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Lundi
13 juillet 2020

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 13 July 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 13 juillet 2020

The House met at 1015.

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

NOTICES OF REASONED AMENDMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 74(b), the member for Timmins has notified the Clerk of his intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 197, An Act to amend various statutes in response to COVID-19 and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes. The order for second reading of Bill 197 may therefore not be called today.

I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 74(c), the member for Timmins has filed with the Clerk a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 195, An Act to enact the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020. The order for second reading of Bill 195 may therefore not be called today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JUNE 27 MIRACLE PROJECT

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I stand in the House today to say: I believe in miracles. We just had one in Windsor-Essex county. It's known as the June 27 Miracle. Organizers ask residents to help our 15 food banks with donations of non-perishable foods. More than 10,000 volunteers pitched in to help collect the donations. My wife, Gale, and I filled our Windsor-built Grand Caravan by collecting food just from our own neighbourhood. Together, during the June 27 Miracle, volunteers collected 20,020,500 pounds of food. That's 916,500 kilograms, or 916.5 metric tons. That's about three and a half times the world record for one-day donations. That's enough food to feed 30,000 families for a year.

1020

This comes, Speaker, during a global pandemic when thousands of people are out of work and when donating to charities is a challenge for many and an impossibility for some. Once again, the people in Windsor and Essex county have shown their generous spirit and their sense of looking after one another and demonstrated that we truly are all in this together. Congratulations to everyone in Leamington, Kingsville, Essex, Lakeshore, Amherstburg,

LaSalle, Tecumseh and Windsor for proving to the world that records are made to be broken and miracles do indeed happen.

ROBERTA BATTAGLIA

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: A month ago, a local 10-year-old singer, Roberta Battaglia, gave the performance of her life at America's Got Talent. She sang the song by Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper, the Oscar-winning theme song *Shallow*, appropriately enough from the movie *A Star is Born*. Another star was born that night when Sofia Vergara hit the golden buzzer, sending Roberta to the live semi-final show in Hollywood.

For now, though, Roberta says that the hardest part about COVID-19 has been staying away from her family and friends. So on June 28, we organized a surprise drive-by parade for her at the Mississauga Canoe Club in Port Credit. Over 100 cars and hundreds of people joined to salute Roberta. I want to thank my friends Carmela Liparoti and Frank Trevisan from the Mississauga Italian Canadian Benevolent Association for co-hosting the event and everyone for joining us, including the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, the Peel Regional Police, who led the parade, and the mayor.

When Roberta said she has been bullied in the past, Simon Cowell told her, "Bullies are always threatened by talented people." The way you beat them is to be "happy and successful."

I know all members of this House will join me in cheering for Roberta in Hollywood. I wish her happiness and success wherever she goes next.

NURSES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Nurses have been working at all hours of the day to battle COVID-19. They are truly heroes. But instead of spending their few free hours with loved ones, London nurses have had to protest this government's unfair Bill 124.

Last month, I attended a protest organized by Allison Mckeen and Rebecca Jesney, where London nurses told me loud and clear that they want action, not empty words from this government. They're tired of the previous Liberal government and how this current government is denying them a raise that keeps up with inflation. They have been waiting for more than 10 years, Speaker.

Allison and Rebecca wrote to me, stating, "Bill 124 has left nurses feeling disenfranchised, undervalued and underappreciated." Bill 124 "emphasizes the blatant pay inequity and gender inequality among public sectors. The future of

nursing depends on our profession being recognized as educated professionals, compensated as equals and treated fairly. Your Ontario nurses deserve better.” I couldn’t agree more.

Speaker, I join their call to repeal Bill 124, and I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with Ontario’s nurses in their fight for fair wages. It’s time for this government to step up and do the same.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Amy Fee: Over the past few months, we as Ontarians have faced an unprecedented challenge in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts of this virus have been wide-reaching and they have been felt by all Ontarians. But through all of this, we can point to bright spots as we see our communities coming together, businesses retooling to make PPE, front-line workers maintaining critical supply chains, and health care workers providing world-class care for those who need it most.

For me, one local constituent really stands out: veteran Jim McLean. He told me the story of his daughter Tina’s battle with COVID-19 while she was pregnant. It was a horrible situation that Jim, though, has used as motivation for good. He has put together a run across southern Ontario this week with his PTSD service dog, Lucky, and his wife, Kathy. They’re running together to raise funds for COVID research at the University of Guelph. Tina, who spent eight days on life support, and her son, Lynx, survived.

It is situations like this that really highlight what we as a community can do in times of hardship. Jim’s story has shaped my perspective on the pandemic and has drawn my attention to the good that can come from these challenging times as we all come together to do what we can do to defeat this virus.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Suze Morrison: Despite the temporary ban on eviction hearings in Ontario, landlords have been continuing to hand out eviction notices to their tenants. They’re getting in line so that they can toss their tenants out as soon as the province flips the switch and allows for eviction hearings to begin.

Last week, the province took the first steps to do just that. The court order temporarily halting evictions in Ontario was amended, and evictions can now resume across the province beginning in the month following the end of the state of emergency. If the Premier lifts the state of emergency in the coming weeks, COVID evictions could begin as early as August 1. But Speaker, folks who have lost their jobs and their income as a result of the pandemic are no more able to pay the months of back rent they owe than they are today.

The Conservative government has done absolutely nothing to protect tenants during this unprecedented emergency. Not only have they not provided any meaningful relief, like the rent subsidy program that the NDP has been calling for, but they’ve used the cover of COVID-19 to

fast-track an eviction bill that will make it easier and quicker for landlords to kick out their tenants.

Is it the Premier’s intention to preside over the largest mass eviction and tenant displacement in this province’s history, and where does he expect those tenants to go? So to the Premier: Will you withdraw Bill 184, stop COVID evictions and implement the rent subsidy program that, as the NDP, we have been calling for since the start of COVID-19? That is what tenants need to survive this emergency.

PUBLIC SPACE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to give a shout-out to the Downtown Guelph Business Association, Mayor Cam Guthrie, councillors and Guelph city staff for implementing a plan to close downtown streets so that restaurants can open to expand outdoor seating into a new dining district.

Downtown Guelph is coming back to life. People are making an extra effort to support local businesses. I’m excited to see friends and family socializing together safely, respecting physical distancing while socializing in the street. It is a reminder that streets are for people and community, not just for moving and storing cars.

As we emerge from the lockdown, going back to business as usual will not work. Let’s build back better. Let’s reimagine public space, making it people-centric instead of car-centric. Speaker, our kids need more space to play safely. People need more space to walk and ride safely. Businesses need more space to reopen safely. Instead of bulldozing the places we love to build more highways, let’s make our streets safe and accessible for everyone to live, work, play and shop local, supporting our local businesses in building stronger communities. I just want to say thank you to Guelph for taking the first step in making this happen.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. David Piccini: I rise today to thank my two local hospitals in Northumberland–Peterborough South: Northumberland Hills Hospital and Campbellford Memorial Hospital.

When I was first elected, I got a tour of both hospitals. One of the first issues both CEOs raised with me was the medium-sized hospital funding formula, which affected our medium-sized hospitals and also our small hospitals in rural Ontario.

You hope to never truly need a hospital, but in the case of emergencies, they’re there. They were there when encountering rugby accidents, soccer accidents for me, and, in the more serious case, they were there to support my mum when we got the very difficult news that she had cancer.

I’d like to thank the teams at both hospitals. These hospitals are the fabric that bind rural Ontario. The leadership—Linda Davis, CEO of NHH, and Varouj Eskedjian, CEO of Campbellford Memorial Hospital. I’d like to thank the board, the front-line health care professionals, the staff and the countless volunteers for the work

they did in advocating to truly address the historical underfunding of their hospitals. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that we've addressed those funding inequities.

1030

Last week, I was joined by Premier Ford and Minister Elliott to address that, and to announce a close to 20% increase in funding for NHH and close to 7% for Campbellford Memorial Hospital.

Again, I would like to thank the staff, the hard-working front-line workers, and all of the people in my community who support our hospitals.

BLACK JULY

Mr. Gurratan Singh: July 1983, also known as Black July, is a period of pain for Tamils in Canada and across the world. In the capital of a country that was supposed to keep them safe, voters lists were used to target Tamil people and burn them alive in the streets. Thousands were killed and thousands more were displaced. It was a clear sign from the Sri Lankan government that they didn't just want to suppress the Tamil people; they wanted to eliminate them.

Since Black July, we have seen a clear campaign of genocide carried out by the Sri Lankan government against the Tamil people. For years, Tamils were picked up in white vans and disappeared, murdered in secret. Even children were killed in the bombing of an orphanage in Chenocolai, and thousands were killed in the genocide of the Mullivaikkal massacre.

Even today, Tamils are still not safe, as they face a far more insidious form of structural violence that targets them politically, socially and culturally. Yet, despite all this despair, when I see the Tamil community in Canada, all I see is strength—a resilient community that stands tall and holds their heads high in spite of all this violence, that continues their pursuit of justice.

That's why I ask for all Canadians and all members of this House to stand and support the Tamil people and their pursuit for justice, so that together we may say: Let's never forget Black July. Vanakkam.

ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm so pleased to rise today to applaud the efforts of entrepreneurs in this province as they get back on track following the COVID shutdown. Ontario businesses sacrificed a lot when they closed their doors to bolster the fight against the deadly coronavirus. Tourism and hospitality sectors were devastated.

Currently, I'm serving on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and we have been hearing from many stakeholders whose livelihoods have been threatened by the pandemic. Despite the bleak outlook, many entrepreneurs see optimism and hope for the future. They know our government is committed to doing everything it can to help struggling businesses recover. Our

Premier is determined to reduce red tape, allowing businesses to function without needless government regulations.

Restaurateurs in my hometown of Hamilton took the lead on opening outdoor dining districts. Our government supported them by loosening regulations to permit alcohol to be served in public spaces. And our government issued an emergency order allowing municipalities to quickly pass temporary bylaws to create, extend and cover outdoor dining areas. The patio approval process has been reduced from weeks to days, and businesses are taking advantage of it. So far in Hamilton, almost 120 patio applications have been received, and almost all will be approved.

Entrepreneurs have taken up the challenge to find creative ways to conduct business in the face of this COVID crisis. Businesses are crucial to keeping and creating jobs, and I am proud to say that our Premier and our government have helped navigate through this economic storm.

LANDFILL

Mr. Will Bouma: Last week, our government introduced Bill 197, the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, a bill that is focused on strengthening communities and creating opportunity for people in every region of the province.

An important part of the proposed legislation, and one that's received a lot of support in my riding of Brantford—Brant was the municipal-say-in-landfill piece, which gives municipalities more say in the projects that are being proposed in their own communities. For decades, municipalities across Ontario had projects forced into their backyards, and they were often never even asked if they were willing to host such projects. Requiring municipal support in the landfill approval process is an important step in helping to ensure that the municipalities that are most directly impacted by the siting of a new, large landfill have a say on such an important matter.

There have been over 140 municipalities that have passed motions seeking legislation giving towns and cities the authority to approve the locations for new landfill sites, and I am proud to be part of a government that has listened to these communities across the province.

This proposal is a balanced approach that gives local municipalities more say in landfill approvals while providing more certainty for landfill applicants, and ensures sufficient landfill capacity in the province.

I want to thank the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for moving forward on this proposal and following through with another commitment in the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan.

QUESTION PERIOD

EDUCATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. Media reports today that the Premier will

be announcing plans for stage 3 reopening of some businesses today, but parents are still waiting for news that this government is committed to a full, five-day-a-week reopening of our schools and adequate child care spaces. Without a plan to fully reopen schools and child care centres, you don't have a plan to reopen the economy—at least, not for thousands of working women who rely on child care and schools to ensure that they can actually get to work.

Will the government be announcing those plans today?

Hon. Doug Ford: I can't comment on what our news conference is going to be about right now, but it's going to be an exciting news conference, like it is every single day, bringing people up to date on where we're going and showing them how our economy is moving forward, making sure that we keep the health and safety of not only families but students our number one concern, making sure that they go back, when they do go back, to a safe environment.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People can't go back to work unless their kids are back in school and back in child care.

While the Premier spent last week ignoring pleas from parents frustrated by the lack of plans for September, school boards across the province spent their last week scrambling to try to put a school year together and calling on the Premier to reverse his decision to send kids back to school part-time this fall.

In Toronto, the TDSB said the Conservatives' hybrid plan "places a tremendous burden on parents and caregivers—and, in particular, women, families with young children and low-income families, and stands to further jeopardize the economic recovery."

Will the Premier step up with a real plan so parents don't have to choose between their jobs and their kids?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through the best advice that we have from the chief medical officers right across this province, we decided to let each school board make a decision, and we gave them three different criteria that they can work with.

To support the school boards, we're making the largest investment in education in Ontario's history. It's \$25 billion—that's over \$730 million from last year. We're increasing student funding by over \$250. Every single school board will see an increase in funding that they haven't seen in many, many years.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There used to be a principle in the province of Ontario where no matter where a child lives, they would have access to quality public education that's pretty equal around the province. It sounds like the Premier is abandoning that theory.

In Ottawa, trustees have voted to send kids back five days a week after parents raised concerns that the Ford government's non-plan would only make things much, much worse. Parents said the scheme was unfair and kids said that "a Google meeting once a week" isn't an

education. Parents have said loud and clear that you cannot expect parents to work and be teachers.

So back to the Premier: Ontario's medical officers of health, school boards, parents, teachers, students and child care operators are all calling on this government to do better. Where is the plan to reopen schools and child care centres in our province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, Mr. Speaker, we must be speaking to two different groups. We usually are speaking to two different groups. I'm speaking to all the people of the province. I'm not too sure who the Leader of the Opposition is speaking to, but what I'm hearing from parents is that it's a good plan. What I'm hearing from school board trustees is, "Thank you for giving us the option, rather than forcing options down our back."

Every jurisdiction is a little different, and what applies up in Kenora doesn't necessarily apply in Hamilton or in Toronto. We're giving them the flexibility to make a plan and work with the school boards, making sure they work with the parents and community organizations. We're going to move forward in September and keep the kids safe. That's our number one priority.

1040

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier, but I have to say that even employers are very, very worried about this government's lack of a plan and lack of funding for getting schools back up and running for our kids.

Last week, the Premier unveiled a 150-page omnibus bill and claimed it was actually a response to COVID-19. The bill will do a great deal for developers who donate to the PC Party, but it doesn't do anything for families waiting for child care. It isn't a plan to reopen the schools or help municipalities that are struggling with cuts. Most shockingly, it fails to even mention—it doesn't even mention once—long-term care.

The Premier has often said that long-term care is an urgent priority. Why has it fallen off the priority list all of a sudden?

Hon. Doug Ford: I'm a little shocked because this is the first time the Leader of the Opposition has even cared about employers or small businesses. They vote against every single bill that we put forward for small businesses, making sure that they stay afloat. I'm just a little concerned about that, Mr. Speaker.

We have a great plan. Endless small businesses, medium and large businesses I talk to, there's one word I get, and that's "thank you": Thank you for working with us. Thank you for moving the province forward, and thank you for not being like the US, opening it right up—as you saw in Florida, 15,000 cases.

We're going to make sure we're responsible and thoughtful when we reopen.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I see, Speaker, that the Premier decided to dodge the long-term-care piece of that question, so I'm going to continue in that vein.

The Premier spent weeks claiming that urgent changes are needed in long-term care. That's what he claimed. Yet last week he tabled a 150-page bill in this Legislature and he didn't table a single change in long-term care within that bill.

For years, families and front-line workers have proposed, for example, a minimum standard of four hours of long-term care for every resident. It's a simple measure that would help ensure that residents are actually getting the attention they need and deserve. Why was that not in the bill?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I find it so rich, so ironic, hearing this from the Leader of the Opposition and the previous government. They did absolutely nothing. They opened up a little over 600 long-term care beds over—what was it?—a 15-year period.

When it comes to air conditioning, Mr. Speaker, you know something? The Leader of the Opposition has been down here since 2009, 11 years—not one single word about air conditioning.

You know something? Granted, there are all sorts of things we think of and certain things we didn't think of, and I want to thank the reporter from CBC for bringing it to our attention because now we don't have to worry about moving forward as we invest into air conditioning, not just in common areas but in each individual room. Just imagine sitting there sweltering, and they sat around for 11 years doing absolutely nothing—zip, zero, zilch, nothing.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the Premier will need to correct his record because I've been here since 2004. In 2006, I was advocating for air conditioning in long-term care. In 2007, I raised it right here in the Legislature, advocating for air conditioning in long-term care. Speaker, the Premier needs to do his homework, unfortunately, again.

Last week, he feigned absolute outrage at the lack of air conditioning in long-term-care homes. Over a decade ago, in hearings on the Long-Term Care Homes Act, seniors demanded that air conditioning in all long-term-care facilities be made the law. I told the Premier last week that we could pass that legislation immediately. We could still do that today, setting that standard.

The Premier found space to make sure that his well-connected developers could get quick approval for their projects in that omnibus bill last week, but seniors in long-term care saw zilch, zip, nothing from the Premier. Why?

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, you know something? I stand to be corrected. I apologize. It wasn't that the Leader of the Opposition did nothing for 11 years; she did nothing for 16 years, so I apologize for that. I'm pretty good at math, too, but I should have figured that out.

What we did do, Mr. Speaker, is put \$243 million into long-term care immediately. We're going to put more money into long-term care than this province has ever seen—ever. We're going to build more homes, more beds, than this province has ever seen. There's one thing to face

a crisis, Mr. Speaker; there's another thing to act on a crisis, and our government is acting on a crisis.

COVID-19

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. This weekend, I had a chance to visit the Windsor-Essex region and hear directly from people about the challenges that they've been facing during this pandemic. While the Premier has been claiming that he put an all-hands-on-deck approach to help the region when it comes to COVID-19 outbreaks amongst migrant workers in the region, late last week the local mayors were very clear, Speaker: Efforts are uncoordinated and chaotic, they said. The Premier says that he has put that all-hands-on-deck approach in place; how come the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing?

Hon. Doug Ford: Without naming names about the mayors—they're great mayors down there and in constant communication. One mayor told me that they don't even have time for the NDP because they haven't done anything—nothing, zero. They don't even want to visit them. So what does that say?

But I do look forward to going down there Thursday, Mr. Speaker, meeting the farmers, meeting the workers, meeting the small business owners right across Kingsville and Leamington. Again, I have a phenomenal relationship with both mayors down there. We'll have more comments when I come back from the little tour we're having of Leamington on Thursday. Hopefully I'll get a few pounds cut off the top of my hair here.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, talk is cheap. In other provinces, provincial governments have shown leadership to get outbreaks on farms under control and prevent them from actually happening in the first place. But in Ontario, we've seen local governments left scrambling to fill the gaps, and a complete lack of coordination, because this Premier and his team did not step up to the challenge.

As of Monday, 19 of over 170 farms in the Windsor-Essex area have completed the on-site testing, and the Premier seems more interested in blaming migrant workers—wrongfully claiming that they're avoiding tests—than in actually solving the problems. When will the Premier get his act into gear and show some leadership on this issue?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that this is a great opportunity to thank all of the people in Ontario—14.5 million people—that have come together every single day to work to defeat COVID-19. We've got a long way to go obviously, but with everyone working together, we're going to get there.

When it comes to Kingsville and Leamington, we just have to thank all of those small businesses. Thankfully, because they've worked together, they've now moved to

stage 2. And, Mr. Speaker, we can't forget the great news that the people of Ontario heard. Obviously we have a long way to go, but 378,000 jobs were created in Ontario in the month of June. That's good news for Kingsville and Leamington. That's good news for every person in the province of Ontario.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: My question is for the Premier. At the beginning of the global pandemic, every jurisdiction in the world was left scrambling for critical PPE and health supplies. Canada was in a desperate struggle to import supplies we needed from China, the US and other countries. Back in April, Premier, you said that this province would never be left in this situation again. We would never be left at the mercy of other countries and other leaders for health equipment or any other supplies because Ontario is a manufacturing powerhouse.

Having worked at Ford Motor Co. of Canada for 31 years, I got involved in politics because of what was done to the manufacturing sector in Ontario. Speaker, can the Premier share about the success of Ontario's manufacturing turnaround?

Hon. Doug Ford: I thank the great member from Mississauga–Lakeshore for the question. Yes, I did say that. Yes, we're in that position now, Mr. Speaker. Just shortly, probably about three months—a little over three months—since we called the manufacturers of Ontario to come together and support the people of Ontario, that's exactly what they did. They stepped up. Before, we didn't have one manufacturer of masks; now we have 23 companies bidding on surgical masks and we have numerous companies bidding on the N95 masks. We have produced and procured over 26 million gowns, 175 million surgical gloves, 123 million masks, four million face shields and over 10,000 ventilators. That's all in less than three months.

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It's an amazing story. It's not the government's story; it's the people's story. It's about the great manufacturers here in Ontario. We can build anything here in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: My question is back to the Premier. Our manufacturing sector generates \$300 billion alone and over 80% of export worldwide. We are a titan of industry, and I know that every Ontarian is proud of our great business.

Last Friday, job numbers brought some great news for our constituents and the people of the province: 378,000 jobs were added to Ontario's economy in June. That's 378,000 more people back at work, and a paycheque at home. We saw 66,000 more jobs in manufacturing and 34,000 more jobs in construction, as we recover from the worst economic downturn in our lifetime, as we fight to get every Ontarian back to their feet. Now more than ever, we need to support Ontario business and manufacturers.

Speaker, can the Premier share with the Legislature what our government is doing to promote Ontario's businesses and Ontario manufacturers once again?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member. Last Friday, with CME, we put forward an initiative that recognized the made-in-Ontario, made-in-Canada campaign. We're moving forward.

It's great, Mr. Speaker, to hear that 378,000 people are back to work, but we have a long way to go as a province to get everyone back to work. But I've always said, we're a manufacturing might here in North America. We do \$390 billion a year in two-way trade with the US and Canada as a whole. We're their number one customer in the world. We buy more than China, Japan and UK combined—absolutely, combined. And when we put our minds to it, there's nothing, nothing in this world, we can't manufacture right here in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. The infections of COVID-19 in Essex county and Chatham-Kent–Leamington are nothing less than alarming. Hundreds of migrant workers have fallen ill, and tragically, we have had several fatalities. Our collective sympathies go to the families of those workers and the loved ones of those workers.

But instead of ramping up testing to get the infections under control in our community, the mobile testing for farm workers has been handed over to a private company with an interesting connection to the PC Party. It's none other than the former executive director of the PC caucus, Jeff Silverstein, a long-time political ally.

Why is the Premier so willing to contract out vital health services to friends of PC Party insiders?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. But I can assure you that there has been rapidly expanded testing, and coordinated testing being done, in the Windsor-Essex area with the federal government, with the provincial government and with the local governments, with the mayors, with the public health units. It expanded very rapidly.

For those workers who were found to have COVID, they were congregated together in a place that was safe for them, and they were being visited by health professionals, nurses or nurse practitioners before they were able to go to work, if they were asymptomatic. If they were symptomatic, of course, they received the necessary medical attention.

Far from ignoring the situation, we have actually gathered together. We've put all of our forces together, worked together to make sure that everybody can be protected, and that is every single migrant worker in the entire area.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks to the Minister of Health, but that is not the message that's coming out of our community, based on the press conference by regional leadership, municipal leadership and public health officials.

Ontarians deserve to know if this contract was sole-sourced and how much it's worth, and they deserve to know how much the Premier's former executive director of caucus, the one who helped him launch the fake news platform Ontario News Now, was involved. Public servants with years of training in public health could have easily done this work, but the Premier puts ideology ahead of the public, even during this pandemic. This testing was needed months ago, and the Premier only took action when an insider showed up to get a slice of the pie.

Why did the Premier contract out vital testing of the agriculture sector, and will he table all relevant information about the contract today?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The Premier is putting the health of every person in Ontario front and centre. That's what's most important. That's what he has dedicated his resources to, what we are dedicating our resources to. We've got the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs working together to contain this, sending in the teams, opening up assessment centres, having mobile testing—whatever is going to fit well with the operations that are going on there, because we know they're active farm operations.

We want to make sure they can continue their work, so we are working with the farm owners to make sure that we can get in and make sure that all of the workers are tested. That's important for their health and safety. If they're asymptomatic and positive, then they will be contained in a separate area. They will not go back to work until they have been assessed by a medical assessor. And if they are symptomatic and need help, we are sending in the public health units to make sure that they get the care they need.

We want to make sure that the entire area is free of COVID as soon as possible in the near future, for everyone's health and safety. That is what we're working toward, that's what the Premier is diligently working toward and that's what—

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

The next question.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The Nancy Island Historic Site in Wasaga Beach is closed this season after having suffered extensive damage due to flooding, but the government has also shut the visitor information centre.

This facility is not on the island. It's on dry land, on the mainland, adjacent to Nancy Island. The centre is not exclusively under the jurisdiction of the provincial government, as the minister knows. It's a partnership between Ontario Parks, the town of Wasaga Beach, South Georgian

Bay Tourism and the Wasaga Beach Chamber of Commerce, and it is staffed by the Friends of Nancy Island, the charitable organization dedicated to furthering educational and interpretive programs.

On behalf of these hard-working and dedicated volunteers, I ask the minister: Will the government reconsider its unilateral decision to shut down the Nancy Island visitor information centre?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks for the question from the member opposite. Just to put it out there, the safety of all visitors, of all Ontarians, is first and foremost on our minds as we are reopening the parks throughout the province. It's the top priority.

We will continue to work slowly at reopening all our additional facilities throughout the province and assess our approach to ensure that adjustments are made at the service to ensure that people are remaining safe. It's going to be based, of course, on the health advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

The Wasaga Beach Welcome Centre, as was mentioned, did not open for 2020 because of COVID-19. But I can assure the member opposite that my ministry is going to be working with stakeholders, the Friends of Nancy Island and Wasaga Beach town to find out a solution for us so we can continue to provide a safe area for folks who are coming to that area and ensure that information services are available for tourists and people visiting.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: I hate taking yes for an answer; thank you very much for that answer. As soon as it is safe to do so, please open it. Obviously, it's important to our businesses. Like the rest of the province, they've been hit pretty hard. Wasaga Beach is 100% dependent on tourism.

On that front, I want to thank Minister of Tourism for coming to the north end of my riding a couple of weeks ago. That was a great boost to the tourism industry there. And I want to thank the Minister of Parks for opening up, finally—after eight years under the Liberal government, of fighting with them to open them up—the bathrooms at New Wasaga Beach and Allenwood Beach. You got us new bathrooms with flush toilets and running water, and they closed down the old privy.

Congratulations to the government for being on the bathroom watch. That was fantastic work on behalf of the people of Wasaga Beach.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: To the Legislature: I can say that the member opposite has been such a stalwart champion for the people of his area since 1990. We're proud that he still maintains part of this Legislature.

But let me tell you, Mr. Speaker: We will continue the Ontario Parks' gradual reopen, always taking consistency, the safety of the folks in this province as we open up. I'll just let the member opposite know that Wasaga Beach and area is a prime priority for this province, to ensure that we're able to support them and their town as they reopen due to COVID-19. Whatever Ontario Parks can do to ensure their support as they bring in more tourists—we

will there to support that community and ensure that they are growing and back from COVID-19. I thank the member opposite for that question.

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ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is to the Minister of Education. I know full well, watching closely the issues at the Peel District School Board, that within Ontario's education, there are serious equity issues. That's why I was proud to see our government take action last week and announce bold new changes to the education system that will help break down barriers for Black, Indigenous and racialized students. Can the minister please tell this House what changes our government is making that will provide all students with an equal opportunity to succeed?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member for Mississauga-East-Cooksville for his advocacy in this respect.

Speaker, we believe that every student, irrespective of the colour of skin, their faith, heritage, their income or sexual orientation—each and every one of them deserves every opportunity to succeed in this province. The transformational change we're driving forward will embolden a generation of students to unleash their full potential and dismantle the systemic barriers that have held them back for a generation.

Following a year of consultations, our entire caucus, supported by the parliamentary assistant, has been listening to parents who have asked us for action and who felt ignored for too long. That's why we're taking action in the areas of suspension, in destreaming and in professional standards and expectations.

In addition, we are ensuring that, to provide a discrimination-free classroom, the government will be strengthening sanctions for behavioural remarks of a racist nature by an educator by working with the Ontario College of Teachers.

We'll also be expanding training: mandatory training for education staff and for all elected trustees and senior school board staff in this province to ensure that they are better positioned to support in the areas of human rights, anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

Speaker, we know there is more to do. We're committed to doing so to get this right for our kids.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the minister for the answer. I'm glad to hear that our government takes these issues seriously and is taking decisive action to stamp out systemic racism in our schools.

Students deserve an equal opportunity to succeed. To drive this change, I know that we need to support school boards so that they can take on this important work. Can the minister please tell this House how our government is financially supporting boards to get this important work done?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you again to the member for the question. Speaker, through the Grants for Student Needs we've allocated over \$40 million to help school boards implement suspension policies in the province, including for the hiring of professional staff and implementation programs to help those educators avoid out-of-school suspensions.

Moreover, Speaker, we've dedicated \$1 million of the additional ancillary \$10-million investment in mental health specifically for mental health supports for racialized kids. That's in addition to the historic doubling of mental health supports led by this Progressive Conservative government.

In addition, we're providing \$3.5 million for the Black and Indigenous grad program. This provides wraparound supports for students at risk, to help them graduate in the province of Ontario.

Through these measures, we believe that these key investments will ensure a better, more equal outcome of education and will truly unlock the potential of every child in this province.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms. Jill Andrew: The question is to the Premier. The majority of COVID-19 cases have been women. According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, located in my riding, 90% of nurses are women. Many are Black and racialized. Your "health care heroes" are underpaid, overworked and haven't seen a dime of their pandemic pay. Some 80% of lone-parent households are women-led and predominantly single-income. Women are largely represented in retail and, as we know, local businesses, both of which were shuttered due to the pandemic and due to the government's lack of an initial plan with rent relief or even an emergency basic income—nothing came.

Speaker, my question is: Women and other vulnerable Ontarians have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. What is this government's plan to ensure that they're not left behind during our recovery?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The associate minister with responsibility for children and women's issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that valuable question. We know that when women succeed in society, our economy succeeds. We know that women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, both at home and in the workplace.

The labour force data shows that more women have lost their jobs and had hours cut. I, alongside my colleagues, like the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, the Minister of Education and the member from Willowdale, have been meeting with partners from different sectors to get their feedback on what our government can do to better support women. This round table brought together women from across our province to provide feedback on how we can better support women's economic participation, as well as identify ways to generate savings, stimulate economic growth, create jobs and make life more affordable.

Many jobs in the fields that we looked at are skilled, high-paying, and they offer opportunities for long-term security. We need to work together to make sure that women and girls are aware of the opportunities of the different sectors so that we can help them succeed.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Premier, Patricia is a PSW in our riding who contracted COVID-19; she's one of the 6,181 health care workers who did. Patricia often worked alone on her floor with 24 residents, many of whom died. Her mental health is waning. Patricia said she believes this government didn't prioritize her or many PSWs because they are primarily racialized and women.

Speaker, Ontario's COVID-19 recovery must include economic security for women. Too many women, from the arts to health care, are cobbling together to make ends meet. Our economic recovery must include healthy and safe workplaces for women. It must include child care options for families so women can actually get back to work with peace of mind.

My question is: Last year, I tabled a motion asking this government to adopt an intersectional gender equity strategy which would see all bills, motions, budgets and regulations introduced. Will this government adopt my motion today to ensure that Ontario's COVID-19 recovery plan is fully accountable to women and underserved communities?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for the question. Women's earnings are crucial to the well-being and financial stability of their families, which is why we need to have broader conversations about child care in this province. We know that access to high-quality child care is a key lever to supporting women's labour force participation, getting more women to work full-time and helping women to transition into better jobs.

The Minister of Education and I have been working hard on this issue together. He and I were able to host a joint round table focused on the impact of child care on women's economic participation. We spoke with women and sector leaders on what our government can do to better support women with families and children in this province.

As our government continues to push forward policies that make Ontario open for business and open for jobs during the recovery, we are working hard to make sure we are promoting women and other minorities.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the minister responsible for anti-racism. Minister, your government has agreed that systemic racism exists and has expressed a commitment to ending it. However, this government has been completely silent on how racialized Ontarians have taken the hardest hit, statistically, to their finances during this pandemic.

As the minister knows, having the responsibility for the Anti-Racism Directorate means working with other ministries to apply a race-based lens to government policy.

Some communities in Ontario have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 when compared to others. So, Minister, can you please tell this House if you've done an initial assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on racialized communities, and if so, have you reached out and connected with these groups? And finally, have you started to work with other ministries, especially the minister responsible for the economic recovery, on a government response?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the question. I don't think that there's any doubt that many, many parts of our society have been impacted greatly by the COVID-19 pandemic, but I can assure you that the Anti-Racism Directorate and my ministry have been working constantly since I was appointed with other ministries. We understand that this is not an Anti-Racism Directorate responsibility; it's not a Solicitor General responsibility; it is a government-wide, society responsibility.

To that point, I will share a few examples of how the ARD's recent work has included mediated partnerships between the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion to support Black youth in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. It shows that when the Anti-Racism Directorate does their job well, we get excellent results in our communities. We will continue to do that, and I'm proud, frankly, of the work that they've been doing.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: I think the minister has completely missed the mark on this question. My question was to ask if she has an understanding that the Anti-Racism Directorate's true intention was to use a race-based lens to establish an understanding of who is hit the hardest during the COVID-19 challenges that we have.

There was a poll done last week commissioned by the TD Bank that determined that Canadians surveyed between 18 and 34 have experienced or foresee experiencing unemployment and reduced hours as a result of the pandemic when compared to 38% of people above 55. More specifically, roughly 70% of Filipino, 65% of South Asian and 64% of Black Canadians expect to face unemployment or reduced hours over the next few months because of COVID-19, compared to just 50% of the general population.

So, back to the minister: Minister, can you share with this House—and be specific; this is about the economic recovery during COVID-19—what your plan is to mitigate some of these disparities affecting the hardest-hit communities, racialized communities here in Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The only person who has missed the mark is the member opposite asking the question. We have made a very measured approach to ensure that, as we return back to opening up our economy, opening up our communities, we make sure we do it in a measured and safe way.

Mr. Michael Coteau: One example.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite would like some specific examples. I am happy to share them:

—supported Toronto District School Board and Children’s Aid Society of Toronto to address anti-Black racism in their respective organizations; and

—supported Durham District School Board with developing anti-Black racism training for their kindergarten teachers;

—developing a cutting-edge applied learning program to equip members of the OPS, Ontario public service, with the anti-racism knowledge, skills and tools needed to build a public service that is more inclusive, equitable and responsive.

Again I reiterate: I am proud of the work that the Anti-Racism Directorate continues to do across all ministries, including the economic ministries.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Associate Minister of Transportation. Last week, I was delighted to see that as part of Bill 197, the government is proposing new measures to enable transit-oriented communities at new subway stations.

This builds on the historic transit partnership agreement that the province recently signed with York region as a positive next step towards shovels in the ground for the long-anticipated Yonge North subway extension into Richmond Hill. My riding in Richmond Hill is very happy, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that Richmond Hill is happy to see that so much progress on this file has been made during the pandemic.

Can the minister tell us more about what the government’s TOC program is and how it will benefit existing and new residents of Richmond Hill, along with other communities?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I want to thank the member from Richmond Hill for her unwavering support for transit expansion in Richmond Hill. You have done a wonderful job representing your constituents.

As she mentioned, we have been quite busy on the transit file despite COVID-19, and I was so happy that we were able to sign our landmark transit partnership agreement with York region to build the Yonge North subway extension, plus a memorandum of understanding for transit-oriented communities. These agreements outline roles, responsibilities and shared priorities when it comes to building this critical subway infrastructure.

Transit-oriented communities offer us a chance to build stations better. Instead of building new stations in isolation, we intend to build complete mixed-use communities that are physically integrated into transit stations. The transit-oriented communities program will provide a mix of housing, including affordable housing, plus daycares, recreational spaces, services and other amenities that residents so desperately need.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much, Minister. It is really very encouraging to see that this government is serious about challenging the status quo and building subways, which we have been waiting for for a long time, while delivering enhancements to the local community. There is no question that building a complete community while we’re building a transit station is just common sense. This practice is being done elsewhere in the world and elsewhere in Canada with success.

However, previous provincial governments in Ontario have lacked this integrated approach and have missed opportunities to deliver benefits for residents. Can the minister please tell the House what the government is proposing to do to ensure that TOCs become a reality in Richmond Hill and across networks in the new subway stations?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I share the member’s frustration that previous provincial governments have missed opportunities to maximize the benefits from transit expansion and that we have fallen behind other jurisdictions. For months, we have been consulting with experts like planners, housing advocates, job creators and city builders. They have consistently pointed to three barriers from realizing transit-oriented communities: land assembly taking far too long, planning and zoning processes are highly uncertain, and the province lacking the ability and flexibility to enter into commercial arrangements with the private sector.

However, that is all changing with Bill 197. If passed, it will address these barriers responsibly while still respecting the rights of property owners and working collaboratively with our municipal partners and stakeholders. We will get the region moving again, reduce congestion, strengthen our communities and drive economic recovery from COVID-19.

COVID-19

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. For weeks, constituents in my riding of Hamilton Mountain have been calling my office to tell me that they are waiting for delayed COVID-19 test results. Despite the Minister of Health’s claim that test results arrive in 48 hours, people in my community are waiting a week or longer for those results. Some still don’t have the results after 13 days.

These delays are making it very difficult for Ontarians to ensure their own health and safety. All these constituents want is confirmation that it is safe for them to interact with their loved ones or to know whether or not their health is in immediate jeopardy.

Why won’t this government fix their broken testing system so that these families can finally have some peace of mind?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, we have significantly enhanced our testing strategy since the outset of COVID-19. We are now able to regularly test over 20,000 people per day. We are building our capacity to 50,000, because

we know that with the upcoming flu season and a potential second wave coming, we will need to be able to do that.

That being said, we know that nothing is more important than the health and safety of the people of Ontario. There are enhancements that we need to continue to do. There are some circumstances where there are particular situations where we can't get the testing done within 24 hours or 48 hours. We're up to almost 80% of the testing being done in 48 hours, but we are continuing to work on that, because we know that people want to be able to return to work. They want to be able to be going out, if they have a negative result. So we're constantly working on that. That is something that we work on a daily basis, as we increase our testing capacity as well.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Increasing the testing capacity isn't doing anything if people cannot get the results within two weeks.

Again to the Premier: To make matters worse, those who want to visit their loved ones in long-term care or other congregate care settings need to receive a negative test result within 14 days of that visit. However, because of the delays, I've heard from many constituents who have missed their visitation appointments. These are people who have been unable to see their families for months. Now, due to this government's failure, they are missing visiting appointments that they have so been looking forward to, as you can imagine.

Speaker, this should have been fixed months ago. Words are not enough any longer. We need action. How much longer are Ontarians going to have to wait before this government finally gets around to doing their job and fixing the problems with our testing system?

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Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, since the outset of COVID-19, we were initially able to perform about 5,000 tests per day; we're now at over 20,000, and we're regularly testing over 20,000 people per day.

With that, of course the test results need to come back on a timely basis, and the vast majority of the cases do come back within 48 hours. There are some areas where there are particular circumstances which we would be happy to look into, but I must reiterate to people: If you feel that you need a COVID test, please go and get one. You will get the results back in a timely manner.

We'll look into this particular situation, but we have dramatically increased the testing capacity in Ontario, such that we have the highest level of testing across Canada, and we're going to continue to maintain that.

TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, our government has taken a proactive approach to support Ontario's \$75-billion suite of heritage, sport, tourism and culture sectors. One of the first

actions taken by the minister was the creation of 14 ministerial advisory panels with experts and professionals who understand their industries best. They have been meeting regularly to discuss sector-specific concerns and solutions.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's Hoteliers and Hospitality Panel has been working hard to support Ontario's hospitality industry. Whether it be through providing deputations to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs or providing advice to government, we know that our hotels play an incredibly important role to our business and visitor economy.

Can the minister please tell this House just how important hoteliers are to Ontario?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thank you in particular to the member for her interest in this area but also her understanding of the tourism sector and what has happened to it since COVID-19 hit.

The hotel and accommodation sector in Ontario was decimated. It generally is worth about \$8.5 billion in revenues across the province, but overnight, on the 12th of March, in the lead-up to the March break, that collapsed almost overnight, as I said. According to the Hotel Association of Canada, at that time, less than 10% occupancy was taking place across the province, contributing to over 250,000 job losses. In my city alone, in the city of Ottawa, we have over 100 hotels—50% of them shuttered, including the iconic Chateau Laurier. They employed over 6,000 people, yet 80% of them lost their employment during that time.

That's why I created the ministerial advisory committee on hotels and accommodation. Speaking with them earlier today, we're going to make sure, as we enter into phase 3, that they are consulted and that we continue to support them, but we don't expect recovery until 2022.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Minister, I know that your passion for supporting such a vital sector in our economy will serve all of us well as you continue to work with our hoteliers and experts in upcoming weeks. This will be particularly important as our province gradually reopens additional businesses and attractions. Safe accommodation will be top of mind for Ontarians travelling locally or visiting parts of the province for business and professional development.

As we look towards phase 3 coming to some of the communities in our province very soon, more of our economy is going to be showcased and able to thrive. Can the minister tell us how the next steps in Ontario's phased reopening strategy will benefit our hospitality sectors as well as sites that serve the business community?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: As a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, she would have heard well over 250 deputants coming from our sectors about the high impact that COVID-19 has had on them as a result of the public health crisis, the economic crisis, and then one I'm going to talk about: the social crisis we have been dealing with.

Abacus Data has just recently done a report that says that 61% of Canadians feel it's too risky to stay in a hotel. At a time when 40% of visitor spending happens during these months, that's stark news for us in the tourism sector. That's why our ministry has invested \$13 million in hyperlocal tourism marketing to support hotels and resorts across the province as well as local communities. That's why I have visited, and led by example—and I'm asking all members of this assembly to do the same—Gananoque and had the opportunity to stay at the Holiday Inn Express. I visited Bracebridge to stay at Deerhurst Resort. I visited Windsor to stay at the Best Western.

I'm asking all members of this assembly to lead by example, tour our communities across this great province, and let the tourism industry, including our hoteliers, know how much we value them in each of—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Next, we have the member for Waterloo.

ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, at the beginning of the pandemic, you could forgive the government for policies that needed tweaking and changes and clarification; it was an unprecedented time. However, it has been months now, and businesses continue to struggle just to survive in this province.

In Waterloo, family-owned virtual reality business Ctrl V is on the brink. They've had no revenue stream for four months, plus a lack of clarity around reopening—which doesn't instill confidence. They're \$60,000 in debt and trying to stay viable for their 14 employees.

Despite the evictions ban, their landlord won't participate in the CECRA, just like the other 40% of landlords in Ontario. CECRA is failing. Businesses need a commercial rent subsidy, full stop. We've heard this from multiple businesses at the finance committee.

Speaker, is this government willing to let thousands of businesses like Ctrl V go out of business, or will they provide them with the direct financial support they deserve? They supported us; we need to support them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member for that important question. I know that she'll be tuned in to watch the press conference today for the very exciting news, because the ability for businesses to be open is what they want.

To support the health needs, to support beating COVID-19, our businesses and our communities have needed to take the steps that our health professionals require. That's why we provided \$17 billion of support, including extensive tax deferrals, including support for business, including support for individuals.

The commercial rent program run by the federal government now has over 20,000 tenants, representing over 100,000 employees who work with those tenants. It continues to grow and continues to have momentum. So yes, this government will stand with small business, as it has already. The most important element of that is going to be

the reopening of our economy in a safe and sustainable way.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: You know, this government has deferred debt—that's what this government has done—which means that the businesses will go out of business a little later.

Ctrl V has worked really hard to advocate for improved programs. They have actually received nothing from this government. When they return, they're only going to be generating 25% of their revenue. They're \$60,000 in debt. They're a small franchise with a few locations in the GTA and Alberta; three of them in Ontario have already closed.

To add insult to injury, whenever they have inquired about reopening their other locations, they have received mixed messages. In one jurisdiction, they were classified as a water park/casino. In another one, they were classified as a movie theatre.

At the very least, businesses deserve clarity about when they can and cannot open. Are there public health thresholds that need to be met? If so, businesses ought to know, and they need support to get there.

If these businesses fail, we will not recover in our economy. The number one ask that we have heard, from finance committee, is a direct commercial rent subsidy, just like our Save Main Street plan. When will this government step up and fight for these businesses?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Over \$1 billion with our federal partners, to support rent for small businesses; Mr. Speaker, \$10 billion of supports. The member can call them deferrals; she voted for them, in terms of support. Support: \$300 of support for electricity for your average small business.

Mr. Speaker, I take exception with—this member is saying that some businesses, like water parks and amusement parks and even casinos, should have been opened prior to now. That's not the best advice we've received from our health professionals. We will continue to open Ontario in a safe and deliberate way. I advise that member and the rest of the members of the Legislature to tune in for the Premier's press conference. We will not put the safety of Ontarians behind what is right for the overall economy.

What we are supporting is a sustainable reopening. Surely she has seen what's happened in the United States when those kinds of facilities were opened too soon. Surely, Mr. Speaker, she'll support the Premier today and the announcement that will be coming later in the day.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The next question.

SPORT FISHING

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. My riding of Barrie-Innisfil is home, yes, to the Innisfil Summerfest Kids Fishing Derby, where many children go fishing with the

South Simcoe Police Service and their families. But as families look to connect with the outdoors and of course with beautiful Lake Simcoe in Barrie–Innisfil, they look for ways they can do it affordably.

1130

I wanted to ask the minister: As people are really angling to get outdoors, what is he doing to connect more people with nature?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the great member for Barrie–Innisfil for her question. She's right: Everyone has been affected by COVID-19 here in the province of Ontario, and all across the world, indeed. Isolation has been a real problem for everybody, but particularly those who live in an urban environment where they don't have the great outdoors at their beck and call and in their back 40, as they say.

So we've done something this year that we haven't done in the past, and that is, in addition to the free fishing on Family Day weekend, Mother's Day weekend and Father's Day weekend, and a free fishing week the first full week of July, we've made it two full weeks in July: free fishing all across Ontario, licence-free to anyone from Canada. Fish all across the province of Ontario without a fishing licence, without an outdoors card, to enjoy this great family activity. What better way to get together with your family than to get out in the great outdoors, where you're safer to begin with? It's a low-risk activity, and we've extended it for a week this year, Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you to the Minister of Natural Resources for getting more people hooked on fishing. It's truly incredible to see.

I think of Simcoe Tackle in Barrie–Innisfil. I just visited them this weekend. Stephano and Jesi just opened their angling store back in February. Really, they show that fishing is a big contributor to our economy. In fact, it's really part of Ontario's heritage and its culture, contributing over \$230 million a year to our local economy. I think of marinas in my riding, whether it's Sandy Cove marina or Cooks Bay Marina, Monto-Reno Marina, Lefroy Harbour or Big Bay Point: They're all benefitting from these types of stimulus that the minister was talking about.

I wanted him to talk more about how fishing is going to impact jobs and really strengthen our communities across this province.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I thank the member again for the question. As usual, she is absolutely correct: The impact that fishing has on so many people in so many ways quite frankly is countless all across this province—again, all across the world. It has a \$230-million impact on her local economy. In Ontario it has a \$1.6-billion impact annually and it is particularly felt in rural and northern communities.

A way of life—absolutely. Fishing has been around as long as we've been around. It's even referred to in the Bible. Fishing has been around as long as we have walked the face of the Earth. It's a tremendous cultural activity.

It's a way of life and it's something that we want to ensure that we encourage here in the province of Ontario.

And what better way, as I say, to spend time with your family but also to support those vital businesses that have been impacted? The tourism minister knows that people in the tourism business have been affected as much as anybody by this pandemic. It's a good way to support those vital businesses as well.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, Katie Tulloch is a teacher from St. Catharines. Her son is starting JK at Lockview Public School in the fall. The shortage of child care and the uncertainty about the school year is creating significant stress for Katie, whose partner also works full time as a nurse on the front lines of this pandemic. They are unable to be admitted to the before- and after-school care at Lockview because it is full. The uncertainty about September is creating higher demand for child care in the Niagara region. They have no other options.

Speaker, both parents are deemed essential workers and pivotal in the fight against COVID-19 and getting Ontario back up and running for September. How does this government expect students to be able to return to school if even our most essential workers cannot find child care?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. The commitment of the government is to ensure that as our economy recovers we are able to care for our children. We understand the relationship between a strong child care system and the economic recovery of our province. It's why, in very short order, we'll be taking action to expand child care capacity to ensure more parents can return to work with confidence that their child is safe.

Our default and our guiding light is safety. It is safety in schools; it's safety in child care centres. With respect to schools, we've been clear that we will be prepared for three scenarios, but the preference of government continues to be a conventional model.

We are so grateful to the people of Ontario for adhering to public health advice. It allows us to place greater emphasis on that conventional day-to-day model. We know it will be important for parents to return to work in September.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Again, to the Premier: When Niagara opened to stage 2, Sarah, a single mother and a constituent of mine, reached out to me because she needed child care to return to work full time, but she couldn't find anything. By the time she found child care, two weeks later, her employer told her that they had filled the full-time position, and now she has to go down to part time.

Speaker, we know that this pandemic is hitting women in a particular way, and this government is only going to make things worse. It is not fair that a full-time working single mother has to choose between her job and secure

child care. How will this government prevent women like Sarah from being disproportionately hit by this pandemic when it is quite clear there is not enough child care available?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, what wouldn't have been fair to working parents is if their fees were increased or their spaces were removed. What we did is take action with an emergency order, and now by regulation, to deny operators that ability, to ensure consumer protection for working parents.

A precondition of provincial funding, the enhanced operating supports we're providing to our child care operators, is that they must not increase fees on working people. Likewise, they must not remove those spaces from parents in the province.

Speaker, we understand that relationship for parents in the province, that they're able to return to work. It's why we will be expanding child care capacity in the province, working in alignment with Public Health and Dr. Williams, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, because the people of this province have done great work in reducing that risk and, as a consequence, we'll be taking action to align child care with the stage 3 reopening.

We believe, Speaker, it's important that we support parents, we keep their kids safe and we ensure that our operators and our child care centres remain sustainable for decades to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes question period for this morning.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 83, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 167, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

The bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I would ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1208.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote was held on government notice of motion number 83, relating to allocation of time on Bill 167, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 60; the nays are 16.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I beg leave to present the first interim report, Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020, of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Sandhu presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: The committee is pleased to present its first interim report on the Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020, and the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on certain sectors of the economy. This report addresses the first part of the committee's mandate, which is to consider the Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020, together with letters filed by party leaders and independent members containing recommendations relating to the act.

In accordance with the committee's terms of reference, the Minister of Finance appeared as the committee's first witness on June 1, 2020. Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer also made a presentation and answered questions. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank them for speaking to us.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the committee, the Clerk of the Committee and the committee staff for their commitment, hard work and co-operation.

Report presented.

PETITIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Jessica Bell: This petition is called, "Support the Green New Democratic Deal.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas" the Premier "is being socially and environmentally irresponsible by ignoring our climate emergency and cutting funding to address the climate crisis;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the government of Ontario to implement the Green New Democratic Deal to:

"—achieve net zero emissions by 2050, starting by cutting emissions 50% by 2030;

"—create more than a million new jobs;

"—add billions of dollars to Ontario's economy;

"—embark on the largest building retrofit program in the world by providing homeowners with rebates, interest-free loans and support to retrofit their homes to realize net zero emissions."

I support this petition, I'll be affixing my signature to it and giving it to the usher.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

Mr. Mike Harris: I have a petition here entitled, "Proposed Changes to Justices of the Peace Act Petition."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario remains committed to pressing forward towards a more accessible, responsive and resilient justice system; and

"Whereas the current process to appoint justices of the peace is outdated and slow. This has created obstacles to filling vacancies, resulting in delays for people wanting their day in court; and

"Whereas there is a need for greater transparency and the promotion of more diversity throughout the recruitment and appointment process; and

"Whereas maintaining the integrity of Ontario's appointment process for justices of the peace is vital to the administration of a strong justice system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows, so that:

"(1) The act is amended with respect to the composition and processes of the Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee;

"(2) The composition of the committee is changed to be leaner and more efficient while continuing to ensure local voices are present. The importance of committees representing the diversity of the communities they serve shall be recognized;

"(3) The committee may hold its meetings and conduct interviews in person or through electronic means, including telephone conferencing and video conferencing."

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition is entitled "Proposed Changes to Justices of the Peace Act Petition."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario remains committed to pressing forward towards a more accessible, responsive and resilient justice system; and

"Whereas the current process to appoint justices of the peace is outdated and slow. This has created obstacles to filling vacancies, resulting in delays for people wanting their day in court; and

"Whereas there is a need for greater transparency and the promotion of more diversity throughout the recruitment and appointment process; and

"Whereas maintaining the integrity of Ontario's appointment process for justices of the peace is vital to the administration of a strong justice system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows, so that:

"(1) The act is amended with respect to the composition and processes of the Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee;

"(2) The composition of the committee is changed to be leaner and more efficient while continuing to ensure local

voices are present. The importance of committees representing the diversity of the communities they serve shall be recognized;

"(3) The committee may hold its meetings and conduct interviews in person or through electronic means, including telephone conferencing and video conferencing."

I affix my signature to this petition, and I will hand it to the Clerk.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

Ms. Amy Fee: I have a petition entitled "Proposed Changes to Justices of the Peace Act Petition."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario remains committed to pressing forward towards a more accessible, responsive and resilient justice system; and

"Whereas the current process to appoint justices of the peace is outdated and slow. This has created obstacles to filling vacancies, resulting in delays for people wanting their day in court; and

"Whereas there is a need for greater transparency and the promotion of more diversity throughout the recruitment and appointment process; and

"Whereas maintaining the integrity of Ontario's appointment process for justices of the peace is vital to the administration of a strong justice system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows, so that:

"(1) The act is amended with respect to the composition and processes of the Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee;

"(2) The composition of the committee is changed to be leaner and more efficient while continuing to ensure local voices are present. The importance of committees representing the diversity of the communities they serve shall be recognized;

"(3) The committee may hold its meetings and conduct interviews in person or through electronic means, including telephone conferencing and video conferencing."

I fully support this petition, will be affixing my name and bringing it to the Clerk.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I have a petition: "Proposed Changes to Justices of the Peace Act Petition."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario remains committed to pressing forward towards a more accessible, responsive and resilient justice system; and

"Whereas the current process to appoint justices of the peace is outdated and slow. This has created obstacles to filling vacancies, resulting in delays for people wanting their day in court; and

"Whereas there is a need for greater transparency and the promotion of more diversity throughout the recruitment and appointment process; and

“Whereas maintaining the integrity of Ontario’s appointment process for justices of the peace is vital to the administration of a strong justice system;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows, so that:

“(1) The act is amended with respect to the composition and processes of the Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee;

“(2) The composition of the committee is changed to be leaner and more efficient while continuing to ensure local voices are present. The importance of committees representing the diversity of the communities they serve shall be recognized;

“(3) The committee may hold its meetings and conduct interviews in person or through electronic means, including telephone conferencing and video conferencing.”

I fully support this petition and affix my signature here.

1310

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EXTENSION OF EMERGENCY DECLARATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’ll recognize the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I move:

Whereas an emergency was declared by order in council 518/2020 (O. Reg. 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 O. Reg. 84/20 on 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 May 12, 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 28 days on June 2, 2020, pursuant to subsection 7.0.7(3) of the act, ending June 30, 2020; and

Whereas the emergency was extended by resolution of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for a period of 15 days past the end of June 30, 2020, on June 24, 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 the emergency be extended for nine days past the end of July 15, 2020;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario hereby declares that the period of the emergency is extended past the end of July 15, 2020, for a further period of nine days.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Jones has moved government notice of motion number 84. Further debate? I’ll recognize again the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is an honour to be in the House to open the debate on what I hope will be the final proposed extension of the provincial declaration of emergency.

Ontario is on a path to recovery. The job numbers announced last Friday demonstrate that Ontario’s economy is beginning to stabilize. According to Statistics Canada, employment in Ontario increased by 377,900 jobs in June, including an increase of 66,200 manufacturing jobs. That number is so much more than a statistic. It represents real people, families, business owners and workers who are back to work and contributing to Ontario’s economic recovery.

Nobody can tell for certain what the recovery will look like over the short to medium term. What we do know is, the threat of COVID-19 is still very real and, without a vaccine, the potential for a spike in cases or a second wave is something for which we must all prepare. Without continued vigilance, the incredible progress that Ontarians have made to stop the spread of COVID-19 and support our economic recovery could soon disappear. All 14.5 million Ontarians have pulled together to contain this virus.

I want to thank the health care heroes, the front-line responders, the caregivers, essential service workers, the businesses that jumped into manufacturing personal protective equipment, and the public, who protected themselves and those around them through physical distancing and other public health measures.

As I have done previously when discussing the collective actions of Ontarians in response to COVID-19, I want to provide an update regarding the Ontario Together portal. Through the portal, more than 27,000 submissions to help Ontario source critical emergency supplies, technologies and innovations have been received across the three streams since the launch. More than 18,000 emergency supply leads have been converted into more than \$658 million in purchases of critical supplies and equipment to support staff on the front lines, including more than 27 million gowns, more than 175 million gloves, 123 million masks and over four million face shields.

There were over 1,200 responses to our first three challenges to support the delivery of mental health solutions to vulnerable populations, to ensure the strength of our supply chains and to deliver financial advice to our small business community. Over 6,800 ideas have been submitted through the portal on how to address the COVID-19 outbreak, including offers to retool their business to make critical supplies or to deliver goods or services needed at this time. If it wasn’t for all these efforts and so many more, we wouldn’t be here today talking about managing the recovery.

The COVID-19 emergency has not been without loss, either. We must also remember those who have lost their lives.

Speaker, today, as we debate extending the declaration of emergency until July 24, I would like to draw members' attention to the declaration's role in stewarding the province along the road to recovery. All of Ontario is now in stage 2 of the province's reopening plan. When the time is right, remaining workplaces and community spaces will also reopen as part of stage 3 and beyond. At the same time, public health advice and workplace safety guidance must continue to be respected.

The provincial declaration of emergency is meant to be a temporary measure to respond to an extraordinary crisis. As we consider next steps, the government must continue to have the right tools at our disposal to respond quickly to reduce the dangers of COVID-19, protect lives and reopen the province in a gradual and safe manner. We propose to do just that, Speaker.

On July 7, I introduced Bill 195, Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020. I look forward to beginning second reading of that proposed legislation. If passed, this legislation will support our continued efforts to cautiously reopen Ontario in a way that recognizes that the COVID-19 impacts may still be felt for some time to come. It would allow Ontario to continue along our path to recovery while easing restrictions where appropriate and maintaining important, select tools to respond to the impacts of COVID-19. And it will ensure that important measures remain in place to address the threat of COVID-19 once the provincial declaration of emergency has ended. That is currently scheduled to happen on July 15.

As members know, once the declaration of emergency is terminated, emergency orders under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act could no longer be amended and could only be extended if they are necessary to deal with the effects of the emergency. Ending the declaration of emergency without a plan in place would compromise the government's ability to continue to protect Ontarians.

In previous comments before the House, I have described this process as the difference between a light switch and a dimmer, and this comparison remains true. Without a plan in place, should the declaration terminate, the province would only have the ability to turn the orders in place at the end of the declaration on or off. For example, the current order regarding public gatherings is limited to 10 people. Turning this order off would return us to the pre-COVID-19 state of affairs with no limits on large gatherings. I am sure that most members of this Legislature would agree that this is not the appropriate course of action given the threat of a resurgence. We need only to look south of the border to see what happens when jurisdictions let their guard down too soon.

If passed, Bill 195 would bridge the gap between the public health measures that were necessary to respond to the initial and immediate threat of COVID-19 during the provincial declaration of emergency and those that will continue to be needed to support Ontarians' safe recovery once the declaration ends. It would, to continue my analogy, allow us to use a dimmer switch approach to

public health measures by gradually ratcheting down public health measures as we continue to successfully battle this virus or to ratchet them up incrementally should that become necessary. I will speak more to the refinement of emergency tools available under the proposed Bill 195 during its leadoff debate.

1320

To maintain continuity of our government's COVID-19 response, I'm asking members to support extending the declaration of emergency to July 24. Without this extension, Ontario would enter a period when some emergency orders could continue to be extended but could not be amended while the Legislature debates what's next when it comes to Bill 195.

We know that things can change quickly and that we need to remain nimble in our response to this virus. Emergency orders have enabled the government to take important actions, such as limiting long-term-care employees to working in no more than one facility, in an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19 among our province's most vulnerable citizens. They have given hospitals the flexibility to redeploy staff where they are needed most during the COVID-19 outbreak. Our government took further action in this area to increase the front-line capacity of hospitals, clinics and assessment centres by launching a health workforce matching portal, to help bring together skilled front-line medical workers with employers.

Early in the crisis, Premier Ford sent a powerful message that we will not tolerate price gouging. We were able to back that up through an emergency order to stop retail businesses and individuals from charging unfair prices for everyday products that Ontarians need.

Many of these orders, as well as other measures that don't fall under emergency orders, are in place to help lessen the hardship of COVID-19 on Ontarians and small businesses. That includes temporarily freezing residential eviction notices; temporarily halting commercial evictions, while encouraging landlords to take advantage of the federal-provincial rent subsidy program; supporting workers and businesses in Ontario's vibrant hospitality sector by allowing bars and restaurants to sell alcohol with their takeout and delivery orders; and cutting red tape to allow municipalities to quickly pass temporary-use bylaws, to allow restaurants to create or extend patios to accommodate physical distancing and serve more people.

Speaker, the declaration of emergency helped propel us forward from March 17 to the point where we are here today. When we made the decision to declare an emergency back in March, we knew we were facing an unprecedented challenge. For almost a century, no one has had to deal with a crisis on the scale of COVID-19, especially not here in Ontario.

The emergency orders this government has put in place were established with the advice we heard from public health and other experts. We took action to rapidly engage, listen and respond across a wide range of ministries and sectors to figure out what we had to do to get Ontario through this. Together, the emergency orders that resulted from that important work are a specific response to

Ontario's outbreak, tailored to the needs of our province. I think both the government and Ontarians have done work we can be proud of to stop the spread and mitigate the impacts of this deadly virus.

I'll take a moment to thank the dedicated public servants at the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the Ministry of Health, public health and, indeed, all across government who have been working around the clock since the start of the declaration of emergency to respond at all stages of the response. We were able to do that because the emergency declaration gave us much-needed flexibility, which has directly benefitted the people of Ontario. That flexibility would be temporarily lost if the provincial declaration of emergency is not extended before this Legislature determines what will take its place.

Since declaring the provincial emergency on March 17, our government has taken careful and deliberate action to protect Ontarians. The provincial declaration of emergency supported our comprehensive response to the COVID-19 outbreak and allowed us to create emergency orders to address critical needs as they arose. It provided a temporary platform for decisive action that carried Ontario through unprecedented challenges and helped us initiate the first important steps of reopening our province.

I want to assure this House that when the provincial declaration of emergency is terminated, should Ontario experience a significant spike in cases or a second wave of COVID-19 that requires a more comprehensive approach again, we will not hesitate to seek a new provincial emergency order if, and only if, necessary.

Speaker, COVID-19 has resulted in lives tragically lost and fundamental changes to our world. Our government's proposed Bill 195 focuses on recovery from COVID-19. It would support the gradual and safe reopening of the province, while continuing to enable us to manage the effects of this outbreak. I look forward to debating the merits of Bill 195 in this House, and invite input from my MPP colleagues. This debate must be carried out with the security that the government still has the necessary tools at its disposal to quickly respond to any outgoing risks and effects of COVID-19 that may emerge, and that the transition from the provincial declaration of emergency to whatever the House decides is seamless and protects all Ontarians.

I hark back to what Premier Ford has said: When the history books are written, it will be said that the people of Ontario never surrendered to the virus. We didn't quit when the going got tough.

So much has been accomplished, and so much still lies ahead of us. The provincial declaration of emergency was a product of its time. As we move from emergency to recovery, the time has come to decide what tools we need now so we can continue to reopen while maintaining the safety of the province and protecting the public. I ask members to support extending the declaration of emergency until July 24.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I want to say at the outset of the debate that New Democrats, as has been the

case each and every time the request has been put to the Legislature for us to enact the powers available to the government under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act—we have supported and we will continue to support those requests, because we understand, as does everybody in this Legislature and most of the people out in the public, that these measures are necessary as a way of being able to contain the pandemic as it ravages its way through the world and places across this province, as well.

I want to say, however, before beginning my comments on this motion and somewhat on Bill 195, that it's a bit of a sad thing that's going on in the Legislature these days. We found out, literally as the government got up to move this motion, what was going to be debated. The Speaker will know, because he has been here, like me, for almost 30 years now, that there is normally an exchange between the government House leader and the opposition House leader to be able to say, "Here is the business we would like to debate the upcoming week." There's a discussion, there's a meeting on Thursdays or whatever day it's convenient to do so, and at least we have the schedule of the House so that everybody is able to plan what we're going to speak to when.

The government has decided, in the middle of a pandemic, to do as they did during the Second World War: run silent. That's what they used to talk about. Submarines "running silent" was a way of saying "keeping it under the radar," "not being caught." The government has decided, rather than work with the opposition to be able to face issues such as this that we both agree on—clearly, we both support this particular motion. The government has taken the position that they're not even going to tell us what bill they're going to be debating. There really isn't any discussion between House leaders these days. The government decided to take a position of, "We're going to do as we please. If you're oppositional in any way, we're going to punish you by not providing you with any information."

I know we're going to get a diatribe from the government House leader when he finally gets to his feet at the end of this debate. He's going to accuse New Democrats: "Oh, they're stalling. They don't want to do anything. They don't want to work." We're going to hear it all. But I just want people to understand that the Legislature has been operating for many, many a year, and it's operated by both the government and the opposition not necessarily agreeing on what government should be doing, but at least how we move stuff through the House.

In the end, the government has the right to propose any legislation it wants. The people of Ontario gave the government that right, and we respect that—all of us in this House, the government side and opposition. But they also gave the members of the House who are elected on the opposition side the ability to ask questions, the ability to propose that maybe things should be done differently. The government doesn't have to accept that information. They don't have to accept that advice. We understand that. But we have a responsibility as well, as legislators, to propose that maybe we should do something different or maybe we should do it differently altogether. And for the

government to get upset because the opposition suggested to do something different and the way to deal with that is to punish them by not letting them know what the agenda of the House is going to be on a daily basis, I think is a bit childish. It really is.

1330

We can agree to disagree. I have no dislike for anybody on the government side. The government is honest in its assessment of the situation. They see things differently than I do, but that's human nature. That's how we operate as human beings. We don't necessarily have to agree, but at least we have to work with each other. I would just think that I would take the Premier's words at face value, that in a pandemic we should be working together. Does that mean to say that we are going to agree on everything? No. It means to say that we at least have a conversation about what we can agree on, what we don't agree on, and what we would do differently. And where there's unanimity or agreement on how we should move forward, then we should do so, and we've done that in this Legislature since the beginning of the pandemic up until about the month of May.

We and the independents as well, along with the government, have worked together on a number of initiatives in order to be able try to soften the blow to the public's dealing with this whole pandemic. But the government got upset because the opposition decided it wanted to oppose something that the government was doing and suggested things should be done differently when it comes to committee and otherwise. The government got mad and said, "You don't like that? Well, we don't have to tell you anything. From now on, we're just going to do and you're going to find out when we do it." Sorry. I just think that's sad.

Mr. Speaker, we have kids in the school system. It would be like our children going to school in the morning, not knowing if they're doing math, English or geography at what time. What parent would want their children to go to school and not know what the school's schedule is when it comes to what their children are going to be learning in class? If we can maintain that principle in a school, you would think in a Parliament we can do the same thing.

Again, I have no argument with the government as to its right to do whatever it wants. The government has the right to propose and to utilize its majority to pass its agenda through the House and its committees. No argument. That's just the way the parliamentary system works and we all understand that. But I do have a problem when the government says, "Well, you disagree with me, so therefore I'm going to take this position of not telling you what I'm doing."

I hope that the government rethinks that position because it's out of sync with what the Premier has been saying and what the public thinks is going on. When you're back in your riding or you're talking to people here in Toronto or whatever, there's a great impression that the government is working in a non-partisan way in order to be able to do what needs to be done in this pandemic—and there are some things that the government has done that

are quite reasonable as far as, I would say, pretty well all of the orders under the powers given to them under the emergency management act.

The government has taken some steps which we, the opposition, agree with them had to be taken. Otherwise, we would be in the same position that we see in places like Florida and Texas and other parts of the world.

Interruption.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's interesting. Sorry, I was hearing a siren in the back. I was wondering if that was somebody trying to get a hold of me all of a sudden here.

But I would just say that my point is that if the government, if the Premier is telling us that we should be working together and the public thinks that we're working together, maybe the government should try at least letting us know what their agenda is going to be in advance so that at least we can be ready.

We're not going to complain about it, Mr. Speaker. You and I have been here for 30 years. You can put anything in the House you want. I'm ready, you're ready and all of my NDP colleagues are ready. We're fine. We're not going to cry over spilled milk. But it's just a rather sad state of affairs when the government says, "You know what? You don't have the right to be oppositional to the government and disagree with what we do, and if you do, we're going to punish you." That's kind of an abuse of power, I think. Not for me—actually, I'll let people decide for themselves rather than me pronouncing it.

I say to the government across the way, you should utilize whatever ability you have to try to work with us when you can. There are going to be times we're going to disagree—for example, Bill 195, I'm going to disagree even before we get into this debate.

I read the legislation. There has not been a case in this House where the government has asked for the ability to declare an emergency order where the opposition refused or delayed it—not a case. Yes, we've debated somewhat, for a short period of time, the actual emergency order because members want to get on the record. They want to be able to put their points forward. That's what this Legislature's all about, Mr. Speaker. It's about members coming here and representing the views of their constituents. There has not been a case where they've been refused. So I'm saying, what is the government trying to fix here?

I heard the explanation earlier from the Solicitor General, whom I have great respect for. She's been around this House for a while. She said that it's like a dimmer switch versus an on-and-off switch—that if the government wanted to move from a gathering of 10 people to a larger number, they couldn't do it because it wouldn't allow them under the current act. All they'd have to do is issue another order. You don't have to do anything other than that. You don't need the fiat of cabinet to deal with that. Why is the government proposing under Bill 195 to give cabinet the ability to declare whatever state of emergency based on what they think is right or wrong without coming back to the Legislature?

What is this place for, Speaker? Of all people, as the guardian of the House, the Speaker of the Legislature,

along with our Clerks and other staff, understand as much, if not more than all of us that this place is about having those debates.

Speaker, you and I have an admiration of a great parliamentarian by the name of Winston Churchill. In one of the books you loaned me, which I read and passed on to other members to read—because I think it's important for people to understand that in the middle of the Second World War there were debates in the Legislature. The House of Commons debated what was actually going on. Every week, the Prime Minister would walk into the House in closed session—because they weren't about to broadcast to the Germans exactly how badly the Allies were doing up until about 1942. We were in pretty bad shape. But every week, the government would lay out how bad it was: We have lost here; we have lost there. We are down here. We don't have the planes; we don't have this; we don't have this. They were laying it out for what it was because members of the House had a job to do, and their job was to listen to what the government was doing and to offer advice on possibly doing it differently.

And during the war, I think Parliament showed itself to be a really resilient body. If Britain came out of the Second World War as victors, it was largely because of the allies they had, such as ourselves, the Australians, the New Zealanders, the Americans and others, but a large part of it was that their own institution allowed them to survive because they trusted in themselves. They trusted in their institution and in being able to share information with elected officials so that elected officials could weigh in on what they thought had to be done. The government listened, took the advice, or didn't take the advice, and moved on. But at least people got heard and, in many cases, the advice was taken.

Well, what the government is saying with the proposition under Bill 195 is, "Cabinet will listen to itself. We will decide from what we hear from ourselves and we'll make a decision because we know what's best. Oh, and by the way, if you don't think it's a good decision, we're going to give the Premier 30 minutes before a select committee for you to be able to ask him questions." The government is going to have a majority on that committee. Do you think that if there's anything controversial and the opposition decides to try to push the government on whatever, there's going to be any listening going on?

Mr. Speaker, you were here during the time of the minority Parliament—the last minority, two or three Parliaments ago—where there was the gas plant committee. The only reason there was any light that came out of that was because that committee was not a majority committee for the government. As a result, the minority, being the opposition Conservatives and New Democrats, was able to get to the bottom of what happened in that particular story.

Was it embarrassing for the government? Absolutely. But this Parliament learned something from that, and the people learned something out of that, and as a result we changed laws in order to prevent that type of thing from happening again when it came to the type of interference

the former Liberal administration did when it came to those gas plants. It changed public policy. That's what this Legislature is all about, Mr. Speaker, as you know as well as I do. This is all about the House of the representatives being able to speak their minds when it comes to the issues of the day and being able to try to influence that decision.

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But when the government says, "No, no, I'm mad because you were oppositional, you New Democrats; how dare you be oppositional to us," and the response is, "Now we're picking up our marbles and we're going home and we're not going to share with you any more what the agenda of the House is going to be," that doesn't tell me that you're prepared to listen. That doesn't tell me, Mr. Speaker—not you—that the government is prepared to listen.

Bill 195 is coming along, and Bill 195 is going to make these types of debates a thing of the past. The government will be able to extend emergency orders by order in cabinet—no checking in with the House. How is that better in any particular way? (a) Is it better for the public? No, because they have a right to know. In this Legislature, part of what we do here by having public debates—they get to see us, warts and all. (b) Is that what the Legislature is supposed to be about? Absolutely not. This Legislature is supposed to be consulted.

The biggest job that we have here as legislators is approving the budget, the monetary parts of what the government has to do, and approving legislation. That's our job. And if any government—I don't care what the stripe is—thinks they got it right the first time out and only they have all the answers by right of winning a majority government, I've got to say, Mr. Speaker, it's a rather sad day in democracy when people actually believe that. But unfortunately, it does happen, and it happens on all stripes; I'll be fair to the government. "I got a majority, so therefore I know what has to be done." No, it's that you have a majority and you have the right to do what you believe, because parliamentary rules allow you to do that, but it doesn't necessarily mean to say you're right.

The government, I think, at least has to listen; it has to hear the argument. I don't mean the argument—just by having a chat in the hallway or having to send an email to a minister so that hopefully the minister is going to listen to what an individual member would like to have changed in whatever is being proposed, or the public. This is the institution of the Parliament. This is what Parliament does.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, since you and I and Mr. Wilson got here some 30 years ago, the role of the Legislature is being diminished each and every day. You would have never seen something like Bill 195 brought to the House when you were elected, as well as me. It would have never been accepted by the public because the media was in a different space back then, and the members were in a different space as well. But what we've seen for 30 years by all hands of government is a continuing diminishment of the role of Parliament to a consolidation of power in the office of the Premier.

Is the Premier entitled to make decisions? Absolutely. By right of being able to appoint his or her cabinet

members and by right of having a majority in the House, the Premier at the end of the day will always win, and so be it; that's the way it should be. That's how the parliamentary system was set up. It's set up so that government in a four-year period can make something happen. You don't have the deadlocked system that you have in the United States, where you've got one House that's one party, the other House that's the other party, and the twain shall never meet. Ask yourself the question, Mr. Speaker: Why is it that there isn't a public health care system in the United States? There are many answers to that question. But part of it is, their system makes it very difficult. It makes it extremely difficult for it to happen.

There are great parts about having majority governments, but there are also some very bad parts about having majority governments. By and large, it gives the government the ability to pass its agenda. But that has always been, Mr. Speaker, with a caveat, that even though the government feels that it's right, it must come to the House and propose and debate what it is they're trying to do and hear in the House, and eventually in committee, what the opposition and the public have to say. Then the government can be judged by the public every four years—if what they judge to be the action that was required that they've taken is right or wrong. They will be judged by the public. The public are the ones, at the end of the day, who are going to make this decision.

What the government is trying to do, I believe, in the way that they're governing, especially during this pandemic, is that they're trying to outguess and stay ahead of everything and believe that they're right all the time. Well, as they say, a clock is right twice a day. That's the only guarantee that we have in life. Twice a day, it's right. Sometimes the government is wrong. Sometimes the opposition is wrong, as well. But that's what this place is all about—to have that discussion.

So I say to the government across the way, of course we're going to support your legislation, as far as what you're proposing here. But as I said, the first part is that the government should be sharing its legislative agenda, its daily schedule, with us on a regular basis so that we know what's going on. They should suggest to us what it is that we're willing to work with them and what we're not willing to work with them—agreeing on those things that we can agree on, disagreeing on those things that we don't, and not taking it personally. This is the Legislature, and I don't take personally anything that the government does. It's what they're doing. It's as simple as that. I may not like it, but I don't take it personally. I think that the government should take less personally what goes on around here and recognize that everybody has a role to play.

Maybe part of the problem is that some of the government members have never been in opposition. Some have been lucky to serve in government federally and provincially now. Some came here in government. I got here as a government member. You came here as an opposition member. It was a very different view about how this House should and did operate, based on where we sat. I've been lucky, because I'm probably the only member to be able to say this: I've served in government, I've served in the

third party, I've served in official opposition, and I've served without status, so I have a fairly good idea from all sides of the House how this place works and doesn't work. When it does work is when we do have debate and we do have discussion, when the government listens and takes whatever advice they think is deemed fit to take and acts on it—and if they don't, they don't.

My colleague the member from Kitchener-Waterloo is going to share the rest of my time, and she has a few things she'd like to put on the record. I'm sure the government would like to say something, as well.

One of the numbers that was branded out by the government in this debate during the day and prior—they're right; Ontario has done rather well when it comes to dealing with this pandemic. Some of it we can take credit for in this House; some of it the government can take credit for in the House, as well—but a large part of it is the public out there. Ontarians and Canadians are different than our friends to the south. We have a better understanding of what a public health care system is all about. I think that's one of the key things that's going on here. Canadians understand that a public health care system is a system that works for all of the nation, not just some people. We're more likely, as Canadians, to follow the directives of the officials within the Ministry of Health and the policy-makers in this Legislature and in cabinet and accept that—as are our counterparts to the south. So we've been more apt to follow the measures that have been suggested by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the government and others about how we should do things in order to try to stop the spread of COVID-19. Have we been perfect? No. We've seen incidences where there have been some bumps along the road. There's no question about that. But by and large, when we all look in our communities, most community members have been really good at trying to respect what needs to be done to stop the spread of this disease, and I think a large part of that is because we do have a public health care system. I think that Canadians instinctively understand that a public health care system serves society better, and in the end they have a greater confidence in what the health care system is telling them to do, because of previous experiences where people have been sick and the health care system was there.

A story that appeared on the Internet—and this may be one of these fabricated things on social media. Who knows? But if it's true, I think it's rather scary. There's a video of an Ontario truck driver—he put a video on—that said, "I was in the United States. I was involved in an accident with my rig. As a result, I had to go get drug testing." That's what you do there. He was in Texas. He went to get his drug test, as required by law, and six people walked into the assessment centre to be tested for COVID-19, and six walked away because they didn't have the 190 bucks to pay for the test. That doesn't give you a lot of confidence in the decisions of lawmakers and the decisions of the system—when you're having people turn away because they don't have 190 bucks to pay for a test.

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But here is a scary part: If they're reporting 16,000 cases in Florida yesterday, what's the real number? At

least in Ontario, we have problems—yes, we’ll admit it. The member from Hamilton Mountain raised the issue of tardiness in getting the results from the tests, but you’re not being refused the test. There are problems in our system, fair enough, and we’ll fix those, but that to me is a scary number because it says something about what is going on.

I just got a note from my staff. I will not be sharing my time with the member. She’s going to take her own time, I’ve just been told.

The other thing I just want to say is, there is a difference in attitude between Canadians and Americans when it comes to authority, and this is not a bad thing. God bless the Americans. They’re great people, wonderful neighbours to the south, and this is probably what makes them a great nation to a certain extent—that there is a very large mistrust of government. People wearing masks and doing social distancing and all that stuff doesn’t come natural to them. I think that’s part of the problem that you’re seeing in the United States, whereas in Canada we have that attitude somewhat, but it’s not as pronounced as what you have in the United States. As a result, I think we’re seeing the difference in the numbers.

The other thing I wanted to say, because I read this on the Internet—it was one of the briefings that I got from wherever; I’m not sure—but the scary thing is that in the last six weeks, worldwide the number of COVID-19 cases has doubled. That’s not Ontario. In Ontario, we’ve been doing fairly okay, and in the rest of Canada as well. But there are certain places around the world, like Israel, Melbourne, the United States, the UK and others where things have been going through the roof because there have been problems in the reopening of the economy and people not following the rules. I think we should be proud, as Ontarians and Canadians, that—we haven’t got it all right; we haven’t been spot-on when it comes to everything that we should be doing, but by and large I think the public is being pretty darn reasonable.

As I look around our community in Timmins, I go into a grocery store, the Canadian Tire or the Timmins building centre, and people are wearing masks. People are washing their hands. People are making sure they don’t crowd up on each other. I think that’s adding to our dealing more effectively with the pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

I think we should really thank Ontarians for the wonderful job that they’re doing, rather than just patting ourselves on the backs—not that there shouldn’t be patting on the backs for people doing great work in government. I’m not saying that, but what I’m saying is, the public has a lot to do when it comes to that.

I just want to come back quickly—and I’m going to probably just end on this—in regard to what I started with. That is, I hope that the government reflects somewhat and decides that maybe they should be practising what they preach, or at least what the Premier preaches, and that is trying to find ways so that we actually can do things together where we agree, and where we disagree, accepting the disagreement and then moving on. The government should not be upset, Mr. Speaker, and I should not be upset

as an opposition member for the actions of the government or the actions of the opposition. It is what Parliament is.

Parliamentary systems and republican systems are the same. You have people on two sides of the issue, or sometimes more than two sides of the issue—but that’s democracy. We’re not a monolithic organization here. This is not a dictatorship. This is not what we saw in the former Soviet Union or the current China, where you have a one-party system. We welcome debate and we welcome diversity of opinion, and that’s what this Legislature is all about.

And when we start taking that personally, Mr. Speaker, I think that breaks down what Parliament is supposed to be about. I think Parliament is about, fortunately, where we agree, doing some great things, and sometimes where we don’t agree, and still doing some great things.

I hark back to the debate on health care. When Tommy Douglas started the debate and movement towards the public health care system in Saskatchewan, the opposition didn’t agree. They were firmly opposed, and rightfully so. That was their right. They were representing the other side of the argument. What happened was that the government, because Tommy Douglas and New Democrats or CCF back then had a majority, in that period—I think it was their third or their fourth Parliament—managed to push through legislation, with great opposition from both the opposition parties and the public. It has to be said: The public was also opposed to a certain extent. They managed to pass through legislation that created our first public health care system.

What that debate did was, it did temper how far the government was prepared to go, because they did have to listen to the opposition; they did have to listen to the public somewhat. A lot of what the New Democrats wanted to do at the time when it came to creating a public health care system—some of it wasn’t done, and still isn’t done, as a result of those debates. That’s the test of democracy. That’s the coming of opinion to the floor and then a decision, one way or another, moderated by the debate. But in the end it did pass, and now there is not a party in Canada, of the major parties—Liberal, Conservative or NDP—who would campaign against our public health care system. Yes, the Liberals and Tories like more privatization in it and New Democrats don’t want to see more privatization of the system; but by and large, we believe in the single-payer system, and there is not a party now that will campaign against that. That happened because of debates in Legislatures such as Saskatchewan and across this country. There were debates about what a public health care system should look like, how it should run, how much budget we should apportion to it etc.

So I just say to my friends across the way: Don’t take this personally, because it’s not meant to be personal. This is a debate in the Legislature. This is all this is. Thank God we live in a country where we can have these debates. We’re very fortunate. In many parts of the world, you can’t even have these discussions in private, let alone in a Legislature. Look at what’s going on in Hong Kong these days. What a change. How sad. But that’s for another

debate. My point is, the government should try to find ways of doing what the Premier preaches, and that is to work with all members of the House when it comes to trying to advance an agenda that's good for the people of Ontario. There are going to be times when the government is going to want to have it their way and the opposition is not going to like it. That's fine. Nothing to take personally—it's just the way it is. Other times, we're going to agree, as we are going to do on this motion, and vote in favour.

So I say to my friends across the way again: As New Democrats, we will be voting for this particular motion. We look forward to what the government has to say, especially after my very kind words to the opposition House leader, as I reach out across the aisle to try to see if he is prepared, along with the rest of the government, to find ways of being able to work with that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, that's the end of my debate.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: It strikes me, listening to the member opposite's comments, that the only one who is taking it personally, really, is the member opposite, Mr. Speaker. We've had extensive debate on this last week and this week, and the member chose to spend 30 minutes, when dealing with respect to an extension of a state of emergency, to try to explain to the House why he is somehow hurt with respect to not being given information with respect to legislation. The member knows full well why he is no longer trusted in the House leaders' meetings, which continue on with myself and the House leader for the Liberals and the leader of the Green Party.

It was made very clear to him, when we started on this COVID-19 journey together back in March, that the government would take extraordinary steps to ensure that the opposition had access to information that, under no other Parliament, it needed to. That included providing copies of bills in advance and providing briefings of bills in advance so that we could work together to try to get unanimous support through this Legislature during the initial stages of the COVID-19 outbreak here in the province of Ontario when we were all working in a fashion that we had never worked in before.

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But one of the guiding principles of that, from day one, was that, as the government shared information, that information should be maintained private until we were prepared to introduce it into this Legislature. Part of the reason you do that is parliamentary privilege, so that members on both sides of the House have access to a bill at the same time as everybody else so that all members of Parliament are treated the same.

The member opposite will know full well that that was the guiding principle that we worked on, and that it was he himself who broke that faith when he released the contents of a confidential bill via press release and via a fundraising letter to his party members—a bill that we were scheduled to talk about and to debate hours later with not only himself but with the other two opposition House leaders, Mr. Speaker. As a result of that, of course, during something like this, something that is so very important, I did

not feel that we could continue to work in the fashion that we had worked in for a number of weeks.

The member opposite is upset that he's not getting information on a daily basis. We will continue to work directly with the critics on the other side of the House so that they understand and know what's coming forward, but there is nothing—and I stand to be corrected by a point of order or by any other mechanism—in the standing orders that requires me to inform the opposition House leader what information or what bills the government will be bringing forward.

But I do say that it is important that we have fulsome debate in this place, and I'm very proud of the fact that for the last number of months, we have seen just that, Mr. Speaker. We have seen a number of bills that have been brought forward in this House during COVID-19 that have received unanimous consent of all members of this Legislature. I'm quite proud of that. Even before that, we saw an increase in debate on all government bills. A vast majority of government bills were no longer being time-allocated. We were moving to closure on most debates as most members had opportunities to speak and comment and debate in ways that they had never had before.

The committees that we've had have rarely functioned in as effective a manner as they have, not only over the last number of months with respect to COVID-19, but prior to that, Mr. Speaker. Even during the last number of weeks—as I said last Wednesday, few if any of the committees have been oversubscribed. In fact, we've had to bring down some committees because they were undersubscribed. We got through all of the people that wanted to speak to committee.

I can appreciate what the member opposite has to do. He's got to do his best to explain to his colleagues why, all of a sudden, he's no longer able to provide them with the information that might assist them. It's not my job to help him keep his job. It's my job to see that this place works as effectively as possible. The members opposite will continue to have my assurance that we will work very closely with the critics so that they can be prepared for debate in this House when it comes forward.

Mr. Speaker, he talks about the spirit of co-operation and friendship. As you know, we had a vote today, because time allocation had to happen on a bill that we all agreed on; this was changes to the Legislative Assembly Act. In an attempt last week to try to mend some of those fences—again, a bill that I know the members opposite all support, including the opposition House leader, because they spoke in favour of it—we tried to move passage of that bill together through unanimous consent. But even on a bill where we have full agreement of the House—all sides, all members—the members opposite refused to move that together and instead have chosen to delay.

We have a couple of bills that the member says he's very excited to talk about. I know the member specifically said that he was going to be bringing some reasoned amendments forward. I look forward to seeing what those reasoned amendments are, Mr. Speaker, which will delay us debating in this place for a couple of days. I can't recall,

with any of the previous bills for which we have received notices of reasoned amendments, where I've actually then received a copy of what these reasoned amendments would be from the members opposite. The member opposite talks about working together. Well, perhaps "working together" means, then, that when you delay introduction of bills that we can debate in this House for something like a reasoned amendment, which is your opportunity to do so, perhaps the member opposite would like to share those at this time, too. I have yet to receive a copy of those. But ultimately, the member opposite will know that we've worked in a way and are proud of the way we've worked and proud of the way that all members of this Legislature work.

I don't take it personally at all. There's nothing that the member opposite does that frustrates me or irritates me. My job is to make sure that the government is able to pass legislation and that we're able to work on behalf of the people of Ontario. I'm very confident in the fact that the changes we have made over the last number of weeks with respect to the standing orders and how this Legislature has proceeded have made this a more representative place, have improved on the Legislature.

It's ironic to hear the member opposite talk about debate when he's the father of time allocation, Mr. Speaker. We had no such thing as time allocation before he came into government. That is a legacy of his time in office. Our legacy was to reduce that usage over the last number of months. At least, certainly since I was appointed to this job, we have reduced time allocations significantly. We have increased time of debate at committee significantly. We have been able to reach a closure in bills because most of the members have had the opportunity to have their say. I think that is really good news for how this Legislature works. We have debate that goes back and forth on all bills through questions and answers, which was something that didn't happen.

So I'm quite confident in our record. Again, I say to the member, look, I don't take it personally. I didn't take it personally when the member for Essex had some harsh words to say about the Premier. I take it as a point of debate. We get angry and we say things. That's what happens in this place. As I've said right from the beginning since my appointment, I wouldn't want to remove passion from the place. When we disagree, we should fight and argue. That's what a Legislature is about.

This member who just talked a moment ago is somehow comparing the fact that he's not personally getting on a daily basis the information that he feels would help him do his job better—he compared that somehow to the Soviet Union. Well, I have two members in this place who escaped that, Mr. Speaker. I've worked with a member in Ottawa who escaped a Communist country. Let me tell you, hearing their stories and the things that they had to do to escape that type of place—I don't think they would compare debating in the Legislature and one person over there not getting a daily update or a weekly update to what happened under a regime that was responsible for the deaths of 50 million people. It's quite the sad comparison, to be honest with you.

Specifically and very clearly to the member opposite, he knows exactly why he's no longer trusted in the House leaders' meetings, full stop. That doesn't mean that the rest of his colleagues aren't trusted to be there. And quite honestly, colleagues, even when he's there, even when the member is there, I'm not entirely certain of the value that is added. At no point can he ever negotiate on anything, anyway. It always has to go to somebody else for discussion and debate. Having said that, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to interrupt for a moment and remind the members that we're speaking to the motion before the floor of the House, and to confine their remarks to the actual motion. I'm asking both sides to observe that.

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you for the reminder, Mr. Speaker.

Look, on the motion, specifically: It's an important motion to the people of the province of Ontario. We have done an exceptionally good job of guiding our way through the COVID-19 pandemic. When compared to any other jurisdiction in North America, I think Ontarians have a heck of a lot to be proud of. A lot of that is because of the exceptional job that the people of the province of Ontario—in fact, all of it is because of the work the people of the province of Ontario have done. They have given us the ability, as a Legislature and as a government, to make changes that we could not even contemplate.

But what we are starting to see in this province is the train go in the right direction. We haven't seen that in a lot of other jurisdictions. What we're doing is, at the same time, we're introducing a mechanism through this motion so that we can get ourselves to a point where we can protect the people of the province for another couple of weeks through a state of emergency. We've heard a lot of people say that they want to see the state of emergency wind down; we've heard that.

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But at the same time, people are telling us that they still want to be protected, that they think it would be irresponsible for the government not to leave ourselves in a position where we can protect the people of Ontario, where we can move quickly, should we need to do that, while still respecting the authority that this Legislature will give cabinet on its behalf.

That's what this motion does, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy that we're here and that we're debating it. I don't suspect that any of the members opposite will have trouble debating this motion today. I think that they hopefully will be prepared to debate further, but I guess we'll see, colleagues. We'll see if not having been given advance notice means that debate collapses quickly because the opposition was unprepared for it. I look forward to seeing how that is.

I will close by again saying—because it was brought up so often in the speech from the opposition House leader—that we will continue to do what we do in House leaders' meetings. We will continue to meet; we will continue to talk; we will continue to let those whom we can trust

understand that there is a very sacred position that we as House leaders hold.

When we are given information in advance of every other member of this place, it is a parliamentary privilege that we get in excess of everybody else. Over the last number of months, when we shared important information, in a sense we were taking away the privilege of every other member of this place and focusing it on the government House leader, the opposition House leader, the House leader for the Liberal Party and the leader of the Green Party. We were sharing with them information that all parliamentarians, through privilege, should be getting at the same time. When that faith and trust is broken, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that you can understand why we will no longer and we continue to no longer have confidence in our ability to share that information with this particular opposition House leader and why we will continue to do our best to share with the critics and with the other two parties.

With that, I'll sit down. I hope that members will see fit to support this motion because I think it's in the best interests of the people of the province of Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins has an point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to refer to standing order 59. It reads as follows: "Before the adjournment of the House on each Thursday during the session"—and we are in an extended session now—"the government House leader shall announce the business for the following week."

So when the government House leader says he's not aware of any rules that ask him to do this, I just want to draw his attention to standing order number 59.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On the same point of order, I suspect?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, definitely on the same point of order: That is something, as House leader, I asked about almost immediately when I was here. It's a tradition in Ottawa that every Thursday the opposition House leader asks the Thursday question. At no time since I have been here has that standing order ever been followed even once. It is certainly something that I would love to entertain in the future—but we make sure that that information gets to as many members of the opposition as possible. I don't think there's anything in there that suggests that that information has to go to the opposition House leader; it just has to make its way over.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Indeed, it's always a pleasure to be in this House, representing the good people of Waterloo. They do pay attention. Even though our House leader has already indicated that of course we're going to be supporting this motion, they want us to be having this debate. They see that as the work that we do, and they think that it's important work.

The government House leader has referenced a situation which I feel needs to be cleared. On our part, we know

what has happened here in this House. The slight that he has referred to which has compromised and undermined the relationship between him as the government House leader and the official opposition is of note. It needs to be noted. It needs to be rectified.

I read the Hansard from last week. I have to say that it has been a long time since I've seen such vitriol contained in Hansard, and I've been around for quite some time. I used to have the great pleasure of serving across the way from one Glen Murray, who could be very, very cutting and very, very nasty and obviously is very confused because now he's running for the leader of the Green Party of Canada.

That said, the government House leader has talked about trust. I think trust is actually at the very heart of this motion and the debate and the language that has been used.

The government House leader has said that we as the official opposition, particularly our government House leader, leaked a piece of legislation prior to it coming to this floor.

I want to point out to the entire Legislature as a matter of public record that the Premier of the province of Ontario—and this is specific to the commercial eviction legislation which was introduced, I think, some three or four weeks ago. The Premier had outlined the contents of a bill a full week before the NDP sent the letter to the government House leader refuting the claims of inappropriate disclosure by the government House leader. I have those two articles here. I'm familiar with these articles because, as the economic development critic, I'm quoted in them.

On June 8, Ryan Rocca from Global News—he clearly had access to the legislation. He goes into great detail about—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I'm going to ask the member from Waterloo to take her seat again for a moment.

I hesitate to interrupt, but I think it's important that, from the Chair, I remind all of the members on both sides of the House that we are actually debating a motion relating to the extension of the state of emergency. Both sides have had an opportunity to talk about some ancillary issues that apparently they have with each other. Those issues, I think, have been brought before the attention of the House. I think that's perhaps more than we need to hear at this time about those issues.

I would ask the members to get back to debating the actual motion that's before the House, which is the proposed extension of the state of emergency.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to motion 84, which is the extension of the emergency session. However, there's a reason why the debate is actually happening, and it speaks to the culture of this place and how we got to this place here at Queen's Park.

The Solicitor General got up and spoke about their record as it relates to the need for such a motion. She used language like, "We need to be nimble and quick and responsive"—and that is not the case right now with regard to a major issue that is facing the province of Ontario. It goes back to the commercial eviction ban,

because businesses across the province were expecting a certain action from this government, and the state of emergency and now the declining relationship between the government House leaders—in all of that, the government has missed an opportunity to be, indeed, nimble, quick and responsive to the needs of businesses in the province of Ontario.

This story first came out on June 8. We shared our concerns with the legislation, which was shared by the Premier in a media conference, both to Antonella Artuso and to Global News, about the ban on commercial evictions. And we raised our concerns to the government House leader, which is, I think, the proper protocol, in order to make that legislation better, in order to make it stronger and, quite honestly, in order to make it effective.

That is what was contained within our letter, and it speaks to—

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think the member opposite mentioned myself having received information. At no point did the opposition provide me with any information—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That's not a valid point of order. I am going to say once again to the member who has the floor, and all the members who might follow: We're debating a motion to propose the extension of the state of emergency. I would ask the members to speak to the motion.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm going to go back to the position that I've taken that this motion and the extension of this motion needs to be debated because of where we are right now in the province of Ontario. I feel very strongly that it is our job as the official opposition to remind the government that as they move forward with these motions, there are checks and balances in this place, and we as the official opposition play an important role in checking some of that power that the government has.

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Now they do have a majority government, and so, obviously, the motion is going to pass. As I've said, our government House leader has already referenced that. But going back earlier to the comments that the Solicitor General made specifically to why this motion is needed—she has said there's a need to be nimble, quick and responsive. I need to challenge the government on that rationale, speaking to the motion.

I'm challenging the government on that rationale because to date—the finance committee, for instance, is meeting right now. They are starting their third round of talking with municipalities. The Chair of the finance committee just tabled their first interim report on tourism. The tourism industry has been crying right now for direct rent support and eviction protection, and yet, those cries for help, if you will, have fallen on deaf ears—which is really not nimble, quick or responsive.

The second report that the finance committee has brought forward, and is being translated right now, is something that I've never seen happen in a finance committee before. In order to deal with the economic crisis and

the pandemic in the province of Ontario, we had suggested a streamlined, four-week process with equal parts of PCs, New Democrats and independents. "Let's concentrate and work four weeks straight through to get to the needed resolution that, particularly, would help businesses, because quite honestly, economic recovery is one of the major issues we're facing right now in the province of Ontario."

That committee finished their delegations. We did report-writing last Wednesday. We actually had Thursday as well to review the report. I have never seen this happen at any level in this place. The government House leaders on that finance committee put forward some recommendations, edited the report, and then voted against the members to say, "Well, this report is just going to come to the House"—without actually seeing the final report. I think that it's in our best interest, actually, to (1) do our due diligence and (2) act quicker, be more responsive, react to what we're hearing from the delegations from across the province.

I think that when we tried to address the issue with commercial evictions and we forwarded official correspondence, we really got stonewalled on that. So that leaves us, as the official opposition, in a place where the motion that is before us is asking for an extension—and it isn't only us that want to proceed with caution. I think proceeding with caution, actually, is in our collective best interest. But there are others who share the concern that the state of emergency—and I raise this just so that people understand that not everybody feels that we should be going in this direction. There was just an op-ed by Bob Hepburn, just on Friday, I think it was—Saturday. And Ford—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, on a point of order.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, as you can appreciate, report-writing with respect to SCOFEA, the standing committee on finance, was done in camera. I'm wondering, since the member has highlighted some of the debate that may or may not have gone in camera with respect to writing of the report, if the Speaker would take an opportunity to review whether the member has broken faith and provided information that was otherwise due to have been in camera, that should have been left in camera.

I also wanted to just correct the notion: The House leader does not serve on the Standing Committee on Finance, and the House leader did not provide any direction to the committee. Again, that was done in camera and I would hope that the Speaker might investigate that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I can undertake to the government House leader and the other members of the House that we will review the Hansard based on the intervention that you've made just now and report back to the House in due course when it is possible to do so.

The member for Waterloo still has the floor.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So there are voices outside of this place, which I think we are incumbent on listening to, which was my general point about how slow the finance committee is

proceeding—and those checks and balances that the official opposition can play.

In this article, Bob Hepburn says—and this is about the daily press conferences, which, of course, the emergency measures sort of extend—that prior to the pandemic, before we went into this state of affairs in Ontario, the Premier had said in February 2020, “We’re in election mode.” Now we are 100 days into the daily briefings. This columnist, Bob Hepburn, says, “In reality, they’ve deteriorated into a political advertising exercise—and it’s free”—it’s a free advertising exercise. I think we have to be very cautious and careful as we move forward in this sort of new relationship, if you will, where the official opposition is not privy to what is going to be coming forward by way of legislation.

I think that there is a reason for us—and this goes back to the Solicitor General’s comments where she referenced the motion and what the government has done—acting quickly on long-term care. Well, there was no acting quickly on long-term care. There’s certainly no acting quickly on the migrant worker health issue in the province of Ontario. Price gouging continues to happen, and she had referenced that as it relates to the motion.

One of the biggest frustrations that I’m experiencing right now as these motions come forward is that—I chair the public accounts committee, that’s why I am somewhat familiar with report-writing in a general sense—the Auditor General is doing important work right now, and that work should inform our work; it should inform our policies, especially as it relates to COVID-19.

Prior to the pandemic, the Auditor General had already looked at long-term care. In fact, it was in the last report. That report also referenced a number of seniors who had died in this province because of poor nutrition. In that report also, they’re looking at environmental and infrastructure and how contracts are awarded. The member for Essex just raised that this morning as well in a question.

I have to say that every time the government comes to us with an extension, we have to ask these questions. It’s incumbent on us as the official opposition to say, “Is this really needed? Why is it needed? How can things be improved?” I think that people across this province actually are starting to ask those same questions.

The Solicitor General also referenced the fact that she equated this between a light switch and a dimmer, until they have a plan in place. I think after four months now, the plan should be in place. My understanding, because we’ve read it in the media, is that the Premier is announcing the third stage of opening for the province—currently in one of those stand-up sessions where he’s going to applaud his colleagues, and that usually goes on for quite some time.

I have to say that I think that it can’t be lost on the people who are watching, that it is our job as official opposition members to ensure that we are asking these questions, that this debate is happening and that no motion just passes without a second look.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my comments as they relate to motion 84, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It’s an honour to rise in the House today and speak to government motion number 84.

Mr. Speaker, I’ve been listening with intent to the debate here today. It’s a little bit interesting, some of the back and forth that has been going on.

I just want to read an article from the Ottawa Citizen that just came out today, actually, after the Premier made his announcement about stage 3. I just want to mention that it is kind of weird that I can now read from my phone in the Legislature, but I’m happy for that change, because I think that’s actually helpful when it comes to saving trees and printing paper.

The Ottawa Citizen actually wrote today that the majority of Ontario, including Ottawa, is going to enter stage 3 economic reopening. Right now, Ontario recorded 116 new cases of COVID-19, and three new deaths, unfortunately. The vast majority of Ontario, including Ottawa, which is where I represent the riding of Carleton, will enter stage 3 of economic reopening. Not only that, starting July 27, all Ontario child care centres will be allowed cohorts of up to 15 children, which is an increase from the current cap of 10.

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Aside from that, what this really means is that businesses, services and facilities will become available once again to members of the public, provided that they can respect COVID-19 health and safety protocols, including gyms, playgrounds, indoor dining at restaurants and bars, live shows, team sports and the vast majority of personal care services. There is still a short list of high-risk places and activities that will remain off-limits for the time being, including amusement and water parks, buffets, dancing at restaurants and bars, overnight children’s camps, private karaoke rooms, saunas, casino table games and prolonged or deliberate contact in sport.

The current limit on gatherings will increase from 10 people to a maximum of 50 people for indoor gatherings, and up to 100 people for outdoor gatherings. These limits really apply to higher-risk settings and activities where people congregate, including social gatherings, casinos, live performances, cinemas, sport and recreational facilities, and convention centres.

Mr. Speaker, that is good news for the people of Ontario, but I think that’s why the extension of this state of emergency is so important. That’s why I’m pleased to support this motion and I’m pleased to speak to it today—because ultimately nothing is more important than protecting the health and well-being of Ontarians. These past few months, especially in the riding of Carleton, where I speak with people every day—ultimately, small businesses are the backbone of the economy, and they have made real, significant sacrifices over the past four months to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Mr. Speaker, we can’t allow the progress that we have made to be undone. We have to be vigilant and we have to continue along the path that we’ve gone on and continue moving forward.

I’ve heard some comments from members opposite about how there’s attempted consolidation of power or

that the government isn't sharing information, when I actually think it's quite the opposite. I think one of the main differences between what's happening in Ontario versus what's happening down south—I have family in Texas. My dad, in the 1970s, lived in Texas and went to university there. He lived in Houston for about a decade, in the 1970s, and even to this day I have still family, cousins, in Coppell, which is close to Dallas, Texas. Seeing what's happening there and in other states, as well, has given Ontarians a really, really strong appreciation for what we have done.

I remember that in the beginning, when all this was happening, a lot of people were saying that if the government does a good job, then the numbers won't increase and there will always be people wondering about whether or not we took it too far. I think every step that we took as a government was measured, was based on fact. It wasn't a political decision, Mr. Speaker; it was based entirely on the opinion and advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario. Moving forward, the projected numbers compared to what actually happened were much higher, but what actually happened was lower.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, a death is a death, and we're not talking about statistics or numbers here; we're talking about people and lives. Every life lost to this pandemic is a tragedy, but ultimately the fact that we were able to limit that speaks a lot. I think Ontarians really realize that now, because I think back in mid-April or even in mid-May when things had started to calm down and people were starting to question why we were taking such a very strict approach to COVID-19—since then, as soon as the numbers rose in the States, unfortunately for the people of the United States—my heart goes out to them all, but it did give us sort of a comparison. I think the people of Ontario were really able to then compare our situation to what was going on in the States.

Since then, I think people have really, really appreciated the state of emergency. They have really appreciated the fact that we have taken politics out of this decision. The decisions that we are making are based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of the province of Ontario. I know that Dr. Williams is working very hard around the clock, especially given that the data and science around COVID-19 are constantly changing. It's almost like a framework and we're just working within that framework. That's why I think the extension of the state of emergency is so important.

But even though we are extending the state of emergency, it does not necessarily preclude the province from opening. I think the fact that we announced the opening of stage 3 today, which is going to actually happen on Friday, the 17th, shows very clearly that we can still be in a state of emergency and yet still be able to support our small businesses and help the economy get back up and get moving again.

There's been a little bit of talk about consolidation of power. To that point, Mr. Speaker, what's really happening is that when the declaration of emergency is ending, the legislation would allow for the province to

continue its path to recovery by easing restrictions where appropriate and at the same time maintaining measures to address the ongoing threat of COVID-19. This ultimately would include the ability to extend existing orders and amend certain existing orders that are related to closing or regulating places, and compliance with public health advice. I think that's the important part of that sentence: "closing or regulating places, and compliance with public health advice." So it's not political advice; it's public health advice. There are also restrictions on gatherings and organized public events, and work redeployment and labour practices.

Ultimately, what we're looking at doing when it comes to extending the state of emergency and what the government can do afterwards is that—essentially the tools of amending and extending certain orders would only include those emergency orders that are active when the declaration of emergency concludes. So the proposed legislation would not provide the ability to make new orders. I think that's really important because that also goes to transparency and accountability, which is something that our government actually campaigned on and something that we take very seriously as a government.

And so, by extending the state of emergency with this motion, it will allow us to build a proper framework—because I think, ultimately the situation that we're in is not something that any of us have ever experienced in our lifetime, or even maybe in our parents' or grandparents' lifetimes. It's such a new scenario for all of us that it's so important that we not just look at this legislation but that we get it right, so that—knock on wood nothing ever happens—in the future if and when we're faced with another similar situation, we already have the tools at our disposal. That's why it's so important that we do this and we do it now.

Again, going back to the topic about the consolidation of power: I respectfully disagree with that. I think everything that we've been doing in Parliament follows the rule of law; it has done so far. When you want to talk about consolidation of power, I would look to our federal counterparts and the Prime Minister, who had shut down the Legislature for several months. I don't even know what's happening there right now.

I think the fact that instead here in Ontario, by comparison, the government House leader's office, the Premier and everyone decided that we should actually reopen the Legislature is proof in and of itself that we're not here to consolidate power; that we're here to work and we're here to debate things in the Legislature because the rule of law is so important.

Mr. Speaker, I am also Chair of the Standing Committee on General Government, and that committee has been very active, even prior to the Legislature resuming. In fact, normally I would fly down, because I live in Ottawa and I'm only 15 minutes away from the airport. Normally when I come down, I would take Porter, and I would say, maybe, from the door of my house to Queen's Park takes me, on a good day, about two and a half hours, or if there's a little bit of traffic, maybe three hours and 15 minutes or

so. But ever since the pandemic, Porter has shut down and so my only option, really, is driving. Since mid-May, I've actually been driving to Toronto every week because we have been so active, whether it's committee or the Legislature or whatever the case may be.

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So I would respectfully challenge the member's claim that this government is looking to consolidate power. In fact, I think it's the opposite. The fact that the Legislature is open and that we are debating this I think speaks for itself. I also think the fact that the decisions we are making as a government, again, are not political—the decisions that we are making are based on the advice provided by the Chief Medical Officer of Ontario. I think that is so important. That's the feedback that I'm getting, as well.

Every week in Ottawa, I actually do a 20-minute interview on a local Persian radio station. This 20-minute interview kind of started, I would say, about mid-April, just through a contact. The guy who ran the radio show had some questions and invited me to come on and speak. I don't normally speak Farsi. I came here when I was a year old so my Farsi is a little bit rusty because I learned it here. But the running joke, now, when I go on the radio show is that it's an opportunity to practise my Farsi—because the first time that I went, it was supposed to be a 10-minute interview and it ended up lasting about 25 minutes. Ever since then, every Sunday at around 11 a.m., I call in and that's my scheduled time slot. For about 20 to 25 minutes, I provide the latest government updates. I also take questions from callers, and it's all done in Farsi. The one thing I hear from people over and over again is how thankful they are for the actions we've taken and for the fact that we are basing all of our decisions on facts and on science. Obviously, those facts and science are constantly changing based on what scientists are saying, but the fact that we are relying on the medical experts when it comes to making these decisions in government I think speaks for itself, especially when you look down south. Unfortunately, everything has been so political, and unfortunately it has meant that so many people have lost their lives. So I think Ontarians really appreciate that and really appreciate the steadfast way that we're moving forward.

Again, with respect to the allegations about consolidation of power, given the fact that I come from Iran, I know what it means to live in a country or be in a country where there's a government that is not accountable to anyone and that has consolidated power. For someone like me who has lived through that experience and who has family who escaped the terrorist regime in Iran to come here to live in a free and democratic society, it's almost insulting in a way, and it kind of diminishes my experience as someone who escaped that, as someone who is a proud Canadian.

I was the first Iranian Canadian woman to be elected anywhere in North America, I think—in Canada, for sure, at least, but I think anywhere in North America. The reason I got elected is because I just wanted to make a difference in my community. The beautiful thing about our country and our province is that in a democracy, anyone can succeed as long as they apply themselves. I didn't have

a political background, I didn't have connections, I didn't know the first thing about party politics, but I decided that I wanted to make a difference and get involved.

I take the fact that we are operating under a rule of law very seriously. I support everything that we're doing. Declaring a state of emergency is not something that you just wake up one day and do. We're talking about people's constitutional rights. We're talking about freedom of assembly. We're talking about the ability to operate a business or live your life and all that. So when we're looking at extending something like this, I think it's so important that we do it properly. The feedback that I have gotten from not just people in my riding but people all across Ottawa, especially on the radio shows, especially in the Ottawa Persian community—the feedback that I'm getting is that they are so grateful and so appreciative of what we're doing and the measured approach that we're taking.

These people who are getting COVID-19, or the numbers we see all the time—It's so easy to just disassociate yourself from that and look at it as numbers and figures, but ultimately, these are real people who have lives, who have loved ones and who have families. We, as leaders, have to make sure that we are protecting them to the best of our ability. That's our job. People put their faith and trust in us to be here and to lead them and to guide them. None of us ever thought that we would be here in this sort of situation; I certainly didn't think that I would be here dealing with this, Mr. Speaker. But I think it has given us an opportunity to really show what leadership is and to lead by example.

Another reason why we've been so successful is that the people of Ontario have been taking the state of emergency very seriously, and they have been taking recommendations very seriously. Everyone is wearing masks; everyone is doing proper physical distancing and washing their hands and taking care of themselves. Ultimately, it's a group effort. We, as a government, can lead by example, but it's up to the people of Ontario to really take that seriously. I've never been more proud to be an Ontarian and to see how we as a province have really come together all across the province—various communities all working together to help each other to get through this time. I know we will, Mr. Speaker. We're almost at the finish line. It's just so important that we make sure that we don't lose track of what it took to get here and that we remain vigilant, because it's only through remaining vigilant and only through being very serious about this and taking it seriously that we can really move forward and get past this pandemic. Everyone is talking about a vaccine, but we don't know when that's going to happen. Then, once a vaccine is created, what are going to be the proprietary rights? Who's going to own it? So we have to operate and we have to move forward now, knowing that that solution—who knows when that's going to be happening down the road? We have to have a framework because today it's COVID-19 and tomorrow it could be something else. We don't know.

I think that leadership is so important. What's really important about the state of emergency is that it's not

creating new powers. Every decision we have made, every decision that the Premier has made—and he has been working tirelessly around the clock. He’s on TV every day. He’s updating the media. He’s taking questions. I think the one thing I really, really appreciate the most, and the feedback that I’ve gotten from people who’ve watched the Premier, is that when someone asks him a question, if he doesn’t know the answer, he won’t make something up or have a 22-second pause. Instead, he will very honestly say, “I don’t know, but I will find out.” And the best thing is that he does follow up on that. I think that honesty is so refreshing, and that willingness to lead by example and to learn and to communicate—Ontarians really appreciate that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased to support this motion to extend the emergency orders, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

Mr. John Fraser: To my colleagues, I’ll be brief. I’m happy to support the extension of the emergency legislation, just as I have and we have on this side of the Legislature, since March. They’re important powers, they’re extraordinary powers, that the government must have.

I’m going to say: Right now, we’re doing this for 10 days; we should be doing it for 30 days. It’s simple.

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The government is now proposing Bill 195 to supersede or override this thing that we’re doing here right now, and that’s not the right thing to do. The government has not made a case as to why they need those powers and why the emergency act, as it is, isn’t working. They haven’t made that case. At no point in this sitting has there been any delay, like a reasoned amendment or undue debate, over this act—never, not once.

Now, I realize that there’s a bit of conflict—well, between all of us, but there’s some conflict between the government and the opposition. I know the official opposition can be obstreperous at times. It doesn’t necessarily feel good. It’s part of the give and take. But when it comes to this piece of legislation, there has been the full cooperation of this House, on all sides, save and except for maybe the member from Kingston, Frontenac and the Islands, if I’ve got it right. I’m not going to accept responsibility for that member. He’s not in our independent caucus; he’s a free thinker. But there has never been politics played on this issue because it’s an important issue.

As the member from Carleton said, it’s about people’s constitutional rights. It’s about their ability to gather. It’s about collective agreements. The oversight that’s required to do those kinds of things should be regular, should be thorough when it’s necessary. I don’t think we’ve gone through six hours of debate, three hours of debate or maybe even two hours of debate on this act, each time we’ve brought it up. But we need to be able to do that.

The government is proposing to take that away: “We’re not going to do that anymore because we’re not in a state of emergency. However, we want the powers of a state of emergency, and we’ll propose another legislative oversight that is less than the one that we have right now, and

that will come before the whole House.” In actual fact—I’m not going to get into it right now—there are things in the emergency legislation that we know don’t work, but in Bill 195, that stuff that didn’t work in the act right now, which we could have fixed, isn’t being fixed. The government is in a hurry.

I’m sure we’d all like to do things the quick way, the easy way, and not to have to be here. The reality is that even after Bill 195 passes, as it will, we’re still going to be in a state of emergency. COVID-19 is not going away. We’ve managed it better, and we have learned how to manage it better. But if we look around the world, we can see the risks that are there. That’s why we should be continuing to vote on a state of emergency—because we’re in one. The government needs those powers. And the thorough legislative oversight of the act, as it exists right now, is necessary. It’s the right thing to do because it overrides a ton of rights. Even though they’re saying that in Bill 195 they’re actually limiting the orders, the orders are pretty broad. You can still override a collective agreement. You can still tell nurses, “You’re working the long-term-care home—sorry.” It’s still a state of emergency if you’re overriding that right, if you can change how many people can get together, up or down, whichever way.

You can amend whatever is in those five or six or seven things, so why don’t we have a broader debate in the Legislature about it? If we’ve got to sit Monday to Thursday, socially distanced, as we are, in different seats, we’ve got to do what we’ve got to do. We’ve never not come here because we didn’t want to vote on the state of emergency. I think members realize that that’s important. We have found our way through this, through some collaboration and co-operation, but now that’s all falling apart. And that’s just not great for the people of Ontario. It’s not the right thing to do.

As I said, Speaker, I’m supporting the extension of the emergency order. I will not be supporting Bill 195. It’s not the right thing to do. The right thing to do for Ontarians is to make sure we have the proper legislative oversight and to be here as often as we need to be to make sure that that happens.

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

Ms. Jones has moved government notice of motion number 84, relating to extending Ontario’s state of emergency. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight be appointed to receive oral reports from the Premier or his designate(s) on any extensions of emergency orders by the Lieutenant Governor in Council related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rationale for those extensions; and

That the committee shall have a membership of up to 11 members, comprised as follows:

- up to seven members of the government party
- up to three members of the official opposition
- up to one independent member; and

That the House leaders of each of the recognized parties shall indicate in writing to the Clerk of the House their party's membership on the committee; and

That the government House leader, in consultation with the independent members, shall indicate in writing to the Clerk of the House the independent member on the committee; and

That the deadline for indicating committee membership with the Clerk of the House shall be Thursday, August 20, 2020; and

That the committee shall meet at the call of the Chair as follows:

- up to 30 minutes for the Premier or his designate(s) to make an opening statement
- up to 60 minutes for members of the recognized parties to pose questions to the Premier or his designate(s) in three rounds of 10 minutes for each party
- up to 10 minutes for the independent member to pose questions to the Premier or his designate(s) in two rounds of five minutes each
- report-writing in closed session; and

That the Clerk of the Committee shall convene the first meeting of the committee no later than Thursday, August 27, 2020, to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee, but no subcommittee shall be appointed; and

That for business conducted under this order of reference, the provisions of standing orders 38(b), (c), and (d) and 134(c) and (d) shall be suspended.

That the committee is authorized to present interim reports summarizing each hearing to the House, or deposit interim reports with the Clerk if the Legislature is not in session; and

That the committee's final report shall be a compilation of all interim reports; and

That the committee shall be dissolved 30 days following the government House leader indicating in writing to the Speaker that the committee is no longer required; and

That the committee's final report shall be tabled in the House, or deposited with the Clerk if the Legislature is not in session, before the committee is dissolved; and

That if the committee fails to meet this deadline, the cumulative interim reports shall be deemed to be the committee's final report and deemed to be tabled on the date that the committee is dissolved; and

That an order shall be placed on the Orders and Notices paper for discussion of the final report of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight following its presentation to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 85. Would the government House leader care to commence the debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, this is an important new legislative committee that will continue to have

important oversight over the emergency orders that will be extended through Bill 195, should this House agree to passage of that bill. I think it's quite clear that the vast majority of the people of the province of Ontario are satisfied with the work of this Legislative Assembly and its members in order to protect the health and well-being of all Ontarians and, by extension, the health and well-being of Canadians, because obviously the decisions that we make here also impact our fellow Canadians in other provinces.

1500

One thing that we've consistently heard, whether it's from small, medium or large enterprises or whether it's from individual Ontarians, is that they both accept the fact that the government and this Legislature, quite frankly, have had to make very challenging decisions with respect to how we protected them in the face of COVID-19. These are decisions that have obviously been extremely challenging.

We've seen it in communities across the province right from the beginning, when we were closing down businesses, when we were instituting a state of emergency that forced Ontarians to, by and large, stay at home. We saw that our schools were transitioned to home-schooling through video conferencing, and at the same time we saw governments—not only the province of Ontario, but our municipal and federal partners across Canada—work very quickly to try and not only halt the spread of COVID-19 but begin to move the curve in the proper direction, where we're now seeing that go right now, Mr. Speaker.

We're seeing the cases consistently falling. That's good news. It's good news for small, medium and large enterprises. It's good news for our students. It's good news for our seniors and ultimately, I think, it's a testament to the hard work that all members of this Legislature have done in getting us to this spot today.

But as we've listened to the people of the province of Ontario, they have also said that it is time that the government move away from a state of emergency and the powers that come with a state of emergency and move into a new direction that allows us to deal with issues with respect to COVID-19 in a quick and effective manner, utilizing what we have learned not only as a government but as a Legislature since really the onset back on March 12, when we started to take aggressive measures as a Legislature.

We've seen very clearly in other jurisdictions in Canada, but more importantly in other jurisdictions in North America, specifically in the United States, what happens when you move too quickly in one direction. We're seeing our partners and our good friends in the United States now confronting daily COVID-19 rates of infection that are far in excess of the initial battle that we had.

This is really important to us, Mr. Speaker, for a number of reasons. As was highlighted by the Premier in a question today, the United States is one of our most important trading partners, and for many of the people in this province it is a contact. Whether you're a small business that does work with New York state or with

Michigan, or whether you're a snowbird who is lucky enough to have the opportunity to visit some parts of the US, be it Florida or whatever—it is incumbent upon the province of Ontario to make sure that, first and foremost, we protect the people of the province of Ontario. That's what Bill 195, which we will be debating, does.

At the same time, as has been a hallmark over the last number of months in this place, we put the authority of this Legislature first. I'm very proud of the fact that this government has gone above and beyond the call of duty to make sure that the Legislature and the powers that it has given us—whether it's through a state of emergency or through the unanimous consent that we've gotten to pass bills quickly, we've said that we wanted to make sure that as we exit the state of emergency, as we move to continue to protect the people of the province of Ontario, we are able to address issues that come up, whether it's on COVID-19, whether it's with respect to Ontarians travelling to other provinces, or whether it's the potential reopening of the border. I think many of us are probably leery of that right now, and we certainly hope that our federal partners will take a second look at that. But the province of Ontario has to be in a position to respond quickly.

It would be unfortunate, Mr. Speaker—I'm sure you would agree—if we didn't take any of the lessons that we've learned over the last number of months. I've spoken about this often. What we've seen over the last number of months in the province of Ontario is not only a testament to the hard work of everybody here—but make no mistake about it: We, as a Legislature, have governed very differently, in a way that we haven't seen ever in the province of Ontario. It was something that I think made a lot of us uncomfortable. We knew we had to move quickly. We knew we had to work together. We did it.

But by the same token—it continues today; there are far fewer members who are in this chamber every single day. As a House leader, it has always made me uncomfortable that I should be deciding who should be voting on things that are important to them. I think that's something that we learned. So we changed how voting took place in this place, so that we could do it in a respectful fashion, in a physically distant fashion, but gave the opportunity for every member of this Legislature to express an opinion on bills as they came forward. That's something that we learned.

As we started to move out of specifically just focusing on COVID-19, we learned that many members have wanted to come into this place. They wanted to debate and they wanted to have their votes heard on the legislation, and that's why we changed how we vote in this place. That's why now we've brought forward a bill that would allow us to exit the state of emergency, but at the same time, leave in place those orders that are very, very important—orders that will impact us going forward. There's no doubt, Mr. Speaker. We've seen it, whether it's in Toronto—we've heard a lot about Cherry Beach and a few other places where a lot of people congregated together. We don't want to lose the opportunity to protect the people of this province, and that's what Bill 195 does.

By the same token, we have said that this Legislature reigns supreme and it should continue to reign supreme. This is the body which should authorize and which should continue to have a role in authorizing the work of the government in terms of a pandemic. That's why we have brought this committee forward.

I'm unaware of any committee—I'm sure somebody will correct me if I'm wrong—that is proactively seeking the oversight of members from all sides of the House. Obviously, it's not something that the government has to do, but it was a full stop on the Premier who said, “No, we have to continue to do what we said we would do right from the beginning.” There is a role for opposition to play, even in challenging circumstances. It is our job to move things forward; it is their job to hold government accountable for the decisions that the government is making, as it is the job of all parliamentarians, regardless of whether you're on the opposition or you're on the government side.

That's what this committee does. It is certainly unique in a provincial context whereby we will continue to have the opportunity to protect Ontarians through the emergency orders, exiting the state of emergency, but those decisions will have to be accounted for by the Premier or his designate. It can be more than one—if the orders are impacting across more than one ministry, then we'll have more people who will be made available to the committee. They will have the opportunity to create reports.

Now, similar to what we have on the state of emergency—Mr. Speaker, as you know, at the conclusion of the state of emergency, the government has to account for the decisions that it made during the state of emergency and allow this House the opportunity to debate those decisions. The government will have to explain why it has made the decisions that it has made with respect to the state of emergency. It's a way for us to look back, to highlight some of the things—I know the member for Ottawa South highlighted some things that we've come to discover that the original state-of-emergency act didn't contemplate when it was introduced by the Liberal government at the time. That's not to suggest that it was an oversight on their part. Parliamentarians as a whole did not foresee some of the challenges that would come in as a result of actually enacting a state of emergency. I think the debate that will come at the end of that will give us an opportunity to highlight that. Similarly, this committee will have the opportunity to review on an ongoing basis the extension of the emergency orders through Bill 195. I think that's important.

1510

We've seen this a lot. When we first started, I don't think any of us contemplated the differences that would occur from region to region and the ongoing challenges that we'd see from region to region. I know, Speaker, that your community in Windsor was one of the last communities to move into phase 2, but what that did was highlight for us a particular issue with respect to the agricultural side, where migrant workers fell into a circumstance where the provincial government—they're so important to

the provincial government. Parts of their time here are managed by the provincial government, and other parts of their time are managed by the federal government. In between, we see that communities were held back. It's not any fault of the migrant workers; it is just something that just obviously had not been contemplated until COVID-19 hit. That is something that this committee will be able to review on an ongoing basis.

I know all members feel the same way. Just because we're moving in a direction and we're seeing, hopefully, the ability for us to move to stage 3—I think we are all very cautious. We're cautiously optimistic, but we're all very cautious, because ultimately I think all of us are afraid of what happens if or when a second wave hits. How are we going to manage that? I don't think that any of us would want to go back to a scenario, to go back to March 12, when we're trying to figure things out—not when we have so many lessons that we have learned.

I have no doubt that the members who will ultimately be put on this committee—I have every faith that they will do the job that this type of committee demands. This should be a very robust committee, and it will be a very robust committee, Mr. Speaker. It needs to be if it is going to do what we are asking it to do: not only to look at the emergency orders and why they're in place, but to help us as a Legislature identify issues that come up. In my community of Stouffville, it took us a little bit longer to move into the second stage as well, because we had outbreaks. It can be very, very frustrating. But I think this committee will help us highlight and identify those areas in advance.

Look, I don't need to speak very long on this, because I think it speaks for itself. It's very important. The work that they do will be very important. The issues that the committee identifies will have the opportunity to be presented into this House through a monthly report. A compendium will be put together. It will be put on the order paper so that we can continue to have a debate.

I also suspect that a lot of the things that we get on a monthly basis will also find their way into the final debate that we eventually have with respect to the state of emergency—the legislative debate that we have on the end of the state of emergency. It will give us two opportunities, I think, to do that: the mandatory legislative debate that comes at the end of the state of emergency, and then the debate that will follow at the conclusion of the emergency orders through Bill 195. It gives us two opportunities to review the work of government, to review legislation, to review the emergency orders and how the state of emergency works, to see shortcomings, but at the same time to ensure, first and foremost, that every community in this province can be assured that they are safe and secure.

One of the things I heard from a local councillor was a fear that the end of the state of emergency will lead people to start to let down their guard, that somehow people might not think that what we're doing is as important, that somehow we've conquered COVID-19, but on the opposite token, I've heard from a number of people who are frustrated that the state of emergency continues. So it is a very fine balancing act that we find ourselves in. But

we have chosen to land on the side of protecting the people of the province of Ontario through legislation and through the emergency orders that we have, through the lessons that we have learned, while at the same time respecting the fact that this Legislature and the members of it are the ultimate authority. I think this committee will allow us the opportunity to provide that oversight.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll sit down and yield the floor and hear what my other colleagues have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't know if I'm going to take the whole hour on this, but there are a few points that I want to make on this particular proposal by the government. The first one is, this is sort of a continuation—and this is just my opinion, and of course the government House leader is going to disagree with me. That's fine; that's not a problem. But when you look at what we're doing here, currently, if the government—and they have—decides that it has to issue an emergency order, it's done under the current Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. The government has the ability to declare a state of emergency and decide that nobody can gather in groups of more than 10, that certain things should be closed, or that there should be certain restrictions in order to curb the spread of the pandemic—understood, and necessarily so. But there is currently a mechanism to do that. The mechanism is the current legislation, which is the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act—fair; that's how it works.

Currently, if, let's say, we had concerns in regard to whatever emergency power the government is using, we have a couple of mechanisms to deal with it. The first one is, we obviously have the debate of the Legislature, because the government, by law, under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, must bring its authority to declare the emergency to the House and have a formal motion of the House passed. So that has to be done.

But the government is proposing, in legislation that's currently on the order paper—and this is the important part: We currently have on the order paper Bill 195, which is going to change the way that these emergency declarations are dealt with. The government is proposing that under that bill, there is going to be a different process by which the House can pronounce itself “yea” or “nay” and present its arguments for or against the declaration of those orders. What they're proposing is that the government will do that by order in council; in other words, by cabinet decision. If cabinet decides that instead of 10 people gathering it's going to be 15 or 20 or whatever, cabinet will now decide that themselves, and the only ability that the House will have to review any of this will be by way of this particular motion that creates a select committee.

The problem I have with what the government is doing—if you look at standing order 25(e), this is an anticipation of something that's already on the order paper. So 25(e) says: “In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she ... anticipates any

matter already on the orders and notices paper for consideration.” This is skirting it—I’ll give the government some credit. This is some pretty interesting wording for a motion because they’re trying to skirt around standing order 25(e), the anticipation rule, because this is meant to not deal with things out of order. Essentially, you can’t anticipate something that’s on the order paper and that the House is going to deal with. That’s why standing order 25(e) is there—so that we never put ourselves in a position of putting the cart before the horse. In this case, the government is putting the cart before the horse, but they’re changing the harness around a bit to make it look like maybe it’s not a horse, if you know what I mean.

The government, I’ll admit, is kind of skirting this rather tightly. But it does raise an interesting point: Should a government have the authority to be able to bring a motion like this before the House when it already has on the order paper a bill that changes the process by which the orders are issued? Interesting question.

1520

I just got into the House today, so the first chance I’ve had to read this motion was just now, this afternoon. It raises an interesting question, and I’m going to go back and do a little bit of research on this. But it would be interesting to hear what the government has to say. I’m sure they’re going to say that if you read the motion that is on the order paper currently, number 85, it doesn’t specifically mention Bill 195. That’s going to be essentially their argument.

But there’s an inference in this motion, and the inference is, and I read, “That a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight be appointed to receive oral reports from the Premier or his designate(s) on any extensions of emergency orders by the Lieutenant Governor in Council related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rationale for those extensions...” The only way that you can do that now is under the current act. This is anticipating that there’s going to be a different act. It skirts it. I understand, language is very clever. The government’s getting really good at saying one thing and doing the opposite. “We want to work with everybody. We want to hear everybody. We want to work collaboratively.” But what they’ve done, by tabling Bill 195 in the version that it’s now in, is that they’re giving themselves the power to extend emergency orders by order of cabinet, and then they anticipate by way of this motion the process by which we are going to be able to review those orders.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very fine point. I will agree with the government, and it’s something I’m going to do a little bit more looking at. It’s certainly, to me, skirting with the intent of what the standing orders are asking. The standing orders are saying that if you’ve got something on the order paper, you can’t anticipate what the outcome’s going to be and how it’s going to work. Essentially, that’s what the anticipation rule is about. The government is doing that by way of this motion. I just want to make the point, because I think it’s more of the same, where the government says one thing and it does something opposite.

In the middle of a pandemic, Mr. Speaker, I think the public, rightfully so, is expecting that everybody be working together towards the same aims, and in some cases, that’s happened. In fairness to the government, I don’t want to say that they haven’t done any of that; that wouldn’t be fair. But increasingly, more and more, the government is moving in a direction where they’re taking power onto themselves and they’re overreaching what their authority should be.

Now, do they have the right to do this by way of legislation? Absolutely. The government has the right to table legislation and they have a right to utilize their majority to be able to pass such legislation. But this is a skirting, in my view, of what the rules of this House call for in that the government is putting the cart beyond—is putting the horse ahead of the cart. Boy, I never get those things right, do I, as long as I’ve been here.

But it’s pretty clear that’s the intent of the government. The intent of the government is to change the process by which we review these orders, and they brought this motion before us before the legislation has even been debated, let alone passed in the House. It raises an interesting question—and I’m just looking at my friends the Clerks if they think I should make that as a formal request, because I’m just sort of thinking about this as we’re going along. Anyway, I make the point, and I ask other people to think about this as I go through this debate, and we’ll decide a little bit later how to deal with that.

So that’s the first thing—is that the government I think is demonstrating yet again that they are prepared to use whatever they need to in order to be able to have their way, and if people don’t agree with it, “Too bad; we’re the government. We know what’s best, and we’re just going to do things.” It’s kind of indicative, Mr. Speaker, of what we’ve seen with how the government has dealt with this pandemic and the issues that we’ve had to deal with nationally and provincially and municipally to deal with this pandemic. The government says the right things. I can’t fault the government, especially the Premier, for anything that he’s saying. He goes to a press conference and he agrees with whatever the question is and says, “Yes, we’re going to do that.” But when it comes to actions, it’s quite different than what is being said by the Premier and by the ministers of the crown when it comes to how they deal with it—price gouging as just one example. The government went on to say—and I agree with the Premier, and I think he was 100% right when he said it—that there should be no one allowed to do price gouging as a result of this pandemic. Who disagrees with that? I don’t think anybody does.

But if you look around, that’s happening. Just take a look at the price of gas. It was \$1.13 as I left Timmins yesterday. I was talking to my friend who was driving through Gravenhurst, or wherever it was—down to 86 cents. How do you explain such a difference? Did I get it right?

Mr. John Vanthof: Eighty-nine.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Eighty-nine cents. It went from 89 cents to \$1.13. If that’s not price gouging, I don’t know what it is.

The government is saying that there should be no price gouging, but the gas companies are not hearing that. They're price gouging, as they always have. This is not just a pandemic problem; this is a problem that has existed for a long time. I guess that's the government's defence: "Oh, it has nothing to do with the pandemic." Well, in the middle of a pandemic, people have less money, and if we're paying more for gas than we should be, then it's price gouging.

The government says that it's going to do something when it comes to dealing with the crisis in long-term care. Who here doesn't agree that we should be doing something in regard to long-term care? The government tabled Bill 197, and it doesn't say "long" or "care" as words inside the bill, let alone put them together. The government says it wants to do something, but it's not showing it in action when it comes to actually taking concrete steps to get us to where we need to go.

I say to my friends on the government side: I give you full credit for the words you're using, but I've got to tell you, I'm not going to give you very much credit for your actual actions because you tend to do different than you say, and this particular motion is an extension of that. The government is putting forward a motion to create a select committee that will give members the ability to call the Premier for up to 30 minutes before committee to ask questions about decisions his cabinet would have made when it comes to doing emergency orders. Wow. But then, when you take a look at how they've dealt with this legislatively, they've kind of turned the thing upside down. In the end, it's a lessening of the authority of the House, not an increase in the authority of the House.

We as members will have less ability to affect the outcome of an emergency order as a result of Bill 195 than we currently have today, because the government has to have support of the opposition to get the bill through as we debated just previously. We had—what?—a two-and-a-half-hour debate on the emergency orders we just extended. There's a safeguard by the way the current process works that, if we need to, we can hold it up and demand that the government send it to committee? Are they obligated to send it to committee? No. But we have the right to ask to have it go to committee. If we felt there was a problem with one of the emergency orders that we think was an overreach on the part of the government, our mechanism to deal with that would be to hold the bill up in the House to have a full debate and, in the debate, request that the government refer that particular matter to committee to be able to move on.

What the government is doing now is that they're saying, "No, you're not going to have that right. We're taking that away from you. All we're going to do is, we're going to give you the possibility of being able to call the Premier for up to 30 minutes." I know what we're going to get when we call the Premier for 30 minutes; we're going to get what we'd get in his press conferences.

Miss Monique Taylor: His designate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's actually a very good point, because it's the Premier or his designate, so more than

likely we'll end up with the designate. But let's say we do get the Premier; we're going to get what we get in his press conferences. He will say all the right things, but because the government has a majority in committee, there's going to be no way for the committee itself to be able to do anything to exert pressure on the Premier to change direction or stop whatever he's doing that we and the public may not be in agreement with, because the government has a majority. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, that's why we drafted this particular amendment to the committee, and I'm going to send a copy over to the table as the usher comes here.

First of all, I'll talk about the purpose of the motion before I read it into the record. The purpose is quite simple. If you're going to send this thing into a committee, if you're going to create a select committee, the committee should be made up of an equal number of members on both sides, chaired by the government. The government should get to chair that committee, a select committee like that—we have no argument—but it should be an equal number of members on both sides of the committee, so that there is at least an equal playing field when it comes to having some mechanism to hold the government to account.

1530

Because currently—not currently; with this Bill 195, should it pass, and the government introduces an emergency order that the public is really upset about, there's not a lot you can do about it because cabinet has the authority to do it and there's no mechanism in the House for us to try to change it. So at the very least, we should have an ability to have a select committee, if it's going to exist, to be equal in numbers. That's the motion that I have here. I'll hand it to the Clerk and to the usher in a minute. It reads as follows:

I move that the motion be amended by striking out "11" in the second paragraph and replacing it with "nine"; and striking out "seven" and replacing it with "five"; and by striking out everything after the first "the" in the third paragraph and replacing it with "Independent members shall indicate in writing to the Clerk of the assembly the name of the independent member on the committee."

I'll give that to the usher.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Bisson has moved that the motion be amended by striking out "11" in the second paragraph and replacing it with "nine"; and striking out "seven" and replacing it with "five"; and by striking out everything after the first "the" in the third paragraph and replacing it with "Independent members shall indicate in writing to the Clerk of the assembly the name of the independent member on the committee."

Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I explained, the intent of this amendment—I hope the government looks at it as a friendly amendment; it's not meant to be an unfriendly amendment, if you want to use the opposite term. It's to say, if we're going to give cabinet, because the government is going to vote on this with its majority and they're going to more than likely pass Bill 195—I don't know, but

I would imagine it will. I don't want to anticipate that the government is all going to vote with us or against us or whatever way. The point is that if we're going to refer this power to committee—in other words, the House will no longer, as a Legislature, have an ability to debate—allowing the government to move forward or not move forward on an emergency measure, then it only stands to reason that if the government says the check and balance is to have a select committee and the select committee then can decide if the government overstepped or did okay, it should be an equal number of members.

At the end of the day, it's a government Chair. We know what the rules of the Legislature are when it comes to how Chairs operate. They're independent in the sense that they are supposed to not rule as a New Democrat or as a Conservative, but rather as a committee Chair. That's why we've said up to five, because there would be five total members appointed by the government, of which one would be the chair, and then there would be three New Democrats appointed and one independent, selected by the independents themselves in a different process than the government proposed in their original motion. In that way, there would be four voting members on the committee from the government side and four voting members on the opposition side, and in that way we would be able to have a discussion and have an ability to hold the government to account, because it's an extraordinary power that we're giving the cabinet.

Think about it, Mr. Speaker. The government, by order in council, will be able to change a collective agreement, right? That's tiptoeing around the Constitution, quite frankly. But they'll have an ability to change a collective agreement in reference to the pandemic. Now, should some of that be done? It's not welcome news on the part of many who are organized into labour groups for the government to do this, but there's some logic to why you need to allow workers from one workplace to go to the next workplace, given it is a pandemic. We understand that. But we're going to be giving the government the ability to do things like that. The government will be able to say, "You can't meet in groups larger than X, Y or Z." The government will be able to say, "Workplace A, B or C shall be open or shall be closed." There will be things that we haven't even thought of when it comes to extraordinary powers that the government could act on when it comes to dealing with the pandemic. That is a really, really serious thing.

In the future, when the courts are looking at some challenge on the part of the public as to the government overstepping its authority when it comes to the declaration of these emergencies under this new bill that's proposed, I think the courts will be looking to this debate in order to see how they should rule. I want to make it clear that we, as New Democrats, believe that yes, there are reasons and times that extraordinary measures must be taken to deal with the pandemic. But there needs to be a safeguard in our democracy by which there is a process by which it is not just the government's will, strictly, that wins the day—that there is an airing of views in the Legislature or in

committee in some way that gives the government the ability to take a pause and to decide yea or nay to move forward with a particular issue, as far as declaring an emergency order.

What the government is now doing is that—there will no longer be, under Bill 195, a mechanism that will allow the Legislature to say, "Hang on a second; you've overstepped here." We're referring that authority to committee—fair enough; I don't think it should be, but that's where it's going. It's going to be a majority committee, which means to say the government is just going to rubber-stamp their own decisions. I'm sorry, but that's the way it works, Mr. Speaker.

Oh, my friend is bringing something to me here. My trusty assistant of many years is sending me something, which I'm going to deal with in a second.

I just say that the government is now saying that that authority is going to go to committee and the committee is going to be governed by the majority government, which means to say there's really no oversight other than a 30-minute discussion at committee with the Premier or his designate. That's obviously a bit of a problem.

Mr. Speaker, I want to withdraw the previous amendment and give you a new amendment. My staffer just caught an error—along with the Clerks, and I thank the Clerks for that—in regard to the first amendment, so I'm just going to formally ask you to withdraw the previous amendment, and I will move a new one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Bisson has asked to withdraw the previous amendment and is going to give us the new amendment.

Mr. Bisson?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It reads as follows:

I move that the motion be amended by striking out "11" in the second paragraph and replacing it with "nine"; and striking out "seven" and replacing it with "five"; and by striking out everything after the first "the" in the fourth paragraph and replacing it with "Independent members shall indicate in writing to the Clerk of the assembly the name of the independent member on the committee."

I will send that your way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Bisson has moved that the motion be amended by striking out "11" in the second paragraph and replacing it with "nine"; and striking out "seven" and replacing it with "five"; and by striking out everything after the first "the" in the fourth paragraph and replacing it with "Independent members shall indicate in writing to the Clerk of the assembly the name of the independent member on the committee."

Mr. Bisson?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you. The problem with the previous motion was the numbering of the paragraphs, so that we get that straight. I want to thank our trusty assistant and the House leader's whip's office, along with the Clerks, for catching that. It's much appreciated.

To finish the point that I was making: If the government is going to take the authority to be able to extend emergency orders directly to cabinet without them having to

come through the Legislature, then at the very least there has to be a mechanism that allows the committee to be able to, in an effective manner, deal with that particular order. What do we do if the government overreaches in one of the orders? I'm not saying they're going to do that, but the potential is there for any government—this government or the next government—because the government says this thing is going to be sunsetted in two years. We'll see. I don't know.

My point is, there needs to be some sort of check and balance that allows the rights of individuals within our society not to be hard done by in regard to what the government is attempting to do here. I just think that would be the wise thing to do.

1540

I don't have a heck of a lot more that I want to say, other than to say to the government I hope that they accept our friendly amendment and that they see it that way, because at the end, they will have five members, the opposition will have four, of which the government will hold the Chair. I think that's the smart way to do things, because what are we trying to fix here? There's never been a case where the opposition has held up the request by the government to have the declaration of an emergency order made during this pandemic. It hasn't happened.

We're trying to fix something that's not broken here. One has to ask themselves, why is it that the government needs to do this? The only conclusions you can draw yourself; I'm not going to say what they are. People can make their own conclusions. If the system now works and it has served Ontarians well, why do we have to change it?

We heard the argument by the Solicitor General, who said, "Oh, yes, but it's because it's a difference of having a dimmer switch and a light switch." She used the example of crowds of not more than 10 being able to gather. Under the current regulation, under the current way that the orders are written, if it's 10, you can't amend it to be nine or amend it to be 20. You have to either terminate that regulation, that order, or just leave it alone.

I say to the government across the way, just terminate the order and write a new one under the act. That's all you have to do. "We no longer want 10. We want 15 or we want five" or whatever it is that you want. The government has the ability to do that. Again, I just say to the government across the way that there has never been a case where the opposition has held up the government's ability to be able to pass legislation—we haven't even debated these things at great length.

With that, that's all I have to say about that, Mr. Speaker. Have a great day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Are we doing further debate on the amendment?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I rise today in support of motion number 85 in terms of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. As the member opposite brought the amendment—unfortunately, I won't be supporting that amendment this afternoon.

Before I go into the many reasons why we require a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight,

I want to take a moment to thank Ontario's front-line health care and essential service workers who have been performing above and beyond for many, many months. I think they deserve our utmost respect for what they have done during this COVID-19 crisis. Whether at a local grocery store, your community pharmacy or hospital, these unwavering individuals have been dedicated to ensuring our province gets the health care and supplies we all need to survive in these difficult times. Thank you to the foodservice individuals who pivoted their production to provide curbside and delivery meals, and all those in the restaurant industry who were able to provide meals to our front-line and essential workers, as well as others in need.

There are two major hospitals in Mississauga, the Trillium Health Partners, and we saw many examples of community members and organizations coming out and going above and beyond to support these front-line health care workers, who honestly did not see their families for days and days and continued to work. It was like a call to duty sort of situation, where they forgot about everything else. They are so passionate about what they have been doing every day, and that is to help the people of this province. As I said earlier, my utmost respect goes to these individuals, our front-line health care workers.

Mr. Speaker, I must say over here, thank you also to those industries who were able to produce PPE to bolster our provincial supply. Your work has been incredible. There have been so many organizations that stepped up in terms of the Ontario spirit. They went above and beyond to make sure that they were able to either bring supplies from outside Canada or start manufacturing PPE right here in Canada—or in our beautiful province, Ontario. This truly shows the Ontario spirit and what my colleague from Markham–Stouffville has said many, many times in his wonderful speeches here: When the Premier asked for organizations, individuals and corporations to step up, they all did. They all responded to our Premier's request of showing what the true Ontario spirit is. It felt like we all were part of one family, working together to make sure that we are able to fight this virus that unfortunately took the lives of many Ontarians. But as I always said, we are going to come out of this crisis stronger than ever before.

Thank you to the long-term-care staff and the Canadian Armed Forces who undertook the critical task of bolstering and supporting facilities that were struggling with outbreaks of COVID-19.

In my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, we have the Cooksville Care Centre. I was very fortunate to go and visit Cooksville Care Centre at the very early stages and was happy to bring PPE. Actually, I received a call from them one day, and they said that they were struggling with masks, gloves and hand sanitizer. So I started to make some phone calls, and I was fortunate that a few organizations stepped up and provided PPE, which I was able to bring to them. You could see the smiles on the faces of these front-line workers who were there, because initially, some of them were reusing masks. It was definitely a health issue. But that smile honestly made my day, because you feel that sense of achievement, that you

have done something good for our front-line health care workers, who go above and beyond for us.

As I've said in this House many, many times, my grandfather, who was part of World War II, was a veteran. When he came to Canada in the late 1960s after retiring from the army, he always used to say this to me: "Kaleed, this country has given so much to me." He used to really enjoy, with other veterans, having—whether they were meeting at Tim Hortons for a cup of coffee or their regular activities. He used to say to me, "Kaleed, this country has given so much to me, to us. And it is your responsibility now to give back to this country." During this time, especially with COVID-19, when we were going out there, delivering PPE or working with the Mississauga Food Bank—I wish my grandfather was here today to see what his grandson was doing. I'm sure he's watching from up there. Honestly, I just feel I haven't done enough yet, and there's a lot of work to do. But I hope I'm making him proud.

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I also want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all our esteemed colleagues gathered here today, along with OLA staff, security and everyone who works so hard so that the gears of this government can remain in motion.

Appointing a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight will provide an additional mechanism of transparency and accountability. The Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight is another necessary step out of many countless steps that this government has taken since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario. As I've said, I completely support the motion, but unfortunately I won't be supporting the amendment brought by the respected member from the official opposition. I feel that the select committee is the right step in ensuring that Ontario's recovery from COVID-19 and its terrible impacts continues to go smoothly.

Mr. Speaker, this province declared a state of emergency on March 17 of this year, and for nearly four months now, our great province of Ontario has been facing unprecedented challenges at every level. So much has happened since that day, but I will try to summarize the key points by taking us through the highlights of just the first 10 days since the declaration of emergency.

Overnight, our province basically shuttered its bars and restaurants, public recreation centres, libraries, private schools, child care centres, theatres and concert venues. All public events were cancelled, including services at places of worship. Mr. Speaker, when the places of worship were asked to close their doors, I think all members will acknowledge that we received so many phone calls about places of worship being closed, because this is something which is somewhat unheard of. But I must say that the people of this province understood the reasoning behind it. I always say that I'm not a medical expert and we have to listen to the Chief Medical Officer of Health of this province because they are the expert. The command table that has been sitting during these times—they are the experts. They know exactly what is the right step and what is the wrong step.

I think that since closing the places of worship and now reopening at 30% capacity, I have seen a lot of individuals of different communities, different faith groups, coming out and acknowledging and appreciating what the government has done and why we have started to reopen places of worship. With even 30% capacity, at least individuals have the opportunity to go to their respective places of worship and pray.

I myself have been going to mosques for prayers, especially every Friday, and it just gives you a sense of relief that things are getting better, but also that we are on a path of recovery. As I said, I think we are going to come out of this crisis stronger than ever before.

Mr. Speaker, only essential services such as grocery stores, convenience stores, pharmacies, public transit, manufacturing facilities and supply chain companies were permitted to remain operational. A lot of times during the last four months, people have been asking, as an example, "How come the grocery stores are open and you have closed places of worship?" I always used to have a conversation where I had to make them understand that it is an essential service. Grocery stores are an essential service, and at the end of the day, we all have to eat, right?

Initially, I think it was a shock for the people of this province with this whole COVID-19 and the declaration of emergency, but I think slowly, slowly, everybody started to understand what was going on. This was a shock for all of us. We were all hearing in the news about COVID-19.

Even my kids, when the schools were shut down and they started doing online schooling—it was something like a surprise for them that they were sitting at home and not going to school. They were studying from home—online schooling. This was something that was unheard of.

I think credit goes to our Minister of Education for doing such an incredible job of making sure that our students are able to graduate this year—and not just the Minister of Education, but also the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, for doing consultations throughout this entire process to make sure that we have all the right information to make the right decisions. As the minister has said throughout COVID-19, "Our students are going to graduate."

I was part of a few online graduations as well. Even my own son, who just graduated from SK, had an online graduation. It was really fun to watch them having online graduations.

This whole COVID-19 pandemic has taught us about technology as well. Now, everyone is having Zoom conferences.

Mr. Speaker, prior to becoming an MPP, I was working for BlackBerry. I joined BlackBerry at a time when John Chen, who is the current CEO, came to BlackBerry. It was all about the turnaround efforts. When my wife asked me, "Kaleed, why are you joining BlackBerry?," I said that it was the last Canadian icon left and I wanted to make sure that it stayed Canadian. During my BlackBerry days, we used to talk about how all the organizations are going to eventually shift things such as working from home or

doing things remotely. And we saw that, throughout this whole process—that organizations changed the way they do business.

We saw Zoom, as an organization, become famous overnight. Everybody was suddenly doing Zoom conferences. Even us here, among our colleagues, our Mississauga MPPs were having Zoom calls. We were having calls with Trillium Health Partners. We were having Zoom meetings with our stakeholders. We were having Zoom conversations with our respective constituents. I had so many online meetings with stakeholders, with our constituents, that I may have not even had in my entire career at BlackBerry. It shows how the people of this province are adapting to change, and I think they all appreciate that as well, because what we have done in this Legislature is that—the business has continued to go on, on a daily basis.

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I appreciate what our minister from Markham–Stouffville has always said, that the people of this province are the taxpayers. They pay our salaries. Last week, I was having a conversation with my wife where I was saying that we are very fortunate that we have a job. I'm sure there are many people out there right now who are struggling, so I should not be the one complaining that I have to come to this wonderful building and work. It's a privilege to be here.

So when we say that the people of this province are paying our salaries, I think they expect us to do our job as well and to make sure that we give them all the information and try to be transparent. Now, when we are talking about this select committee, this is just an additional step that we, as a government, are taking to make sure that we are able to provide the information to the people of this province as to what exactly we are doing when we are talking about emergencies. I also think the people of this province deserve to get the information from us as well.

Again, as I said, unfortunately, I won't be supporting the amendment brought forward by the member opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: As with Bill 195, I won't be supporting this motion. I do appreciate the amendment from the member from Timmins that allows us to make our own decision, although our participation in that committee, as you can see—10 minutes a month, in two five-minute increments—is not exactly our idea of oversight.

I just want to reiterate what I said earlier. This is going to be a select committee of a few people, and what we're asking Ontarians—and what we've done over three months are things like closing their schools. We've closed their churches. We told their businesses that they couldn't operate. We told doctors and nurses, "You can't go on vacation. And by the way, you're working over there." You can't get together with more than five people, not even in your backyard. Think about those things. Those are necessary things—they were, but at some point they become unnecessary.

Basic, fundamental rights of people—we've asked them for the power to take that away. Very generously,

and very trustingly, they gave it to all of us, not just some of us—because all of us, also known as the Committee of the Whole, represent all the people in Ontario. There's nothing wrong with the current way of doing business and extending orders every month. It was intended to be that way, because the things that we're asking of people are extraordinary. They sacrificed a lot, so we at least owe it to them to bring it back to all of us and give ourselves the opportunity to debate it in a more fulsome way.

I'll say it once more: Not once has this debate over the extension of emergency orders lasted more than two hours—the debate that we just had. People are putting trust in other people in here. Now we're just going to take it away from here and we're going to put it in a select committee, and everybody will get a little bit of time. The government will have a majority. They'll write the report. We'll write some dissenting opinions. It will go on a shelf. The Premier can show up or not; somebody else can be delegated to do it. It's just not right. It's not the right thing to do. That's not why this place is here, so I won't be supporting this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I rise to speak to this amendment to government motion number 84. I just wanted to talk about what our Solicitor General outlined this week when she talked about the importance of not only tabling legislation that gives Ontarians a little more security, a little more transparency, a little more hope, but also the components in this bill that add to the legislative oversight that is so important.

I wanted to go over some of the successes that we've had to date as a Legislature, as a parliamentary democracy. When Ontario was hit with COVID-19, we all had to react very quickly. We had to put partisan divisions aside and we really had to come together to pass emergency legislation. Time and time again we were in this Legislature debating it over and over again, but why? "Why" was to protect the people of Ontario, to protect our businesses. They made tremendous sacrifices. Many folks in the health care sector, many businesses had made sacrifices.

These great personal sacrifices throughout the pandemic are why we want to be very transparent with the standing committee. It's also the reason I can't particularly support this amendment. When we look at the great sacrifices that were made through this pandemic, we have to think of all the families. One family in particular I wanted to discuss—and why it's so important to think of these individuals—is in the proud riding that I serve, Barrie–Innisfil. We have a family who own about 15 restaurants in the area. From Dosti Eats to Simmering Kettle to many other restaurants like Stacked, the whole family is really investing in the area, and they sacrificed a lot when it came to COVID-19, but it was important, because they wanted to keep residents in their community safe.

As things gradually reopened, they gave back to the community. They opened up Dosti Eats, for example, which has different fast foods. The story of Dosti Eats is

really incredible, Mr. Speaker, because it really shows you the great fabric we have here in Ontario. The wife is Indian and her husband is Guyanese, so they wanted to open up this fast-food eatery that takes Caribbean food, mixes it with Mexican food and puts in an Indian flair. It tells you the real spirit we have here in Ontario. You have the entrepreneurial spirit that is shown by Shalu Persaud and her husband, Naren, who founded these eateries. Of course their three daughters went on into business—like I was saying, they opened up Stacked Pancake House with their nephew—and his wife's youngest sister even owns the Mucho Burrito in Barrie as well, so you see the real spirit of Ontario, a family that really wants to invest in the area.

But COVID-19 took a really tough turn on everyone. So to turn things around for them and their community, they wanted to give back, and especially when things happened across borders, be it in the US or Canada. They opened up one of their restaurants to receive donations for uplifting Black youth in our community by offering to be a donation spot for care packages. You saw care packages coming around from all walks of life, whether it was Shelley Finnigan from EB Games—who gave a big donation.

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Despite what was happening with COVID-19, you had a lot of the community really stepping up and you had these families that really wanted to do something about it. That's why it was so important for the government to step up to the plate when it came to COVID-19. We wanted to support everyone. We gave record investments into our health care sector, people's businesses. We wanted to make sure everyone was provided with personal protective equipment. We wanted to protect workers from losing their jobs and tenants from losing their home. We lowered hydro rates, reinjected \$10 billion into our provincial economy and much more, Mr. Speaker. But that aside, we also put together the largest contingency fund in Ontario's history for good measure.

Again, this piece of legislation we're here to debate today is for good measure. We could have just introduced an emergency bill without a standing committee for oversight, but again, we wanted to put in a good measure. We put in a contingency fund. We're financially responsible and we've made sure that we're accountable to Ontarian electorates. But just the same, here in legislation, we want to be accountable to the public, give full transparency, so that there is a committee that would be able to review all the measures every 30 days. We really owe it to them. That's a current theme when it comes to what really drives this government.

Right now, we really want to see their economy roaring back again. I can't help but reflect on the 1920s. We've seen how much technology has really evolved, similar to the evolutions of technology in the Industrial Revolution and what we've seen from the 1920s—but again it was hit by an economic crisis. As much as COVID-19 is first and foremost a health care pandemic, it's really affected our economy. It is why it was so important to introduce these measures as a government so that we have the ability and

the flexibility to tell Ontarians that we are here to protect them, but at the same time, we understand when changes need to be made very quickly.

Certainly, our government hasn't been making changes on our own. We've been consulting with public health, which is very important. We can't make decisions without public health, because this is a health pandemic after all. But we've seen how we, as a team, could work together not only across partisan lines, across government lines, across your communities—I mentioned some in my riding—and we were all really in this together to bring those cases down.

Today was a really pivotal point in this whole pandemic we've been in, and that's going to stage 3 of the economy. It's so important to go to stage 3 to be able to reopen things, being able to have activities outdoors of 100 people, being able to put on live music and concerts—obviously not in big concert halls, but small ones outside. That's so important for the cultural fabric of Ontario. We have the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport who's been travelling all over the area to really foster and encourage that hope and prosperity within our province.

I've mentioned it a few times: In Barrie, we had Barrie music live. It was a Facebook group that was initiated for COVID-19 fundraising efforts. A lot of charities are still operating and they still need to function via donations, and so they established this online virtual ability to play music online and be able to donate. But now, the individuals in Barrie–Innisfil can continue to play on because they're able to actually gather outside to do those charitable events and whatnot. They're very excited. In fact, when stage 3 happened today, I had Shawn Gibson from BarrieToday give me a call and that was what he really picked out—the fact that we are going to be spurring our local cultural economy within the area of Barrie–Innisfil.

That's why this is so important when we talk about—and the minister said this really well when she first introduced this bill, which includes the motion that we are debating today with the standing committee, and that is, of course, that it wasn't easy to declare a state of emergency. It took a team effort. It took a very prudent approach. It was important because it was the right thing to do and we wanted to continue down a path of safety, but also now we want to continue down a path of recovery.

The minister was saying as well, and the Premier echoed this: As much as we have the bill before us and we talk about emergency measures and being able to have that flexibility with, of course, the oversight of the standing committee, it does not allow us to have new orders, and that's really important. I know that the Premier and our Solicitor General had said those remarks. Of course, everything that we would do through this pandemic would be in line with our public health officers and ensuring that we get their advice. It's very important.

But there are a few things that the minister had also mentioned, and what she was saying is, we continue to go down the path to recovery by easing restrictions where appropriate while maintaining important, select tools to address ongoing threats of COVID-19. Then she went on

to say that the proposed legislation “would bridge the gap between the public health measures that were necessary to respond to the initial and immediate threat of COVID-19” and those now needed to support Ontario’s safe recovery. That really sums up the importance of having not only a flexible response to COVID-19, but again, this oversight that we are talking about today with the standing committee.

Again, we saw the success of many committees we’ve had here in this Legislature. When I was talking about getting the economy roaring and all the great digital stuff we’ve had, we’ve seen the amount of digital tools that have been used for committee. Likewise, with the standing committee, again, we have to practise safety and physical distancing—and how we were able to turn that around in this Legislature and really bring things up to the 21st century. I know that the Standing Committee on Finance, for instance, has been sitting this whole time, and they continue to do that to really get the economy back and roaring again.

In order to do that, Mr. Speaker, we have to be just as nimble as our businesses have been. Like we were saying, they were open one day, they were closed another day, then they were able to open with curbside collection and then they were able to have patios. They were adjusting; they were tweaking the business models they needed. But at the core of it, at the core of all of it, was the safety of their customers because, as much as it is their livelihood, they also want to make sure they keep their communities safe. That’s just in line with what the government is doing as well.

We see that safety, of course, is first, and we continue to look at the numbers. Of course today we saw that the numbers are looking really great, and we were able to move into stage 3. What does stage 3 mean and what does it mean for the standing committee?

Well, for businesses in Barrie–Innisfil, stage 3 means that restaurants like Ol’ West Wing by Chris Nelson—he wasn’t able to have a patio. Now he can have indoor seating. There are many community members who really rely on that restaurant as their place of social gathering, and of course they’ll do it safely. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has mandated masks indoors, and certainly a lot of people are respecting that.

It also allows other restaurants a leg up, like Get Roasted Cafe, who have been trying to really accelerate their pickup and their delivery. They set up the little patio they could, but now they can really open up their doors. Do you know what that’s also going to help them do? By them opening up their doors, they can meet their obligations, like pay the rent. Certainly we’ve heard a lot about that.

But it really takes leadership, Mr. Speaker. It takes this government moving and taking action, and this is why it’s so important to move forward with giving flexibility to emergency measures, so that we can tell Tammy who owns Club Pilates in Barrie that now she can open up her business, which was just so nascent. It was less than a year old. They opened it just before COVID-19 happened.

Similarly, Simcoe Tackle opened back in February. This is their prime fishing season, so that’s going to help them as well. And many other gyms—we talk about not only the outdoors and how important it is for your health, but for people, physical activity is a big part of their health, too. Now they can do that safely indoors.

Many of those new businesses that opened—again, they were flexible all along. When gyms could not have their patrons inside, they offered to have training and group training outdoors. They had that flexibility. Any business owner knows they need to build in that flexibility, and the government is not doing anything different than that. It’s building in that flexibility to be in tune with what Ontario residents expect, and of course, giving them that ability to move forward.

We talk about other businesses, like 9Round, as well—they opened just before the pandemic—and you think about all those places that parents rely on for their kids to have a really fun summer; Kaleidoscope, for example. Now that they’re able to have people indoors, those parents that really want their kids to learn more STEM are able to go into Kaleidoscope and get more of that experiential learning, but also go to the camp, which is exciting. Again, another example of business—Kaleidoscope was really an indoor business. They needed to be flexible during COVID-19; therefore, they decided to set up a camp and do it safely so that parents have confidence, and of course, all the children that are participating in their camp program feel safe as well.

We expected businesses to be flexible, so of course the government will follow suit and we’ll also have the flexibility when it comes to emergency measures so that we can work with public health, work with our business sector and make those amendments as needed.

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But we won’t do it without the needed oversight, which is exactly what we’re debating here today—which is the select committee that would be created to provide that oversight. Of course, Ontarians can tune in to the legislative channel, as they’ve done during this time, whether it’s watching the debate we’re having now, whether it’s watching the Standing Committee on Finance or any other one of our committees. But they can certainly tune in and have that accountability, which is so important.

Again—the government House leader mentioned this—it wasn’t a requirement, but we found it as a duty of this Legislature to be able to have that select committee to provide that oversight, despite it not being a requirement. I think that’s really commendable and very noble. It shows that all along, this government has really wanted to be a team player by bringing everyone back, having that accountability. I know that at the federal level it took a little while for them to come around to have their Parliament sit.

Of course, we were the first ones to do a lot of things. As mentioned earlier, Ontario was one of the first jurisdictions to close schools, and we didn’t do it lightly. We did it to protect children. Since that day, we’ve certainly made it further along, and I know I’m hearing

from a lot of parents locally. Many are thrilled that they're going to be able to have their kids go back to school in the fall, whatever model that looks like for them. Many are saying that they prefer the full-time model for that certainty for their jobs so that they can continue with their commute to work, while some other parents are advocating for the virtual approach just to protect their children. That's, again, providing that flexibility within education, flexibility to allow parents the choice when it comes to education. That's that theme of providing flexibility—that you've got to move with the times. And it's just what we're doing within this bill, but also this motion that is part of the bill, which allows us to have this committee that complements all of the safety approaches we've done to date—very, very important.

I was on quite a business tour this past weekend in my riding, and certainly many of them are glad that they're—they see the common sense behind building in flexibility when it comes to legislation. They won't know all the ins and outs of legislation certainly, but they understand the need for flexibility. Again, they do in their day-to-day lives, they do in their business, and it would be no different from a government. Because we've had big challenges—COVID-19 was certainly a very large challenge, and we've overcome it. We've overcome it by having Ontarians trust in their government—trust it to do the right thing and trust it to have the right advice from public health. It's that enshrined trust between the government and the people that it represents that is so enshrined within this Legislature—that we come here and it gives us real pride that we are able to be here to represent many of the things that make up our riding.

I spoke about some of those things and how it would benefit our local community organizations or community ridings and whatnot, but I just think of the great outdoors and how a lot of people talk about summer vacation. Many families might have wanted to go out and travel somewhere, but now they're really discovering their province. It's a whole new way to discover the province, whether it be going to Blue Mountain, whether it's going to—this weekend in Innisfil we had Skydive Toronto, and Laura, who is five years cancer-free, participated in a skydiving event to mark her five years cancer-free. So Laura, if you're watching, congratulations on your jump. You're certainly more brave than I am. I know Joe, who runs the skydiving business, was closed for a very long time, but now he's running it safely and he's able to operate for the next few months. It's a very good place in Innisfil, which we're very proud of. It attracts many tourists from all areas, and certainly we commend Joe for moving his business from farther up north and moving it a little closer to Innisfil. We're very fortunate to have him there.

But it's those businesses that, again, had to exercise flexibility as well. They had to close their business at the beginning of all of this, and as they realized how they could do things safely—Skydive Toronto, as I was saying, which is located in Innisfil, they do a temperature check. They have you fill out a form that asks if you have any of the symptoms. You sign it; you agree that you signed the

form, the location, the time. Then they put a wristband on you, you go through in the facility and then you continue on, whether you are a skydiver or you are an observer, as I was on Sunday, watching Laura jump out of a plane to mark her five years cancer-free. So congratulations, Laura. But that shows you that all businesses are stepping up to bring in that flexibility that they need but also all the safety measures they want. It's, again, no different than what the government is doing. We're providing safety and, of course, we're keeping in sync with our economy, but certainly safety is number one, and doing it with the flexibility that we're able to exercise. Again, in exercising that flexibility, we're not singling out the lack of transparency, and the transparency will continue as expected, like the accountability measures that are proposed in this act, in the measures.

As it was mentioned, the government is going to have all members of all parties be a member of the standing committee. At least every 30 days, they will—the committee will—be able to do questions and answers with the Premier's designate. I think that is a great example of how not only our government is providing extra transparency and accountability, but how we're really just echoing what all Ontarians have been doing this entire time through COVID-19.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? Further debate? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, sir. I appreciate that. Sorry for my tardiness on that.

I appreciate the opportunity to spend a little bit of time talking on this today. I did speak to the original motion, and I know we're speaking to the amendment that is before us. I don't think that the member will find any surprise in the fact that I'll be voting against the amendment. We put forward a proposal that I believe would respect the composition of the House, and that's what the original motion has. It's an opportunity for us to look at all of the things that we are doing and that we're continuing to do, as I spoke—I wouldn't say “at length”—to originally.

I don't think I need to speak too long to the motion today; I just wanted to—or to the amendment, excuse me. I just wanted, whilst I have the floor, to say a few words because we are talking about emergency orders and extension of emergency orders. I just wanted to spend a few minutes speaking about some of the impacts that these emergency orders have had and why it's important that we continue to have some oversight. I'll be specific to some of the small, medium and even a couple of the large enterprises in my own riding.

I think I spoke at length about Frank's barber shop once. I don't need to bring that back up. But when you talk about some of the other small businesses in my riding, whether it was the Main Street Bakehouse, whether it was the Fickle Pickle in Stouffville—as I said, Fickle Pickle on Main Street, Stouffville, has been an institution for decades. They were very concerned, and they still are. I don't want to belittle the fact that this continues to be something very, very challenging for them. They're still very worried about how COVID is impacting them.

We've seen some of the recommendations that came out of the standing committee on finance with respect to patios and allowing extension of services onto patios. Ironically, in my hometown, this has—I wonder if some of my colleagues feel the same way—really brought life back to our historic downtown, life that had been missing. It's now getting more and more busy. It's nice seeing activity out front. You're seeing more people moving around and coming back into the historic downtown because there is more life on the street because we allow patios to extend onto the sidewalks.

In speaking to some of the businesses that are involved, they acknowledge the fact that they understand why we have to keep the orders in place and they understand and respect that we need to continue to be vigilant on COVID-19, but it is tough for them. It is very, very tough for them. The Fickle Pickle is about 5,000 square feet, and it's now relegated to a patio of about, maybe, maximum 20 tables, and I think I'm probably exaggerating when I say "20 tables." But they have continued to keep people employed. They are doing the best that they can. They made some investments in the patios to bring chairs out. They're continuing to do all that they can to keep things going, but they're nervous. We are nervous in the town as well, because they are such an important local institution.

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The Main Street Bakehouse—I've mentioned them once before. Oliver Belo and his family have done something very special on Main Street in Stouffville. Not only is their patio—I say "patio"; it's a sidewalk, basically, with tables and some lights overtop, but they've made it look really, really nice. The entertainment they have is themselves, their singing. Their family are great singers. It's a family of singers and they are the entertainment, Mr. Speaker. But they're making a go of it, no matter how challenging it is. They have two locations, one in Markham and one in Stouffville. They're making a go of it, but they, too, are very, very nervous. They want to see more going on.

It's a struggle that I think a lot of us have and that a lot of our small, medium and large job creators have. As legislators, as parliamentarians, our number one priority is the safety and security of the people we represent. We want them to be healthy, but at the same time we all understand that people have made enormous investments. Whether it's in small, medium or large enterprises, they've made enormous personal investments, and without them being successful, we will not have the resources we need in order to invest, whether it's in long-term care, whether it's in education or all of the other things that we do.

But we've seen examples. We've seen examples that when you open up too quickly, you set yourself back even further, and what we are seeing, as I touched on earlier, with some of our friends down south is very, very concerning to a lot of us. We struggle with that in this place, Mr. Speaker. We struggle with how we ensure people's safety, how we get the economy going.

We've seen the numbers. The Premier talked about it this morning in a question from the member from for Mississauga South—

Interjection: Lakeshore.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Lakeshore, excuse me—a question from the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore. The Premier referenced that some 300,000 people had gone back to work, and while that sounds good, it's great and we're encouraged by that, that still leaves far, far too many Ontarians still waiting to get back to work, and this is a struggle for them. There's a lot of people—I'm hearing it in my own community—balancing the end or the conclusion of federal supports with their back-to-work protocol and whether it's in the business they're working for.

So it is a very, very challenging time for all of us to try and figure out what the balance is, without causing not only stress to the people who sent us here but, more importantly, causing—I don't want to even say a second wave—by being irresponsible, causing us to be in a situation that we don't want to be in, which then leads to other problems.

As I've said in a couple of other speeches I had, it's also a time of remarkable opportunity in the province of Ontario. Through every challenging time there is always an opportunity for things we should be proud of, despite the challenges that we are having in the province, despite the fact we're seeing not only just Ontarians, but millions of Canadians out of work because of this. Investments slow down and dry up.

The disappointment that we have from students—I talked about my own daughter missing her grade 8 graduation. University students have put so much into their studies and then aren't able to celebrate with family. The challenges that come with not being able to visit family in a long-term-care home, I can't imagine how difficult that would be for individuals.

I know in the context of my own family that often it's family members who are also part of the caregiving team, and it's hard. We've had members on our side, as I'm sure members opposite have as well, who have lost loved ones during this. You know, a funeral on Zoom—it's unimaginable that this is where we would be. I don't think any of us thought at any time that we would be having funerals on Zoom, that weddings would be cancelled, that we would meet in the way that we have met in this place over the last number of months. Nobody would have ever imagined that. But at the same time, we are coming through it, and we're coming through it very well.

The Premier talked about the Ontario spirit. It's not just the Ontario spirit; it's the Canada spirit. We have seen this—I have a sister who's in North Carolina right now. It was her birthday a couple of days ago, so I'll say happy birthday to my sister Connie. But she was telling me the difference—she obviously continues to pay very close attention to what's happening in Canada, but it is so different down there than the experiences that we've had here.

Governments of all political stripes have set aside any differences, whether it's the federal government or the provincial governments across the country. Regardless of what party they represent, they've done something that is, I think, very special and very unique, in the sense that we

have come together and we've worked very closely to make sure that we are able to deal with the issues that Ontarians and Canadians want us to deal with. In particular, we initially sought, when we started this back in March—we knew that we had to work very closely with the federal government, and our municipal partners said the same to us: "Whilst you work with the federal government, you're going to need to work very closely with us." And we've done that.

I've said in the House a number of times: that immediate understanding of the federal government that the provincial governments across this country had to focus on health care. As we tried to figure this out and the best ways to deal with it, we had to deal with health care. So they opened up the room on the personal support so that we could make massive investments into health care, and so that we didn't see what happened in other parts of the world. I say this, having had the opportunity to speak to my relatives who lived in Italy, and the fear that they were going through. We were watching this from here. I don't want to say that we were lucky—that's a really bad choice of words—but we were fortunate in the sense that we were able to see other jurisdictions that were hit first and some of the mistakes that they made, through no fault of their own. They were dealing with something that they hadn't dealt with. But we knew right away that we had to make sure that there was the capacity in our health care system to deal with what other jurisdictions, whether it was Italy, whether it was Spain—and we moved very quickly to do that.

We forget, now that it's July, the stress that people had when the borders were starting to close. I'm sure we all had the same calls to our constituency offices about family and friends who were in Europe or who were in the United States: "What should we do? How do we get them out? Can you help me in getting them out?" In those initial months when it was very challenging and we were uncertain, we were trying to work very closely with the federal government to get Ontarians out.

But as I said, on every issue where we have disappointment, there is opportunity. As I said, the Ontario spirit—we all knew it was there, but manufacturing has stepped up to the plate. They could have done the easier thing and said, "No, we'll wait, and we will let others deal with this." But no, they've stepped up to the plate in a way that I think has been truly remarkable. And I know all members are of the same mindset. We're grateful for the fact that, in the future, we aren't going to be relying on other jurisdictions to provide us with the personal protective equipment that is so important in dealing with this. This pandemic highlighted something that we can now deal with across Canada, not just in the province of Ontario but across Canada. That is something that I think we should all be very happy with.

We saw the move very quickly by our educators, who were on March break and then went from March break right into teaching kids online. The speed at which they were able to do that—it's not something that anyone could have expected, but it was done as quickly as possible, and

by and large we have learnt a lot from that, and our students were able to continue their educational journey thanks to the hard work of our partners in education.

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There is much that we have to be grateful for. We are learning things through this pandemic. You know, Mr. Speaker, I bring back the example of—whether it's Markham or Stouffville in the downtown, I've already spoken to my mayor, and I think it is something that we will have to be seized with as a Legislature. The life that we see coming back to some of our main streets because of some of the changes which the members on the standing committee on finance were able to highlight is something that I would like to see continue, but that's something that this Legislature will have to come to terms with. I think it has been very, very successful, and I hope that there will be increased opportunities.

What we have learnt with respect to my community in particular—Participation House is in my riding, and I think we're all very familiar with the challenges that they face. But at the same time, seeing how Markham Stouffville Hospital was able to come to the assistance of Participation House, how it was able to come to the assistance of Markham Home—this is not to suggest that the people who work in those homes weren't doing the jobs that they're supposed to be doing. Just the opposite; they were working very, very hard.

I remember initially when some of the reports came. They were completely unfair to the people who were working in these two institutions, suggesting that they had somehow abandoned the people whom they were supposed to be working for. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. It simply did not happen. These are hard-working people who were doing the best that they could. But we've learnt from that. We've learnt how we should deal when something like this, a pandemic, breaks out. What are these congregate care homes, long-term-care homes and retirement homes able to deal with? We've learnt that the best way is to invite the hospitals in a community in to help them deal with a situation that they otherwise would never have been asked to be prepared for. Part of that is the work of the people in this Legislature because we have all moved quickly, we've identified things, and we want to move forward.

I'm also proud of the fact—I've said it a million times—that the Legislature keeps sitting here. The easier thing for us to do collectively would be not to sit, but we've chosen to continue sitting, to continue debating and to continue moving legislation forward, continuing question period. We get in arguments, and that's great. That's what I think people would expect, especially during this time. That's what they expect us to do.

So we're cautiously moving in the right direction. We have some challenges, as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, in your region with migrant workers. It's not just your region; there are many migrant workers in Stouffville, which always, I think, surprises people. Why would there be a need to have migrant workers in Stouffville? We would not be able to be half as successful in farming in

Stouffville if it wasn't for migrant workers. I don't want to say "red tape"—it's not red tape—but the inconsistency in who deals with what, whether it's the federal government, which deal with the living conditions, or the provincial government, which deals with the health care side, is something that we are going to have to work on between ourselves, the federal government and the local medical officers of health, to find a way that we can end this type of inconsistency. I think it's important to them that we do that, at the same time recognizing how important that sector is to the economy.

Mr. Speaker, look: While I'm excited by the opportunities that the bill affords us—Bill 195 allows us to move out of the state of emergency, should this Legislature approve of it—this committee is something that will allow us to continue to focus on the state of emergency that we've been living through, on how we've responded to it, and brings forward not only the Premier and his designate to continue to answer—because we know that we will be in this for quite some time now. It would be nice to think that as we adjourn on July 22, that would be the end, but we will be in this reality for many months, and we just have to make sure that we address it properly.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? No, he's moved adjournment of debate. I'm sorry; I was looking down at the member from Guelph. I thought he was about to speak. Excuse me.

The government House leader has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjection: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): On division? Carried on division.

Debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Orders of the day?

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
AMENDMENT ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr. Calandra moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 167, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts /
Projet de loi 167, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Calandra referred this on February 18. We turn to the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It really is a pleasure to be able to rise quickly on this one. I say "quickly" only because I know that members on all sides of the House are in favour of the passage of this bill. We heard even last week supportive comments from the opposition, and I appreciate their support of this.

Honestly, this is a bill that has been on the order paper for quite some time. These are very long overdue amendments, and I think the amendments that are encompassed in this act will go a long way in helping us better protect the people who work in the Legislative Assembly and respect those who may feel a different desire on how we do oaths in this place when taking employment.

I think with that, I'll bring my comments to an end and again thank all colleagues for their support on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Calandra has moved third reading of Bill 167, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion is carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Orders of the day?

REBUILDING CONSUMER
CONFIDENCE ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 VISANT À RÉTABLIR
LA CONFIANCE CHEZ
LES CONSOMMATEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on July 8, 2020, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection /
Projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la protection du consommateur.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Ms. Wai had the floor when this motion was last up. Ms. Wai, are we doing further debate?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: No further debate. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? The member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You just don't know what's going to happen here today. It's all very exciting. The new way that the House is running, it's just, "Be prepared for all things at all times." Fortunately, we can do that.

I do want to start by saying, though, that the Rebuilding Consumer Confidence Act 2020—I just want to do a special shout-out to MPP Rakocevic, the member from Humber River–Black Creek, because—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes. He gave an amazing speech on this issue because he has lived it. He has experienced and walked with his constituents as they have struggled with Tarion. His stories were personal and emotional. He did everything that a good, strong, community-focused MPP should do, which is bring the voices of those people who have negative experiences with Tarion—and there are

many in this province—and respect those voices and advocate for those individuals in this Legislature.

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I have to say, I know that he did amazing work on committee. He subbed in when the Auditor General delivered that component of her 2019 report and we had the Tarion board come before us, including the past president. He asked really good questions, did the research and ensured that this watered-down version and sort of going through the motions on Bill 159 that the government has come forward with is known to everyone as not good enough for the people of this province.

The MPP for Humber River–Black Creek started off by saying, around second reading, among other things, “This bill opens up many acts in order to bring minor amendments to give the government more control over its delegated authorities.”

Delegated authorities are not well understood in this place. It was interesting for me, as an older member now in the Legislature, to watch some of the newer MPPs realize that the province does have delegated authorities, which they essentially have no governance and no oversight over, and Tarion is one of those organizations.

He goes on to say in some of his comments, “If the government really wants enhanced transparency and accountability for its delegated authorities”—which now we know that you probably don’t because you didn’t make the changes—“then make them subject to Ontario Ombudsman oversight and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act as well.”

So not only did the critic on this file obviously do the research and know the file in a very in-depth way, but he also started off by offering solutions to the government. Mr. Speaker, you’ll remember this very well, when the PCs were on this side—in fact, right here on this bench; I think one of the ministers sat right here—I distinctly remember an impassioned speech pointing to all the flaws that are part of Tarion. I just can’t imagine what it would feel like—although I sometimes hope that that may happen—having the opportunity to rectify those wrongs, to address those injustices, to use all of that experience and apply it legislatively to change the legislation, to make sure that consumer protection around home building actually is a reality in Ontario. Imagine having that opportunity and then not acting on it. It must be frustrating.

I sometimes have empathy for some of our former colleagues, whom we got to know quite well during the last session. It must be so frustrating and disappointing to be in a position of power with a majority government, which they are very fond of reminding us of, and then having the opportunity of listening to these voices through committee, and then not changing the legislation to protect consumers. I can’t imagine, myself, ever going through that process.

The MPP for Humber River–Black Creek goes through some of the legislation. He goes on to say, “But the real meat and potatoes here are contained within schedules 4 and 5, which seek to amend the New Home Construction

Licensing Act, 2017, and the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act.” That’s where he focused most of his attention.

He honours the voices who have been consistent. One of those voices, of course, is Barbara Captijn, who, in this instance—he tells a very personal story about Barbara, but she’s well known to all of us because she has come before finance committee, before estimates. We’ve met with her in our offices over the years. She has consistently lobbied for Tarion to be responsive.

Given the fact that the Auditor General did such a comprehensive review of this delegated authority, pointing to—and I just want to give a special shout-out right now to the Auditor General, because her staff go into places like Tarion. They do forensic audits, which means they stay there; they witness; they dot the i’s and they cross the t’s. And I do wish that public accounts had the opportunity to be part of this COVID-19 recovery plan that the government has. You’ll know, Mr. Speaker, that the public accounts has been prevented from meeting in this place. And the Auditor General plays such a pivotal role in holding all politicians and all governments accountable. When you follow the money, which is what she does, and you hold that accountability measure and you hold that bar high, we are all better served by that. When the Auditor General is permitted to do her work and the committee—I miss my committee, which I have to tell you I never thought I would ever say, but I miss that process of pulling in the civil servants and the bureaucrats and the agencies and having a real opportunity to hold them to account. That’s the power of our democracy and that’s the transparency that is needed in instances like this.

To go back to Barbara: She’s a long-time Tarion reform advocate and the MPP, the critic, told a very personal story. Ms. Captijn “wrote a memoriam for the late Dr. Earl Shuman—may he rest in peace—a man whose generation-long battle with Ontario’s builder-puppet home warranty program ended when Mr. Shuman took his own life. The memoriam informs of a community brought together by a system of enduring consumer protection failure”—and then the MPP, the critic, goes on to talk about Earl Shuman. I think that this story is so powerful and it resonated with so many people in this House because sometimes we forget that it is those stories that have brought us to this place.

I’m an MPP because 20 years ago cuts were being made to education—and the only opportunity, the only chance that I had to be successful in this province was because I am the product of an excellent education system. I say that with great modesty. I know the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane was active around environmental issues and around water quality; that brought him to this place. My good friend from Hamilton Mountain has always cared deeply about children and wants to see those rights maintained and heightened and strengthened.

To hear the MPP for Humber River–Black Creek really honour Mr. Earl Shuman in such a powerful and emotional way resonated—because we do lose track sometimes, Mr. Speaker, about who we work for, and we need constant

reminders, I think. I'm not saying that we need little signs on our desks that say, "For the people," because if you forget that you're for the people then we have bigger problems at play here.

Mr. Mike Harris: You're just jealous you didn't get any.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm not jealous. I can guarantee you that.

Ms. Captijn went on to say, and this is from the memorandum: "For those who didn't know him, he fought for 27 years to rectify injustices he saw in the Ontario government monopoly, Tarion Warranty Corp., and the abysmal access-to-justice problems faced by ordinary people trying to get their homes fixed under Tarion and the Licence Appeal Tribunal."

So this was Earl's example. He had come to committee and he was very prolific at writing all of us and in the media, and it goes on to say—so this is an example of how broken Tarion was, and is, and continues to be: "If you buy a new home and install a 24-carat gold toilet in it, you're the builder of the home under law because you contributed more than a certain dollar amount to the home's overall value." This is how warped this whole system is at Tarion, and real reforms have not been made to this government monopoly in over 40 years. This is confirmed by the Auditor General. She clearly outlined to the government how broken the Tarion warranty system was.

We have a serious issue of illegal home building in the province of Ontario. Tarion, of course, does nothing in any way, shape or form to protect those individuals, those citizens—and if you think about it, how important a home is. For many of us, we've spent a lot of time in our homes during this pandemic, and I can tell you that there is a great disparity between some homes in my neighbourhood of Waterloo and Regent Park, where I used to work at Eastdale Collegiate.

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I can tell you that not all homes are created equally, but a good home is worth fighting for. But you can't do it alone, especially when you have been guaranteed a warranty of some sort that says, "You know what? We're going to guarantee the quality of this build. We're going to make sure that your rights as a consumer are upheld"—and then turn your back on those individuals. That's what the Auditor General's report essentially came to, and I'll get into some of the finances as well.

The member from Humber River–Black Creek paid homage to Earl Shuman. I feel like this one line stood out for me, because I kind of identify with it: "He was a rule-breaker, rubbed many people the wrong way, but he knew that nice, polite people seldom bring about real change." I would like to concur with that statement. That is a truthful statement. The disrupters in our society, if they apply their energy and build consensus, can accomplish a huge amount. The question is, why not with Tarion, after 40 years? And I have to say that the emotion that the member spoke to as a critic really came through in his comments.

The question that he did leave us with, and the question that still remains, and I think the government should be

fairly sheepish on this point, is: Why did Tarion, which is supposed to police illegal builders, never prosecute the one who operated illegally for a decade and built, among others, Mr. Shuman's house? After all of those years of advocacy, 27 years of fighting, he still did not receive justice and was, of course, disappointed in this piece of legislation, which failed to close those loopholes and failed to pull back the layers and provide more accountability. The fact that this story of Tarion has had its ebbs and flows but has never seen sustained criticism is because until you experience it, it's not on your radar. But when you do experience it, you are either defeated by it or you become a fighter. I think that Mr. Shuman was definitely a fighter. But in defeat, when he attended the last meeting and saw what was afoot, I think that the frustration and that battle wore him down. Let's not forget that when we're looking at this piece of legislation that is before us.

"Learning about new home warranties in Ontario has felt like being unplugged from *The Matrix*—we've seen that movie—and awakened to an ugly reality, the reality that we live in a province with only a veneer of new home warranty protection. And when problems arise, the system meant to protect can become the enemy itself." This is a direct quote from Hansard. I think that the hope of when the Auditor General did her thorough review and presented the numbers and the public accounts committee reviewed the report—of course, we haven't had an opportunity, you'll understand, to meet and to continue our work, because many of you don't understand—and actually, neither did I when I first came here—that the work of public accounts is truly a back and forth. The auditor goes back after she has done her initial investigation and the public accounts committee makes recommendations to the Committee of the Whole—this Legislature—in the hopes that legislators will listen to the public accounts committee and, of course, the auditor. That clearly has not happened with Tarion, Mr. Speaker.

Tarion—in this House, anyway—has a long-standing reputation of really—it's a black box, if you will, Mr. Speaker. It's almost impossible to follow the money, and following the money is of course a really key part of accountability. "Tarion pays out almost three times more for their own salaries" as a delegated authority. Please listen to this: They pay "out almost three times more for their own salaries and benefits than the claims they paid out in 2018. Why would they need to have over \$583 million in the bank when they are only paying out \$10 million in claims a year?" That's a pretty valid question. Why does Tarion need to have \$583 million in their bank when they only honour \$10 million worth of claims in Ontario? "Well, if Ontario's new home warranty insurance was regulated in Ontario, then they would have to produce a claim incidence study to show what the liability of future claims might be." That would be kind of an accountability measure, which actually would be really good for the consumers of this province.

Another delegation that had come to committee: "Mr. Ferland compared Tarion to Canada's largest provider of property and casualty insurance which, he said, pays out

65% of the dollar value of the premiums they collect: ‘How do you think most Ontarians would feel if they knew only 18% of their new home insurance premiums are being paid out in claims?’”

This really is the hook. This is the question. Where is the money going? Why is the overhead at Tarion so high? Why are the salaries so high? All of us in committee were surprised that the past president made something like \$750,000. I mean, some of us have been stuck at \$116,000 for eight years now, and the Premier of the province makes about \$225,000. Why does the president of Tarion make three times—over three times—as much as the Premier of this province? Where is the rationale? What’s the justification? Is he working so hard? I don’t think so, because they only honour \$10 million worth of claims in the course of the year.

I’m running out of time.

Another delegation: “Ms. Gay Viecelli provided three practical improvements to the legislation before us today. She stated, ‘If the current government proceeds with Bill 159, there are many issues which need to be addressed.’” And she points these things out:

“‘The first is in the section entitled, ‘Administrative agreement...’ The wording ‘promoting the protection of the public interest, and consumers in particular’ should be replaced with ‘promoting strong consumer protection.’” You shouldn’t have to remind a consumer protection agency that their goal and their primary work is consumer protection, but apparently we do. “‘The legislation should clearly state at the outset that this is consumer protection legislation and its main objective is to deliver strong home warranty protection.’”

Secondly, “‘conflicts of interest is the second issue. It is essential to avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.’” Listen, there are a lot of issues around conflicts of interest, real or perceived, in politics, and every time these issues are allowed to proceed, it compromises confidence and undermines our democracy. It hurts all of us. Has the conflict of interest been addressed by Bill 159? No, it has not.

“‘Therefore, builders and industry representatives should not be on the board.’” It really is like the fox being in charge of the henhouse here. And this came up in questioning—it’s part of Hansard—at public accounts. It was really interesting because when you have privilege and you have power, like they do on this board, like the chair of Tarion has, being asked, “‘How are you policing yourself?’” is a really complicated question to answer. Clearly that power and privilege has never left you to question: Am I being impartial? Am I doing my due diligence? Am I fiscally responsible in this role? Who am I working for? Those are questions that have never been answered by Tarion. They remain outstanding.

This goes back to consumer confidence. I can make a strong economic case for greater accountability over this delegated authority, but I think, just to go back to the member from Humber River–Black Creek—he honoured the voices; he pulled those voices into this Legislature. He pointed to the government that you have not honoured

your responsibility in honouring those voices, and if you are going to tinker around a piece of legislation like this and not fix it, it really begs the question, what will it take to fix Tarion? Because this government has not done that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Harris: It’s an honour to be able to participate in affairs here in the House this evening. I was hoping that maybe we could turn to schedule 10 of the bill for a minute, and the member from Waterloo, who I have great admiration for—I used to be a constituent of hers. Unfortunately, I’m now a constituent of myself—not that I think she would be able to count on my vote anyway.

However, I was wondering if she might be able to elaborate a little bit on schedule 10 and some of the good things that she sees in this bill around ticket sales and how that might also be able to dovetail off some of the great stuff that was introduced in Bill 100 not too long ago.

1710

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, I thank the member for moving—I’m just joking. It’s true that he was a constituent of mine, and I always advised him to go to his MPP because I’d heard she was very effective, but that caused him to move.

Listen, schedule 10 is the issue around scalping and tickets obviously is a long-standing issue. It speaks to consumer protection. But the bigger issue of this piece of legislation and the promise that was made by the government was to fundamentally reform Tarion. One of Tarion’s priorities—making its claim processes clearer—has not been completed, although consultations on how to correct the problem have begun. And so, schedule 10 aside, why take on an issue like Tarion and then not actually address the key issues of fixing it?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you to our member from Waterloo for her presentation.

I just had a question with regard to schedule 10. Of course, there have been some minor changes, I understand, to ticket sales, and I’m just wondering if these minor changes will actually prevent the gouging of music and sports fans, because I’ve heard that it will not.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Any time you change a piece of legislation and you try to address some core issues—and we all know that there are huge issues with scalping of tickets in this province for arts, concerts and sports—you need the oversight. So the fundamental answer to the member’s question is no, because that oversight is not there. You have not built in the backstop to make sure that there is an accountability measure, to ensure that people who are scalping tickets are held to account, and that goes to oversight. So for a government that pretends to be tough on crime and coming down hard on price gouging, for instance, this misses the mark. Schedule 10 misses the mark.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member from Waterloo. I appreciate your presentation, but I just want to clarify two things. First of all, just to give you peace of mind, with Tarion, we had already changed the board of directors from 16 down to 12, and more so, two of them—talking about consumer protection—have the experience just on consumer protection. We're really reassuring all consumers with this bill.

The next thing is, I appreciate that the member from Humber River–Black Creek has mentioned a lot of different cases, and our heart goes out to them as well, but a lot of those cases happened before our government. That's why we feel sorry for that and we feel that pain. That's why this Bill 159 is addressing those—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the member from Richmond Hill: Consumers who have invested all of their money to build their dream home, to embrace the warranty system, do not want your thoughts and prayers. They do not. They want justice. They want to make sure that the builder honours the contract. They want to make sure that the hundreds of thousands of dollars that they've invested was not wasted. One delegation reported that—and there was definitely some racism at play in some of these issues, where one family was accused of taking out the attic—as if you can take out the attic of a home. And part of the problem was that the people who were inspecting these homes weren't qualified. They weren't qualified to do the job that they were entrusted to do.

And so, at the end of the day, the changes lack urgency and government oversight, and therefore it does not address the core issues that delegations brought to us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Waterloo for your presentation.

I was hoping you could speak a little bit more about how consumers in Waterloo have been impacted by the lack of teeth that Tarion has had and also address that question of whether you think the government's changes will give these consumers better protection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for the question.

Waterloo, like many communities outside the GTA, has grown very quickly. Where there used to be beautiful farms and fields, there are now many subdivisions.

What we have seen first-hand is that the rush to put up these houses has compromised some of the quality. Bill 159 was supposed to address some of that with a targeted inspection program designed to look at homes still under construction, so not when the house is completely done and you can't fix the problem. The goal was to inspect the houses as they're being constructed. Unfortunately, that has not been part of Bill 159.

This was a solution, really a smart solution, to not just deal with the end result but address the inspections in a very real way, in real time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: We seem to be hearing a lot about stuff that happened prior to our government. Just some food for thought for everybody here right now: By the end of 2020, I believe, which is the fall of this year, we will have 76% of Justice Cunningham's recommendations implemented within Tarion, which doesn't leave a whole lot to go. Mr. Speaker, that's all within two years of our government.

To say we're not moving fast enough—I'm going to paraphrase here because I don't have a lot of time, but this is a letter from an actual client, if you will, of Tarion, saying, "I wish to bring to Tarion's attention the incredible customer service and effort from their warranty representative. They were knowledgeable, diligent, conducted a thorough investigation of their claim." Just continuing through here: "They exceeded expectations"—and this person's level of professionalism.

To say that we're not moving forward in a quick enough manner, that people aren't happy with the outcomes—what does the member have to say to that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I have lots to say about that, because counter to what the member from Kitchener–Conestoga has said, our goal as legislators is to address the systemic issues that are part of Tarion. I will quote the Canadians for Properly Built Homes: "It is unacceptable that a number of recommendations will take at least two years (from the date of the auditor's report) to complete." That is unacceptable. If you've waited 40 years, two years is also another lifetime.

They're a non-profit group of homeowners that has been pushing for years for Tarion reform. It remains unclear how many homeowner disputes have been resolved. That's definitely a problem. And there's a transparency issue around the wages and around the salaries that still exists. Although the government has ordered Tarion's new executive and board compensation to be public, the chief operating officer before refused to say how much he was making except that he wasn't making as much as the \$769,000—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'm wondering if the member for Waterloo could speak about the NDP amendments that we put forward in committee that were not adopted and how you think that that would have enhanced the bill.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm really interested to see what I'm going to say too.

I do know, though, having read the Hansard from the member from Humber River–Black Creek, that the amendments were not adopted, but they were informed by the voices and the delegations of the folks who came to that committee. Most of it came to transparency. There were actually several amendments on oversight, and then there was ultimately the issue of accountability.

Unfortunately, this is a pattern that we're seeing here. This "we're all in this together and let's work together" are

words only, because when we get to committee, regardless of what committee it was—and just one more time, public accounts should be meeting during COVID-19 to inform government policy—we get outvoted. Having been on the finance committee, I have been outvoted many times.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to speak on Bill 159, and I do it partly because one of the biggest decisions anyone makes in their life, when it comes to their finances, is their home, the place where they live, the place that they want to raise their family. I can tell you that over the years, I've heard so many heartbreaking stories about people who bought a new home, their dream, and their dream turned into a nightmare.

1720

I want to thank the member from Humber River–Black Creek, who had the opportunity to share many of those stories. I don't have the time to do that in my limited time, but I have to say that new home buyers in Ontario deserve better than Bill 159. As a matter of fact, they thought they were going to get better because in the spring of 2018, the then candidate, now the Premier, said that he didn't like government monopolies and that we would fix the Tarion corporation. But if you look at Bill 159, it preserves a government monopoly.

I actually want to quote the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who, back when the Liberals bungled this file, said, “The government's proposals”—he was speaking about the Liberals at the time—“fall dramatically short of the reforms contemplated by Justice Cunningham and of consumers' expectations.” I would argue that you could make the exact same quote today when it comes to Bill 159. We didn't get rid of the Tarion monopoly to move to a multi-provider, competition-based insurance system like British Columbia has, which works well. Instead, the government stuck with the monopoly.

Then, when the opposition brought forward amendments to at least try to improve what Tarion has done, the government turned them down. They voted down wanting to make consumer protection a priority in a bill that's supposed to be a consumer protection bill. They voted down wanting to eliminate conflicts of interest on the Tarion board. When consumer advocates came to committee and said that the directory of bad builders is supposed to warn us about who we select as a builder, we said, “Hey, let's maybe inform this directory to inform consumers.” That was voted down. When we said, “Hey, let's share information with building inspectors so they can do their job better to protect consumers,” that was voted down.

Over and over again, ways that this bill could have been improved to deliver on what the members opposite argued for when they campaigned in 2018 were voted down. No wonder consumer advocates are so disappointed and feel so betrayed by Bill 159.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Harris: I have the greatest admiration for the member from Waterloo and, of course, the member

from Guelph. He and I have worked together many, many times, and we both sit on the committee on general government, which this bill went through.

To offer a little bit more insight, to the member for Toronto Centre, I believe, when we're talking about the amendments that came forward here—I'm going to say that almost 80% of the amendments that were put forward by the Green Party and the NDP were actually out of order. We gave unanimous consent for the member from Humber River–Black Creek to at least be able to read them into the record, but when you're talking about opening up acts that aren't actually part of the bill that is being worked on here, in this case dealing with Tarion, it makes it very difficult to be able to put those forward.

My question to the member opposite is—we were able to come to a consensus on a few of these and build upon them more. I was hoping maybe he'd be able to touch a little bit on those amendments.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: To my colleague on the opposite benches: I would just like to encourage him and the public to check Hansard, because none of the amendments I put forward were ruled out of order. There were some other amendments that were put forward by another member that were ruled out of order, but none of mine were ruled out of order, just to be clear about that for the public.

I will grant the members opposite one thing: Because of the pressure from opposition, they did make some amendments that will allow them to do some things in regulation, which is a continuing pattern of this government—to say, “You know what? We're not going to put it in legislation. We're not going to give you the guarantee that it's in legislation, but we'll put it in regulation. Trust us that we're going to do the right thing when it is in regulation.” At least we pushed them that far. But certainly, it doesn't deliver what consumer advocates want.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you to the member from Guelph. I'm sure you will have a thriving tourism and theatre and arts community in Guelph.

I wanted to know if you agree with the following statement: The Canadian Association of Tour Operators said that Bill 159 should have increased the consumer protection fund to protect tourists whose travel company goes broke during a trip. “The government has missed an opportunity to fully protect Ontario travellers against failures, and it has done so despite many submissions by CATO and other stakeholders....” I'm just wondering how Bill 159 assists Guelph's tourism and culture sector, or does it not?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks for the question from the member. I assume you took that out of Hansard or through a letter. Absolutely, this bill fails to protect consumers. Whether they're tour operators, homebuyers, it doesn't deliver the consumer protection people wanted and asked for—and it's in the title of the bill.

As a matter of fact, tourism operators now are coming to the finance committee to ask for support and help

because they didn't get it in this bill, so now they're asking for it in the recovery. So I'm hoping that the members opposite, as they listen to what people are telling us they need to recover from this pandemic and reopen our economy, listen this time to what's happening at that committee, because that wasn't included in Bill 159.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Maybe just to clarify the record even further, the amendments that the member opposite from Guelph put through—he actually withdrew those amendments because they would have been ruled out of order. So maybe just for all of the people that are watching and need a little bit further clarification, I think we've set the record straight at that point.

I ask the member opposite, when we talk about ticket sales and some of the things that we're achieving with this bill and also that we've put forward with Bill 100, would he rather see someone buy tickets in Canadian dollars from a legitimate ticket reselling site, or does he think that someone should be forced to go onto the black market or purchase something from a scalper in front of Bay Street before a Leafs game? What are his thoughts on that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): A Bay Street scalper? The member from Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm not a Bay Street scalper, just to be clear, Mr. Speaker.

I feel compelled to correct the record once again. So the member from Humber River–Black Creek did put forward some amendments that were ruled out of order, and the government members, to their credit, granted unanimous consent for us to debate those. They were actually to provide more oversight of delegated authority, such as the Tarion Corp. This member had planned to put some of those amendments forward, because I support that, but I was told they would be ruled out of order, so I did not submit any of those amendments that were ruled out of order.

I did withdraw some of the amendments I put forward because they were the exact same amendments that the member from Humber River–Black Creek had put forward. Those were not ruled of order, but the government had already voted them down, so out of respect for everyone's time in this Legislature, as we had important work to do, I withdrew out of respect for all of my colleagues. But I will continue to fight for consumer protection in Bill 159 or any other bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member from Guelph. One of the delegations that came was 19-year-old Catherine Chen. She said, "It shocked me to realize that I have more protection buying an iPhone than a new \$2-million house. Apple will warranty their product. But not the builder." She goes on to talk about the elephant in the room.

Understanding that new home construction is a complicated issue and broken in so many ways, what do you think

the real elephant in the room is and why did the government not address this in legislation?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question.

Actually, that was one of the most compelling delegations. A young woman has now become politically active because of the horrible situation that their family had to go through, and they didn't receive justice through their home warranty. She's absolutely right. Her Apple iPhone has a stronger warranty than Tarion has provided for her home.

The elephant in the room is the fact that we have a government monopoly that actually pays bonuses to their executives to deny people claims. We had another delegate who came to committee and pointed out that Tarion pays out almost three times more for their own salaries and benefits than the claims they paid out in 2018. I grant it, that was when the Liberals were in government, but you would have thought that the government would have brought forward a piece of legislation that would fix this problem.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Maybe I'll rephrase this for the member from Guelph so it rings home a little bit more true. My previous statement about, does he think buying tickets off a legitimate resale site in Canadian dollars versus maybe buying tickets for a Guelph Storm game at the Sleeman Centre from a scalper out on—I believe it's Woolwich Street, I think is the main thoroughfare there. I'll pose the question a little bit differently: What are his thoughts on that?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: We seem to have a little K-W/Guelph thing going here with all the members.

I think that that particular provision in the bill, which is good, would have been strengthened if the amendment capping the amount that those resellers could charge would have passed, because then we would have provided an additional layer of consumer protection—which is just another example of an opportunity where we could have potentially all worked together to actually strengthen the bill, if the members opposite would accept a few of the amendments that the opposition, whether it's this member or the members of the official opposition, put forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for a quick question and a quick answer.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you to the member from Guelph. What would be the main amendment that you feel would strengthen this piece of legislation?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to the member. First of all, I would have just gone with a completely different approach and gotten rid of the government monopoly and brought in a competitive multi-provider system. It's kind of ironic actually, because who would have thought we would stand in the Legislature and the official opposition, represented by the NDP—I think there is another private member's bill, from the member from Humber River—would be calling for a competitive model, and the government, which is the Conservatives, is calling for a government monopoly. It's almost as if they've switched on this one. So I don't know what's going on on this Tarion thing.

I prefer the competitive model, quite frankly. But with this particular bill, the one amendment I put forward that I thought was incredibly simple was just to put in there that the priority should be consumer protection in a consumer protection bill. At the very least, that's what advocates asked for, to make it about consumer protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Before I begin with my comments with respect to Bill 159, it's really important that we understand the context and the story that many people go forward in when they're purchasing a home.

If we look at the story of relatives and family members in my own household and in my extended family as well, they describe the story of arriving to Canada with, quite frankly, nothing. It's a story that many different racialized folks and immigrant folks go through in the process of coming to Canada. Often, it's the bonds they form with their friends and their family that get them through these really tough times.

One story always really rings within my mind any time I think of this issue around housing. My uncle told me of the experiences of how he first lived when he came to Canada. He described a few things to me which were really, really telling. The one circumstance he described to me was his living arrangement, and his living arrangement was that they had eight people in one apartment.

What happened with the eight people in one apartment is that they had shifts for each bed. That means they had a morning shift and a nighttime shift. So he would come and, let's say he had the day shift, he would sleep during the day, and when he left to drive a cab, the night shift individual would return back from their shift and sleep in the bed, until he returned the next morning.

Literally, the rooms and the beds—and this was also a circumstance in which they had four or five individuals per room. They didn't do it out of choice. They didn't do it out of any, you know, this is how they enjoyed it; they did it out of survival, because economically housing was so unaffordable to them in this dire circumstance. He describes how when he was driving a taxi, he would—when he was waiting for a fare, in the middle of the winter he would leave his car off and he'd have a blanket. He described how he'd be shivering cold, waiting for the next call so he could turn on the car and drive but, out of caution, wanting to save money, he needed to live in this really desperate circumstance.

When you look at the evolution that often people take in the process of obtaining substantial housing, it goes on this path of either being in a rental apartment or often a rental basement. In Brampton right now, there's a lot of folks who often need to survive by living in basements. There's often additional income for those who live in the part of the house above the basement, and it's often a process that can be really tough for a lot of folks. When you are finally able to get to that economic position—for those who are able—to purchase a home, that, to many folks, is much more than just a home; it's a signal, it's a sign, it's an accomplishment of having made it through

those really tough moments and having made it through that calamity, stress, financial stress and emotional stress.

When I think of these stories, it's disheartening for me to hear how much those folks had to struggle, but then it gives me joy to think that they ultimately, in many cases, accomplish so much. That's why the sense of home is often so much more for some folks than just the four walls that comprise where they live; it represents them finally being in a position not to have to worry about having to share their bed with four other individuals or two other individuals. They're not renting out a bed. They're finally living in a bed in a home, and that means so much.

But that's why this issue around Tarion is so important, because when we have a system right now that is in favour of builders over consumers, well, the end result is that people who have struggled so hard and for so long, people who have been through so much to get to this position of being able to finally have a home, to have finally accomplished something that was years in the making, then when that's taken away from them, where they don't have the support system or, rather, the checks and balances in place that allow for them to properly pursue claims, if their house is made improperly, or allow them to pursue the correct measures that are required if they're economically put in a bad position because of the quality of their home, then that actually destroys that dream and it destroys those years of hard work that hopefully were done with some sort of light at the end of the tunnel. Well, that light becomes dimmed and, in some cases, that light becomes extinguished. People lose hope, and having correct support for people in a correct form of recourse if you're not in a situation where your home is not developed properly, well, it's so important because beyond anything, when we look at it, housing is, or should be, a fundamental right.

Housing is something that when we talk about people being able to exist or live within a society, when you talk about those basic necessities, they say, "Let me have a shirt upon my back, some food to fill my belly and a roof to put over my head." Food, clothes and shelter: That's been the rallying cry for social movements across the world. The ability to access food, clothes and shelter, and housing—the science is very, very clear, and we actually heard of it. We heard testimony of individuals who had worked so hard and finally got to a place in their life where they had a house, and because of issues with the house, they were driven back into poverty—those who had worked for years to get out of poverty.

So when we talk about the context of the importance of having a proper home warranty, well, we're talking about providing people the protection for what should be a fundamental right, a necessity—housing. When we jeopardize that, we don't just jeopardize that individual—keep that in mind—you jeopardize their family and often their extended family. When you talk about households in Brampton—and we have them in some houses—the reality of the economic situation of people who live there, they live in multi-generational houses, often with multiple families in one house. They often come and tell me, "These houses are so huge" in different parts of my riding.

I'll say, "Yes, they are, but ask how many family members live in that house." How many people have come together to support that household—and how that household provides often, in many cases, a place for their grandparents to live, a place for their kids to attend school or to commute to school, so it becomes like a support system for so many different aspects of that household. When we jeopardize people's housing, we jeopardize not just that individual who is signing their name upon that house; you're jeopardizing all those people associated and all the people who rely on that individual.

1740

Also, when we talk about it from an economic position, when people don't have the ability to access housing and then people are driven into poverty, you're losing another individual who is contributing to our economy. You're now having another individual who could have robustly participated or given back to our economy. You're hurting our society, our social fabric in so many different ways.

When we talk about the problems that have been outlined very well by my colleagues today in the official opposition, they have, rightly so, brought a lot of attention to the problems with Tarion and with the legislation being put forward. We know that when we have a system being put forward that stacks the Tarion board with builders who can rule in their favour instead of that of the consumer, that's a problem. That's not fair.

When we're in this House, ultimately our goal is to put forth policy to help people out. If we're not helping people out, then I always ask people, "What's the point? Why are you here?" We got here to look at the issues that people are struggling with across the board.

From a consumer position, consumers are being disadvantaged left, right and centre in Ontario. We have seen and heard in committee testimony and examples across the board of individuals who were driven into poverty or had to live in unhealthy conditions; issues of mould in a household and how that can impact you, even in a context in which you might live in a house that has mould and not realize its health impact upon you until many, many years later. That opens another issue around if you don't have decent housing, that's going to have a further impact on the cost of our health care system. When you have all of these individuals who are getting sick from houses which are made improperly, and possibly getting sick from the mould or different other defects that are being made to the house, the ultimate result of that is going to be a cost upon all of us, because we live in a collective. We're supposed to support one another.

In the same way that we have a social contract where, if someone is sick, we come together to take care of them, we should have a protection put in place that if you're putting it all on the line for something that you need to get by as a family, then you should have that sense of security that when you do put it on the line, you're protected and you're not going to be facing a board of Tarion or a system of Tarion that's ultimately going to weigh in favour of the builder, and not the consumer.

Consumer rights are something—we need to think about the right of those who are spending their hard-earned

money to advance themselves in their life. We're not talking about frivolous things here; we're talking about essentials—a roof over your head, what you need to get by. When that is in jeopardy, when that is something that is at risk right now, well, then we have to rethink this process.

We've said it time and time again: that the process right now has left families devastated, and that, quite frankly, Tarion as a system—that we need something new in place. We can't have a system that is continually being put in favour of builders, put in favour of those who ultimately—just look at that imbalance yourself, Speaker. You have builders who are building something at a profit and individuals who are purchasing something because they need it: a necessity versus a profit. When you look at that huge imbalance there, in and of itself, you see that we need to create a system that is going to, at a minimum, provide the protections necessary for those who are putting it on the line.

When I say that the research is clear, when I say that the evidence is clear—earlier I said "science," but I meant to say that the evidence and the research and the testimony are clear that this kind of jeopardy puts people at risk in a very fundamental way. The setback that it causes to families, to individuals, can be—and has been, based on what we've heard—something that people can't recover from. Ultimately they will spend, and they have spent—we've heard testimony of individuals who have spent the rest of their lives trying to recover from either the health impact or the economic impact, and how it has been devastating across the board.

That's why I think, when we are talking about building greater consumer confidence, that we can't build greater consumer confidence if we are setting up a system in which the odds are stacked in favour of those who ultimately have more resources—the builder—versus those who are, in many cases, struggling for resources—the buyer. And that, to me, sounds like a system that is inherently problematic and inherently broken.

When we talk about, from a greater sense, the issues that people have faced across the board, the issues that people have faced when they're trying to take this next big leap in their lives, just hearing it and reading about that testimony is really something that I took to heart very clearly. I kept on thinking of those stories of those individuals, of people like my family members and, connecting back to that initial story, of my uncle, who struggled so hard and lived such a large portion of his life in housing where there was lax security, quite frankly; housing where he was unable to develop a family and didn't have the ability to think beyond every other day.

When he was in that period of his life and he was struggling in that moment, he wasn't thinking about "the house I'm going to live in." He didn't have the luxury to think like that. He couldn't even think about planning a family or developing a family because, when you're in such a desperate circumstance, when you're living paycheque to paycheque, when you literally don't even have the comfort—I think about that story and I always

wanted to ask him, “You didn’t have the ability to even just”—something that we take for granted—“lie in your bed for a couple more hours some days?” If you’re not feeling well, if you’re feeling sleepy or if you had a long week and you had to sleep a couple more hours—he legitimately didn’t have that ability. He didn’t have that ability because the economic situation was so tough for him and for many others. He’s just an example I’m providing, but there are so many other individuals who are in that circumstance and are currently in that circumstance again. You often are shaped by the environment that you are in. When he was in that really tough situation, he couldn’t think beyond that moment of his life.

Having worked so hard and pinched every penny and striven and just literally to do whatever he could to get out of that, to then invest everything into a house and have hopes of starting a family and having the stability in his life and having the ability to not have to worry about his housing situation for a short period of time because at least he wasn’t sharing it with so many other individuals and he had that security—to then be purchasing a house and then being struck with mould or a building defect or something that either results in the value of that house being far less than what he anticipated so he is economically now destitute or being put into a situation in which the health conditions of that house are such that he is now negatively impacted and, God forbid, he has to deal with some sort of illness or sickness. It doesn’t just take out a year or six months or that period of time he’s struggling; it literally wipes out everything he did before that. Those are the real economic circumstances.

Now we look forward. Let’s look at what the future holds for Ontarians. We know that there are darker clouds on the horizon. The economic fallout of COVID-19 is something that we’re still really trying to understand and contemplate as a society and as a community. If we’re not putting in protections now for individuals, we’ve seen very clearly that the gap between the haves and have-nots is getting bigger and bigger.

That lack of affordability of housing is getting—the dream of even owning a home is something which is becoming more drastic. They say that the generation now is one of the few generations who are never going to own a home and who are actually going to have a quality of life that is less than that of their parents. The dream of buying a home, which is something that would be called the Canadian dream or “the dream of better”—that was something that was affordable to people.

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When you look at that circumstance now, especially in the GTA with affordability—and not even just the GTA, but in urban centres across North America or across Canada particularly—when that dream is something that’s going to be far more fleeting, then for those who hope to achieve that dream, if those protections are not in place, if something like this happens, then it’s not just that house that’s on the line; their life is on the line. And we have seen that.

If that has been the circumstance now under this current economic climate, and if we see a darker climate up ahead

economically, if we see tougher times up ahead economically, then what’s at risk is far more. We should actually, instead, as legislators, be putting forth greater protections for homebuyers, greater protections for consumers, because that is going to be the great struggle that everyone is going to be facing in the future.

We really need to rethink how we are approaching this context. We really need to rethink how we are approaching consumer protections. We can’t have a system like that; it has been broken. We can’t have a system like what has been proposed, and we’ve been dealing with right now, which has left no protections for consumers, has left no protections for those who are in tough positions and has put those who have struggled so hard in potentially a further precarious situation. That is not how we build security, that is not how we build consumer confidence and that is not a future, given the current economic climate, that we should be putting forward. We should be rethinking this.

I will end by putting this proposal and this thought out to—we should all be thinking about this. Quite frankly, it’s something the NDP has been doing time and time again. We have been putting forth suggestions, amendments, solutions to problems that are looking at it from two perspectives. The first perspective is, right now people need support, and so we immediately need to put forth supports to take care of people to get through these tough times—but also to be forward-looking. If across the board, we see in many ways people are arguing that potentially the greater calamity of COVID-19 is not just the health risk but the economic fallout that is coming, then we need to be thoughtful right now.

We need to say that, collectively, we agree that housing is a right, that people have a right to decent and good housing—and for those who have the means to purchase a house, then that means that that individual also has that right to a house. It ensures they are protected, they are safe and that if any problem occurs, the consumer is protected. That’s something that as opposition, we’re fighting for. And as government, I would say, please heed the calls of those who are in a tough position and ensure that you’re putting forth legislation that protects not just the haves, but most importantly, protects the have-nots.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I listened intently to the member’s debate, and it was interesting because he was speaking about affordability for our generation. Mr. Speaker, I recently purchased a house this past summer, and it was quite expensive. There were a lot of taxes and fees. Coming from a party that advocated for increased taxes, especially the carbon tax, and other things that increased the cost of living, I just find it strange.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, in terms of consumer protection, the Auditor General—and you know I served on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for quite a while. The Auditor General in a report specifically said that a multi-provider model may actually diminish the mandate of consumer protection, whereas the surety

model allows warranty costs to remain subject to government approval, as well as more consistent warranty decision and process.

My question is, why is the member opposite still advocating for a multi-provider model that will not provide the same benefits as a surety model for—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Any time we put forward a solution to this government, we hear time and time again the same thing. They don't want to talk about the root of the problem.

You have a system of Tarion that is stacked in favour of builders and not consumers. We heard testimony that really pulled at my heart, testimony of people who were put in economically terrible circumstances because of a problem with their homes. Instead of looking at that evidence, looking at that testimony, the government goes on a different angle.

You heard the evidence at committee. This is something we all heard. It is put forth in Hansard, if there's any confusion around it. Look at the impact that has happened to individuals now. The system is clearly broken. This is a broken system. It clearly weighs in favour of builders. It's not working to protect consumers. The government should be putting forth legislation that protects consumers, not that protects those who have the resources.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Brampton East for your presentation outlining the difficulties and the challenges and the obstacles people must overcome when they move to Canada in order to realize their vision of having a secure home.

My question to the member for Brampton East is: How should we reform Tarion to protect consumers? What are your recommendations?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Thank you so much to the member for that question.

What we've seen is that Tarion is broken. We know that much. We know that Tarion is not a solution for creating a system that protects consumers.

We've actually seen really amazing legislation come from the opposition. We have legislation coming from the member for Humber River–Black Creek, with his Bill 169 that he put forward. That provided real protection to consumers. That's the kind of protection we need to take care of folks right now in these tough positions. That's the kind of protection we need, to ensure that consumers are in a position where, if they have an issue with their house, their house is being protected, and, beyond that, they are being protected economically.

Why are we here? Why are we advocating? Why are we fighting? We're fighting because we heard people are struggling, and they shouldn't have to struggle when their house and livelihood are on the line.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Scarborough Centre.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: We have been listening to people, and the Auditor General said that Tarion favours builders over homeowners. We've absolutely been listening. Across the province, stakeholders have said this and we have heard these issues that have been raised.

We are taking the builder directory away from Tarion and we are giving it to a new organization. Our government is going to be holding the HCRA to a high standard, ensuring this is one of the first priorities it puts into place—to fix the directory to have better information available to homeowners and to potential homeowners.

Can the member opposite at the very least acknowledge our government's work to ensure that builders are held accountable and that consumers are protected—because it is actually very clear that we have been listening and you're being dramatic.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I'll say that what's really dramatic—and I'm often accused of being dramatic. When you hear about someone—and you can call it dramatic or you can call it compassionate. You can call it hearing stories of real people who are being hurt and people who are putting everything on the line. I was a part of one of the travelling committees. We heard directly; I heard directly from folks who had health conditions as a result of mould in their house that impacts them to this day. If that doesn't result in people speaking with passion, something that the government describes as dramatic, then what are you here for? Yes, I'm speaking with passion. Yes, I'm angry. Yes, I'm upset. Because when I hear about people getting a raw deal from their builders, it makes me feel sad. It makes me feel upset. If you're going to call that dramatic—I would say don't call that dramatic; call that compassionate. Because that's our job—to fight to protect people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to the member for Brampton East.

A home is probably the biggest purchase for many families. The second-biggest purchase for many families is a car. Many people buy a new car because of the warranty, and those same people buy a new house because of the warranty. In your comments, would you say that a first-time homebuyer is protected by this new law concerning Tarion?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Thank you so much. We've heard it time and time again. I think we heard from the speaker earlier an example where you said that you have more protection when buying an iPhone than when buying a home, or we have more protection when buying a car than buying a home.

We've seen clearly that this piece of legislation is broken, the system is broken, and it's wrong. Your example is a very appropriate example. The fact that people have more protection buying a car or buying a phone than they do a home—well, it goes back to our earlier point: that housing should be a fundamental right; it should be protected. And for those who are able to purchase, they should have at least that sense of security that if something goes wrong, they have the ability to turn

to some sort of recourse, instead of being put in a position where they are going to be economically devastated. That is not how we build consumer confidence. That is not how we build a future in which people have that security, that sense of protection.

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So I would say I agree with my colleague's comments, and we're going to keep on fighting for that in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a pleasure listening to the member from Brampton East this afternoon. I have to say that I completely agree with you. I am just as mystified as the member from Guelph when we find ourselves on the opposite side of advocating for what appears to be a monopoly versus free choice in that.

When I first saw this legislation, I thought, why are we not tearing down this broken system? But then the Auditor General comes along and says, "If we disrupt the system so hugely, we will actually destroy consumer rights."

So I would like you to explain how having—because I think, if I'm not mistaken, you're the one who thinks that we need to reform the auto insurance industry because private auto insurance—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Mr. Will Bouma: —things for Ontarians. So how would private insurance fix things for homeowners?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: This is an interesting thing we have before us, Speaker. It looks like we have agreement, finally, for once. Yes, this system is broken, and we have a member of the government saying, "Yes, that system is broken."

We talk about solutions—but we're in the business of creating solutions. This is an assembly where we create laws, we can create policy and we can create a better future

and a better way of dealing with problems. We had that solution put forward to the government when the member for Humber River–Black Creek put forth Bill 169. We had a better solution put forward. We have seen, time and time again, better possibilities towards broken legislation and towards broken systems. When we have a system that even the government is finally saying that, "Yes, it's a broken system"—well, we agree. Don't try to rebuild something that is clearly shown to be broken—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Response.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: —time and time again. Let's build something better. Let's build something that will actually protect people. Let's hear the legislation being put forward by—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We have time for a quick question and a quick answer. Member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I guess I'm the quick-question person today. Thank you, Speaker.

Thank you to the member from Brampton East for his impassioned debate on this issue. I'd like to hear your opinion about how the lack of a strong conflict-of-interest component in this legislation will affect consumer protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member for Brampton East, you have 30 seconds.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Thank you very much, Speaker. Look at this legislation from the top. It's supposed to be rebuilding consumer confidence. Well, if you have something that clearly has issues around conflict of interest, then how is that going to breed confidence amongst consumers? How is that going to put faith in people who have already seen a train wreck of legislation and a train wreck of examples in which people have been struggling because of lack of protection? So that's definitely going to result in less confidence towards consumers.

Report continues in volume B.

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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

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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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 / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Ian Arthur, Stephen Blais
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Catherine Fife, Randy Hillier
Mitzie Hunter, Andrea Khanjin
Laura Mae Lindo, Sol Mamakwa
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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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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 / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Rudy Cuzzetto, Robin Martin
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**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
Lucille Collard, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

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Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
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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

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Stephen Blais, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

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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
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