Timmins has done way more election campaigns than I have, but I've done a few. I've knocked on a lot of doors, and it's funny that during election cycles long-term care isn't often an issue. Politicians of all stripes react to issues. It's hard for us to create an issue unless people are thinking about the issue.

The Minister of Long-Term Care spoke eloquently this morning in question period. I didn't agree with some of the things she said, but she said we all have to work together. Well, one thing we need to work together on, and I challenge the government on this one, is that when the next election comes around, we're still talking about long-term care, and we're not talking about lower taxes and suing the government on carbon tax and stuff like that, because long-term care is an issue that has been deteriorating for years and years and years. It behooves—I think that's a word—us all to keep that as an issue when the next election rolls around because that's when things get, hopefully, done, not just as an election issue but as a societal issue.

In the care home where my mom was—it's an extended care home. I have no complaints about how the staff worked. They do a lot. They do maximum with the minimum. And you know what? I'm probably not a good judge, because when the MPP comes to visit his mom it might be different.

The minister said today, "Oh, yes, we have 3,000 inspections." The only kind of inspection that really works is unannounced and thorough. I started a while ago—I'm a dairy farmer by trade, and I am amazed that in this province, dairy farms are inspected yearly, unannounced and thorough. We didn't like it when the inspector showed up because your day was shot. You could be in the middle of a seeding day, or it could be the middle of haying and the inspector shows up and he takes all your equipment apart, and it's, "Why did you do this?" and, "Oh, wait a second, last year you had to have this fixed." I'm proud of Dairy Farmers of Ontario that they do that and I'm sure other ag sectors do it too. But how come they can do that and the government can't do it in our long-term care homes?

Why is it not a good idea to have unannounced annual inspections? Dairy farmers have the same problem. If my somatic cell count went up, if my bacteria went up, well then I had the inspector too, because there was a red flag, right? The inspector shows up because there's a problem. They test your milk every time. Every time your milk leaves that farm, they take a straw and they take a bottle and it goes to the lab. If there's anything wrong with that milk, you get a call, and if there's something really wrong

with that milk—people talk about antibiotics in milk; if you ship milk with antibiotics if it, you not only don't get paid for your milk but you pay for all the other milk that got tainted too. You might just pay for a silo full of milk.

How come dairy farmers can do that and we can't do it for the people in our senior and our long-term care homes? How come? How come? Dairy farmers make a profit too. Obviously the inspection system isn't geared to protect the product. Dairy farmers have a very rigorous inspection system that is geared to protect the product. The product is milk. I question whether our inspection system for long-term care is actually geared to protect the residents, because that's the product. I challenge the government if that's actually the case, because it is a valid question. Why? Why is it not an unannounced annual inspection? I believe there are 600-and-change long-term-care homes in the province. When I farmed, there were 5,000 dairy farms. I think we're now at 3,500 or 4,000. So it's not impossible. The question is, why?

1420

Specifically, this falls on their lap because they're the government. They worked hard. They won the election. We didn't agree with a lot of the things they said, but they won the election.

Miss Monique Taylor: John, move back to your spot.

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay, I'm—

Miss Monique Taylor: Your mike, your mike. Your next mike.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, I'm moving. Sorry about that. Do I get an extra 10 minutes for that?

It's a question that we really, really have to ask. And I challenge whether a commission that is commissioned by a sitting government—and the sitting government picks the commissioners, the sitting government picks the scope, the sitting government picks the terms of reference—I question whether questions like that will be answered.

Another question is, is our whole system wrong? Is the answer to giving quality of life to our seniors—is the answer really to build more warehouses and see if we can feed the people for seven bucks a day? Is that the answer? Again, that is not a question that I think a government commission—appointed by the government, terms of reference set by the government—I don't think that's one that that commission is going to answer.

But those are the questions that need to be asked. Until we ask those questions and seriously address them, we will continue to fail the people who work in long-term care, the people who work in home care and the people who tragically died prematurely because we failed to address those.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, it's always an honour and a pleasure to rise in this House and represent my constituents in the great riding of Milton.

March 17, 2020, was a very unique day in the history of our province. With the threat of a global pandemic, our government took immediate action, under the guidance and steady-handed leadership of Premier Doug Ford, and a state of emergency was declared. As a result, we took

action to contain the COVID-19 virus by closing Ontario public schools, along with limiting public gatherings, asking people to self-isolate and closing recreational programs, libraries, private schools, daycares, as well as bars and restaurants.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, schools were also closed, and as a father of three, I can tell you that that was not easy. Two of my boys are still in the school system. One is in grade 12 and the other one is in grade 9. Especially with the one in grade 12, I can tell you that I was very concerned about his future, because he was looking forward to going to university in September of this year.

I want to thank the teachers, the board of education, the Ministry of Education, the Minister of Education and everyone who's involved in the education sector. I must say that my son now feels comfortable and is moving along nicely with his education, and has been accepted to Waterloo. He'll be starting in September.

But none of this was done—all of these decisions were not made lightly. These decisions were, of course, made on the advice of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer and our health care professionals, because we know that this would mean, for the people of our province, our way of life as we know it would change. However, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that we have found the strength and have really come together as a province to address COVID-19.

The unique threat of COVID-19 requires all of us to do our part, of course. Communities like mine in Milton are coming together, united against a common threat. We are making sure our seniors have food and medication and other essentials, Mr. Speaker, as we are caring for those in the greatest need. We have seen donations of food and non-medical-grade PPE, and volunteers stepping up like never before. Everyone is doing what they can to make sure that no one is left behind. We see blue ribbons in support of our heroic front-line workers—and their families—who are working around the clock and making a remarkable difference in our lives. Their sacrifices represent the very best of our province. Our successes to date belong to our health care workers on the front line of this pandemic.

I want to thank my constituents in Milton and all Ontarians for your help. Together, practising physical distancing, limiting travel for essential needs or staying at home, each and every one of you have played an important role, and we will continue to need to do that in the times ahead.

Businesses, too, are coming forward like never before by retooling their operations to make medically critical supplies of PPE and sanitizers. We're witnessing the Ontario spirit in action, Mr. Speaker. More than 23,000 submissions have been received through the Ontario Together portal, resulting in nearly 200 million pieces of critical supplies and equipment to support our front-line staff.

Modelling data released in mid-April showed early signs that enhanced emergency public health orders are working. Ontario is trending towards the best-case scenario under the circumstances and has avoided a significant

surge in cases, with the rate of growth, day over day, declining. Therefore, these emergency orders have prevented hospitals across the province from being overwhelmed as we continue to flatten the curve. Providing this information is key to ensure continued transparency with the public about the current challenges that Ontario faces in dealing with COVID-19 and where there has been progress. Today, we're here to make sure that progress continues, because the situation is still evolving and we know this battle is not over. Continued implementation of emergency health care measures is slowing the spread of COVID-19.

While we continue our fight against COVID-19, it presents a threat to each one of us so long as it continues to spread. Ontario must remain in a position to take any and all action necessary to fight this virus. The outbreak of this virus is the greatest threat that our province, our country and the world has seen in decades. That is why the declaration of emergency must remain in place. Doing so will allow us to continue to quickly implement and enforce orders in the public interest. Emergency orders allowing for the public health units to make immediate staffing decisions, and protections against price gouging, to name a few, are just some of the emergency actions we have taken to support communities across our great province. Further expanding Ontario's emergency status will allow emergency orders like these to remain in place.

1430

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures, Mr. Speaker. It is critical that we continue to do everything we can to contain the spread of COVID-19. We must continue to limit social gatherings and keep all non-essential workplaces closed. We must continue to test those most vulnerable in our communities and those who care for them each and every day. These actions save lives. We must continue to take all steps necessary to protect our families and our communities. As elected officials, our first priority is to keep people safe from harm's way.

I want to assure everyone listening that our government will continue to do everything within our power to protect you. Extending the state of emergency will allow us to do just that. With the state of emergency remaining in place, our government can take quick action, should the need arise, to protect the health and well-being of the people of Ontario. We know the measures put in place affect people in different ways, but they are important to stop COVID-19 once and for all.

Since this all began, my team and I have spoken to thousands of people in my riding of Milton, with a simple message: Our government is here for you.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, no one is immune to the impacts of COVID-19. In response, our government immediately launched a \$17-billion action plan, and, shortly after, A Framework for Reopening Our Province. Guided by the principles of responsibility, effectivity and clarity, both of these actions mark our path to victory over COVID-19, while setting us on the road to economic recovery.

Under Ontario's action plan, our government has taken action to help those who are doing their part by staying at

home and to support our small businesses that are experiencing challenging times. Because no good deed should go unrewarded, Ontario took steps to invest \$3.7 billion for people and jobs through increased payments to the province's GAINS program and support for parents, along with deferral of student OSAP repayments and providing job-protected leave for workers. For businesses, Ontario is making \$10 billion available by providing interest-free and penalty-free payments on provincial taxes and deferring employer payments for six months to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

We are working in partnership with our federal government, bringing much-needed commercial rental relief. Known as the Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program, Ontario is committing \$241 million in forgivable loans to eligible commercial property owners experiencing potential rent shortfalls because small business tenants have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Available until August 31, 2020, and retroactive until April 1, 2020, our government will help share the cost of rent so that businesses can keep their lights on. Mr. Speaker, not only does this program also provide stability to business owners and commercial property, it is a critical element to ensure the full economic recovery of our province.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, thankfully, our government had taken strong, responsible actions to properly manage the province's finances, allowing our action plan to immediately allocate the necessary resources to fight this virus. This action plan in response to COVID-19 has also enhanced the capacity of assessment centres in hospitals, provided more testing and screening through public health, expanded contact tracing and increased the supply of PPE and other critical supplies to protect front-line workers. These measures, when combined with an extension of the state of emergency, will protect the health and safety of people in our province as we begin to carefully and gradually implement our framework to reopen our province.

With this first stage of the framework already in place, we have begun on the next chapter against COVID-19. It allowed certain workplaces to open their doors once again, which means more people returning to work. This includes lifting essential workplace limits on construction, opening retail stores with a separate street-front entrance, opening libraries for pick-up or delivery, and allowing for community and household services. As of May 31, I'm happy this now includes the reopening of drive-in movie theatres and batting cages. Beginning yesterday, Mr. Speaker, Ontario parks are expanding day-use activities, while outdoor playgrounds and structures, along with public swimming pools and outdoor water facilities, remain closed.

The staged reopening is helping people get back to normal. Importantly, the approach we have set forward outlines the criteria that Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health will use to help advise the government on when it is safe to begin loosening emergency public health restrictions. This time will also allow business owners and

service providers time to ensure workplaces are safe for staff, consumers and the general public.

Our staged approach highlights our government's commitment to continue to provide guidance and advice as workplaces prepare to reopen, including businesses deemed essential that voluntarily chose to temporarily shut down.

The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development has introduced over 80 sector-specific health and safety guidelines to support our reopening framework. With these measures, our government is working with our business community to protect everyone. This means adding 58 new inspectors, because we want people to have the confidence that government will investigate if individuals feel unsafe on the job. This also means increasing the phone line capacity at the Health and Safety Contact Centre for safety questions.

The path to victory depends on our continued efforts in stopping the spread of this virus and our ability to adapt to changing circumstances. On the ground, it remains critical that we continue to do everything we can to contain the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health, safety and well-being of all Ontarians. Extending the state of emergency in Ontario is an important component of these efforts. From the beginning, we have not hesitated to use every tool and resource available to us, and we cannot and will not falter on that.

Mr. Speaker, the nation is looking to us to be the leader in the fight against COVID-19, and we will rise to that occasion. However, we can only do this together. It is more important than ever to follow public health advice. Working from home and staying home when ill continue to be crucial and critical to stopping the pandemic. Until COVID-19 is behind us, each of us must take simple yet critical steps to reduce exposure and protect each other, such as physical distancing, frequent hand-washing and covering a cough or sneeze. If everyone across the province keeps doing their part, we will win the battle against COVID-19 and emerge stronger than ever before.

With the state of emergency remaining in place and the tremendous work of our communities and public health professionals and the front-line heroes, we will continue to make progress in the containment and the ultimate defeat of this deadly virus.

As the Premier stated, "When the history books are written, it will be said that the people of this great, great province never surrendered to the virus. They didn't quit when the going got tough."

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I also want to thank, of course, all of the front-line workers who have been doing a tremendous job over the last few months, especially in my riding of Milton. Our Milton Chamber of Commerce has led the way, especially helping our local small businesses by holding weekly webinars, by providing the necessary information. I had the honour of attending that each and every week and communicating and helping to answer some of the questions by our local businesses.

Another area that I really want to thank is the truck drivers. Milton has a very large trucking industry, and

there are a fair bit of truck drivers who live in my riding of Milton. If it wasn't for them, our shelves in the grocery stores and the pharmacies and all others would not be stocked. Of course, putting themselves in some ways in harm's way, they continue to make sure that our supply chain is moving and our shelves are stocked. I want to take this opportunity to thank them as well, along with the #miltonstrong group that was created. The community has been doing a tremendous job in participating, in helping others who are in need during this difficult time.

I can go on and on and on. We all know there are some of the wonderful, amazing examples right across this province, this country, in terms of the organizations, individuals and businesses that have really, really stepped up. I want to thank each and every one of them for doing what they're doing and helping fight COVID-19 during these very, very difficult times.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker for allowing me the opportunity. I appreciate it.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to stand on behalf of the fine folks in Oshawa here in this Legislature to add our voices on the motion to extend the emergency orders until the end of June.

This has been quite an interesting stretch of time, as we have heard many in this House refer to. There have been many anecdotes that we have learned from our community members, from our community organizations; that we have learned from sectors and industry. My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane shared with us much about the food processing world.

We're learning things that we never thought we would have to in terms of the specifics around COVID-19. There have been a number of challenges and a number of really special opportunities to grow.

While I'm going to take this opportunity today to highlight some of the needs and the areas where we need to focus with care to improve the circumstances in the situation, I'm also going to say that I'm so impressed with the commitment of community organizations, with the volunteerism, with the heart and the soul of my neighbours and community members. I am sure all of my colleagues around this House, regardless of stripe, are hearing the same heart-warming stories in their communities: businesses that have stepped up and stepped forward; individuals who have put together initiatives, who are connecting with their loved ones and their neighbours; some of the long-term or retirement homes—I'm going to speak about that at length in a gut-wrenching capacity, but when we look at some of the retirement homes and long-term-care homes that are doing kind and good things with the families to help them connect with their loved ones on the inside, there are heart-warming pieces to this.

But we are making decisions that impact and affect everyone across our neighbourhoods and our business communities, and a number of my colleagues on this side of the House have shared those concerns on behalf of their communities and constituents with the government, directly with the ministers. I've watched the change—and

I'm not in those meetings with the government House leader and folks, but at the beginning, it was easier to connect to the ministries and to share some of those thoughts, because we were all gathering this information in real time. Now that the government has a lot of this information, now that we're pushing to have those pieces fit together in a better way, this is where it feels like we're meeting with that resistance.

Please continue to do the important work that may be challenging but is so necessary—and it should be shaped by the experience and expertise of the front-line workers. Whether they are the grocery store workers who are wanting safe workplaces, or working in meat processing, whether they are police on the front lines, whether they are nurses, PSWs, everyone has a voice in this, and you have to listen to it.

This bill is talking about the government's framework for a gradual and safe reopening of the economy. Certainly, as we've heard from the government, from the broader community and from these benches as well, we must do this with care and caution and make sure that we do it in the best way possible, so that it doesn't become undone, so that people aren't at risk of harm.

The business community: They've been very vocal, very active. I have written a letter on behalf of main street businesses, small and medium-sized businesses. They're still looking for support and resources. Whether it's as specific as helping them to transition to a digital and online platform with digital main street and bringing that program back, whether it's talking about banning evictions or commercial rent relief—all of these things—it can't just be the tax deferral down the road. We need help now. They need help now. We can all point to a favourite business that may not be there at the end of this, whether we already know that to be true or we are worried that that will be the case. Those workplaces need to be kept safe. The workers need to be kept safe, and the customers, the establishment.

I'll tell you, the other day I went into a local store. I do my best to make it only as-needed, but I was in there and I was impressed by the protocols and the measures that had been taken by that local business, with the Plexiglas and the dots on the floor, and how you came in and where there was hand sanitizer and things were labelled. Everybody knew the rules—except the guy behind me and his daughter. They didn't know the rules and they didn't care. Not only did they not know the rules and didn't care, when it was pointed out politely by the sales clerk, but they weren't happy about that. But they looked around and read the room and realized there were a bunch of other folks who were not impressed that they were not on their dot.

It's a strange time. I know that businesses have communicated that they want clear guidelines because they don't want to do something the wrong way and end up not just in trouble, but endangering someone. They want to be able to work with this government, so make sure that they have those opportunities.

When the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane mentioned the hotline, that the businesses in his community and the tourism industry were referred to the hotline, and

then the hotline turned out to be giving different information than my colleague is hearing from the ministers, that puts people at risk of maybe getting in trouble, doing the wrong thing and potentially endangering the public. That is not how we move forward, with kind of a mishmash or hodgepodge, or chaos. Let's do things thoughtfully and take that feedback. When you hear that a hotline isn't working, make sure it does. There are so many examples of that, so do your best, please, because we haven't seen that in some of these areas.

We need consideration of safety. Whether it's classrooms, farms, jails, food processing, these are workplaces, and you're not setting forward a positive track record on work refusals. People have to be kept safe. It's not just about a poster; it never was about putting up a poster. We're in uncertain times. This has to be very clear.

Moving on, though, there are a lot of folks across the community who would like to be a part of that. I have a letter here from a community member, a constituent. His name is Arnaldo Beni. He has written to this government, and I've shared his voice in here before. He's a neighbour of ours who is on ODSP and who has asked the government to top up folks on ODSP and on social assistance, because right now, as he said, "It would help us in the long run. So we can go to a store and buy stuff when this is over. My ODSP should be at par [with] CPPD—I get a raise on CPPD and they claw it back." He's making \$955.48 a month and \$310.15 on ODSP, and that's his final, that's his take-home.

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He said, "What's happening is that I've been the same for the last three years; everyone else is getting a top-up; why not us? It will help my well-being, my mental health, and I can do out and do things. I like to be busy. If I get the top-up money, I can save it. Without it, it isn't sufficient to survive. We are well below the poverty level. Sometimes I can't afford a bus ticket. The bus is free right now, but not forever." This is someone who has said that when the Premier has said no to the bump-up for people on social assistance, he felt very alone.

My colleague from Windsor West and I were discussing it: When we hear that the government is clawing back, when the provincial government is taking money from that federal benefit and clawing that back from folks on social assistance and then telling them to go to the food bank, that that's an option that may be on the website, that that's the direction—how about the direction is, don't claw back the money, that federal benefit? If the province is snaking that money to pad their own coffers—the federal government has asked you not to do that, but money's money, right? That money goes a long way to folks who really need it, and these are uncertain times, and we keep hearing that, but it's even more uncertain for the people who are in the margins.

This is National AccessAbility Week, and people living with disabilities across this province have been living in deep poverty. They already faced barriers; COVID-19 has made it immeasurably worse. We are thinking about it now, but we have no way of knowing just how bad it will

get for people who are tucked in corners right now and can't get out and don't have support, don't have that voice. We cannot leave people behind.

I know that this pandemic is massive. We've heard it referred to as a beast. We've heard it referred to as a war. We're all facing it, but we're not all in this together. We are all in this at the same time, but the people who, if they're lucky to have an apartment, can't get out—

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Folks, if they can't get out into the broader community, they're not in it together with us; they are in a corner without what they need, and we hope that they will be well enough to survive and come out the other side. So we are all in this at the same time, but differently, and we have to ensure that we factor that in and have different approaches for different people.

I want to take a moment. My colleague from Niagara Centre is here and reminds me that there's a motion on the order paper, so, government, hey, if you want to, it is there. There is a motion that you could bring forth, and we would be more than happy to discuss, debate, pass, make some changes. It's calling for emergency operational funding for municipalities, in line with what we've been hearing from FCM and AMO.

Our municipalities are on that verge of having to make decisions about service cuts and tax increases. They need help. They are waiting for support from this level of government. I know that we all are aware of that, acutely aware of what we are hearing from our municipal and regional partners in our communities, so let's get on with it. Let's make those decisions. Let's work with them. Let's ensure that all of our neighbours are supported from all levels of government. If we're going to leave them just to flounder on their own, that is going to affect not just municipalities but our friends and neighbours.

Connected to infrastructure—and I'll just touch on this; this is a longer conversation that I look forward to having. I wear a number of hats, of course, as the critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways on behalf of the official opposition, but something I'm hearing from some of the smaller-tier municipalities and folks across the province is that a lot of folks are waiting for an answer from the ministry about their projects, their submissions, about when and if we are ready to get into construction with some of those projects. With the infrastructure funding, they're not sure what will or won't be approved. I understand that we can't point to a timeline right now, because there's so much uncertainty, but the municipalities want to be absolutely ready for when there is the opportunity to advance their community goals, and the smaller municipalities cannot do these projects themselves. Please don't make them have to.

Health care: I've got a few things that I'd like to share. Personal protective equipment—we all say "PPE" now, like it's a term that we all just knew; some of us did. Personal protective equipment is required in different spaces, whether it's a non-permeable gown, a mask, an N95 mask, gloves, face shields. And I'm sure there will be something new, in the next stretch of time, that people will need access to.

The minister has said on a regular basis that hospitals and places have what they need in terms of PPE. When I've spoken to the folks at the hospital—the government is referring to a two-week supply. Everyone has that two-week supply. But hospitals are looking forward to when they can do different kinds of surgeries. They're looking to make plans for their next steps, and they can't, according to the rules—nor would anyone want them to—move forward with those plans without having certain amounts of personal protective equipment stockpiled. Whether it's a 15-day supply or a 30-day supply or what have you for certain types of surgeries or for their rolling work, they need to have that on hand, and they're not necessarily able to procure it easily. I know that our hospital has done some innovative procurement for gowns. I think we have about a million gowns coming from somewhere that they heard about from someone else. We're making it up as we go in our communities to ensure that we have what we need.

Anecdotally, from the front lines, we are hearing concerns about their lack of access to PPE. I have a letter here from a concerned home support worker. Her PS says, "If this letter is shared with the public or my employer please keep my identity concealed as I am concerned about repercussions." I'm starting there, because when you have a private employer that says, "We're going to tuck our problems in a drawer, and we don't want people to know," we end up with secrets, we end up with problems, and we end up with people dying.

We look at our long-term care and some of the gut-wrenching truths that are coming out and why we need a full public inquiry, where it's not just—as the minister said, we don't just want to get to the bottom of it. We don't want to be able to take what we get at the bottom of it and bury it. I want public resources to go into a public inquiry, as per the Public Inquiries Act, 2009, that is a real process—that it's public resources that go into this, that it's a defined process, that what comes out of it can be useful, that what comes out of it is public and people get to know what that is.

With a government commission, you decide the terms; the government decides all of the pieces, the players, the goals. And if there are any recommendations based on the findings—I don't know; we just trust you that you picked the right ones? That's the difference between a commission and an inquiry. The broader public, by the way, is not fooled by that. As I've read this morning, they want to lift the roof off of long-term-care homes and have all of us look inside.

This concerned home support worker said, "Due to the nature of our jobs we are not able to distance ourselves from our clients. Since we can only access PPE after a positive COVID-19 test result, how are we to protect ourselves from contracting and, more importantly, from spreading it to a number of our clients, many of whom are immune-compromised such as those who are on chemotherapy, have COPD or a number of other conditions?"

She explained that they have to pre-screen before they go to a home to attend to a client, and then, based on the symptoms and what they confirm, they have to get

permission from their supervisor, and then they go to an office in Whitby—and Whitby covers a vast area: Whitby, Oshawa, Courtice, Bowmanville, Port Perry, Port Hope, Cobourg and more. Then they can get a maximum of—at the time that this was written, the end of March; perhaps this has changed—three paper masks and a gown. There is no supply of N95 masks even for suspected cases. The office is limited. Then they have to drive all over the place. So it's not a great system.

This government, earlier today, though, was ramming through the passage of that—changing home care, making it more able to be privatized. Well, we've seen how well that has gone in long-term care. That's a topic of conversation in the grocery store. People across the community are now talking about long-term care, who had not necessarily been politically engaged or active or knowledgeable on the subject. Now this government is pushing through with home care, and we're not finding that the home care situation is any better, and that's just what we can see; that's just what we can hear about. Let's not make it worse. Why won't you put the brakes on it and do things properly?

1500

In terms of PPE and access, I have sheets and sheets here from the Ontario Nurses' Association of examples across the province where there are reports of insufficient access to N95 masks, or if they have N95 masks, they're not properly fitted—different challenges. I understand that with the process unfolding, we are going to have hiccups along the way, but these are not hiccups along the way. These are stories that I would be glad to share directly with the minister to actually investigate, to make sure that things are as the government, I would hope, hopes them to be.

But I'm going to come back to talk about personal protective equipment and access. We are grateful to the businesses that are coming forward, that are volunteering to make gowns, make face shields—companies like General Motors. We had written a letter on April 15 that the community had called for it, and General Motors, like they're doing in Warren, Michigan, is now making surgical face masks. That's great, but what about when some of the companies that are volunteering—when we get back to business, if the economy opens in a successful way and they're able to get back to manufacturing or making their own products, are we going to lose some of that supply chain of the things that we need? This government needs to make sure that we have in place how we get those supplies, not just crossing our fingers and being grateful for the volunteer businesses.

Here's a thought: Let's have the government flex its muscles and use its pull, and let's invite General Motors to also make N95 masks, because we don't have anyone in the province—and I'm pretty sure not in Canada—making N95 masks. So where does our supply come from other than the kindness of strangers? Let's make them in the province. General Motors is doing it now, making a percentage of their masks in Warren, Michigan. That is the template. This is not a pipe dream. This is not some magical unicorn idea. We're seeing it in Warren, Michigan.

Let's see that in Oshawa, where they're now manufacturing the masks. Let's move forward to have that, because we need to build capacity, whether that is with supply chains of personal protective equipment, whether that's capacity for testing or whether that's capacity for contact tracing. We need to ensure that this province can move forward together in the best way, and that depends on this government.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I'll be opposing the continuation of this state of emergency. But before I speak to that, I would like to just reference the member from Timiskaming's comments today, and I think it's important that all members review what the member from Timiskaming said. He spoke not just about the challenges with small business and the confusion, the contradictions and the hardships of small business, but the member also spoke about a personal aspect of COVID, which I think is profound, important and that has not been closely examined or understood.

The passing of a loved one is—I don't know what words to use to describe it, but we know we've built in processes to help us understand the loss of a loved one, help us understand and grieve and remember and recognize the importance and the contributions of a loved one. We've prevented so many people from doing just that. These are the unseen tragedies of COVID, and they're really important. I don't believe we can measure the importance. These are things that we're not even looking at. So I hope everybody listened intently, goes back and reviews the member from Timiskaming's comments.

There are a number of tragedies that are going on during this time that we have not closely examined and that we need to examine. That's one of the failings of the state of emergency: its failure to permit members to examine subjects. It diminishes the role of members in a representative democracy. It's as if the Premier and the government have forgotten this essential element, that democracy is a two-way street. It is not a single directional institution. For a democracy to be effective, for it to be functional, the government, the executive must be able to hear from elected members so that they can bring their constituents' concerns forward.

The Solicitor General mentioned that the state of emergency allows for a framework to happen to reopen. Well, that's not true. It's not true. The framework is this; the framework is not the state of emergency. We can see what happens if government is not hearing from and listening to elected members, not hearing from constituents, and when we only have experts making decisions. The real crisis that we've seen in long-term care: Nobody in this House was involved in the decision-making about the directives that were being applied to long-term care. Those directives were developed strictly by the experts. We all know the tragedy and the failings that have happened in our long-term care. We do not want to continue or to replicate things that fail.

Speaker, I believe the motion, as it is, is also defective in that it does not permit accountability or transparency of

the COVID command table. Just for everybody's understanding, we have delegated all our legislative authorities into an unelected, unaccountable body, and we are not permitted to see how it operates. It's called the COVID-19 command table.

So I move that the motion be amended by adding the following at the end:

"And that during this extension, the work product of the Ontario COVID-19 command table, including agendas, minutes, and communications and excluding correspondence that is protected by cabinet confidentiality, be made available to the public in a timely fashion with a compendium of this disclosure tabled with the House on a weekly basis;

"That the initial disclosure be of any and all existing work product; and

"That each Monday shall be tabled the compendium from the preceding week."

It's a fairly simple motion, Speaker, or amendment to the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm just going to ask the member to sit for a minute, please. Stop the clock.

Mr. Hillier has moved that the motion be amended by adding the following to the end:

"And that during this extension, the work product of the Ontario COVID-19 command table, including agendas, minutes, and communications and excluding correspondence that is protected by cabinet confidentiality, be made available to the public in a timely fashion with a compendium of this disclosure tabled with the House on a weekly basis;

"That the initial disclosure be of any and all existing work product; and

"That each Monday shall be tabled the compendium from the preceding week."

1510

I return to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston.

Mr. Randy Hillier: In essence, what this motion does is that it puts the same checks and balances that we have in a representative government, in a representative democracy, over onto the COVID command table, which has the delegated authority.

We know that openness and transparency must be present if we want to have accountability, and that's what we don't have with the COVID command table under this state of emergency. We don't know how they came to those decisions. We don't know why they came to those decisions. We don't know who they communicated with. We don't know what their correspondence, what their data was when they made those decisions, for example, that prevented the OMA from providing physicians in our long-term-care facilities and creating assessment centres there. Why did that happen? Why did they come up with the directive that prevented people from leaving long-term care?

Whether those decisions were right or wrong, maybe this public inquiry will find out. A real public inquiry will

find out with less than their independent commission, that's for sure. But with all these decisions going forward, we, as elected members of this House, and the public—the public at large—ought to know how this extraordinary body of the Legislature is making decisions so that we can examine them, so that we can scrutinize them and so that we can determine if these are in keeping with the expectations of our constituents.

So I do hope all members will give thoughtful consideration to the amendment, to make the COVID command table transparent, to make it accountable and to make their dealings public so we all know. As the Premier has said, we all should know what he knows. Well, let's put our money where our mouth is and let us know what is going on at the COVID command table.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate. I recognize the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a real pleasure to be here today to speak with my colleagues, and it's great to see you in the chair. I'll be splitting my time with the Associate Minister of Energy, a great friend of mine, and we both believe that between the two of us we can get a 40-minute speech in during a 20-minute dissertation.

I'm here obviously today to support the emergency order of our government and of our cabinet. I must say at the outset, as somebody who has the privilege at this time to be sitting in the government of Ontario's cabinet, that each decision that we take as a government is a tough yet necessary decision based on the information that we receive and the crisis that we're in during this time.

As the Premier has indicated, we are looking forward to a safe and gradual reopening of our economy. We want to make sure that we are working with the experts, that we don't overload our hospitals, that we support our long-term care workers and that we ensure, as we move forward to reopen the economy, that every safety measure is in place.

I must say before I get too far into this that my gratitude, sincere gratitude, goes out to our front-line health care workers; to those who are in law enforcement, who are with our fire departments; to our bylaw workers; to the truckers who I saw at our ONroute stations when I drove down here, who continue to support our supply chain; and to those grocery workers, some of them as young as 15 or 16 years old.

Who would have thought before this crisis, Speaker, that some of the most amazing volunteers in our communities would be the local sewing circle? We have seen some amazing things happen from the people of Ontario during this crisis. We have seen people step up to the plate. We've seen people, our neighbours, helping out the elderly in their community by delivering groceries. I'm very proud that my husband has been doing that with our elderly friend Myrna, who can't leave the house, but we make sure each week that she gets a socially distanced visit from us.

We have seen restaurateurs who are losing their shirts go into their kitchen to make what food they have available to support our front-line health care workers.

We have seen so many people come together during this particular time. I think, first and foremost, we must recognize all of them for their Ontario spirit. I want to say thank you to them.

Speaker, as the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, I have recognized that this has been a very difficult time for us, with our double bottom line, of being responsible for the cultural fabric of the province and at the same time about \$75 billion worth of economic activity. I think everyone in this House recognizes that, first and foremost, COVID-19 is a public health crisis. Stemming from that, though, I often say we have a triple threat, because the economic crisis that has been created as a result of COVID-19 is real.

I thank my lucky stars each and every day for my health and that of my family, but I often think about the people who are in a precarious work situation: the people who are tourism operators in a small town in rural Ontario. I think about the hotelier who has been at 3% occupancy. I think about the musician who saw on March 12 their entire year's earnings sink away. I think about the director who put every ounce of money into his Canadian film but with nowhere to premiere it. I think about those who work in public libraries, who want to make sure that they can continue the gift of reading. I think about the museums that we have across Ontario that are shuttered right now, that are trying to promote what it means to be an Ontarian. That's an economic crisis.

But the third part of the triple threat—and this is what pains me, because this is going to be the lasting effect of COVID-19—will be the social crisis. We see it each and every day. We see it in our children, who aren't able to go to school and are wondering, "What does 'COVID-19' mean? Why can't I see my friends?" That's a real issue that I deal with, with my own 15-year-old daughter.

We see it with people who are tentative, who don't want to go to the grocery store. We see it with people with people each and every day, as we walk and we're doing the right thing while we social-distance as we walk across.

Speaker, these are going to be things that we have to deal with, whether it's in the ministry that I am privileged to part of—Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries—or anything else—that triple threat, of the health care crisis, the economic crisis and the social crisis.

In my ministry in particular—Speaker, you're well aware of this—I've been very proud to say we have a spectacular double bottom line. We're worth \$75 billion in economic activity. We are also part of the cultural fabric of the province of Ontario. But four out of seven sectors of the hardest hit have been identified by the C.D. Howe Institute as coming from our industry partners. Some 350,000 of the 400,000 jobs that were lost in the month of March come from the partners of heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries. We're tracking it: About \$20 billion of economic activity was lost in these sectors. As tough as that is—holy smokes, Speaker—that social crisis, that cultural fabric crisis, is something that's difficult.

As I have about four minutes left, I want to say this: As we look south of the border and we see the racism that has

played itself out over the past week, we must all condemn that. We must make sure that, during this economic and public health crisis, each one of us in this assembly stands for a better Ontario that rejects racism, that stands up for the Black community, that stands up to make sure that, as tough as these days are and the days that we have had were, where our mental health has been challenged, that we are better than that. I know we are, and I know that we all stand here and speak with one voice.

Speaker, also, if I had it in my ability yesterday, I would have been at a Pride flag-raising.

We must also recognize the men and the women and those who are considering their identification. We must stand with them. This is Pride month. Love is love. We must continue to all stand here in this assembly and talk about that social issue as well. These are tough yet necessary conversations during decisions that we're having that are tough yet necessary, in order to protect the society in which we all live. We must be able to say the name George Floyd. We must be able to say that we wish we had been able to help George Floyd. As we continue to support those in the LGBTQ+ community, we want to make sure they have a voice here in this assembly during this economic, public health and social crisis.

1520

Speaker, just as I started with the hope of the volunteers across Ontario with the Ontario spirit, may I point out some of the amazing adaptability that we have seen throughout Ontario?

Earlier today, I had an opportunity to visit the Scarborough zoo to see some of the amazing things they're doing with their drive-throughs, to make sure that children are able to social-distance but also see animals.

I want to talk about the drive-ins. We remember, in the 1980s and 1990s, when we could go to a drive-in in our local communities. That's coming back. We were able, as a government, to open those just last week.

I had an opportunity today to spend some time with our high-performance athletes who are going to compete for Canada at the Olympics. I was able to see those athletes, the first in the country to be able to train in a highly sanitized environment, in an environment where there is a medical professional, in an environment that allows them to compete with the rest of the world. They're doing it right here in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, before I conclude, I ask all members of this assembly to check out something my ministry is working on that we will announce later—but I'm going to scoop it for all of you: Look at Ontario.live.

We should be proud to live in Ontario. We should be proud to be able to visit, when it's safe to do so, other parts of Ontario. We should be proud that we're the world in one province. We should be proud that we are diverse. We should be proud that all of us, together, collectively, despite our political differences, can assemble in this House.

I will never forget the time when I first came into this Legislature—because of COVID-19, I didn't get to say I was here for 14 years. Peter Tabuns, Christine Elliott and

I all walked in on the same day. I sat over there, in the corner. I remember looking up here and thinking, “My goodness, the people of World War I and World War II fought so that not only would this building be safe, but so that there would never be a war to compromise this building on our Canadian soil.” Today, we are here fighting probably the biggest fight of our lives, and that’s COVID-19.

I want to say to every single member of this House: You are destined to be in this House to fight COVID-19, you are destined to be in this House to support your constituents, and your destiny will play out—all of us, together.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the Associate Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bill Walker: I’d like to thank the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries for her very inspiring message and for all that she’s doing.

Madam Speaker, just before I start my official remarks, I want to extend sympathy to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who shared with us today—and I did not know—that he lost his mom. She was also a sister of our Minister of Agriculture, the MPP from Oxford, whom we all reverently refer to as Uncle Ernie. They also lost another sister, which is very sad. To your family, John, please extend that from all of us here in the House and everyone across Ontario.

Madam Speaker, March 17, 2020, as we all know, was a unique day in the history of the province. With the threat of a global pandemic, our government took immediate action. Under the guidance and steady-handed leadership of Premier Doug Ford, a state of emergency was declared. This was not something that we took lightly then, and it’s not something that we take lightly now. We had to do that, in our mind, to ensure that we could implement policy quickly, so we could make changes on the move, because this is a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic that none of us have ever had experience dealing with. We knew that we needed to be decisive and that we had to take action as quickly as possible, and the way to do that was with a time-limited order, an emergency order—that is actually part of our governance structure—to allow us to do that. We were guided by that principle then, and we are guided by it today, looking for an extension to that order—and that is to keep the people of Ontario, the people we are given the privilege and opportunity to represent, safe and healthy. We do that every day that we’ve been through this COVID-19 pandemic. Our cabinet, our Premier, every member of this Legislature have been working hard to do that. We want to ensure that we have the ability to do that.

I want to make it crystal clear; in my riding, a lot of people interpreted when we said we wanted to extend the order that that was a full closure and an extension of closure of business. I want to just quote from the Premier’s speech today at 2 p.m.: “This week, our government extended Ontario’s state of emergency.... Let me be clear: This does not mean that our reopening is on hold.”

It’s crystal clear that we have a plan. We said that we would come out in phase 1, a very deliberate, a very

sensible plan to make sure, again, safety, but to get that economy going, to get people back to some semblance of normality. We are doing that, Madam Speaker. So I want to make it unequivocal: This allows us to do things that we put in the order originally.

There’s been a lot of discussion in this House today on long-term care. In these orders: work deployment measures in long-term-care homes; streamlining requirements for long-term-care homes; work deployment measures in retirement homes; and management of long-term-care homes in outbreak. We extended this so we have the ability, as needed, to ensure that we do whatever is necessary to protect those people in our long-term-care facilities.

Beyond those, Madam Speaker: prohibiting organized public events and certain gatherings, so that we don’t continue to spread this drastic disease. The more we can contain it, slow it down and stop it at some point down the road, the sooner everybody can get back to whatever that normal life will be.

Drinking water systems and sewage works: again, ensuring that we have the rapid ability to do things to ensure the public safety of the people we are entrusted with.

Electronic service: In many of our worlds, the local government has the ability now to meet electronically to keep the wheels of government and their lives, frankly, moving. So we did that through an order, Madam Speaker. We need those orders to be able to do those types of things.

Here, in urban areas like Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, the GTA and greater GTA: traffic management, to ensure that we have policies and protocols that are working for the people. We need to ensure we have all of these orders, Madam Speaker.

Signatures in wills and powers of attorney; service agencies providing services and supports to adults with developmental disabilities; hospital credentialing processes—we knew that we were going to have to move staff from a hospital, for example, into those hot spots at long-term-care facilities. We needed legislation to be able to do that. Under an emergency order, we have the ability to rapidly deploy people from one facility to another to ensure that health and public safety is absolutely the criteria. That is what these orders are about, Madam Speaker.

I want to just be a bit technical to ensure, because I know lots of people in my riding are questioning. When we originally did the declaration of emergency, it lasted for a period of 14 days, at which time it could have been renewed or it could have been withdrawn. You can then extend it through cabinet for another 14 days, by governance, by protocol and by policy, all in place. After that, it can be continued to be renewed in 28-day cycles. That’s exactly what we’ve done. I want to reiterate for clarity that this does not mean that our plan to move forward, our plan to start opening more businesses, is on hold. I can’t be any more clear. Frankly, this extension will allow us to protect the health and safety of the people of the province and actions that—like I just said, for staffing purposes, to actually allow more people to get back to work, to open businesses even quicker.

I want to just make sure, with the time I have here today, that we're coming here as a government, as a cabinet, and certainly, hopefully, with the support of the opposition and the independent parties to actually collaborate.

I was in opposition for eight years. I get the whole role, that you have to hold us to account. Frankly, that's your job and we respect it. We demand it. We want you to do that. But we also want you to come to the table with ideas and solutions. We want you to come to the table with things like long-term care: What have you done? What names have you put forward to help us on this commission that we want so we can expedite care?

We inherited a colossal nightmare in the long-term sector. I was the critic for two and a half years of that sector, and they built 600 beds over 15 years. The opposition NDP, the members who were here, voted for every single budget of the Liberals, and I don't recall a lot of them screaming and hollering about a lot of those things. At the end of the day—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member from—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member can correct his voting record, but he cannot correct mine. We did not do that. That is just way beyond the pale.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. I don't need armchair quarterbacks from the government side telling me how to make my call.

Back to the Associate Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really wanted to put that out there—and I think I got the exact reaction that I was expecting—because there is a little bit of guilt going on at times. They allowed that government to stay in government to do the policies and have an extra term, frankly.

Interjection.

Hon. Bill Walker: Look at the election record. We know who voted where, and what government ended up with whose support.

1530

At the end of the day, what I want to talk more about, though, is actually how we're going to move forward as a collective so that we are all working for the people of Ontario and ensuring, with something like an emergency order like we're debating here today, that the health and the safety of people, the people of Ontario that we're entrusted to serve every single day, is the absolute priority.

I want to assure the people of Ontario that we have put together a plan. Phase 1: We've already started that with a number of businesses. Last week, again, the allied health professionals, the regulated health professionals, were able to open. We are looking to move forward to phase 2, and there will another large number of businesses that are able to open there, and then finally, stage 3.

But as one of those people around the cabinet table who takes his responsibility very seriously, and the accountability, frankly—we can't guesstimate. We can't ensure

because we don't know until we see the numbers from the medical officer of health. Everything has been done in cooperation, consultation and with the approval of the medical officer of health.

Most people would suggest that I, as a politician, or any of us in here do not have the credentials to lead a pandemic from a medical health side, and I would certainly concur with that. So we have done what the people of Ontario I think have expected. We've deferred to the medical officer of health and the command table of experts around that table who actually consult. And then we come in as well, because it is important to ensure that the economy gets back rolling as quickly as possible.

We all need that to happen for the long-term care of all of us, but we have to do that in a deliberate, measured approach. We are trying to do that to the best of our ability. We want to ensure that we have that ability to move forward in a manner that is actually respecting and protecting the health and safety of the people of Ontario. We knew when we made that decision, as I said earlier, that it was not taken lightly, and it is not taken lightly today. We knew that by doing that we were going to actually have some impact on all the lives of every single Ontarian. But we knew as well that the resilience of Ontarians always steps to the plate in times of challenge, and we know that that's happening today.

The bulk of Ontarians have stepped up by doing things, like social distancing, washing their hands and staying out of places and crowds, that have actually allowed us to get this pandemic to slow down—to flatten that curve, as we've heard over and over again. But we have to still remain diligent. We can't take our foot off. We have to continually ensure that we're doing those things so that we retain that ability to control the spread of this pandemic. Otherwise, if we open too fast, a lot of those things that have opened could get shut again, and we don't want to put anybody through that. Every single person that I've talked to said, "I don't ever want to go back there again. So if you have to take a bit more time"—and I ask especially the business community. I hear from them every single day, and I want them to know, standing in here today, that I fight every day at that cabinet table on every single discussion to get them open in a safe manner and as quickly as we possibly can. But we will never, ever, ever forsake the health and safety of the people I have been given the privilege to represent in this House.

So I ask everyone out there to understand, all parties in this House to work together collaboratively, to come to the table and say, "We're doing this for the betterment. How can we offer suggestions that are actually productive, positive and are going to help every single person get through this pandemic as quickly as we possibly can?"

Madam Speaker, I've got a lot of words in and I've got 10 seconds. I want to assure the people here that the Premier, cabinet, every single elected person is doing their best to get this pandemic behind us and ensure that we have the health and safety of the people of Ontario as our absolute priority.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the pain felt by the Black community across the continent. I stand here as an ally against anti-Black and all other forms of racism.

It's always a privilege to rise in this House, and I also want to take this opportunity to thank our front-line health workers and all essential workers for their brave and tireless efforts during this pandemic. I also want to thank everyday Ontarians for the daily sacrifices they continue to make to reduce the spread of COVID-19. I will be supporting the extension of the emergency declaration during this global pandemic, and I will now briefly discuss a number of relevant issues during COVID-19 that must be addressed.

Long-term care: Right now, eight private long-term-care homes in Ontario have been placed under government administration. This includes Hawthorne Place in my riding, which will be temporarily administered by North York General Hospital, and nearby Downsview Long Term Care Centre, which is being temporarily administered by Humber River Hospital.

Staffing levels at five of these homes, including Hawthorne Place, were so low that the Canadian Armed Forces had to be called in to assist. A week ago today, the Canadian Armed Forces released their report depicting conditions that were horrifying and inhumane. At Hawthorne Place, residents crying for help did not receive any response for as long as two hours because of a lack of adequate staffing at the private long-term-care home. Before the armed forces came in, staffing levels at Hawthorne Place were as low as 10% of their full capacity. Residents sat all night in soiled diapers because there was not enough staff to change them. Hawthorne Place had a cockroach infestation, and the Canadian Armed Forces found significant fecal contamination in patients' rooms. The army also reported that medical equipment like blood pressure cuffs on thermometers was rarely ever disinfected between uses and was used between patients who were COVID-19-positive and other patients who were not.

I want to truly thank the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces for releasing this report and making their findings public in order to protect lives. It should not have taken our brave men and women of the armed forces to expose these horrific conditions in our long-term-care facilities, and these private LTC facilities are just the tip of the iceberg. There are many more private long-term-care homes in Ontario where these same conditions exist, and the government must act now to take over all unsafe long-term-care homes.

I'm in regular contact with Humber River Hospital and have spoken to the CEO and senior administrators of North York General Hospital. I want to thank both Humber River Hospital and North York General, who are doing everything they can to aid and protect some of our society's most vulnerable people and bring relief to the overworked and understaffed employees of Hawthorne Place and Downsview Long Term Care Centre.

Let's not let their work be in vain. Let's ensure that any findings, observations or recommendations they make in

these homes are made public. Let's make sure that the work they do to ensure that these long-term-care facilities are properly administered and staffed and that staff are properly trained and have access to the PPE they need to protect residents and themselves is not in vain. Their work must endure beyond COVID. Our elders are counting on them, so that never again will our loved ones have to be subjected to such horrifying and unimaginable conditions.

We in the NDP have been calling for a full independent inquiry into long-term care for years. Two weeks ago, this government, like the Liberal government before them, rejected our call, instead opting for a behind-closed-doors, government-controlled commission that doesn't have the necessary independence required to find the answers to fix our broken system. In fact, in light of the release of the Canadian Armed Forces' report, the Ombudsman of Ontario has announced that he will take the unprecedented step of investigating the work of the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care in Ontario's long-term-care homes. While I genuinely hope that the Ombudsman report will find answers and accountability, I believe that what we need to fix our long-term-care system is a full independent public inquiry. We need to do this for our seniors so that they can live in dignity.

Tarion: Right now, there are many Ontarians who have had to physically distance in homes with major serious defects because their builder wouldn't fix them, and Tarion is either delaying in helping or not helping whatsoever. Last week, Bill 159 was passed at second reading without implementing the advice of experienced and principled Tarion reform advocates or opposition amendments to improve the legislation. I've called on these stakeholders, and here's what they have to say.

Karen Somerville of Canadians for Properly Built Homes continues to advocate for real Tarion reform. I will share her words in this House: "Tragically COVID-19 has increased the suffering for some purchasers of newly built homes with Ontario Building Code violations. In addition to the usual stresses involved with fighting Tarion, we have heard from a number of homeowners who say that they are 'trapped' in their homes with mould and/or excess radon. Health and safety is obviously a concern. Some homeowners have said that they have considered suicide.

"We are very concerned that in some municipalities, e.g., Toronto and Oakville, regular municipal inspections during construction have not taken place throughout COVID-19 even though homes continue to be instructed during COVID-19. This is a potential serious health and safety concern for the purchasers of these newly built homes."

Consumer rights activist Barbara Captijn has also shared comments with me: "Today, new home buyers continue to live in homes with construction defects which Tarion is not resolving, and the monopoly continues to operate in secrecy with the same lax ministry oversight. The COVID-19 lockdown is a huge challenge for all Ontarians, and especially for those living in new homes with leaking basements, leaking roofs, mould and radon issues, which are dangerous to their health and safety."

I also called on the local business community through Emery Village BIA. Yesterday was June 1. This means that another month has passed and, for many small and medium-sized business owners who have lost all or significant portions of their income, another month where they have been unable to make their rent payments. They are now unsure if they will be evicted and lose their entire livelihood.

My riding of Humber River–Black Creek is home to Canada's largest business improvement area, the Emery Village BIA. This BIA was formed in 2003 and is comprised of 3,200 commercial, industrial and retail establishments employing approximately 28,000 people. It is also one of the city of Toronto's largest designated employment zones. The businesses in this area are some of the hardest-hit and include some of the largest employers in the city of Toronto. This government cannot turn its back on these same businesses that are at risk of closing as a result of COVID-19.

1540

Sandra Farina, the hard-working executive director of Emery Village BIA, has been in regular contact with me during this pandemic, relaying the concerns and needs of the businesses she represents. Yesterday, she pointed out that the BC NDP government has issued an emergency order that protects tenants from eviction by landlords who refuse to apply for the Canada Emergency Commercial Assistance program, or CECRA. Sandra would like to know if this government will commit to implementing the same policy in Ontario in order to prevent tenants from being evicted during this difficult time.

I join Sandra in calling on the government to ban all commercial evictions. One of the main challenges is that the current federal-provincial plan requires that landlords opt in, and many don't, as they balk at having to eat 25% of the rent. The NDP's Save Main Street plan fixed these issues, but sadly was not adopted by this government even though it was supported by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

The taxi industry: While businesses across Ontario are in trouble during COVID-19, the taxi industry was already in crisis before this pandemic, mainly due to challenges in obtaining insurance. Most taxi drivers in Ontario are small business owners who own the vehicles they operate. If they are unable to obtain insurance, these small business owners cannot run their business.

Marc Andre Way, president of the Canadian Taxi Association, had this to say:

"Ontarians rely upon the taxi industry, deemed an essential service during COVID-19, to provide accessible services in major centres across Ontario, along with other crucial ground transportation services.

"There are approximately 10,000 licensed taxis in the province with far too many of these now parked on account of both the current pandemic and the full-blown and well-publicized taxi insurance crisis that has been escalating at an alarming rate over the past year. When these taxis are uninsured, the drivers who own them are unable to earn a living to provide for their families.

"Before COVID-19 struck, the Canadian Taxi Association was already sounding the alarm with the Minister of Finance because more than 2,000 taxis could not access affordable insurance and were therefore already parked and taken completely out of service.

"The taxi industry has been brought to its knees, first by skyrocketing insurance premiums and an inability to renew auto insurance policies, and now by COVID-19. The no-fault accident benefit injury claims load on taxis is very high because of the number of passengers they carry.

"The Canadian Taxi Association appealed to the Minister of Finance in the pre-budget consultations to amend regulation 664 to allow the transfer of 'no fault accident benefit' claims to the insurer of the 'at fault' motorist. This reform would reduce taxi claim costs by 25% at no cost to taxpayers and would greatly assist the taxi industry, stabilize insurance premiums and open taxi insurance capacity.

"Taxi owner-operators have seen business plummet by 80% or more, and they are really struggling. As the province gradually reopens, access to affordable insurance will be a key component to the taxi industry's survival because without insurance, wheels will not turn.

"Amending regulation 664 will help the industry's post COVID-19 recovery."

Thank you, Marc, for your advocacy.

The taxi industry needs help. I call on this government to work with it so that these small business owners and drivers can continue to do the important work of safely driving Ontarians to the places they need to go.

Auto insurance: Even before COVID-19, Ontario had some of the safest roads in all of North America. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been fewer cars on the road. Many Ontarians have faced some major financial challenges over the last few months. Many have been laid off and are not sure whether they will be able to go back to work. Others are small business owners we discussed who have lost most or even all of their business. They have to worry about how they will be able to afford to make their next auto insurance payments in addition to their rents, mortgages and other expenses.

Driving is down; accidents are down. Many others have been working from home and have not needed to drive to go anywhere other than to buy groceries, supplies or other essential errands. Even our essential workers are driving a lot less since their only trips out of the home are for work and for what's absolutely necessary. The reduction in traffic was certainly self-evident since mid-March and is still not back to what it was. As major auto insurers themselves have conceded, driving and accidents were down.

I also wanted the numbers, so I reached out to the Toronto Police Service to compare accidents during mid-March of this year and onward as compared to last year. The results were extraordinary. Accidents in Toronto have been down by 74% between March 15 and, recently, May 15, which drove home the Ontario NDP call for an across-the-board 50% reduction in auto insurance rates for all drivers during this pandemic.

Unfortunately, this government has not taken bold steps in dealing with auto insurance premiums during the pandemic. As such, Ontario drivers have been left to haggle with their insurance companies to try and get a discount without any concrete guidelines and certainly without the government, who has not had their backs.

The money auto insurers are saving during this pandemic should be passed on to Ontario drivers who are already paying the country's highest premiums. If this government was really serious about lowering auto insurance rates, they could do it today.

But even more concerning are elements of a consultation being quietly conducted by Ontario's financial services regulatory authority during this pandemic. Currently, Ontario drivers cannot be refused auto insurance coverage based on any other factor other than their driving record, and that the insurer must offer them the lowest possible rate based upon their driver profile. This is stipulated by the take-all-comers rule, a rule that FSRA seems to be considering to end.

If this rule was removed, whole classes of drivers could potentially face the same fate as taxi drivers we just spoke about. For example, some insurance companies may decide that it is too risky to insure people who are living within a certain postal code or region, or maybe male drivers between the ages of 18 and 25, or maybe those with bad credit ratings, a new classification that this government might be willing to allow insurers to consider. Again, this potentially disastrous change is being quietly considered during the pandemic, and it's wrong.

COVID disproportionately affects marginalized communities. Cheryl Prescod is the executive director of the Black Creek Community Health Centre, which has been on the front lines of community health for over 30 years and certainly now, during this pandemic. I will now read a submission from Cheryl that briefly discusses the impact of COVID-19 on marginalized communities and the importance of collecting race-based data during this pandemic:

"We are in the midst of a global pandemic, one that will fundamentally transform our province.

"To change this pandemic's trajectory, we must be willing to ask difficult questions, including ... which communities are at increased risk of harm.

"To help contain COVID-19, we need to bring a critical analysis and differential population health analysis to our pandemic response.

"This means collecting sociodemographic data, including race-based data.

"We saw the toll of COVID-19 on certain communities in other parts of the world:

"—data from the US and UK showed that more Black people got sicker and died from COVID;

"—Black community members can have an increased vulnerability to COVID because they have a higher incidence of chronic disease—especially diabetes, asthma and hypertension, therefore, have a higher risk for developing complications of the novel coronavirus;

"—experts concluded that the pandemic was simply amplifying the racialized health inequities.

"Early on in the pandemic, at a COVID briefing (April 10), CMOH Dr. Williams was asked about collecting race and sociodemographic data. (Question prompted by data from US showing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and racialized communities.)

"CMOH response was disappointing and alarming, saying this was 'not a priority concern' for Ontario.

"This prompted an open letter" signed by over 190 organizations and 1,600 individuals "calling for collection of these data and stronger leadership from the CMOH; follow-up letter sent by Black health leaders from Alliance for Healthier Communities." We, the opposition, added our names and our voices to this call.

"After further pressure, Toronto announced that they would start collecting race-based data in a bid to track health inequalities.

"After consultations with experts, Ontario finally decided it will begin collecting race and socioeconomic data for COVID-19-positive cases. This was an important step that we hope will be used to change policy and target programs and services to unique settings across the province.

"The fate of Black individuals is worsened in environments with limited resources—like neighbourhoods that are overcrowded and resource-poor—i.e. Toronto's Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.

"Why? They have less access to care; more are losing their jobs; higher number" who live there are in essential services, which are also some of the lowest-paid jobs.

"To really address racial disparities, we need to implement strategies to achieve racial equity—utilize tools during the COVID recovery that include the government engaging with the Black community to develop practices, policies, programs and budget to address the long-lasting impact of structural racism.

"This will help Black Ontarians have a greater chance of improved health outcomes, because 'good health' is a product of access, social, cultural and economic factors.

"Ontario is home to the largest proportion of Black people in Canada. Let's work with our Black communities to flatten the disparities the same way we are working together to flatten the COVID-19 curve. COVID-19 does not flatten these disparities; it amplifies them.

"Without pandemic response and recovery strategies that are firmly grounded in anti-racism and ethical frameworks, Black people will continue to be exposed to greater harm.

"I've seen this in the communities hardest hit by this pandemic—like northwest Toronto—where a higher number of hard-working but low-income residents struggle to survive the ravages of COVID-19. This is seen through job losses, food insecurity, isolation and mental health issues.

1550

"Many families are living in multi-generational households and struggle with physical distancing and self-isolation.

“While a number of agencies in the area, like the Black Creek Community Health Centre, have responded quickly through emergency food programs and the delivery of essential household items to families in need, the community remains under tremendous strain. Working in collaboration with Humber River Hospital and other agencies and grassroots groups, the CHC continues to address the health needs of the community in a responsive and equity-driven way.”

Thank you very much, Cheryl Prescod, and thank you very much, Black Creek Community Health Centre.

COVID-19 is an unprecedented crisis. The policies enacted as this province and communities respond to the pandemic will have lasting impacts. I urge us all to include a critical anti-racism lens and consultations with our community as we plan our recovery from the COVID crisis. Only then can we prevent further devastation in already marginalized communities.

“Following the latest violence against the Black community, most are calling on our governments to consider the following: a declaration of anti-Black racism as a public health crisis; a provincial commitment to the allocation of protected funds to provide culturally appropriate health and well-being support within Black communities; and culturally appropriate organizations must be given the support they need to continue providing these services.”

Again, thank you, Cheryl.

In an article in the Downsview Advocate, Janelle Brady, PhD candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, OISE, and coordinator at the Centre for Integrative Anti-Racism Studies at the University of Toronto, wrote, “Some would say that coronavirus has nothing to do with race or inequities; however, it pinpoints systemic failures such as those worsened by years of systemic racism, lack of accountability and the erosion of public systems.”

This government needs to make sure that funds and appropriate resources are allocated to these communities to concentrate services and provide help where it is needed the most. The individuals in these communities are the ones who rely on public transit to get to work during rush hour. These folks do not have the luxury, in most cases, to work from home as many are essential and front-line workers. We know Toronto is an expensive city, where many newcomers cannot afford to buy spacious or individual homes. Many cohabitate with extended family members to be able to afford rent, which in turn increases their chances of contracting COVID-19 due to an inability to practise proper physical distancing. While I am relieved that this government has finally started to collect race-based data, it has taken far too long and the government must act immediately to ensure that support is concentrated where it is needed the most.

As stated by the people that I have spoken and shared the words of, COVID is not affecting people equally or equitably. Those who are most at risk, those who were in a state of crisis, whether they were low-income workers, essential workers, marginalized communities, even drivers in Ontario, have been affected even worse. The

examples I brought forward about new home purchasers: Imagine those same people that have been fighting Tarion, fighting the government for change, are also being told to stay at home, in homes where there’s mould, homes where there are major structural defects. COVID has made the hard lives of many Ontarians much harder, and we must all work together to fight this global pandemic.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I’ll be sharing my time with the member from Orléans.

I want to begin by saying that I’ll be supporting the extension of the emergency order until the end of June because I believe we’re still in an emergency situation. We are by no means out of the woods. There are many people still hurting and many people still suffering, many people who are still vulnerable, whether they live in a long-term-care home, a group home, in shelters, on the street, or in poverty. We need to be able to move quickly to address their needs. So I support the government in that aspect.

I do have a great deal of concern, on the other hand, with the government’s approach during this emergency order, which is the time allocation that I spoke about this morning. I’m not going to belabour that point, where we’re taking five pieces of legislation and rushing through it. I’m not sure there’s an emergency for those five pieces of legislation. The government hasn’t clearly articulated that. There’s a big risk that we’re going to get some really long-term things wrong.

Why are we pushing forward a bill that talks about evictions when we’re in the middle of a pandemic? How is that going to improve people’s lives? Why are we talking about the legal system, appointing judges, when we’ve got these kinds of things happening in our communities? What is the rush? What are the things that are really important to people right now?

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane lost his mother. It’s really hard to not be able to grieve. What’s even harder is being a family caregiver and not being able to get in to support your loved one in long-term care or in hospital or in hospice. Other governments have come up with a plan to make that happen; this government hasn’t. It’s important. It’s happening right now. Why are we not debating that? Why are we not pushing that forward?

Universal masking: We know that universal masking is going to reduce the spread of the virus. The government talks about it: “You should wear a mask.” What are we doing about making sure that people who can’t afford to buy a \$10 mask will have one—people living in situations where they really need one, or people who have to take public transit? Why aren’t we talking about that?

There are these urgent things that we need to do. But it seems like the urgency is placed on the wrong things. During an emergency and this pandemic, the most valuable commodity is time. The speed at which you make decisions saves lives, prevents the disease from spreading and helps the economy.

I don’t know why we’ve delayed on decisions like increasing the wages of the lowest-paid people in long-

term care by a month. Why did we wait a month to make sure that people wouldn't work in two homes—because when it happened here, it meant the virus was going to spread, and it did. We can't be surprised by what happened in long-term-care homes, because we delayed making decisions.

We're delaying making decisions about other things: reintegrating caregivers, universal masking—actually, delaying decisions about what we are going to do now in long-term care. Hospitals are going to be moving out soon. What's the plan? Are we going to raise those wages permanently? Are we going to be making those jobs better? Are we going to be able to recruit people? That's the plan that we need right now, because this is not over. Long-term-care homes are still vulnerable. That's the plan that we need to see.

We don't need to be rushing on five pieces of legislation.

Regional openings: We're thinking about it.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes.

We're thinking about it. We can't afford to spend too much time thinking about it. Perfection can't be the enemy of the possible, because the possible, in this case, actually means things like people's lives, people's livelihoods. We're not going to get it perfect, and we can't try to get it perfect.

Testing: Tens of thousands of tests—testing capacity—were wasted in trying to figure out what we were going to do next, because we hadn't figured out what we were going to do next before we finished what we were doing. Those are the things that are urgent. The government has said, "Here's our plan for testing," but they haven't rolled it out.

So while I respect the right for us to continue the emergency, because I think we have to make those decisions quickly—they're not getting made quickly. But we have this time allocation for those five bills. We're in a rush to do the wrong things. We need to be in a rush to do those things that need to be done right now, because they are going to ensure that people are kept safe and that people's livelihoods will be secure.

I don't understand, in a province like Ontario, which is massive, where we have situations in communities across this province where the disease really hasn't spread, and with proper social distancing and proper PPE and proper public health measures, you can open a barbershop, or you can open a restaurant or a takeout, or allow people to go in to see their loved ones—we're not letting public health officers make those decisions. The longer we wait, the harder it is on people. I'm not saying it's easy. What I'm saying is, we're not in a hurry to get those things done, and those are the things that it's critical to be in a hurry on. Speed in a pandemic or an emergency saves lives. You've got to get a balance. When you delay to get the perfect, it comes at a cost.

1600

As I said, I'm supporting the extension of this emergency order. I think some oversight over the command

table is the right thing to do. I think some disclosure there would be a good thing. We've reduced the appearances by the Chief Medical Officer of Health down to two a week as opposed to five a week. I understand that. But there's no discussion as to what's happening at the command table. I think Ontarians need to know. There's cabinet secrecy. I understand that; you shouldn't disclose those things. But Ontarians want to know what's going on. They want to know what the people who are delegated to make those decisions are thinking about and what those decisions are. I think that's a fair and reasonable thing. Maybe the simplest thing for them would be to appear once a week.

We're in this situation right now where we're extending the emergency order, but the government is trying to take the position that this is business as usual. Well, it's not business as usual. That's the thing that's disturbing about the time allocation motion. It's kind of a 180 from where we were all working together. It wasn't perfect. There was some obstructionism and stuff that went on that I don't think should have happened, but I don't think that their reaction to that was appropriate. It's not business as usual. It's not going to be business as usual for a while, so I would urge the government to support the amendment. I would also urge the government to engage in a conversation about those things that are truly urgent, like universal masking, like talking about regional opening, rolling out the testing, and integrating caregivers.

The last thing I'm going to say—I'm sharing my time here, and I could go on for the next 10 minutes—is commercial evictions. It's just not good enough to say, "If you kids don't behave, I'm going to come upstairs, and, boy, there's going to be trouble." That doesn't cut it. Just tell landlords what you're going to do. The Premier says that, and it's kind of like being a toothless tiger: "Just wait until I get a hold of you." That's not good enough. That's not good enough for those stores that are going to close, for those not-for-profits that are going to close, for all sorts of people.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As was said by my colleague from Ottawa South, I'll too be supporting the extension of the emergency orders to the end of June, because there continues to be an emergency in Ontario. Many of our neighbours, our families and our friends are suffering as a result of COVID-19.

To say that it has been a difficult time for Ontarians is, of course, an understatement. In fact, I have often found it difficult to find the words to properly describe how I'm feeling about what is going on, and, frankly, compared to many, I think I, and we, have it relatively easy. We are healthy, we continue to be employed, and that is not the case for many of our neighbours, our families and our friends. We all know people who haven't been as lucky. We all know people who are out of work. We know business owners who have closed their doors, and some of them don't know how, or if, they're ever going to be able

to reopen. For them, they're pondering what losing it all looks like.

What many business owners don't understand is why their provincial government was so slow to respond to them. It's not as if the government didn't know what to do. Many, including our caucus, called on the government to restrict commercial evictions. We called on the government to provide a commercial rent subsidy program that works not two months later, but to do that almost immediately.

Now we're at a point where, despite the proclamations that we're reopening the economy and getting back to business, many of those business owners are simply contemplating walking away. But for many, if not most, it won't actually be that simple. You see, as part of their commercial lease, they've signed personal guarantees. So not only will they have lost their business, Madam Speaker; they will be out of a job, out of an income, and they will owe tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars for a lease on a business they no longer run, a business that no longer exists. For them, it's complete financial ruin.

The government must prohibit commercial evictions. They needed to do it two months ago; they needed to do it last week; they need to do it tomorrow. They must recognize that the existing rent supplement program isn't effective and it's not going to be effective. They need to provide that financial relief directly to the tenants.

But it's not just small business owners—or business owners of any size—that are suffering. The emergency continues in long-term care. In Orléans, the Madonna Care Community has been devastated by COVID-19. Two dedicated staff, who continued to go to work even with inadequate PPE, inadequate infection control, inadequate pay—they continued to go to work to support the residents they cared for, for so long—decades, in fact, long-term employees. As a result of their dedication, they lost their lives.

Dozens of residents at Madonna Care Community have lost their lives to COVID-19. The iron ring never materialized; it broke. So it's clear that the emergency continues. But with that said, Ontarians do want transparency in how some of these decisions are being made.

A news conference at 1 o'clock is nice. Having a couple of telephone questions from the media can be helpful. But they want insight into how these decisions are being made. They want to know what information the government has that's leading them to make these decisions, what factors are being considered.

The Premier has said that we'll know what he knows. For several days, the Minister of Long-Term Care has repeatedly been asked for the scorecard on facilities. Not only has that scorecard not been disclosed; the question really hasn't even been answered of if it will be, and certainly not what that scorecard says.

Residents of Ontario want to know that the government has this information, that it's considering it thoughtfully and that it's using that information to make decisions that ultimately affect all of us. They want to know what

information the government is using to contemplate returning to school in the fall. We still don't really know. As a parent of an elementary-aged child, it's something my wife and I discuss almost every week.

We're receiving this feedback from our constituents, not just about school but about child care in general. How can the economy go back to work if our kids are stuck at home? How can we trust that we can send our kids to daycare or to school if we don't know that the government has a plan? We don't know what information they're using to formulate that plan.

It leads to more questions than answers. It leads to more uncertainty, and at a time of crisis, we need certainty.

1610

It has been two months. There's still quite a lot of time to go before we get through this. Clearly, the emergency will continue, and continues right now. But residents do want that information. They do want that transparency. They want the insight into how the government is making decisions and what information they're using to make those decisions.

I'd ask the government to consider this as we move forward, to provide that transparency to Ontarians so that they can have confidence in the measures the government is taking with this unprecedented emergency power that we're entrusting them with.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I'm really, really pleased today to be able to speak regarding all of our challenges in dealing with COVID-19.

If I use a metaphor to paraphrase an observation where Ontario stands in this battle against COVID-19, let me position us: We're not at the beginning of the fight. We're not at the end. But perhaps we are at the most important point of all, the point at which we consider our next steps, where we try to find an effective balance between public safety and economic survival. These steps that we take will demonstrate how well we, as a province of 14 and a half million people, have fared thus far and how well we will do in the coming weeks and months. And our positions really inform how we apply what we have learned so far.

This certainly is not the time to take the foot off the gas. There's too much hurt out there. But perhaps it is time to release the emergency brakes for stretches of the road where we can see some area of clearance. But to do so properly, we must have the brake available to us and we must use it with care, for we do know that there are some risky parts of the road ahead and many, many curves that are dangerous.

In deference to the different roads and the population concentrations of our province to travel at a reasonable speed on some stretches of the road sooner rather than later, we must be able to release the emergency brake entirely while remaining ever-vigilant for hidden bumps and sudden curves.

From this point forward, the safe, responsible route for the government must continue to be primarily based on the

best health advice from our professionals. And it is their advice and our action on it that has led us away from some of the horrors that we've seen and still, sadly, see elsewhere. And it is their professional advice which will continue to advise our actions going forward.

The safe, responsible route now is to provide the government with a full tool box of options because we cannot allow ourselves to be stuck in a straitjacket with no options. But we have to have it so that more and more parts of this province can have the availability to transition back to normal as soon as possible. To gradually relax restrictions, we need the full state of emergency powers in place as the starting point. We can't drop all restrictions at once everywhere. That's what would happen if we didn't extend this regulation for now because, as we all know, that would be chaos and a public health disaster.

Instead, by taking a careful, phased approach, we will be able to reopen Ontario as local conditions enable and allow. And where the public needs to be further protected from outbreaks, appropriate restrictions will remain in place, as they should. But for those of us—I know certainly myself, as someone who equates liberty with citizenship—and in a riding where basically there is little to no incidence of COVID, it can be a tough pill to swallow to isolate not just from your loved ones but from much of their lives, for weeks and months. And seeing those many, many people with their livelihoods and pensions fading, it is much, much tougher. The heartache is literally incredible. Across this riding and across this province and certainly not just in my riding, I think a number of us here see it, we hear it and we certainly feel it. That is why I believe this government now faces its biggest challenge. And this is why this may be the most important week in our collective fight against this foe that has killed many parents, many loved ones, destroyed dreams, devastated our economy and caused so much sorrow for all of us.

As a result of the great work and sacrifice of so many, we face this challenge now, though, knowing much, much more about COVID-19 than we knew just weeks and months ago. At one point it didn't even have a name to it, let alone a number—just a virus that emanated from across the pond. Now look what it has done to us. We know how it can savagely attack and kill without warning, attacking stealthily and overtaking our bodies for days without symptoms and, in that period, infecting still others, who are all blissfully unaware. It is for that reason that we had to take unprecedented action to save Ontarians and to get to know this beast that we face.

Now, as our testing capability and actions give us more reliable data that we can act upon, we are becoming familiar with the roads that COVID-19 frequents and, as well, the road that it doesn't travel. We know more about when it might side-swipe someone who is unsuspecting. We know more about how it infects. We know more about how to prevent infection and how to protect ourselves, whether it's by social distancing of two metres or whether it's by the hygienic methods of wearing a mask or by hand washing. I can tell you right now that my hands have never

been so clean in my life. My wife would be so proud of me. And now we know more about the roads on which COVID-19 travels. We know, as I alluded to previously, just where many of these safest roads are located.

More specifically, though, we can assess risk based on geography and on patterns of movement. Individuals in cars, for example, pose little risk if they're driving from and to places of low COVID-19 incidence, whereas individuals on public transit travelling to and from and through areas of higher COVID-19 incidence are at significantly much greater risk. That is why health has recommended all people who use Ontario transit systems—to advise their users to wear masks, to protect themselves and others in those heavier concentrations of people.

We're also learning from clinical work that there are things that we can do to protect from within. The simplest thing, of course, is keeping your body fluids up, drinking water, making sure we have healthy levels of vitamin D in our systems. There are many ways that we have seen that could lower our personal risks. We've had many, many claims of vitamins, and what they can do and can't do for the systems, and highly debatable, but, and many, many medical people will agree, vitamin D appears to be a real and addressable solution to some small extent, simply by protecting us from some viruses, as long as it is the natural vitamin D from the sun.

We have all learned during this ordeal how to socially distance when doing all of our necessities, whether it's going shopping to buy food, to pass someone on the sidewalk, to walk through our lobbies here, to treat our staff with courtesy and distance, to turn our heads away in elevators and certainly on staircases when meeting other people. But I can tell you, in my riding—I live in a large, rural riding—we don't have 60 or 70 people getting off a streetcar and 30 people crossing at a light. Social distancing really is the norm simply due to the population density and the way that we move and travel; hence the lower incidents that we're very, very thankful for.

To be blunt, it's my expectation and I believe that with this extension of the provincial emergency powers, we're entering a new phase where, potentially, our government can carefully remove—and I repeat, carefully remove—the emergency brake for those regions of the province where the battle has been won or is being successfully waged. I believe that in many parts of this province, small groups camping or cottaging or using the outdoors—the great outdoors—will not then be putting themselves or others at risk. Instead, they'll be outside, where it's healthy.

1620

Our small businesses and towns, cities and villages depending on tourism will get the visitors they need, with all taking precautions that we have learned. We have to bear in mind that a lot of these are not year-round businesses. They have a four-month window of opportunity by which to survive. If they don't operate in May, June, July and August, that's it. As we get closer to this summer season, their options are becoming extremely limited, so certainly that has to come into context. That's a path that I

see us trying to address down the road in incremental steps.

Of course, the extension of the emergency powers will allow us to go with very firm hands on the wheel, guided by our health professionals. This can't be just a political decision that you and I would wish, want or like. This has to be guided by the science, with the co-operation of our health officials, taking in all the relative data that they have available to them. I believe that staged reopening of Ontario is going to take all the voices of this Legislature, on both sides of this House, so that all regions and all areas are represented in both government and in opposition.

That's why the emergency powers continuation leads naturally to expanded summer sittings in this Legislature. We've consulted, and there isn't a member in here who hasn't consulted with the people in their riding. I know many of us have been told a similar story. The many people I have talked to know that things have to be done. We can't just sit here and talk around something. We have to make decisions, and we need a full complement of MPPs here to make that happen.

While not having the opportunity to serve in this Legislature for many, many years, in contrast to some of my colleagues in the House on both sides—I know the member for Timmins has been here a couple of years, or maybe a little bit more. But while I say, with the greatest respect, that they still spend time here participating, I was very, very fortunate in my own way of serving municipally for a number of years, in a unique capacity: serving in the federal government with a bit of a different twist. I served in opposition, both when there was a minority and when there was a majority. I served in government in a minority and in a majority, and the dynamics are almost always there. There's always those who propose; there's always those who oppose. That's the nature of government and opposition. But it's tremendously and critically important to have both of those elements there because that is the strength of our democracy. That's why we are sitting in this House. We're not abdicating our responsibility, like the federal government is right now. As a former federal member, I'm disappointed and saddened at the fact that democracy is not taking place at the federal level, but thanks to all the members in this House, on all sides of the House, it is here. We are sitting; we are participating. We are trying to find a way to work through this issue so that COVID can be dealt with effectively and properly in our ridings. So I thank all members.

I went through a few of these. Certainly I'm not old enough, even though I'm generally getting up there, with the grey hair—I didn't go through SARS, but I went through the 2008 economic meltdown. It was a disastrous thing to deal with; there's no doubt about it—a 22% interest rate for most small businesses, which were already mortgaged to the hilt; certainly, late-night sittings of 72 hours at a time; always opposition and government sitting in opposing positions, but occasionally having the wherewithal to be able to come together to find the solutions we needed.

I think that ordinarily that might even be sufficient, but that's not good enough right now. We are in a unique

position, unlike anything I have ever seen in my life. Many of us in this House and probably no one in Canada has ever seen or been exposed to a pandemic like we have. It's caused an unprecedented delay in this Legislature—unprecedented. Of course, the subsequent emergent demands on this Legislature are just building and building. We cannot afford not to be here to work.

I would like to mention today, in respect of the civility that can, on many, many occasions, take place, that the leader of the Green Party gave an impassioned address the other day that I appreciated. I sat on committee with him as well.

I know the member across from Humber River–Black Creek, whom I work in committee with—we've all found a little way to put a little water in our wine to be able to come up with the best solutions. I'm thankful that we're able to do that. So I'm confident that we're going to come through this by working together.

We have been blessed, really blessed, to be elected to this position. It's an enormous responsibility, particularly at this particular time in life. And so I'm hopeful that all of us will recognize that we have three things that we really have to do. We have three main key responsibilities: We have to work, we have to be accountable and we have to deliver results. As a result, that's why we introduced motion 77, to enact the responsibility of government.

The opposition said, "We can't do it effectively, with the virtual. It's going to be too late for some of our farmers. They have to get the planting in." Hogwash. The planting is done. Virtual sittings are a reality. We can and we must.

Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act: It's tremendously important that we deal with this legislation. It's critical in preventing the contamination of our food supply, and at a time like this, when food supply is challenged, we need to be here to deal with that.

The Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, Bill 161: We're dealing with that. It's tremendously important as well. We can't have cases falling off because we're not able to prosecute effectively and have them thrown out because we haven't followed a timeline that's acceptable.

Transit: I don't even want to go down the transit file. For most of us who come in here, it's two hours to get Toronto and two hours to get downtown. There's a little bit of a change right now, but we'll take it as it comes.

But importantly, what I will say: The other bill was Bill 175, the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act. This is a wonderful opportunity for government and opposition to be able to deal when we have the challenges that we have in home care and long-term care. This is a great opportunity for all of us to bring forward the issues and the thoughts and the desires and to find the results that we need. That is why we are here. I certainly am so appreciative of the—

Interjection.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I thought the member for Timmins would give me a rousing ovation on that, but he hasn't yet. But that's quite all right.

Physical distancing and everything like that is the norm for us, but I can say that at least until September, we're going to be permitted to vote and sit here. We've got all of the different mechanics of voting either in the lobbies—or all of the vehicles that are there before us. But I'm quite confident that the House leaders have worked together to try to find a way to make the accommodation so we can participate in the democratic process effectively.

I think the people who I serve, who we serve, at a time of crisis like this, are looking to this government. On both sides, they're looking for assistance, they're looking for direction, to help us advance through this crisis. In reality, this is an obligation. We can do something about it and, quite frankly, we must do something about it. The bottom line is, we have to deliver results. That's our job. That is our responsibility.

I would like to talk at great length about my personal riding, but before I do that, I would like to—certainly I know that some of my staff are in at 6 in the morning and work through till 7 or 8 at night. Some of my staff ordinarily would have 30 to 40 calls and emails a day; now we're handling 300. They are working their proverbial butts off, really. To all of those people, this is no overtime; this is no time off. This is just called “be there to help people,” and that is happening, from all of our staff. I would assume, across both sides of this House, that we have that same contribution going on, to recognize that we need their help.

We as members will sit in this Legislature and we will debate and we will work on solutions. But we certainly need our staff, particularly when we are here, to be able to handle the priorities and the concerns back in our ridings, to recognize that when people need a hand, they have to be there.

1630

We have a simple little policy. I've been doing outreach. We're calling 50 people a day, not only just to certainly inquire how they're doing but just to give them an opportunity to talk. You know something? We're learning too. We're getting the feel. We're getting the pulse of the people. We understand their challenges. We understand their problems. Some of them are offering some great solutions, and that's tremendously important. We have to listen to those people, too, because we don't have every answer here. There might be a very few select members in this House who feel that they have every answer, but I can assure you that most of us, certainly those of us with a little touch of grey, recognize that there's a lot of other people who know a heck of a lot more than we do, and it's tremendously important to listen and accept their guidance, their support, their advice and their counsel.

I will say to all of my colleagues: I'm looking forward to sharing a little bit of extra time with you here this summer. We've got some serious, serious work to do. We do need all hands on deck. I expect that everybody will take the same gusto in dealing with this. Once again, thanks for taking the time, being one of we few people here who carry, somewhat, the weight of Ontario on our shoulders. God bless.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dave Smith): Further debate?

Ms. Bhutika Karpoche: Speaker, before I begin, I want to say that today and every day, New Democrats stand in solidarity with Black communities across Ontario. Black communities in Ontario, Canada and across the globe are raising their voices to highlight systemic anti-Black racism, to highlight brutality and injustice, and are demanding change. As elected representatives, as legislators, we must step up. We must take action to root out anti-Black racism in all our institutions.

As always, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the constituents of Parkdale–High Park and, today, to debate the extension of the state of emergency motion.

COVID-19, as we know, is a public health crisis. It's a global public health crisis. It's an economic crisis. But it is also a moral crisis. COVID-19 has laid bare the inequities that exist in our society. Just look at who is getting infected with COVID. The city of Toronto released a map of the hot spots, and, as predicted, if you look at the map where the hot spots are, it's in racialized communities, it's in poor communities; because we know that when it comes to health, whether it's infectious diseases or any other health conditions, there are social factors that determine the health of people and the health of communities. It is very important that we recognize that in order to address health issues, we need to address social issues.

COVID-19 has also forced us to recognize the valuable work that front-line workers are doing: of course, health care workers, doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists—everybody in the health care field, but also grocery clerks, janitors and cleaning staff, transit operators, migrant workers, warehouse workers and food distribution workers. There are so many people who are doing the essential work to keep things running, whose work is so essential that even during a pandemic, they have to keep working.

Their work isn't just valuable because of the pandemic; it has always been valuable. We had simply refused to recognize and see it as such. Now that everybody understands the value of their work, we cannot simply say thank you or call them heroes and not take action to support them through the pandemic, but also through the recovery.

Now, with all that we're experiencing because of this pandemic, the question is, what are we going to do? After a lot of pushing from the opposition, from the New Democratic Party, but also a lot of pushing from the public, we have seen, I would say, baby steps in terms of action from the government. For example, when it came to pandemic pay, it took a very long time for the government to bring forward pandemic pay. They also did not make it retroactive to the start of the pandemic, as it should have been and as we are calling for.

Not everybody is getting pandemic pay. Many groups that are doing front-line work are not going to be eligible for pandemic pay. And it's only temporary. Can you imagine? The government is actually telling personal support workers that when the state of emergency is lifted, they're going to take back the \$4 top-up that they received during the pandemic. That's a shame.

These little steps that the government has taken so far are not nearly enough; they're so far from enough in terms of what we really need to do in order to address the problems that existed pre-pandemic but that have gotten so much worse due to the pandemic.

We're hearing from people across Ontario—I'm certainly hearing it from my constituents in Parkdale–High Park. Everybody is saying that we cannot return to “normal,” we cannot resume business as usual, we cannot return to the status quo, because “normal” or business as usual or the status quo was not working. “Normal” meant that personal support workers, who do the heavy lifting, who are carrying the heaviest burden, and who are most vulnerable when it comes to the pandemic—they're still working multiple jobs, and they're earning close to minimum wage, without benefits, without access to supports, without proper workplace protections, just to be able to earn enough to live. “Normal” was seniors in long-term-care homes, lying on their bed, soiled in their diapers, for days. “Normal” meant workers having to choose between taking a day of rest because they are sick or losing a day's wages. “Normal” meant that workers working minimum wage jobs could be working full-time and still not earn enough to pay rent. The average one-bedroom rent in Toronto right now is over \$2,000. “Normal” meant that Indigenous and First Nations communities still didn't have access to clean drinking water. Can you imagine no access to clean drinking water in 2020? “Normal” meant murdered and missing Indigenous women—and we still act like it's not a problem. “Normal” meant that we continue to criminalize Black people.

I could go on and on in terms of the problems that existed pre-COVID-19 that have been laid bare because of this pandemic.

I want to go back to my original question: What are we going to do? Are we going to take this moment to act on this crisis, to build a better world? I certainly want to. I know that on this side of the House, we want to. Does the government side want to? Do we have the courage to reimagine what the world could be, what the world should be? What would that world look like? It's not that we don't know what it looks like; we know it—it's all of the issues that we have been fighting for decades, when it comes to the environment, taking action on the climate crisis, ensuring that we make a just transition to a green economy; when it comes to workers' rights issues, ensuring that every worker is able to have a thriving wage, have access to paid sick days, have access to emergency leave, have mental health supports, have workplace protections, are free from employer harassment and intimidation, have the right to unionize, have universal pharmacare to go along with our health care system. I could go on and on. Universal child care: That's another important one. There are so many things that we know we need to do. It's certainly not for a lack of imagination, not for a lack of ideas and solutions. We know what the solutions are; we just need to take action.

1640

Speaker, I want to focus my suggestions in terms of recovery to housing. As you know, I'm very passionate

about housing. Coming from a public health background, we're always talking about, and I'm always pushing for, the social-determinants-of-health approach when it comes to dealing with health care in this province. Housing is a huge determinant of health.

So post-COVID, what does recovery look like? I would say, housing for all. And what does housing for all mean? It means no homelessness. We cannot have anybody experience homelessness. It means no person in Ontario having to choose between paying rent, so they can keep a roof over their head, and paying for other expenses, like food, like medicines. It also means that housing is not just a roof over your head and the four walls around it, but being legally protected against illegal evictions, against forced evictions; being protected from harassment and intimidation; and having laws that protect tenants from unreasonable rent prices, rent increases. It means having housing that is truly affordable.

Instead of moving in that direction, as we know, the government is actually taking steps backwards because, in the middle of a pandemic, the government brought forward their bill, Bill 184—which, ironically, is titled “tenant protections” and something, something. Advocacy organizations—I think I saw it from the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario—in their analysis of Bill 184 said the only place where there is tenant protection in this bill, Bill 184, is the title. That's it; that's where it ends. So housing for all means halting Bill 184. We cannot move forward with that. We need to ensure that housing as a human right is exercised in this province.

Also, housing for all means having homes that are properly maintained, not places with mould and bedbug infestations, not places that don't have proper heating or cooling. It also means accessibility, ensuring that the home that you're living in accommodates your needs, whether you are a senior or whether you're somebody that has a different ability or has a different medical need. It has to allow everybody to live with dignity.

It also means having a home with sufficient space, not overcrowding. We know that this is a big problem in many of our urban centres, where you will find many—especially racialized communities, poor communities—in overcrowded apartments. We also know that this is a big problem in many First Nation Indigenous communities.

Overcrowding is a serious problem. It is also a health problem. In fact, when we talk about the pandemic, about COVID, imagine a person who is a personal support worker. I know this person, because I spoke to a constituent who is a personal support worker, who said, “You know what? I don't mind. I want to do my part in supporting our province and our community through this public health crisis, but I'm afraid to go home because my grandson lives with me.” And she lives in a small apartment with her family. So overcrowding is also a very big issue. When we talk about housing for all, we need to make sure there is sufficient space for people and their family, not crammed into small apartments.

Speaker, there are many other things that we could be taking action on. Of course, I focused my comments on

housing, but I want to reiterate, I want to repeat, that the solutions to imagining what the province could look like and to moving towards that future already exist. We know what the answers are. It's simply a matter of taking action. So I ask the government: Will you take action? Will you have the courage to take action?

We have, yes, a crisis on our hands, but we can act on this crisis. We can make this a turning point in Ontario to say, "Yes, we experienced one of the worst global public health crises, but we made sure that that we took action to move our province forward, truly forward, in an inclusive manner, where no one was left behind."

I see I have a little bit more time, so I'm going to talk a little bit about evictions, continuing on the housing theme. Right now, we have a moratorium on evictions. Although the courts have prohibited the Landlord and Tenant Board from enforcing the evictions, eviction hearings are still being scheduled, notices are being sent out and, as the province reopens, we know that the Landlord and Tenant Board is going to resume hearings very soon as well. Without any kind of rent relief for tenants across this province, we can expect that the moment the moratorium is lifted, there are going to be mass evictions. In Parkdale–High Park, 58% of residents are tenants. This is a huge issue. People are, right now, not able to pay rent just so that they have enough money to be able to buy food, feed their families, to buy medicine. "Housing for all" also means that the government cancels the eviction against every tenant who is not able to pay rent during this pandemic, because it's not their fault. So we need to make sure that the government ensures that every person still has a roof over their head when this crisis is over, when the moratorium is lifted, because, like I said, if you don't have housing, you don't have health. Housing is a huge determinant of health.

I really hope that, moving forward, this government will be more transparent. Right now I know the government has struck the Ontario economic recovery committee, but again, the committee is filled with just cabinet ministers. As far as I can tell, we haven't had much information on what consultations the committee is doing. If the government consulted the public, you would hear that rent relief is a huge issue; it's a top priority. Housing is a huge issue for all Ontarians. So we really need to see the government take action on it.

That's all I have. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: This is the first time I've had a chance to speak in the House today. I just want to acknowledge the pain that so many people are feeling right now, especially in the Black community, and just to stand in solidarity with everybody who is combatting anti-Black racism.

Speaker, we're being asked to make a big decision today to grant the Premier extraordinary powers to extend the state of emergency for another 28 days, to essentially have the province in a state of emergency from St. Patrick's Day to Canada Day. And with all due respect to

my members opposite, I just want to say that the government needs to act as if we are in a state of emergency.

I was deeply disappointed to see the government move through an extraordinary programming motion this morning, fast-tracking a number of bills unrelated to the COVID crisis. I have spent time this afternoon meeting with people expressing concern to me about how their charter rights could be violated in one of those bills, and asking me, "How can we fast-track that in the morning and then grant the Premier extraordinary powers in the afternoon?" Or, "How could we fast-track a bill that would change home and community care in the morning when we should be debating how we overhaul the way in which we care for our elders in long-term care in the afternoon?" So, if we're going to be in a state of emergency, let's continue the non-partisan work we've all done that's granted many UC motions to move legislation forward and to move the state of emergency forward.

1650

So I urge the government to work with the opposition in a co-operative way, to support greater oversight of the command table, and I would support the amendment on the table that does just that. I want to be clear to all the people who are writing my office saying, "End the lockdown": We're not out of this crisis yet, which is exactly why I will be voting with the government to extend the state of emergency. But I hope you use those emergency powers to ban commercial evictions; to bring in more actions to take over long-term-care homes that need to be taken over; to address access to the safe supply for people who are dying from overdoses in our streets; to talk about universal masking and reopening and improving testing and contact tracing. Use the emergency powers to address the crisis we face.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's an honour, once again, to rise in this Legislature and to talk to the amendment brought forward, but also to the motion, motion 78, which is the state of emergency extension.

First of all, I would like to thank the front-line workers. Those are the health care workers, the truckers, the grocers and others who have been involved in working straight through this pandemic that we've all been faced with since roughly March 13 or thereabouts. So we're going on close to three months dealing with this COVID pandemic.

I also want to thank the tens of thousands of volunteers who have, in fact, given freely of their time and their efforts to assist those. When I talk about "assist those," who are "those"? One of the groups of people—as this is Seniors' Month, we talk about the most vulnerable people: those in our long-term care homes, those in retirement homes, even just parents who are living on their own. In my own riding of Chatham-Kent–Leamington, and even in my own neighbourhood, I know of neighbours who have got such huge hearts. They know a lot of the seniors in the neighbourhood who are—when this first hit and the media really pumped it out, fear gripped a lot of senior people. It gripped a lot of people in general. I know of

people who have yet to have even gone out of their home for fear of this COVID pandemic.

So again, I want to thank those volunteers, those people who are willing to go out and do groceries or cut the grass for our seniors in neighbourhoods. These are what I call ordinary people doing extraordinary things. And to those people, I want to say thank you to each and every one of them.

We all know that this is like World War III. The only difference between World War III and previous world wars is that in this war, we cannot see our enemy. We can't see it. And I know that people throughout the province—I get it. I get the emails; I get the phone calls. I deal with a lot of the phone calls coming into my constituency office where people are getting anxious. They're becoming impatient: "Go ahead, lift the ban. Cut us loose. Let us go." And yet our Premier has been insistent upon the fact that we care and are concerned about the health and well-being of all Ontarians.

I will say that there were some hot spots over roughly the last three months that have been identified. Close to my riding, but not my riding, is Windsor-Essex. It has been identified as a hot spot—perhaps because it's a border city. But in addition to that, Toronto, Peel region, parts of Brampton, north Etobicoke, Scarborough: They've identified those as hot spots.

For 95% of the people in the province of Ontario, I want to say thank you. Thank you for abiding by the guidelines that have been laid out by our government. We didn't just lay them out because we're on a power trip. Gosh, no. We are not doing that. We are laying these guidelines out for your personal health and well-being.

I look at the people around me and I know that every member in this Legislature supports our government when it comes to the safeguards and many of the guidelines that have been laid out. I do hear people say—and I get the emails, and I'm sure you do as well, where people say, "Open it up. Cut us loose. Enough is enough. I'm getting anxious." I also get the emails that say, "Slow down. You moved too fast."

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You should write a song.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Yes, there is a song in there.

The point being, there's a balance that we have to try to find. I would rather err on the side of safety than on the side of just being footloose and fancy-free.

We have seen where groups of people have disobeyed the guidelines, saying, "We don't care. You're not going to touch us. We're not going to get this COVID." They gather in large gatherings. We've even seen large gatherings outside of Queen's Park on the lawn with their signs: "Open it up." Look, I know that families are hurting. I know that parents are at home with their children all day long. We talk about mental health for children, yes, but we also have to look at the mental health of parents as well.

We're doing our best to assist our children when it comes to online learning—which many of the unions, if not all the unions, were averse to. Well, guess what? It's nothing but online learning. And I hope that the teachers who have been instructed to conduct online learning with

their students are doing it faithfully, because they're still getting a paycheck for it.

We look at other situations. Small business: Small business people are hurting—we know that. We know that. So we have taken a step-by-step, very methodical, logical approach in stage 1 of reopening some businesses. Yes, we picked off some of the low-hanging fruit. Some of that low-hanging fruit would be a lot of the outdoor activities that people can do. We opened up the provincial parks. As of March 31, access into provincial parks was free. Now that has changed.

I look at golf courses as an example. Boy, I tell you, I have a lot of golfers down in my riding, but I'm sure we all have many, many golfers in our own ridings who couldn't wait to get out there and hit that little white ball. Now those courses are open.

There have been some improvements in terms of health and safety for the golfers, which I greatly appreciate. As a matter of fact, I went out and golfed around once this year, and I had the opportunity—I sat in a golf cart; the only person in that golf cart. But do you know what I found? It was really kind of cool. This one particular golf course—I won't mention Willow Ridge in Blenheim—what they've done is, they've installed Plexiglas between the driver and the passenger, which would then eliminate, perhaps, the passing of any of the pathogens that would—it's people speaking to each other. Now I understand that they're able to do that, which has doubled the revenue. That's one business.

1700

We also talked about the importance of small businesses that had a street access and they could in fact control the number of people that were allowed in their store at any given time, and they've been following that. I think of Mercato's in Chatham-Kent—it's a great meat store. As soon as you walk in: "Please sanitize your hands or put on gloves as you enter our store." Every one of their employees, I might add, is wearing a mask. They did that back probably in early April, and I commend the ownership for wanting to protect the health and safety of their employees as well as their patrons. That's just one example. There are thousands throughout the province.

People who are now having to realize that we have to look at this COVID—it's real, and it's not going away real soon. The Premier has emphasized, day in and day out, that the health and well-being of Ontarians is first and foremost. That might go against the grain of some people saying, "Enough is enough; I'm losing my business. What can you do?" There are some financial programs that have been implemented in conjunction with the federal government to help small business—"Oh, but that's not enough." Well, would you rather have nothing or something?

Listen, I ran my own training and development business for 25 years. I went through a recession from 1989 to 1992. Many people might remember that. What do you think was the first budget line that got cut when all of a sudden companies had to reduce? It was training. But I went through that. I went through that cycle. I went through the peaks and I went through the valleys. Do you know when

I got the most excited? It was when I was in the valley. You say, “Why is that? Why would you want to get excited in the valley?” Because I knew I wasn’t going to stay there, that I’d slowly start climbing up that mountainside again.

But being the fiscal conservative that I am, I wouldn’t all of a sudden, as I started making more money, spend more money. For me, it became a need-to-have or nice-to-have, and a lot of the need-to-haves I focused on. The nice-to-haves I set aside until maybe there was an opportunity. But I look at it and I go, “You know what? We’re kind of there right now, where a lot of the businesses are struggling.” I know that; I get the phone calls. I’d love to see this entire province opened up, but we have to exercise wisdom in our decision-making.

We talked about the command table earlier. We have to trust the command table. We have to trust the people who are there, the medical advisers who are at that table. We have to trust them. If we open it up to everyone on the opposition side, well, there might be—I don’t know how many would be over there. Let’s say roughly 55 people on the opposition side. We’d end up with 55 different opinions of what needs to be done. We don’t have time for that. We’ve got to move forward. We have to move forward. They have to trust us. We may not like it, but we have to trust it.

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: They can chuckle all they want, but that’s okay. You know what? That’s typical of the opposition. Anything the government does, they don’t like. It doesn’t matter; it doesn’t matter what it is. Well, you know what? The point being is, we have to move this province forward, but we need to move this province forward systematically. We need to move it forward step by step.

There’s an old saying: By the inch it’s a cinch, but by the yard it’s hard. If we move by the yard, what can happen? We can find ourselves up in wave 2 and maybe even wave 3. So it’s called “go slow to go fast.” If we go fast, then all of a sudden, we’re cut back, and all of a sudden it’s, “Okay. Now we’ve got to close everything down again.” We don’t want that. They don’t want that. They don’t want that. So be patient with us. I say to people, “You need to be patient with us. If not, we’re going to find ourselves in wave 2 and wave 3,” and trust me, wave two could be coming. I’m not fearmongering; I’m just speaking a reality. So that’s one of the reasons why the Premier has, again, extended this declaration of emergency for all of Ontario. Look, do I like it? No. But I appreciate it, I respect it and I will follow it.

I will say, earlier I talked about one of the hot spots in the province. Yes, one of the hot spots is near my riding, in Windsor–Essex. But we have to be systematic in our approach. One of the things I’ve pushed for and other members of my caucus have pushed for as well is regionalization. What does that mean? Well, we can identify hot spots. Guess what? We can also identify where COVID-19 is—well, I won’t say non-existent, but is very very less. We will never eliminate COVID-19. “Zero” is probably not in that same sentence. But if we can identify areas where it’s not bad—and I might add, Chatham-Kent is one

of those areas—then I say, open up more of the businesses in those areas.

But here’s the drawback. Here’s the drawback: We’ve identified that Windsor–Essex is a hot spot. Windsor is only 50 miles from Chatham. If we open up the restaurants and we open it all up, guess who might start coming to Chatham to patronize the restaurants? And the restaurants would love it, but the community might say, “Hold on. You’re coming from an infected area into our area. You could infect us.”

“Oh, Rick. Listen, that’s not going to happen. Come on. You’re fearmongering.” No, I’m not, and I’ll tell you why.

One of the things that happened just this past weekend was a young man, 31 years old, a migrant worker who had tested positive—Windsor public health put him into a motel. Guess what? Saturday morning, they found the young man dead. Public health didn’t let Windsor Regional Hospital or others know about that death that occurred Saturday morning until late Sunday afternoon. Is there a problem with that? Well, you may not think so, but I’m telling you, I have a problem with that. People deserve to know. They have a right to know the infected areas.

These migrant workers—the Trudeau government is allowing a lot of immigrants into the country. A lot of them are migrant workers, not being tested. “Go to the locations where there’s work for you.” Do you know what else is happening? These migrant workers—if one gets tested positive and they’re living in bunkhouses, there’s an excellent chance that they could infect everyone else in that bunkhouse. Then suddenly they have to be shut down and they have to be quarantined for two weeks.

A lot of the cases are mild, thank goodness. But I will tell you something: Erie Shores hospital in Leamington, along with Windsor Regional Hospital, put a task force together. They said that enough is enough. They weren’t getting the response they wanted from the chief medical officer of Essex county. They said, “We’re going into this greenhouse and we are going to ensure that the people in those greenhouses—we’ll test them to make sure that they’re safe.” Well, guess what they found? In one particular greenhouse, they found 15 migrant workers testing positive, three of which had to immediately be hospitalized. Had they not gone in, those people would have been continuing along.

But here’s something else. Maybe call me a whistleblower. Call me what you want, but we have found out that within my riding, there are five—five—recruiting companies in the area that hire illegal migrant workers. What happens is this: They go from one greenhouse to another greenhouse in another area to another greenhouse in another area. Is that right? No, because there’s the potential of infecting the greenhouses and the workers who are there and the communities in which they live. That leads me back to: Could people from Windsor come to Chatham and infect other people? Yes. This is the reason why we are extending this particular state of emergency, motion number 78. We have to extend it. We have to be sure.

1710

I don’t like to see this go on and on, but if we don’t do something now, we’ll be into that second wave sooner

rather than later. Hopefully, we'll find ourselves not even in a second wave—and if it is, it will be a mild second wave. The last thing we want to do is open things up and suddenly have to close things down again.

I stand with our Premier; I advocate for regionalization, but we have to exercise caution with that, because if we don't exercise that caution, we're going to find that we're going to be infecting more people in even the good areas, and we don't want that either.

Again, I want to reiterate that the Premier's concern and our government's concern is, first and foremost, the health and safety of all Ontarians. Yes, that includes not just the constituents in our own ridings but even in the opposition ridings; it's everybody throughout Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: As always, it's an honour for me to rise and speak on behalf of the great constituents of London North Centre.

I'd also like to send a huge shout-out to all of the community organizations and businesses that have come together during this pandemic, including Labatt, which is creating hand sanitizer, as well as LIFE*SPIN, which is distributing food to families who might otherwise be going without.

This pandemic has really shown the strength of London. It has shown how people can come together in a time of crisis, and also how people are reaching out to one another and caring for one another.

The month of June, as I'm sure all of you are aware, is what is known as Pride month here in Ontario. I would like to think back to some events that occurred with our neighbours to the south early in the morning on June 28, 1969. At that time, there was a raid on the Stonewall Inn. Marsha P. Johnson, Zazu Nova and Stormé DeLarverie, all persons of colour, fought back; they said no. They refused to accept that their rights were being denied.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "A riot is the language of the unheard."

In Canada, we had Viola Desmond. She now graces our \$10 bill. She is the first woman to appear alone on a Canadian banknote, and it is also a major accomplishment because she was a person of colour. As a teacher, I used to always educate students about Viola Desmond because many people didn't know about our great history. She predates Rosa Parks. She was an extremely successful businesswoman who just wanted to watch a movie after her car broke down. She never actually broke a law. There was a lot of winking and a lot of nudging, however, because the seat that she chose, a floor seat, was one that was not open to people of colour. She ended up being convicted of not paying one cent in tax, even though she offered to do so. Instead, she was hauled away by the police. She lost a shoe, she fractured her hip, and she spent all night, with her hands crossed, in prison. I used to tell my students that because she responded in the way that she did, she didn't put herself forward to further legal action. I used to ask them, "What would have happened if she had fought back? What would have happened if she violently

reacted towards the police officers?" Well, they would have had far more choices to charge her with. But Viola Desmond is also a very unlikely hero in that, as a result of this attention and this event, she ended up dying penniless. She was extraordinarily successful, as I said. I believe she was in the neighbourhood of a millionaire in today's dollars. She also had a broken marriage.

We've all seen the events that have happened with George Floyd, and we all know the reports of Regis Korchinski-Paquet. I think it's important that all of us, regardless of our political stripe in this House, assert that Black lives matter. I'm also happy to join the leader of the Ontario NDP, Andrea Horwath, in declaring anti-Black racism a public health emergency.

Today, we're talking about the extension of emergency orders. The declaration of emergency has tremendously impacted small businesses in my riding. I've heard from individuals who haven't been able to open their doors. They're not being able to generate revenue. And yet, they're being told by the province, "You can apply for federal money. You can kick the can down the road. You can add to your debt load, but you're going to have to pay it back later. But the province isn't going to do anything."

I also have dealt with a number of individuals who have called the emergency hotline and received contradictory answers depending on the time of day they called. In fact, some have told them that they are entitled to be open—the list goes on and on about the complicated messaging.

We hear the government say, "Work with us," and we do want to work with you. That's why we brought forward to you the Save Main Street plan, to provide direct subsidies to folks who are struggling. They are having a difficult time. Some of them will not survive this pandemic. We have tabled this, asking you to provide a 75% commercial rent relief, and to also freeze utility payments and put a ban, once and for all, on commercial evictions. People are getting locked out and you're doing nothing, absolutely nothing, for these folks. Asking them to take on more debt or blaming the federal government is irresponsible.

I also had the good fortune to take part in a town hall for saving the Village. You see, a number of different businesses in the Church-Wellesley Village are also being dramatically impacted by their inability to be open. There are a number of bars and restaurants, places where the LGBTQ community gather. Because of physical distancing guidelines, those places can't be open.

They talk about the CECRA as being some sort of great benefit for businesses. However, there is no reason that a landlord has to take on this program. There is no direction from the provincial government. I mean, we've heard the Premier in the news, wagging his finger and threatening landlords that if they don't play nice, he's going to be not nice, but we don't see any legislation, do we? We don't see anything except for these idle threats.

So I'm appealing to this government here and now: Employ the Save Main Street plan. Save the businesses so that they can open their doors and feed their families once this pandemic is over. If you do not act, you are leaving

hundreds of people in your wake because of your choice not to act.

Further, in the Church-Wellesley Village, I was also quite astonished to hear that taxation rates are something that this province could look at. See, taxation rates are assessed based on the potential for a multi-storey unit to be in that location, whether there's one there or not. So these storefronts are having to pay enormous amounts of tax based on what could be there. That makes very little sense.

1720

I'd also like to shout out to places that are doing wonderful work in the Church-Wellesley Village, like The 519. They're providing food and resources for the homeless and also for the street-involved. And also, the Glad Day Bookshop is providing relief for artists who are unemployed as a result of COVID-19.

Early in this government's tenure, they removed rent control. For what purpose? Who does that serve? And while this has been on new units, people are feeling this now. This allows predatory landlords to simply want to evict so that they can raise the rent next time.

Further, the absence of any sort of commercial rent control in our province is a glaring absence and one that we should look at. That, to my mind, is very clearly anti-business. You're not allowing people to compete; you're allowing landlords to win.

We also called on this government—when we talk about working together and getting things done—we called for an emergency income and rent relief for private individuals. Again, we didn't see a government that's willing to work with us; they ignored it completely. I'm glad the federal government stood up and did all the heavy lifting with that. We've seen the CERB, despite all of the holes that are in that. But at least somebody did something. At least one level of government cared.

Hydro rates: They were reduced for a period of time, and now they're going to be bumped back up to 12.1 cents per kilowatt hour. And this is supposed to be some sort of benefit? That's an increase of 20% from what it was earlier during the pandemic. The government has that within their control.

I'm also curious about the fact that the pandemic pay that has been offered to our front-line heroes has only been offered from April onwards. Pardon me, Speaker, but I think the pandemic started in March, did it not, here in Ontario?

I'd like to turn my comments now to the city of London, and I must commend them for a number of reasons. They've always had fine business acumen. They've always been responsible and careful stewards of the public purse. In fact, they have a triple-A credit rating. London acted in the best interests of Londoners and they acted immediately. They put together tables of folks who are affected by the pandemic, finding out how they were affected, but they also provided immediate relief. They did things like the Good Food Box program, they added money into the Housing Stability Bank, and they also made sure that people had Internet access, because we

know that students were having to attend school from home. They also supported community organizations.

Our city is now predicting a budget shortfall of \$33 million by the end of August, and that is from a city that has always been a responsible steward. They have lost money in transit revenue and overtime costs for first responders; they've given property taxes; and also, there's a decline in utility charges. The city of London is calling upon this province to act and to do something. We cannot underestimate the link between essential services and the cost to our health care system. If the province does not act and does not respond to the needs of municipalities, well, it's penny-wise, pound foolish. You'll ending up spending far more in the long run.

We've seen that the federal government has been quick to respond yet again, and it announced plans to fast-track funds for roads, bridges and other public works. It's time for Queen's Park to do more.

I'd like to now turn my comments to focus on long-term care, and I hope that this declaration of emergency and its extension will adequately address the moral horror that has become our long-term-care system. We've heard this government say that they're shocked about the military's report, and yet I have letters in my hand here today from folks who wrote to Dr. Hoskins, the former Minister of Health, and subsequently received no replies. I'd also like to point out that while we have heard the Premier and the minister talk about this being a priority for them, we never heard them talk about this during their campaign in 2018. I think, quite strangely, that they were talking more about sex ed than long-term care was ever mentioned. It's rather disappointing.

The Koyle family provided me with this letter, and it is as upsetting to read as the military's report. Their husband, their father, received care that nobody should have received. Such things happened as he received a black eye shortly after being in long-term care. He received another resident's medication not once but twice. He became agitated as a result and fell and broke his hip and then his health declined. There's a brutal story about a catheter which I won't share here today, but also he ended up with a urinary tract infection. Once it was treated and properly diagnosed, the doctor said, "He is not to sit in wet diapers." Well, what happens?

In this letter to Dr. Hoskins, they pointed out quite rightly that a greater ratio of PSWs to residents must happen. There should be more consistent PSWs so that they know the residents and there's less of a dependence on part-time workers. You know what they received from the ministry and from the local MPP? They received a letter back with their name misspelled, and a form letter at that.

I've also received a number of letters from the family council at Mount Hope. Now, before I begin my remarks on this topic, I must clearly point out that despite the horrifying conditions that have been related to me in these, they have also indicated that this is not a criticism of the institution or the workers therein. These people are not bad actors. It's the government that needs to own this.

The family council has watched over the years as budget cuts have happened. They sent this letter to the current minister on November 25, 2019. They talked about a lack of visibility of staff on the floors and how there's temp and agency staff. Staff have poor working conditions. Staff often look to family members to care for residents; it's like people are being asked to prop up a system that the government refuses to fund. There are inadequate caregiver hours per resident, there's a gross underfunding of long-term care, and there are no action plans to show how this new health beast will help Mount Hope and St. Joseph's Healthcare—but also, the draconian cuts to services like drugs and physiotherapy and OT, social workers, technical care, garden therapy, and the list goes on and on and on. They even say, "The workers can't fill a pail to clean up a mess when the water tap is being shut off. The Ontario government has shut the water tap off to long-term care by strangling it of funding."

One only has to look at other jurisdictions that have given over to for-profit companies the delivery of public services. Prisons, hospitals and other public services are being used by these companies to generate profits. They do so by providing the poorest service they can while submitting to governments the most costly invoice they can. There's no incentive to improve service when the object is to make a profit on the care of people who must have it to live. It's a very un-Canadian value to profit off of someone's ill health or to profit off of someone's age. It's a disgrace in our province and it's a disgrace in our nation.

They also call upon an interesting solution: that Family Councils Ontario be empowered to obtain and present a picture, a more comprehensive picture, of conditions in Ontario's publicly funded long-term-care facilities, and I wholeheartedly agree.

1730

We've called on this government for a find-and-fix inquiry. I've heard from so many constituents who have talked about the Wettlaufer inquiry, and what changed? Absolutely nothing. Yet this government wants to talk about a review. Well, your track record on reviews is really not that great, considering that none were done in 2020 and only nine were done within the last calendar year. That is an absolute embarrassment.

Furthermore, I'd like to see from this government more action for physicians. We've seen physicians who have not been able to practise as a result of COVID-19. They've been on the front lines, but the government wants them to instead wait for a code for Telehealth Ontario that they are developing, which is going to take until July to pay, or something along those lines. These are folks who have set up clinics. These are folks who pay staff. These are folks who prop up our health care system through their practices, and yet nothing is being done.

When the SARS epidemic came about, the Eves government did have a financial plan to make sure that these clinics would stay open, yet this government doesn't even listen to itself.

If this government would like to talk about working with us, we're here to work with you. We're here to pass legislation that will benefit the people of Ontario, and we will be supporting this legislation. But it's high time that you committed to a find-and-fix inquiry. Not doing so borders on the immoral, and some might even call it criminal.

Our seniors deserve better from our government. You can't keep pointing the finger at the past Liberal government. This is on your watch, and this is yours to fix, so commit to a find-and-fix inquiry.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Jane McKenna: I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of this important motion to extend Ontario's declaration of emergency until June 30.

But as I was sitting here—obviously, we've been in here since 9 o'clock this morning—and listening to the member from London North Centre, I jotted down a few notes that I wanted to just bring up here today. Because if we're always looking in the rear-view mirror, we can never move forward. I just want to bring up a few things that have happened.

Prior to COVID-19, under the leadership of Minister Fullerton, an incident management system was put together. They are there. They're essential to coordinate operational support to long-term-care homes. They meet daily. I just want to bring up a few things that they've been doing prior to COVID-19.

Since May 1, they've increased the number of low-risk green homes from 356 to 547 homes, representing 87.4% of all long-term-care homes.

Second, since May 1, they've reduced the number of high-risk homes from 35 to 19, a 54.3% improvement. The reason I bring this up is that we need to talk about all of the things we've been doing prior to COVID-19 and moving forward.

As of May 27, 37 hospitals have deployed teams into 59 yellow homes and 19 red homes.

Then, on the fourth point, they completed testing on long-term-care residents and staff, with a second round of testing already under way.

The fifth point is, the number of COVID-19-positive tests in long-term-care homes decreased from 12.5% to 7.5%.

The sixth point is, as of May 28, 129 out of 626 long-term-care homes are in active outbreak, from a high of 190 on May 18.

The seventh point is, 164 outbreaks have been resolved.

It really was important, as I was jotting these notes down in my scribble, to be able to bring those up, because it's very important to realize the work we've done under the wonderful leadership of Minister Fullerton, what has been done up to this point in long-term care.

I want to thank my chief of staff, Ken Audziss, and Peter, who work in my office, because we decided to extend our hours from 9 to 7 every day. We felt it was important that when there's a crisis, people have a live line to be able to speak to. So I want to do a shout-out to both

of them, Madam Speaker, to thank them so much for their hard work and their dedication. As I say to everybody in here, which I know everybody in this House is doing, we're only as good as the people who are with us. It's so important to realize that we all work together as a team. As I say to my kids all the time, when you work alone, you make progress; when you work together, you make history.

But I also wanted to point out something else, because someone asked me a question the other day about our funding from the federal government. While I was sitting here, Madam Speaker, I just scribbled down some notes and was looking something up.

In 1957, the government of Canada passed the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act, which resulted in the federal government agreeing to finance 50% of the cost of provincial hospital care. I'm going to say that again: 50%. This act was used by the federal government to negotiate publicly funded hospital care plans throughout Canada. In 1977, the then Trudeau government ended the 50% funding model—just so we're clear, the 50% funding model. Today, the federal government funds just 15% of the cost. Just so we're clear, it has gone from 50% to 15%. I just wanted to bring that up too, Madam Speaker, prior to starting some of the notes that I have here today.

I wanted to write down all the things that people have been calling my office about, because I've had lots of questions about what a state of emergency is. So I thought it was important today to be able to let the good people of Ontario, and obviously the good people of Burlington, know exactly what the details are of what we're doing here today.

Over the past few weeks, there have been a number of calls about emergency management legislation. People want to know what a state of emergency is. They want to know the difference between a state of emergency and emergency orders—we've had that call, I can't tell you how many times—and they want to know how long this could last.

I'll begin my remarks by answering these questions for those watching today's proceedings on television or online.

What is a state of emergency? All three levels of government—federal, provincial and municipal—have the ability to issue a state of emergency to enable them to take immediate, temporary and extraordinary measures to ensure safety and security due to a major crisis.

The government of Canada's Emergencies Act allows the federal government to take special temporary measures to ensure safety and security during national emergencies. Though the federal government has considered that, in early April, Canada's Premiers sent a letter to the Prime Minister urging the federal government not to invoke the Emergencies Act over COVID-19. Instead, the government of Canada has used powers under other laws to make extraordinary orders like mandatory self-isolation and travel bans.

In Ontario, the provincial government can declare an emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil

Protection Act. This allows the government to quickly implement and enforce emergency orders in the public interest.

In addition, Ontario's 444 municipalities also have the ability to declare emergencies within their own borders. When a municipal emergency is declared, like it was in Burlington and countless other municipalities, the head of the municipality is given the power to make orders to carry out the emergency plans all municipalities are required to have in place.

What are emergency orders? Compared to the state of emergency, emergency orders are the extraordinary measures that governments at all levels are putting in place during COVID-19. In Ontario, these orders fall under section 7 of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

If the motion to extend the declaration of emergency until June 30 passes, the provincial government will be able to continue supporting Ontarians through the emergency orders issued to date, including the emergency order that suspends time-of-use electricity pricing so that individuals and families are charged the lowest off-peak rate, the emergency order giving hospitals expanded measures to ensure that doctors and medical staff can be rapidly deployed to potential COVID-19 hot spots, and the emergency order ensuring that child care providers don't charge parents if they are not providing child care.

This is why the motion before us today to extend the provincial emergency and its subsequent orders is so, so important.

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The next question I get asked all the time is: How long will this last? People I've connected with also want to know how long this will last. Ontario's Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act specifies that the initial declaration of emergency on March 17 lasted for 14 days. It could then be renewed by cabinet for another 14 days, which it was on March 30. After that, the state of emergency must be renewed in 28-day increments through a vote of the Legislature. The Legislature extended the state of emergency for 28 days on April 14, Madam Speaker, and for 21 days on May 12. The motion we're considering today extends the emergency for 28 more days.

COVID-19 has been a journey like no other. From coast to coast, Canada's provinces and territories have all declared either a state of emergency, a public health emergency or both. In these uncertain times, governments of all political stripes have agreed on the need for these emergency declarations and various emergency orders. Political observers know that Canada's east-west political divide has been a central topic in Canadian politics for some time. But now in 2020, regardless of where in this great country we live, coronavirus has brought all Canadians together with the shared goal of beating COVID-19.

As we discuss and debate the extension of Ontario's state of emergency, Madam Speaker, let's consider what's happening right now in provinces to the west of us. British Columbia's NDP government declared a provincial state

of emergency on March 18. BC's declaration can only last two weeks at a time, so their state of emergency has been extended five times. On May 27, when BC announced its extension to June 10, Premier Horgan said there was "no likely end in sight." As of yesterday, BC had reported 2,597 cases, including 165 deaths and 225 active cases.

Alberta's Conservative government declared a 90-day state of public health emergency on March 17. Alberta's provincial emergency plan lasts until June 15, and Premier Kenney has indicated that it would not be renewed. As of yesterday, Alberta had reported 7,010 cases of COVID-19, including 143 deaths and 400 active cases.

Saskatchewan's Conservative government declared a provincial state of emergency on March 18. Their orders are good for 14 days, and so their state of emergency has also been extended five times. On May 28, Madam Speaker, Premier Moe announced its latest extension to June 11. As of yesterday, Saskatchewan had reported 646 cases, including 11 deaths and 47 active cases.

Manitoba's Progressive Conservative government declared a provincial state of emergency on March 20. They have extended their state of emergency twice, most recently on May 17, for another 30 days until June 17. As of yesterday, Manitoba had reported 295 cases, including seven deaths and 10 active cases.

Here in Ontario, based on the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, we took an important step to protect Ontarians by declaring a provincial emergency through the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act on March 17. We led the country, being the first to declare a provincial state of emergency as a result of COVID-19. In taking this action, we made it possible for the government to quickly implement and enforce time-limited orders that provide support for individuals and businesses, help keep our communities safe, and assist our front-line workers as we gradually reopen the economy.

The decision to declare a provincial emergency was not made lightly.

We had another big day on April 3, when Premier Ford showed strong leadership by being the first in Canada to release modelling that was guiding the government's decision-making. For most of us, April 3 seems like a lifetime ago—and my fourth grandchild, whom I still haven't held yet, was born. Initial modelling projected 80,000 cases, on April 3, of COVID-19 in Ontario as the best case, and up to 300,000 cases as the worst-case scenario.

There's no denying that over the past 12 weeks, the decisions we've made in this place together have allowed us to flatten the curve. It's why, as of yesterday, the total number of confirmed cases in Ontario stood at 28,263, with 2,276 deaths and 3,834 active cases.

Every day, we hear reports in the news or online about some pretty alarming numbers, like the total number of cases or, even worse, the number of deaths attributed to coronavirus. The one number we don't hear all that often is a number that gives us hope—hope that what we're doing is working, hope that every day is bringing us

another step closer to doing the little things that we took for granted before COVID-19. This important number is the number of people who have recovered from COVID-19. In Ontario, as of yesterday, the number stood at 22,153. While this number is encouraging, it also reminds us that there is still far more to do; that no matter how much we wish things could go back to normal, we're not quite there. It's why we're considering this unprecedented extension of the state of emergency in these unprecedented times.

Let's consider what's happening in the province to the east of us. Quebec's CAQ government issued a health emergency on March 13, and they have extended this order 10 times. Most recently, it was extended on May 27, until June 3. The island of Montreal also has its own state of emergency, which is in place until at least June 4. As of yesterday, Quebec has reported 51,354 cases, including 4,661 deaths and 34,757 active cases.

New Brunswick's Progressive Conservative government declared a state of emergency on March 19, and they have extended this order five times. Most recently, on May 29, the order was extended by 14 days, to June 12. As of yesterday, New Brunswick had reported 132 cases, no deaths and 12 active cases.

Nova Scotia's Liberal government declared a state of emergency on March 22, and they have also extended their order five times. Most recently, on May 31, the order was extended to June 14. As of yesterday, Nova Scotia has reported 1,057 cases, 60 deaths and 13 active cases.

Prince Edward Island's Progressive Conservative government declared a public health emergency on March 16 and a province-wide state of emergency on April 16. PEI has extended their provincial order twice. Most recently, on May 28, the order was extended to June 14. As of yesterday, PEI had reported 27 cases, no deaths and no active cases.

Newfoundland and Labrador's Liberal government declared a public health emergency on March 18. Newfoundland's declarations can only last 14 days at a time, so their state of emergency has been extended five times. On May 29, Premier Ball extended the order to June 14.

A little trivia for those at home: Does Canada have two Legislatures that use a non-partisan consensus government system? To get the answers, let's look to Canada's Far North.

Nunavut's non-partisan consensus government declared a public health emergency on March 18, and they have extended it five times. Most recently, on May 28, the order was extended to June 11. As of yesterday, Nunavut has no reported cases, with 142 people under investigation.

The non-partisan government of the Northwest Territories declared a state of emergency on March 24. They have extended it five times, including on May 26, when the state of emergency was extended another 14 days to June 9. As of yesterday, the Northwest Territories have reported five cases, no deaths and no active cases.

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Finally, the Yukon's Liberal government declared a 90-day state of emergency on March 27. The emergency

orders last until June 24. As of yesterday, the Yukon has reported 11 confirmed cases, no deaths and no active cases.

Since Ontario declared a state of emergency on March 17, this Legislature has sat for nine days, including today's sitting. In the month of June, various committees will meet to consider bills and the Legislature will be back in for five more days. Ladies and gentlemen, the Ontario Legislature remains open and accountable, even during these unprecedented times. This government recognizes that both legislators and the opposition play a constitutionally important role in holding the government to account.

Since March 17, the Legislature has come together to pass a number of pieces of important legislation to support the individuals, families and businesses impacted by COVID-19.

I just want to skip past here, just because it's important to be able to say a few words, because I know I was talking further. I just want to say, in concluding my comments today, a quote that's both recent and local: "When the history books are written, it will be said that the people of this great, great province never surrendered to the virus. They didn't quit when the going got tough. They didn't leave anyone behind."

During these isolating times, this quote from Premier Ford underlines the importance of the decisions before us today. By extending the state of emergency, we are choosing to reopen the economy safely and carefully. We are choosing to protect those most vulnerable. We are choosing to leave no one behind.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: This is my first day back in the House since we recessed due to COVID. I know some members have been back. This is my first opportunity. It is nice to see everyone. I wish everyone and their families good health.

It feels a little bit normal. One of the intentions that I had was to figure out whether this place could be functional and to see it in action. We have some semblance of that, and I think it's due to the dedication of the members that occupy the seats in this House, and that is a good thing.

Speaker, at the outset—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And the staff.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And the staff, of course. Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that—of course, everyone who makes this building work.

From the outset, I want to express my condolences and my solidarity with members of the Black community in Canada and racialized people around the world who are suffering today from the pain that we see in the United States. I offer my solidarity as a white person of privilege who understands the privilege that I've been given, and that solidarity goes to members of the Ontario Black caucus, my sisters and brothers who raise the issues around fairness, equality and justice every day in this House. We are better off for their interventions, and I applaud them.

Speaker, we've learned a lot. We will continue to learn a lot. It is our job to learn from each other. As New

Democrats, we'll be supporting the extension of this emergency order. We believe it's correct. We believe it's right. We also do that sincerely wanting this government to succeed. I know it may come as a shock hearing it from me, but I want my Premier, the Premier of the province of Ontario, to succeed beyond our wildest dreams. I want us all to succeed in this House.

It is our job to do better, to be better, to make life better than it was pre-COVID and post-COVID. We have the ability, and now, in this House, subsequent to the extraordinary scope of the time allocation motion this morning, our Premier has extraordinary tools and powers—more, I would argue, than any Premier in the province of Ontario has ever had. As the saying goes, extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. And indeed, I believe that is what members of the government are attempting to do: to arm this Premier with all of the powers that could be foreseen and could be required. Whether they are appropriate or not, they are a majority government, and it is their right to extend those powers.

We, as opposition members, have a role, and our role is to question the motives and the movements of this government. One that is definitely contentious is the removal of opposition members to present private members' bills. Most often, these bills are not originated from our own willingness, from our own initiatives. They are out of consultation with members of our communities that have pressing needs, that haven't had their voices heard. If there's anything to be learned from the protests happening around the world, it is by and large because voices have not been heard.

I caution the government. We've seen this play out before. We are seeing it play out now. When you deny the right for people to be heard, you're denying justice. You're also denying some good information, some valid, helpful policies that you may want to adopt.

We've seen private members' bills in this House go on a tripartite basis, pass with unanimous and collegiality and collaboration. We've seen that happen. There's nothing to say that that couldn't happen again. It is another tool that, as members of the opposition, we are offering you. But that has been quelled, and, I would also argue, then, that some form of democracy, a modicum of democracy in this House has been quelled as well. It's disheartening.

We're all receiving so many urgent requests on behalf of our community. We're getting those calls and emails, and people are scared. They're frustrated. They don't understand what's happening. And they're wondering, indeed, and rightfully so, when someone is going to lead us out of this. Speaker, we're trying. On this side of the House, not only during COVID but pre-COVID, we've sounded the alarm.

If I told you today, or if I told you pre-COVID, that if you spend as a government \$300 million over the next 10 years on public health, you can bolster our public health regime. You can help protect people from unknown viruses and disease. If I told you that, you'd say, "Hey, Natyshak, you're a little off your rocker," as the Premier tries to label me most times. Well, that's because we did

tell you that. We told you. We warned you that cuts to our public health regime were going to make our communities more vulnerable. And that's what you did: You went ahead and cut public health.

If I told you that spending \$300 million on public health could indeed save us billions economically, you'd say, "Well, that probably would be good value for money." But no, you didn't see fit to make that investment.

This is where, in retrospect, we have to remind the government that we sounded the alarms. We sounded the alarms around long-term care. We have introduced bills to increase the hours in a day that a client, that a resident receives hands-on care. That's been cut by subsequent governments. This government can blame the Liberals all they want, that they inherited a broken system, and we won't really argue with them, but indeed, the Liberals inherited a broken system from the previous government, the Mike Harris regime. We know that, Speaker. We see the data. We know the cuts: 6,000 nurses fired under Mike Harris's Common Sense Revolution; the massive privatization of long-term care; the deregulation of long-term care in our hospitals.

They call it red tape. We call it protection measures. Those are things that protect those residents from the atrocious evidence that we've seen today, whereby this province had to call in the army. It's embarrassing. And despite what the Minister of Long-Term Care says—they had it all under control and they've put so much effort in—despite her best efforts and through the guidance of the Premier, they failed.

The deaths in long-term care in Ontario are, by and large, the majority of the deaths that we've seen. It shows quite clearly that the most vulnerable in society are the ones who have been left behind by this government and previous governments.

1800

But we can do better. We're here, Speaker, to offer this government counsel, to offer them help. How is that? One of the things they can do—members who sat as opposition members before heard New Democrats call for an expansion of the Wettlaufer inquiry into a full public inquiry into long-term care. I forget how you voted on that. I'm not quite sure; I truly am not quite sure. I hope you supported us, because that would have been a pressing moment where they could have supported us to expand and to peel back the curtains on what happens in our long-term-care sector, to learn where those cracks were. That didn't happen.

We've introduced bills, as I said, to increase hands-on care. These are Ontarians. These are your mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers and folks who have disabilities, who built this province. We have to do everything. We have tried to do everything, regardless of the support that we've received on either side of any government.

There's an interesting parable here. Somebody said that it feels like Groundhog Day every day under COVID-19. Every day we wake up and we're at a standstill. Nothing changes and life seems to have been put on pause. If anyone's familiar with the movie Groundhog Day—it's an

interesting movie, because that's what happens. The character of Bill Murray goes through the same day every day, stuck in perpetuity on a day that does not change, despite his best efforts. But that movie ends similarly to how COVID will end. It's a very powerful narrative, Speaker, in that the character gets out of that Groundhog Day the day he starts to look after other people, the day he starts to look after the most vulnerable in society, the day he starts to build from the bottom up and where he helps a homeless person who is suffering.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I hesitate to interrupt the member for Essex, but I'm going to ask some of the members to come to order so that I can hear his presentation, so he can make it.

The member for Essex has the floor.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, I couldn't agree more with your intervention. Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Again, it means that we in this House have to start from the ground up: those who are the most marginalized, those who are the most vulnerable. This morning, I gave a statement on our migrant worker system in Canada. If anyone saw the reports about the standards and the rate of infection in our migrant worker community, that's no accident. If anyone in this House claims to be shocked by that, they are being ignorant to the facts that have existed for a while.

We rely so heavily on our migrant workers. Most of them are generational. These are families that have come decade after decade. It's the father and mother who travelled here, who have then brought their sons, who have then brought their daughters. They have a great, close relationship with the farms that they work with. This is their career. They are professionals. They also provide a job that most Ontarians aren't inclined to do—not inclined to do because of the back-breaking work it requires, but also because of the low pay and protection it offers.

Are we taking advantage of our migrant worker population? Many would say—and I would agree—that we have been for quite some time. Now that we see that those who are producing and safeguarding our food supply are also at risk and a vector for this virus, we have to act. That's something that I would love to see this government put on a time allocation motion, something that fast-tracks those labour regulations that would actually protect those workers so they'd have access to personal protective equipment, PPE. They could comment and could actually express their concerns about their working environment without fear of reprisal and being sent home.

What era are we living in? We can do better, we must do better, and this Premier has all of the tools. His government made sure that he got all the tools this morning. There are no excuses for him not to act with the expediency that we require in this House.

Speaker, I have hundreds of letters from people with family members who are suffering, either with family members who are in long-term care or who have been in long-term care or who passed away during this outbreak. They talk about the deplorable conditions. I have evidence

and anecdotes from front-line workers, who are anxious to have their information shared.

But this morning, I raised a question for the Premier—actually, we raised nine questions to the Premier that he avoided, that he refused to answer. My question to the Premier was why, at his situation table—the COVID-19 table that he has brought together—are there no people from the front line? Why are there no front-line workers, who can bring incredible experience to the table and institutional knowledge about what those conditions are and how to make it better? Why would you not go to the source of the problem, to those who are closest to the problem? It doesn't embed a lot of trust.

Of course, we are extending this motion. It is an emergency declaration, that this province will continue to be under the umbrella of emergency regulations and precautionary principles. I believe that is right, and I will vote for it, but there is a little bit of—it seems bizarre, Speaker, because we all know that one of the reasons we're actually getting a hold on this is because Canadians, by and large, I believe, are trusting of their government. We understand the rule of law and we respect each other. The other thing, I think, is universal health care that is giving us a fighting chance against this thing.

But I digress, Speaker. If we are under an emergency declaration, then why would the government pack not only this House but the rafters with their members this morning, when we all know that social and physical distancing is absolutely essential for us to avoid transmission of this virus. What was that message? What did it say? "Look at the power we have"? I don't get it, Speaker. I saw some members up there, at the top part of the gallery, coughing on top of their other members. We know that this virus—again, we are all familiar with how it is transmitted now, through droplets. We have to stay awake. Yet, they have packed this room, endangering all of us. It doesn't infuse the emergency that this province should be reinforcing.

I just question what their priorities are. Is this about optics or is this about actually having a functioning Parliament and a functioning Legislature? New Democrats committed to you to maintain the ratio in this House so that you would always have the majority and you could pass the bills as we previously did—so that all of your families were protected. Someone over there has to give the brain trust a shake. This doesn't make sense. You have to send the signal that we're actually taking this seriously, because people are watching.

Speaker, there is no question that COVID-19 has exposed and laid bare the inequalities and vulnerabilities of our society, the conditions which we as legislators have created for day-to-day life in this province. We see it everywhere. We see it in our education system. We see it in rural Ontario where our agriculture producers, who were promised support when they needed it, in times of need—who bought into the business risk management program, who were sold a bill of goods by this province and this Premier that that cap would be lifted and have yet

to see that. If there was ever going to be a time where our farmers, our primary producers—to protect the domestic supply of food, it's essential. If there was ever a time for the government to enact that and to remove that cap, it's now. Our agriculture critic has waxed eloquently on this, but it has yet to happen. We see nothing.

There is also an epidemic of mental health issues not only in our urban centres but in our rural centres. You have to connect with our agricultural producers and ensure that they have the resources, because they are suffering. I'm talking to the farmers in our communities. These are proud people who don't normally pick up the phone and say, "I'm not doing very well." They're not the ones to do that. You have to acknowledge that, and you have to be proactive and put the resources together.

I want to thank my friend Brendan Byrne, who is with the grain and oilseeds federation of Ontario. He's a wonderful resource, and I urge the members of the government—I know you know him. You should connect with him, because he can offer you some ideas.

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The need for connectivity, basic services like the Internet now: We see how important that is for access to education. Our kids are suffering under this system right now. The drop-off rate for online learning is massive. You will see that data reflected sometime soon, I'm sure, if it doesn't exist already. So any of your overtures on online learning, you can throw those out the window, because not only can most Ontarians in rural areas not access it with any type of certainty or quality, but it is absolutely not appropriate for learning conditions, teaching conditions, and student connectivity and their ability to have social interaction. We have to avoid that system completely going forward.

Speaker, the small business support—I'll end on that. My colleague across the way gave a little bit of a perspective on what's happening across the country in various provinces. Just today, under the leadership of Premier Horgan in British Columbia, an NDP government, they are protecting and supporting their small businesses by ensuring that they cannot be evicted from their rent, so commercial renters, small business operators, are protected. If those landlords don't take the offer from the feds, then shame on them. It's 75% of the rent. In times like this, we're all going to take a little bit of a hit, and those commercial renters who can't support those small businesses that are just struggling to exist, not even to make money—shame on them. But through the leadership of Premier Horgan in BC and their cabinet and their members, they saw that as something that should happen.

We've offered those types of solutions to you. We have yet to see anything tangible come out of this government. There is still time. I see that this place can function, Speaker. I'm happy and proud to be a part of it, and I hope that we use our time wisely.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioic Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
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	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	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	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	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
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	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	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	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	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	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	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	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	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	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	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	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	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	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	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	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	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	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	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	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	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	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	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	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	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	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	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	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	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	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	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	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	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	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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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Lorne Coe, Wayne Gates
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Kaleed Rasheed, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
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Stephen Blais, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Randy Hillier, Mitzie Hunter
Andrea Khanjin, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Daryl Kramp
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Rudy Cuzzetto, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Billy Pang
Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Roman Baber
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Roman Baber, Will Bouma
Parm Gill, Natalia Kusendova
Suze Morrison, Lindsey Park
Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Jill Andrew
Toby Barrett, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
John Fraser, France Gélinas
Christine Hogarth, Norman Miller
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
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 / Greffière: Tonia Grannum