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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 13 July 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 13 juillet 2020

Report continued from volume A.

REBUILDING CONSUMER
CONFIDENCE ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020 VISANT À RÉTABLIR
LA CONFIANCE CHEZ
LES CONSOMMATEURS

Continuation of debate 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): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Let's fight about it.

The member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you, Speaker. I'm honoured to stand today and add a few words with regard to Bill 159 and the Tarion debacle.

First, I'd like to start by really saying thank you for Barbara Captijn, who happens to be one of my constituents in St. Paul's. I had the honour of meeting Barbara maybe a year or so ago when she really brought to life the struggles that countless Ontarians have dealt with with Tarion.

As a non-homeowner myself, as someone who is a renter, I think we often romanticize seeing homeowners, "They've got the home; they've got it all, everything's perfect," and it was Barbara who opened my eyes and my heart to the realities of Tarion. It was also Barbara who shared with me the tragic story of Dr. Shuman and the fact that here you had a man who spoke with passion, who spoke with compassion, who spoke with knowledge in science and research and data not only for himself but for countless homeowners, and to see that his light was extinguished and that he died by suicide because of Tarion—I'm just going to say it—is absolutely deplorable, and I think that one life is too many, and for nothing else but Dr. Shuman, quite frankly, and for advocates like Barbara Captijn, something needs to change.

Our member from Humber River—Black Creek—I was here last week—gave a compelling lead on Bill 159. He, as we all know, has introduced legislation to this House, Bill 169, that really puts front and centre the desires of homeowners as opposed to those of builders, and this government has not paid attention or is unwilling to simply

make Bill 169 law. Instead, we are trying to fix a broken machine here.

There's a quote that comes to mind—completely unrelated to home ownership, but it's one of the theorist Audre Lorde that I read when I was doing grad school, and that is that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

We cannot try to make Tarion better. If it's already garbage, let's just start over. Let's look at Bill 169 as a way to actually empower and amplify and give voice to those homeowners who, as our member from Brampton East said so eloquently, have built and fought and gone through sleepless nights for years, their entire lives, coming here to Canada for that dream.

I just want to say thank you to Barbara. Thank you to Dr. Earl Shuman, who has left a legacy that all of us are going to keep fighting to ensure it's heard, and also thank you to his widow, Krista, who still remains an advocate.

Schedules 4 and 5, as we have heard, do not go nearly far enough to address the urgent issues facing new home buyers who are struggling with construction deficiencies and cannot get the help they need from Tarion. For instance, when families find dangerous mould or leaking roofs in a new home, Tarion, the provincial new home warranty agency, supposed to be there to support them, to get their claims fulfilled—it's just not happening. In fact, they're feeling very abandoned. We know that the Canadians for Properly Built Homes have said that Tarion is just not working, and they absolutely do not agree with schedules 4 and 5.

We've heard in the House members talk, and then the government has said, "Oh, you're talking about previous governments and this, that and the other." But at the end of the day, they're the government now, and we recognize that they have that power to put forth legislation, to move forward legislation that would hopefully help Ontarians.

Ontarians have spoken. They have deputed, they have cried, they have mentioned being depressed, being physically ill. They have attempted suicide. They have died by suicide. I think it's clear to say that Ontario has spoken and that Tarion is just not working for our homeowners, and what Ontario is saying is that we do not want legislation, that we don't need an agency that is working for builders. Last time I checked, builders are not financially strapped. Builders are not working the night shift, the afternoon, the morning shift, covering all kinds of other gig economy jobs to make ends meet in hopes of having a dream. They're pretty well off.

But the fact is the Tarion crisis is a crisis that both the Liberal and Conservative governments can hold responsibility for. They stacked the Tarion board with builders

who help themselves. It makes sense. If you're a builder, your desire is going to be help builders, not necessarily to empower and amplify the voices of angry homeowners or distraught homeowners.

1810

The NDP, our official opposition, asked the Auditor General for an independent investigation of Tarion, and it found that Tarion executives take bonuses as high as 60% of their salaries for turning down families' claims. To me, that's a big conflict of interest. It's near criminal, in my opinion.

Tarion re-licenses shady builders. Whatever sort of educational training you go through to become said profession—I would like to think that if you are shady, if you are not honourable, if you have been proven time and time again to fail at your job, then you wouldn't be re-licensed. But that doesn't quite apply for Tarion's shady builders, whom they prop up consistently and re-license.

Tarion also sets impossible timelines and abandons families who cannot meet them. That is something that Karen Somerville spoke very prolifically about within the whole Tarion kerfuffle.

We talk a lot about democracy, about wanting to listen, and about how this building is supposed to be doing better for Ontarians. Our consumer critic, the member for Humber River–Black Creek, has tabled a piece of legislation that completely addresses these concerns, that demands an independent administrator, that sheds light on this notion of builders being on the board of directors, for goodness' sake. And yet, the government has not accepted this piece of legislation. I think this is a very easy moment to make a difference. Don't do it for the Humber River–Black Creek MPP or for me or for anybody over here. For goodness' sake, do it for the memory of Earl Shuman; do it for the memory of the numbers of folks who saved, who worked hard, who finally got that dream, who finally put the key in the door and were hit with the shock of mould in the basement or un-level ground, or whatever the case might be that causes them to turn in on themselves, quite frankly, and start to think, "What have I done wrong? I've failed," when, in fact, it's not them. They're going to an agency for help, and that agency is not helping them. That's a real, honest concern.

Bill 159, in terms of what's missing—it doesn't go far enough to address those urgent needs, as I've said, facing new home buyers. The ministry has confirmed that it will be at least a year before even these inadequate changes are implemented, leaving homebuyers stuck with the status quo in the meantime.

What I've learned through this pandemic is that normal as we knew it before COVID-19 certainly wasn't working for a lot of Ontarians, and as we move to our recovery stage—apparently, the government said that we're in stage 3 of reopening, but we're still dealing with an unprecedented pandemic, and that pandemic is still the big purple elephant in the room. A homeowner who's dealing with the pandemic, who's working, who's stressed out, who's being a social worker and a teacher at home and a primary caregiver, everything wrapped up in one—they're calling Tarion and they're not getting the help they need.

We have to do better. So I'm hoping that as we move into our reopening—this, again, is one moment when we can do the right thing by homeowners as opposed to builders, and really work hard as a Legislature to get Bill 169 made, have it made so that we can actually have an opportunity to see people relish in their dream of being a homeowner without having that idea that the ground is going to fall out from underneath them at any time.

When a new buyer finds defects in their home—cracked foundations, mould, leaky windows or walls, poor HVAC systems—and the builder is unwilling or unable to fix the problem, Tarion is supposed to step in. I'll say that over and over again: They're supposed to step in. But sadly, they're not stepping in, more times than not. Instead, new homebuyers have complained that Tarion regularly refuses to help them, apparently preferring to protect the builder and not the consumer. Several consumers have found themselves in court, not only fighting their builder but also, of course, Tarion, the organization that is supposed to help them, and that's a real concern.

In 2019, just last year, the government amended legislation to require Tarion to disclose executive compensation. Tarion disclosed that its CEO was paid over \$769,000 in salary and benefits the year before, which essentially put him on the sunshine list. Again, I'm not standing here thinking that I am an expert on home-buying, because I am not. But I'm assuming here that the majority of folks who are dumping their life savings into a new home, only to find the shock of their life that they didn't get what they paid for, are not making \$769,000. I don't think that these are the folks who are complaining and pleading and taking time off work to maybe sit on the customer service line for God knows how long to get help.

The Auditor General report also found that Tarion allowed bad builders to escape accountability for shoddy construction, allowing them to continue receiving builder licences. Again, all of this speaks to this notion of a lack of transparency, a lack of accountability and, again, a lack—an unwillingness, actually, to listen to people in their most challenging hour. Frankly, that is similar to what it's been like as a new MPP, watching the government often without transparency, acting often without accountability—bombastically, quite frankly—and certainly not doing much consultation, at least not with the everyday person; that's for sure.

In these last five minutes, I want to turn and really highlight the piece around death by suicide, and mental health and depression. I stand here in the Legislature, where this Conservative government cut \$330 million from mental health services. So it's really hard—well, actually, it's not hard, considering what I had learned. Back in—when was it? Oh, dear. Back in August of 2019, the CPBH president, Karen Somerville, had sent a letter to all members of the Conservative government. That was a letter that spoke specifically around the suicidal attempts and suicidal thoughts of people who had just had the worst shake with Tarion.

The Premier, apparently, responded. The president says that he was the only person in the entire government

caucus to respond, and that he forwarded CPBH's concerns to the Minister of Consumer Services. Apparently, the minister responded in June of 2020, 10 months late, but I guess better than never. Considering that that letter came out the very same year that the government cut \$330 million from mental health services, I don't even know where were these people, these poor homebuyers—where were they going for mental health supports, for goodness' sake? It's shocking, and it's very concerning.

1820

The letter, ironically, was actually sent to the minister, from Huron–Bruce, during mental health week, you know? And it took her 10 months to respond. Shocking. If I can quote from that letter briefly, let's see—let's see here. Of course, this letter goes on to tell the heartbreaking story of Dr. Shuman. The letter also goes on to mention that our MPP, MPP Taylor, also has raised the tragedy of his loss in the House. Then it ends with, "These very serious issues related to Tarion are dragging on far too long. I'm reaching out to you today to ask you to appoint an administrator to take over Tarion effective immediately, as MPP Rakocevic"—sorry, Humber River–Black Creek—"provided in his Bill 169. If you will not do this, please advise what concrete steps you've taken to help these desperate, potentially suicidal, homeowners." I won't have time to read the letter, but it's quite an impactful letter.

In fact, in my last couple of minutes, with regard to conflict of interest—yet again, the advocates contacted the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the member for Huron–Bruce, about conflict of interest on boards of directors. As you probably know, to quote the MPP from Humber River–Black Creek, the NDP recently proposed an amendment related to Bill 159 to address conflict of interest issues on the Home Construction Regulatory Authority board, but your PA, the member for Sarnia–Lambton, defended the conflict of interest and said that it's necessary to give builders seats on the HCRA board so that builders would co-operate. I mean.

They go on to say, "CPBH has maintained for more than a decade now that there should be no builders on the board of Tarion due to conflict of interest," and that, "For the Tarion board to receive builder input, a builder advisory council would be sufficient and appropriate." You know?

In my last minute, I think it's clear, and I'm certainly not the expert on this file, but any issue that comes to my constituency office, any call I've gotten, any email I've gotten—for goodness' sake, I don't care if you're an NDP, if you're a Conservative, if you're Liberal, if you're Green, if you're purple, if you're orange. When someone says that their loved one has died by suicide or their loved one's mental health or their physical health has deteriorated to the point of hospitalization because of the burdens of working with this Tarion agency for decades and getting no response, something has to change. It really has to change. That change is staring this government in their face, and that change is Bill 169. Don't do it for us. Do it for Ontarians. Do it for their memory.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to thank my colleague for the presentation.

We've had a fair amount of debate on the bill thus far, and we believe that enhancements to the single-administrator model for the delivery of new home warranty and protections are in the best interest of the people of Ontario.

The Auditor General, when she did her audit in 2019, agreed. At the same time, she identified several risks with the multi-provider insurance model. Could the member please explain why the members of the opposition continued to support the multi-provider insurance model with all its inherent risks to Ontario residents?

Ms. Jill Andrew: You know, I think what the NDP official opposition have done is we have continued to support the voices of homebuyers. That is what we have done. And that means putting forth amendments in committee. That means amplifying the voices of homebuyers who have said flagrantly that they haven't gotten the support from Tarion that they need. I'm just not sure why in some cases it's taken the government 10 months to respond to homebuyers' advocates. These people should be the experts to the government on any housing legislation with regard to homebuyers, but they haven't been.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Toronto–St. Paul's for her comments, particularly for speaking to Earl Shuman and allowing his voice to continue within this Legislature, because it's clear through Bill 159 that there's complete disregard for that man's passing.

Housing is central to our human life, and our sense of safety is so important to our mental health. Why do you think this government is pushing forward this legislation, which does not fix Tarion in any way, shape or form, at a time when housing is so incredibly important?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you very much to the member from—oh, my goodness—London Centre, yes.

There are probably many reasons. I think the number one reason is that this is the government, and there is a power and control element of just wanting to ram through their own decisions without consulting with those who are most hampered by those legislative decisions.

I think you're right: Housing is a human right; it should be a human right. We've seen from past legislation that it hasn't been a human right—affordable housing cut, rent control cut, all of those pieces—but I digress.

I do believe that this is about the government not listening to Ontarians who have deputed and who have said that this is not working for them. They need change, and that change is Bill 169.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: We talk about fixing Tarion. I just wanted to draw attention, to the member opposite, to numerous changes that we have already made to address some of the concerns you spoke about and some of the

concerns that were brought forward based on the Auditor General's recommendation over the past year.

One thing: We've begun the process of setting up a regulatory body outside of Tarion. We've required Tarion to post board and executive compensation policies publicly. We have introduced new measures for prospective pre-construction condominium projects. We've taken steps to overhaul Tarion's board and reduce the influence of builders.

You talked about supporting homebuyers. Our government does support homebuyers. That's why we passed the Trust in Real Estate Services bill, which I think the members opposite forgot that they actually supported.

We continue to work toward building a strong new home warranty system that takes steps, and we have shown this commitment. Considering these changes, how can the member opposite say that our government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you to the government for the question. The government has asked, how can the official opposition say that the government hasn't done enough to protect homebuyers? I don't think I have anything else to say but call Karen Somerville. Call Krista Shuman. Speak to any of the constituents from any of our ridings and probably yours. Call some of the constituents over at Eglinton—Lawrence I heard from with regard to their problems with Tarion. They're the experts. I'm not suggesting I'm the expert on Tarion, but when a homebuyer comes to us and says, "This is not working and we need help," and they come to you all and say that, you should listen. You absolutely should.

We do not need builders on the board of directors. We do not need any builders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the member, the MPP from Toronto—St. Paul's. Thank you for enlightening this House today about Bill 159.

I sat on the committee to hear the heart-wrenching stories and some of the situations that people across Ontario—I mean from one end to the other in Ontario—and we heard the terror that occurred from Tarion which they had experienced, from delegate after delegate. They mentioned the concern of lack of accountability. To the member: Do you feel that this Bill 159 needs to be stronger to protect the consumer? And how would you explain that it could be stronger? Can you give us some examples?

1830

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you to the member and colleague of ours for the question. Again, I think the Tarion agency needs to be, first and foremost, there to support the buyer. If you're talking about \$10 million paid out in claims, that's it? If we're learning that claims are being stunted, are being denied to prop up the salaries of executives, to me this is a no-brainer. It needs to be overhauled.

As I've said repetitively and as I would agree with my colleague from Humber River—Black Creek, Bill 169 is an answer, an answer that would ensure that consumer advocates—many consumer advocates, not one or two—are on the board.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member opposite for speaking to the Rebuilding Consumer Confidence Act.

In this legislation, we know that the fundamental premise is to ensure that consumers are being supported. It's one of the reasons why we also brought forward changes to ensure that tickets toward enjoying concerts and sporting events—which I know all of us are missing at this time—are being sold in Canadian dollars to ensure there is transparency. Would the member opposite support this move to ensure that all Canadians and all Ontarians are able to purchase tickets in a transparent way?

Ms. Jill Andrew: What I would say is this: I would support anything in an actual bill that supports Ontarians, where my constituents in St. Paul's say to me, "Jill, this works for me. This works for my family," and where it works for the majority of people, not those who are at the top of the chain, who don't have to worry about economic issues, but that really supports everyone.

For me, what I understand from schedule 10 is that the shifts that have been made have not made that much of a difference in terms of stopping the gouging of ticket sales, live shows or concerts. People are still being gouged. I don't know that that has gone far enough. I know CATO has said that it hasn't gone far enough. I don't know that it has gone far enough. And we certainly know that people, prior to COVID, were still being gouged by scalpers and whatnot.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That's all the time we have for questions and comments in this round. Further debate?

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 159. Before I start my remarks on the bill, I do want to note that it has been incredibly frustrating to come into this House throughout the summer extension and, as a member of this Legislature, to not even know what bill I'm expected to debate at any given moment. I'm a newer member to this Legislature—I've only been here two years now, first elected in 2018—but from what I understand, there used to be history in this House where the government House leaders would get together and discuss the agenda for the upcoming week. It has been incredibly frustrating to come in every day and not know what I'm expected to debate until the government stands up and calls the specific orders of the day.

There have been a number of times over the last few weeks where I've come in prepared to speak to no fewer than five or six bills at any given point in time. I pour my heart and my staff time and my time into researching and preparing our debates and going through our inboxes to look at the emails that our constituents are telling us so I can bring their voices specifically into this House. I'm here prepared to speak to Bill 159 today, but I have to say, Speaker, it's one of about a dozen bills I feel like I'm prepared to speak to. I'm sitting here waiting for Bill 184 to be called, so I can give my hour lead on that bill, and would note that the lack of information that has come

forward from the government side has been incredibly frustrating. But here we are debating Bill 159, a bill that I didn't know I was going to be even speaking to until a few hours ago.

What this bill does do—having said my piece on that, Speaker—is that it makes various amendments to the legislation that oversees Tarion, the Condominium Authority and other delegated administrative authorities. What I've learned about this bill and the reason we're having a conversation about Tarion is how homebuyers have been left behind in this province for so long. It's a hard concept for me to even talk about, Speaker, because I've never been a homebuyer, and quite frankly I don't know that I ever will be, because housing has become so unaffordable in the province of Ontario.

I have spent my whole life living in, quite frankly, precarious housing situations. I have never known what it's like to take that pride in home ownership, and so many of my constituents never will, quite frankly. In downtown Toronto, in my riding of Toronto Centre, not only are our rental prices some of the highest in the country; our home purchase prices are some of the highest in the country, and I don't know a young family that can afford to get into the market anymore. Unless you've got the support of the bank of mom and dad behind you to help with the down payment—

Laughter.

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's true. If you're coming from the kind of generational poverty that I grew up in—I don't have the bank of mom and dad to go to. So many of my constituents don't have the bank of mom and dad to go to. What I haven't seen from this government is any action over the last few years to really support those first-time homebuyers to enter into a market that we've been priced out of through things like speculation in our housing markets, through things like money laundering in our housing markets. We've got all of these bad actors in the system.

And then, put yourself in the shoes of that family that has now scraped together for years, and saved and saved—and in Toronto Centre, in my riding, where the stakes are so high—to finally buy that new home, and then you take ownership of your home and it's defective. You've got mould and leaking pipes or whatever the issue is. You bought new for the precise reason of having a warranty to protect your purchase.

Again, I don't know what it's like to be a homeowner, and the only comparison I can make in my world is cars, really. A lot of folks know I'm quite the automotive enthusiast in this House. I often spend the free time that I have on the weekends out racing, actually, competing in motorsports, so I know what it's like to have bought a new car that has been defective. I've bought used cars that have oftentimes done me a lot better, but the point of buying new is to off-set risk when you're buying a car, right? I have to assume that the same principles apply to buying a home. You're off-setting the risk of the unknown, to buy a home that you know is going to meet the needs of you and your family. You're paying extra. You're paying that premium to off-set that risk.

What we're seeing with the deficiencies in Tarion is that homeowners are buying new, thinking they're going to be protected, and then when something goes wrong with that new home, they go to Tarion and their claims are denied, because who oversees Tarion? The very builders who are building their homes.

Speaker, I don't want to suggest that all builders are bad. We know that there are some really great builders out there. I live in Regent Park, and a lot of folks in my community are quite happy with the developer that has been leading that project, and it's not just new homes, but it's also a project that includes the rebuilding of social housing units for Toronto Community Housing. But I will note that there have been frustrations with the project and that we're only net-replacing the same number of social housing units that existed in Regent Park before. We haven't actually been able to get any net new units into our neighbourhood, and it comes down to, really, the unwillingness of Liberal and Conservative governments for the last 15 years to invest in social housing and to put the money on the table for the operating subsidies to maintain those units going forward.

1840

I will say that the building I live in is a new building. My husband and I rent, and we have had issues, but when you've got a good developer who takes responsibility for the product of their work, you actually never have to deal with Tarion. We've had issues with the gym in our building, and the sound that travelled through to the units below and how absolutely disruptive it has been for that family, so we've actually had to have our gym shut down in our building for, I think, going on two years now while we've had to go through this process and bring in sound engineers and do decibel testing. It has been annoying for everyone involved, but the builder came to the table and has been working through it with us in partnership with our condo board—which my husband actually sits on, so I hear the chatter at home about, “What's the latest gossip on the gym floor today?” when I go home for dinner. But the builder came to the table, and is helping work through it, and is paying to fix the problem, so we haven't had to deal with Tarion as a building and navigate that process.

But for the families who do have to go through Tarion, it's frustrating. As my colleagues have said in this chamber earlier today, people have lost their lives by suicide because they poured their hearts, their life-savings, their hard work into buying that home, and then when it's faulty and it's falling apart and they don't have the resources to fix their homes, it's a betrayal. That's exactly what it is.

This bill does some tweaking around the edges, of course. I know that if my colleague from Humber River–Black Creek were here, he'd speak much more eloquently than I can. I don't want to suggest that I'm an expert on Tarion by any means, but at the end of the day this is enabling legislation, and I think that a lot of the concerns that my colleagues have raised are that the devil is in the detail. So many times, we've come into this chamber and we've watched this government put enabling legislation on the table, and they say, “Trust us,” to trust you that it's

all going to get worked out in regulation, but I'm here to tell you that we don't trust you. I don't trust any of you as far as I could throw you, for the most part, and it's because trust has to be earned. I haven't seen that trust earned from the government members to date in my experience in this Legislature.

Going back to my opening comments about not even knowing what bill I'm debating any given day of the week and how I'm expected to do my work as a legislator if I don't even know what I'm expected to speak to when I'm thrown up on my feet: That's part of that trust, right? It's about working together as colleagues. When I think about the relationship that we have as legislators in this building—well, what does the committee process look like? We've just come out of committee on this bill, and I didn't have a chance to sit in on the committee hearings for this particular bill, but I've read through some of the Hansard and I have some quotes that I can speak to later that highlight some of the issues that were raised in the committee and that I've heard from my constituents, as well. But what does the committee process even look like in this building anymore?

Interjection: Painful.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Right? Every bill put forward, including this one, we put forward amendments, and you don't give us an inch. You don't ever give us an inch. It doesn't matter how good our amendments are; you vote them down.

Maybe I'm wrong, and I'm happy to have my record corrected. I'm not actually sure that in two years this government has allowed us to pass a single amendment to a single bill. I don't know that for sure, but certainly the bills that I've followed the most closely and the committees meetings that I've sat in on—maybe one or two. I don't know. You don't give us an inch.

The point of committee when we're looking at our legislation is to bring the public's voice into this building. You've written a bill, but you're not infallible, and so we go to committee. We take the bill and show it to the public and say, "What's right and what has missed the boat?" Maybe it's a good idea, but when you look at it from a regional perspective, maybe it's not going to work the same in the north as it is in the south. But you're supposed to listen to the public and then make amendments, and when we put forward amendments on this bill, you voted them down. You don't even listen. You don't give us an inch, and it doesn't matter what bill it is. You vote them all down anyway.

I haven't watched the government members ever come into this building with humility, with humility to be able to say, "Hey, maybe we missed the boat. Maybe we just didn't think of something." It's okay to be wrong and allow the opposition to come in with amendments that are going to make your bills better and make them supportable. That's what I'd like to see from the members opposite.

I want to speak a little bit about some of the concerns from stakeholders that were raised at committee that you didn't listen to and the issues that, quite frankly, leave me

questioning whether this bill will live up to the title of its name.

When we look at Tarion, they're a private warranty corporation under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and they're the regulator of the new home building industry in Ontario. As a regulator, it's their role to ensure that builders honour their construction warranties and intervene and uphold those warranties when they're not met or honoured by the builders.

Tarion's responsibility is to ensure that those who purchase new homes or require substantial builds on their property receive quality outcomes from the builders they've hired. If a new homebuyer finds mould, leaks or cracks and the builder of the home is unable to fix the problem, then it's Tarion's role to go in and fix the issue and seek compensation from the builders. It seems like a pretty good system to ensure that Ontarians buying new homes are protected from bad builders and possible health and safety issues, and it would be great if that's actually how Tarion operated, but unfortunately for far too many we know that's not actually the case.

Part of how we got here is a history from the previous Liberal and Conservative governments, who have not actually addressed key issues, which is that they let the builders that Tarion is supposed to be overseeing control Tarion and sit on the board, and put the interests of builders ahead of the interests of consumers. For years and years and years, we've seen the scales tip away from protecting the homebuyers to protecting the interests of the builders. Beginning with its inception in 1976, Tarion has favoured and been controlled by the building industry that it's supposed to be regulating. It just doesn't make sense. The board is controlled by many of the builders in Ontario and their lobby groups and their lobby interests. How could a lobby group oversee and regulate an organization that's supposed to be representing consumers, and that's paid for by consumers?

Consumers pay fees into Tarion, and then those fees by consumers are then turned around and paid out in excessive executive salaries to the tune of over \$700,000 a year. I don't know anyone in Ontario who deserves to make \$700,000 a year on the public dime and on the dime of consumers. It's excessive—

Interjection.

Ms. Suze Morrison: To the member opposite, the member from Carleton, it doesn't matter that that one executive is gone. It's the very fact—

Ms. Jill Andrew: That he was there.

Ms. Suze Morrison: —that he was there in the first place earning \$700,000 a year.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Nina Tangri): Order, please.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you.

There have been many complaints from constituents and folks who have come to committee. I have a few quotes here as well. Barbara Captijn, who I know many folks are familiar with—I've met with her a number of times myself. She's been to my office—a lovely, lovely

woman; really passionate about consumer rights. When she came to committee, she spoke about her frustrations as being self-represented and fighting back against Tarion and their lawyers when challenged and when they denied claims. She says, “So imagine yourself as a self-represented consumer up against two sets of lawyers, Tarion’s and the builder’s. There are all the procedural hurdles you have to go through. Sometimes they eliminate your key witnesses through legal—there are all sorts of legal tricks of the trade. There are several lawyers in this room today. It’s about delay, it’s about tactics, it’s about winning for your client. But Tarion is there as your adversary when you’re a homeowner. That’s a problem. They’re not there as your friend. They team up with the builder, both of them with an interest in getting the claim dismissed.”

She also went on later to say, “If 83% of consumers are losing there—for years, we’ve been saying there’s something wrong with this.” She’s saying it’s unfair as consumers, and they feel left behind.

1850

I see I’ve only got a few minutes left, so I’m going to jump ahead, because I had a few other quotes that I did want to read into the record here. I want to speak just really quickly in my last few minutes about the Justice Cunningham report and how I don’t see the actions that were requested in the report necessarily reflected in this bill today. The report on Tarion by Justice Cunningham stated that the purpose of the program should provide four distinct functions—I’ve got my pages all out of order, Speaker; apologies.

The first was making rules regarding warranty protections; the second, administering warranty protections; the third, adjudicating disputes about the rules; and the fourth, regulating builders and vendors. Based on the fact that Tarion was put in charge of all four of these functions, Justice Cunningham stated, “I believe that this multiplicity of roles, at a minimum, gives rise to a perception of conflict of interest and can also result in actual conflicts of interest.”

It was further found that Tarion executives take bonuses as high as 60% of their salaries for turning down families’ claims, that Tarion re-licenses shady builders and that Tarion sets impossible timelines and abandons families who can’t meet them. So what do the findings have to do with the bill in question? Justice Cunningham in his letter to the minister following the completion of his review concluded that, “Inevitably, this framework has given rise to real and perceived conflicts of interest and has presented it with challenges in fulfilling its multiple roles.” This reinforces the need for change, the need for a new system to be put in place, the need for a warranty plan that protects homeowners and demolishes the authority of Tarion.

Since this report, there have been attempts by Liberal and now Conservative governments to address these issues, but it’s disappointing that the legislation just doesn’t go far enough. I would suggest that one of the key pieces is, as my colleague from Toronto—St. Paul’s said earlier, actually putting the consumer’s voice centre in all

of this. Where is the consumers’ representation on the board and the oversight of Tarion? Why is it that the builders’ voices are prioritized over and over and over again and the families are left behind?

Speaker, like I said, what I would really like to see this government do is actually listen to the public and prioritize the voices of consumers. But more importantly, in this bill and beyond, that also includes how committee works, and being able to listen to the people coming into this House and the changes that they’re asking for in your own bills and being able, willing, to make amendments and accept them when they’re put forward by the opposition. I think we can get to a much healthier relationship on both sides of this House if you would give an inch once in a while. I think we’d have a much better working relationship for the betterment of everyone in Ontario. Thank you. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We’ll now have 10 minutes of questions and comments.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to comment.

I’m sure the small business owners out there must be dreading the fact that this poor member has to prepare for five bills, has to be ready to speak to five bills—such hard work for them.

But, Mr. Speaker, let’s talk about amendments. The member opposite says that the government doesn’t entertain amendments. The reality is that this bill actually went to committee after first reading and, during that time, the members opposite brought amendments forward which the government accepted and put in the legislation and made legal as we brought it back to the House again for second reading and then back to committee again. So, colleagues, we listened.

We heard from the members opposite. The member from Humber River—Black Creek did a really good job on this, as did the member for Sarnia—Lambton. On this bill, we did listen. That’s why we went to committee after first reading. We listened to the amendments, and then we passed those in the House. So I wonder if the member might comment on the amendments that were proposed by the NDP at that time and accepted by the government.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I honestly don’t even know how to respond to the government House leader at this point. The government House leader has for weeks now been coming in and berating our members quite rudely and heckling. What I said in my remarks was that—

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The government House leader has raised a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member opposite suggested that I had been berating or belittling the members opposite. I wonder if she might table some of those, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That’s not exactly a point of order.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Speaker, the government House leader has actually helped make my point. There have been a number of occasions where I’ve risen in the House

and watched other members rise, and if the government House leader doesn't like what we have to say, he interjects with frivolous points of order that are not points of order to shut down our line of debate and our train of thought because he simply doesn't like what we have to say. This is not how you build good relationships across the aisle so that we can work on better legislation together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Toronto Centre for her comments and for the really deep dive into some of the really difficult issues with the monopoly that is known as Tarion. It is a deeply flawed system that Bill 159 does not fix.

You talked about the stacked board and about the manipulative processes that Tarion engages in. They deliberately hide a lot of their practices. When you led off your remarks, you were speaking about this government and how they're not communicating their legislative agenda and not involving the opposition in a collegial way, a non-partisan way or a collaborative way. Do you see any similarities between Tarion and this government?

Ms. Suze Morrison: Probably I see a few similarities; I'm not too sure how many of them would be parliamentary comments to make. But I will say, and thank you for the question, that it is really frustrating when the government members won't work with us in a collegial way, and to suggest that we don't want to do our homework to speak to all of these bills is not the point. I do my homework and come prepared to speak to a multiplicity of bills every day, but the point is that we need to work in a co-operative way. It's not professional to keep us locked out of the agenda for the week. How does it hurt you to let us know what we're expected to speak about so that I can be best prepared to bring the voices of my constituents into this House?

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you, Speaker. Through you, I'd just like to ask the member opposite—I sat in committee when we listened to the Auditor General. I sat in committee when members of the Tarion board were there, and I can tell you for sure that our member here from Carleton was grilling them to a large extent—and there was a lot of consensus on both sides of the House—asking them questions.

Quite frankly, we all know that the Tarion system was very broken, and we all know that we had to fix it, and we could have done it together. Unfortunately, every time that we put something together, they put amendment after amendment. So my question to the member opposite is, you wanted a multi-provider. However, by doing that, you give the opportunity for, especially the smaller developers and the smaller builders, that they may get no coverage. That, to me, means that you only support large developers. Can you please answer that question? Do you only support large developers then?

Ms. Suze Morrison: Speaker, I don't even know. The member opposite talks about wanting us to work together.

What would be helpful to working together is if I knew what was going on in this building any given day of the week. It is not too much to ask to know what business is going to be called before this House before I'm up on my feet. It is not too much to ask. If you want to work together, that's how we can work together. Give us the notice of what bills are going to be called throughout the week so that I can better prepare and bring the voices of my constituents into this House and we can have better debate. This is petty politics, and you can do better.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Stop the clock, please. Just before we continue, government members, it has been a quiet afternoon up until now.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Please, we're being cordial going back and forth with questions and comments, and it's nice to listen to the answer to the question you pose on both sides. Thank you.

Questions and comments?

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Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the member from Toronto Centre for bringing a lot of good things to the floor this afternoon, later on into the evening.

This bill here, Bill 159, Rebuilding Consumer Confidence, is an omnibus bill, and it's a huge bill. We have seen many of these bills come before us without any notice or any preparation, and it seems like they just get ran right through. But my question to you is, do you feel that in this bill, Rebuilding Consumer Confidence, there is a lot of lack of accountability?

Ms. Suze Morrison: Absolutely, I do. It's interesting how the government likes to give their bills these titles, like Rebuilding Consumer Confidence, and they don't actually always live up to the title of the bill's intent. We've seen this in a number of cases, with Bill 184, for example, the protecting tenants act. Well, it's an eviction bill.

How accountable is this government to its own legislation? They say they're doing one thing and they do the exact opposite. So I would like to see the government members come to the table with real solutions that again, like I said, put the interests of consumers, and not developers, first. Or in the example of the housing bill, put the interest of tenants, and not landlords, first. I find it really disappointing, but thank you for the question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Carleton.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member from Toronto Centre and there seems to be a common theme here. She said that she's no expert on Tarion and she doesn't really understand the legislation. She said that she doesn't know what's going on in the House. Yet she expects us to listen to her amendments. My question to the member, my—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. I've asked both sides to tame it down. Saying what you just said was not what was said in the House, so I'm going to ask you to withdraw.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): You have 15 seconds to pose your question.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question to the member is, why should we take her suggestions and her amendments over the Auditor General's amendments, which is what our legislation is based on? Because I was there and I was the one who grilled the CEO of Tarion.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Clearly, I think I've struck a nerve today with the government members. I'm not too sure what that's about. But I will say that it's not my amendment specifically that the government members didn't support at committee. It was the member for Humber River-Black Creek, my seat mate, who is actually quite knowledgeable on the subject, quite knowledgeable on the topic. They were his amendments that you voted down. I'm sure he spoke quite eloquently to them at committee. Like I said, I wasn't able to participate in the committee meetings for this bill specifically.

I would much rather not have our debate today devolve into name-calling and accusations as we saw from the member from Carleton just now. This is not how we have good debate. So, thank you for the question—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We have time for one quick question and one quick answer. The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Toronto Centre for her very eloquent presentation. The things that she laid forward were quite clear and what we heard from stakeholders in our communities, what we have been hearing from homeowners in our ridings, and the trouble that we have been hearing from Tarion.

Rosario Marchese was the member for Trinity-Spadina and brought forward a bill in 2010-11. Now we're seeing Bill 169 in front of us today. What could Bill 169 do better than Bill 159?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): You have 15 seconds to answer, the member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Off the top of my head, I would say, let's have a conversation about capping executive compensation. I don't think anyone thinks that \$750,000 is an appropriate amount. Also, like I said, to put the consumer's voice first and create space for consumer voices in the oversight.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: It's 7 o'clock, so I think we need to remind our viewers that we're debating Bill 159, the Rebuilding Consumer Confidence Act, 2020.

What's clear in discussion of this legislation is that Ontario's government has a continuing plan to strengthen protection, promote trust and confidence for Ontario residents, including those residents in the town of Whitby that I have the privilege of representing.

This evening, we're continuing our conversation about Bill 159. We first brought this bill to the House back in December 2019. Since then, Speaker, a lot has changed. As we adapt now to life with COVID-19, I think it's important that Ontario residents know that here at Queen's

Park, we also take our responsibility for carrying on our legislative agenda very seriously.

We do this, Speaker, because we know that hard-working families in Whitby are looking to this government for reassurance and for action—and action they're getting, Speaker. They also want to know that as government, we have their back, and more importantly, that we're caring for the things that matter to them, hard-working families here in Ontario, hard-working families in Whitby.

People need to know this now more than ever. Ontarians are not only counting on us as a government to ensure that the province is committed to their health and safety during COVID-19, but they're also expecting the government to continue our work to strengthen consumer protection and to further enhance business practices.

Now that's what I hear from my constituents. I hear it from the Whitby Chamber of Commerce. I hear it also in round tables virtually that I host with the finance minister. I hear it in round tables that I host with our small business and red tape removal minister.

As we progress on our work and continue to consult broadly across this province, I'd like to assure everyone in this House today, and importantly, everyone listening, that our government continues to place a priority on listening—listening to those people that we have the privilege of representing, whether it's in Whitby, Ajax, Pickering, Mississauga. We continue to listen. We're listening to the needs and concerns of consumers across the province to help better protect them.

Our government consulted with the public and stakeholders on three main pillars that will help us work faster, smarter and more efficiently as we move forward on all of our work. The first pillar is protecting the privacy of Ontarians. The second pillar is enabling businesses to compete digitally. The third pillar is enabling better, smarter and more efficient government to help inform the creation of Ontario's digital and data action plan.

Speaker, when you discuss these particular pillars, what's really important in the context piece is the feedback, and the feedback from these consultations will help the government develop an efficient and effective action plan, again keeping in mind the importance of protecting consumers in this province, the hard-working families here in Ontario.

After first reading, Speaker, Bill 159 was referred immediately to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy—the government House leader spoke about that process earlier tonight—which made the important decision to visit different communities across Ontario, and I was part of that committee. We travelled to Ottawa and Windsor and Brampton. In my experience, it's not the typical road map for a bill, Speaker, but I was really, really impressed because it helped us to get a more rounded perspective, outside of the GTHA.

Once again, we demonstrated that the government is committed to listening, but ultimately taking action. In this case, with regard to Bill 159 particularly, because the bill covers so many different areas that are so important to people in so many parts of their lives, we wanted to give

as many opportunities as possible for people to offer their feedback, and indeed they did. Speaker, you joined us in Windsor. You heard that feedback from a variety of sectors.

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I should also note that I think it's great that the committee took the time to get outside of that greater Toronto-Hamilton area. Speaker, you've been here in the Legislative Assembly for a period of time; you know the value of going into different regions outside of the urban settings. And why is that? Well, life can be very different, and I think it's important that when you get outside of the greater Toronto-Hamilton area and enable people to have the opportunity to have their voice heard, they appreciate that. They appreciate that you're taking the time, but more importantly, you're sensitive to how their particular regions are very different, and you're factoring that in.

One of the things that I hear most often in Whitby and in other parts of the region of Durham is that people are getting really tired of the cookie-cutter approach and decisions that don't necessarily connect and reflect realities outside of metropolitan areas. I think that people, as we took Bill 159 across Ontario, really appreciated the fact that we went to Windsor and we went as far east as Ottawa.

What's clear is that the proposed legislation would, if passed, strengthen protection and promote trust and confidence for all residents of Ontario—at home, online and in the communities that we have the privilege of representing. But why are those changes needed? Simply stated, the government recognizes that the people of Ontario need stronger protections. We've heard it often in our constituency offices, across all sectors, haven't we? The government wants everyone to feel confident that they're well informed, better protected and have more choice. They're also often confused and frustrated by the arcane rules and regulations that exist. Ontarians need real change to curtail these experiences, and by ensuring that we have a more robust, modern range of effective enforcement tools, for example, we can better encourage compliance with the law and improve consumer confidence.

Now, the Consumer Protection Act needs change—it really does need change; it's 15 years old; no one has reformed it in over 15 years—so that consumers in Whitby and across the region can be better protected, as well as better tools to deter the bad actors who continue to cause harm to consumers and do damage to the reputation of honest business people.

Speaker, we know how important it is to have an effective, consumer-focused new home warranty and protection program in this province. That's why, last spring, the government conducted focused consultations with key stakeholders. This list includes the insurance industry, consumers, new home builders and vendors, other professionals and subject matter experts, other Canadian jurisdictions and, of course, Tarion.

Now, based on the research and consultations, the government decided to move forward with an enhanced single-administrator model rather than moving to a multi-

provider insurance model. We believe that enhancements to the single-administrator model for the delivery of new home warranties and protections are in the best interest of Ontario residents.

Now, within that context, it's also important to note that in the Auditor General's 2019 audit of Tarion, she identified several risks with a multi-provider insurance model and found that the advantages of moving towards the competitive, multi-provider insurance model is still unclear. So, Speaker, by implementing an enhanced, single-administrator model, the government would be able to move effectively respond to the issues that consumers raised during our recent consultations, such as improving the claims process.

The people have spoken and we have listened. Now is the time to take action, and action we are taking. Through this proposed legislation, the government is rebuilding critical consumer trust and protections, aspects neglected by the previous government, one that failed to heed the recommendations of the Auditor General. They just ignored them.

In relation to new home warranties, our changes proposed in this bill would, firstly, overhaul the Ontario new home warranty and protection program to make it consumer-focused, as it should be, by enhancing the current single-administrator model for the administration of warranties and protections.

As you well know, Speaker, buying a home is the largest purchase most of us will ever make in our lifetime. But this bill is so much more than just about the purchase. I have said before in debating this bill, and I would like to remind everyone tonight, it's important to note that real estate is not just about the square footage or great floor plans. It's about having a place to call your own. It's about that kitchen table or your sitting room where you host your family gatherings, and your backyard where you gather with your friends and family again. At the end of the day, it is about that amazing, safe place where you can spend quality time together with your family. And, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please. I'm sorry to the member from Whitby. I've been calling people to order so much I'm losing my voice this afternoon.

Mr. Lorne Coe: We did hear from Ontario's hard-working families—I talked earlier on about the breadth of our consultative process. Families from across this province are buying new homes that unfortunately have defects, putting their health and safety at risk. Consumers are frustrated and rightly fed up with the slow and complicated warranty and protection claims process that, quite frankly, feels stacked against them.

We've heard loud and clear that they want to be confident that they're hiring a reputable company to build their home, and they expect strong warranties and protections that they can depend upon. We also heard that they want strong oversight and enforcement of clear rules for all builders. Quite simply, the system has not been working for many years.

Well, the wait is over. Yes, it's finally over. We are rebuilding the Ontario new home warranty and protection program from the ground up, focusing on consumer protections, transparency, as well as access to information and good government.

Speaker, at this juncture, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House. We've had 13 speakers, six and a half hours—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You jumped the gun.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I did.

The member from Whitby has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the favour of the House that the motion carry?

I did hear a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. Prepare the lobbies. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1922 to 1952.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Coe has moved the adjournment of the debate.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 0; the nays are 53.

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

The member from Whitby has the floor.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Just to finish up a bit on Bill 159: My constituents in Whitby and other municipalities in the region of Durham need to feel confident that there are strong protections in place when they spend their hard-earned money, and I believe that Bill 159 does exactly that.

Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Coe has moved that the question now be put. I understand there have been 13 speakers to this motion and more than seven hours of debate. Therefore, I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Carried on division.

Ms. Thompson has moved third reading of Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection.

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

I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, unless I receive a deferral slip—I wish to inform the House that I have received a slip from the chief government whip requesting that the vote on third reading of Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection, be deferred until deferred votes on Tuesday, July 14, 2020.

Third reading vote deferred.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

Resuming the debate adjourned on July 13, 2020, on the amendment to government notice of motion number 85 relating to the appointment of a select committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this motion, I understand the government House leader had the floor and that he's prepared to continue. He still has time on the clock. I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Just to finish off, as I said, I think the proposed select committee will not only provide members of this House the opportunity to provide oversight on the emergency orders going forward, but I think it's also an excellent opportunity for us to continue to debate in this House when the mandatory debate on the state of emergency comes. So, with that, I will yield the floor to another colleague.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate on the amendment to the motion.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to speak on the government's select committee motion on emergency management oversight. I think it's important for the public to understand that this motion is related to the extraordinary powers the government is proposing to grant themselves in Bill 195. The government's plan is to end the state of emergency while granting themselves power to extend or amend emergency orders they brought up under the state of emergency, and to be able to do this for up to two years.

Speaker, let's take a moment to reflect on what the government has ordered over the last four months and what the people of Ontario have done. The people were told that we could not—and many still cannot—hug or visit our loved ones. People were asked to close their businesses without a revenue or rent support program that works. Schools, daycares, houses of worship and community centres were all closed. Collective bargaining agreements for front-line workers were overridden.

Allowing these orders to be extended indefinitely without prior input from the House or the public through the normal legislative process would grant the government—I dare say, the Premier—extraordinary powers, which is why I urge the government to support the official opposition's amendment to provide a more balanced oversight committee.

The government is proposing that after the orders have been extended and after the power has been executed, the Premier might come to a committee, a committee dominated by government members, to explain why the Premier made the decisions he made. This is not the kind of

substantive and democratic oversight that such extraordinary powers require. Whether intended or not, this motion in Bill 195 feels more like a power grab than a real mechanism for ensuring democracy and oversight.

I know the government has a majority, and they can and will exercise their majority on this motion, but I warn them to proceed cautiously if we want to avoid the kind of hyper-partisanship that has led to such tragic consequences south of the border. That is why I support the official opposition's amendment, and without passing this amendment, I will not support the government's motion.

2000

Premier, think about this, and I ask the members opposite to think about this: Do you truly want to exercise such extraordinary powers without the democratic oversight that the people of Ontario expect and that they deserve as we battle COVID-19?

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: It's a pleasure to rise as part of this debate over this motion and the proposed amendment. I would like to thank my colleague the government House leader for bringing this motion forward, which I think is so critically important to make sure that we can maintain the kind of transparency and accountability that our constituents expect during this pandemic and during this crisis period and these extraordinary times.

You know, Mr. Speaker, throughout my time as an elected member here, when I speak, I often like to refer to some historical examples, to look back at how different things have developed over time. When I was studying the provision of emergency powers that governments receive during times of crisis, it actually took me all the way back to ancient Roman times. During ancient Roman times, when there was a crisis, the people would turn to one person and give that one person absolute power over the state to deal with the crisis. Now, sometimes this worked and sometimes it didn't.

One particular example comes to mind, and that's the story of Cincinnatus, Mr. Speaker. Cincinnatus was a Roman statesman from the 400s BC. During that time, Rome was under siege from an eastern tribe. A group of Roman statesmen decided to go and visit Cincinnatus at his farm just outside of Rome; Cincinnatus was a turnip farmer. They said, "We're at a time of crisis. We need you to come forward and help protect the Roman state." So Cincinnatus came from his farm and he went to Rome and he assumed absolute power over the Roman state. He fought off those eastern tribesmen. And 15 days later, he completely relinquished all of that absolute power that had been given to him to deal with this crisis, and he returned to his turnip farm where he ploughed and farmed his turnips for the rest of his life.

Cincinnatus is considered a wonderful example of leadership from ancient times. He is somebody who a lot of later statesmen would turn to as an example of somebody who rose to deal with a crisis but didn't take that opportunity to seize absolute control. He is a good, good example.

Thankfully, since ancient Roman times, we've seen our democratic institutions evolve and develop. Thankfully, today we have robust democratic institutions to deal with these crises, and we no longer have to give absolute power to a single individual with no accountability. As we've seen throughout history, not all leaders have been quite as noble as Cincinnatus.

It is now up to Parliament here in Ontario through all of its available mechanisms to help hold up and hold our institutions to account. That's exactly what this measure before us will do. The motion presented by our House leader will establish a parliamentary select committee to review any extensions of emergency orders by the Lieutenant Governor related to the current COVID-19 pandemic. We're establishing a committee of Parliament that's going to be made up of representation from different wings that are represented here in Parliament. We're going to have members of the government party, members of the opposition party and a representative from our independent bloc here in Parliament. These different representatives are going to have the chance to question the Premier or the Premier's representatives on these extensions to the emergency order and make sure that that accountability is in place to make sure that we have that transparency and accountability that Ontarians expect and that I know my constituents expect.

The government throughout this pandemic has had to make a lot of very tough decisions. Of course, one of those tough decisions was the decision to declare a state of emergency in the first place. But this was critically important, because the state of emergency has allowed the government to issue critical emergency orders covering a broad range of different topics.

One of those topics, of course, is long-term care, where we have seen some of the most devastating impacts of COVID-19 during the past several months. This is an issue of particular concern for me because my riding has one of the largest seniors' populations in all of Ontario. Making sure that our long-term-care facilities could adapt quickly to some of these challenges has been vitally important.

During the COVID-19 crisis, I had the chance to deliver food to some of the long-term-care facilities across my riding. It was very nice. One of our wonderful Ottawa business leaders, George Hanna, who owns Gabriel Pizza, donated almost a thousand meals, whether it was to front-line hospital workers or workers at long-term-care facilities or other areas where we were providing service to vulnerable populations. I brought a number of pizzas to those long-term-care facilities and had the chance to chat with some of the workers at those long-term-care facilities—obviously, following safe physical distancing measures—and time and time again, those workers at those long-term-care facilities were so thankful that we were able to issue some of those critical emergency orders under the state of emergency.

For example, some of those orders allowed us to redeploy vital hospital and public health staff from across Ottawa to some of our long-term-care facilities that needed the most support. I recall having a chance to chat

with the president over at CHEO, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. He said that it was quite interesting for some of his team at CHEO, who are used to dealing with pediatric patients, and who were suddenly pulled out of the children's hospital and were dealing with folks at the other end of the age spectrum.

No matter who it was, the folks across Ottawa who were redeployed during that time rose to the challenge and, thanks to that emergency order, were able to get into those homes that needed the most support.

Another emergency order dealt with making sure that workers were only working at a single long-term-care facility. Again, we definitely didn't want to see a situation where folks were being forced to move between different long-term-care facilities, potentially bringing with them the COVID-19 infection, which would have been devastating to a lot of our homes. So having that emergency order in place was vitally important.

We also had the emergency order that was covering price gouging. We needed to make sure that issue was dealt with. As the Premier repeatedly said, we were going to go after those who were price gouging during this crisis, and we needed to make sure that was also covered under those emergency orders.

All of these examples demonstrate the reason why the state of emergency is so vitally important. We need the ability to act quickly, to make sure that we can deal with this ongoing crisis. This select committee is going to allow us to continue to do that in a responsible way, with a mechanism of parliamentary democracy providing the sort of accountability that we need.

Last year, I really appreciated the opportunity to work as a PSW at one of my long-term-care facilities for a day. I went to Extencicare Starwood in my riding and worked as a PSW for the day and got the chance to become certified with the hoist. I'm now listed as one of the folks who is certified to man the hoist at Extencicare Starwood, which I never thought would be a prerequisite as an MPP, but I'm glad to have that skill in my tool belt now. It was wonderful to be able to build a relationship with those hard workers at that long-term-care facility and to see the sorts of things they have to deal with day in and day out—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There are a number of private conversations taking place in the House at the moment. I'm not going to be harshly critical of anybody who was engaged in a private conversation in the last couple of minutes, for obvious reasons, but at the same time, the member for Ottawa West–Nepean has the floor and I think everyone should listen to him and we should hear him.

2010

So, again, I apologize for the interruption. The member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the intervention. I pride myself as somebody who doesn't tend to follow the practice of heckling in this House, and so I appreciate being given the same respect when I rise to speak as well that I give to all of the members across this House.

Again, returning to what I was speaking about, I was talking about my experience working as a PSW for the day at Extencicare Starwood in my riding. Extencicare Starwood is right down the road from where I grew up and from where my grandparents first settled in Ottawa West–Nepean when they moved there in the 1950s. Having the opportunity to see those hard workers day in and day out and get a chance to experience what they experience every day gave me a wonderful perspective.

I was so, so pleased to be able to see our government reacting quickly throughout this crisis to bring about some of these emergency orders that would allow us to deploy resources, to deal with staffing issues, to try to help those long-term-care facilities that were in crisis.

Beyond just the long-term-care facility, the emergency orders have also played a role in other areas of government responsibility as well. In my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, I took an active interest and role early on in the COVID pandemic in making sure that we were providing the best possible protections to our residences in the developmental services sector. Barring a terrible, terrible example that happened in the province, generally speaking we have seen very good protection across our congregate care settings in the developmental services sector.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, this is something beyond just my professional interest. It's also a personal interest for me, given that my brother lives in one of these congregate care settings in the developmental services sector. I know how devastating it would have been if there had been a COVID outbreak at my brother's home. Making sure we were providing that ring of protection around those congregate care settings was so vitally important, so I began having biweekly meetings with the developmental services sector in Ottawa, holding a Zoom round table call. We were all getting used to the new reality of Zoom round tables. To go on a brief tangent, Mr. Speaker, I love playing the game of bingo on Zoom where you try to guess which people are actually wearing pyjama bottoms in their square. If you win, at the end, I don't know what prize you get.

I would hold these Zoom meetings with the developmental services sector in Ottawa, and they would indicate to me that, for example, they needed to make sure that they were able to quickly deal with staffing issues if there was a staffing crisis or a staffing shortage at any of their particular homes. We were able to provide that feedback back, along with many of my other colleagues who were providing the same feedback, I'm sure, across both sides of the aisle, to the minister. Quickly, we were able to get an emergency order out covering the developmental services sector as well.

Similar to long-term-care homes, developmental services congregate settings wanted to make sure that their workers weren't moving between different homes. Again, we were able to quickly deploy an emergency order to prevent that from happening. Another change that was able to happen quickly is, on one of those biweekly calls,

I was informed that the workers at developmental services congregate care settings weren't actually covered under the daycare provisions for essential workers. We brought that feedback back, and the ministry was able to work in concert with the Minister of Education to make sure that that daycare could be offered. Because, again, I know many workers in those congregate care settings who have children themselves happened to work extra-long hours to make sure that they were providing the care needed to protect those in those congregate care settings. We were able to get that daycare in place for those workers.

Again, Mr. Speaker, time and time again we see examples where it has been critical for the government to be able to use this state of emergency and these emergency orders to protect some of our most vulnerable, to be able to take quick action on some of these vitally important issues, like long-term care and the developmental services sector, and protect some of our most vulnerable.

That is why we need to make sure that we have the continued ability to deal with this crisis that we are still in the middle of. I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, that I see light at the end of the tunnel. I was thrilled when I heard today the wonderful news that Ottawa, along with other parts of the province, will this Friday be moving into stage 3 of our second phase. We're going to start to be able to go back out and enjoy some of the things that all of us have been sorely missing for so long now, including being able to go to a restaurant. I even noticed when I was reading that this will mean that folks can now go back to a movie cinema. That's something I've been missing, being able to go to a movie cinema. Of course, we'll have to have proper physical distancing in place, but some of these things are returning to normal.

Despite that, we need to be ready. We know that COVID is not something that's just going to respect the will of Parliament; it's an evolving threat that we need to be able to deal with, and we need to have these powers in place quickly when we need them to protect our most vulnerable. By bringing in this select committee, we're going to be able to continue to do that with that critical essential parliamentary oversight.

Mr. Speaker, in the last few minutes remaining to me, I'd just like to talk a little bit about the Ontario spirit that we've seen over the past number of weeks during this COVID-19 crisis. We have seen so many—so many—shining examples across the province of people stepping up to the plate. I spoke about one earlier, George Hanna at Gabriel Pizza, who really put himself out there at a time when his business was suffering to make sure that he was supporting our hard-working front-line workers.

But another example I'll highlight, Mr. Speaker, is the work of our wonderful social services and charitable organizations right across the city of Ottawa. I was very pleased—or privileged, I should say, and honoured—to be asked at the beginning of COVID to sit on a United Way community response table in Ottawa. That United Way community response table has met weekly since the beginning of COVID. Every Friday, they meet for around 90 minutes to two hours, and they bring together almost

75 different social services agencies from across Ottawa. Every single week, they tackle a different key issue, whether it has been food security, supports for refugees, supports for homelessness, efforts to combat gender violence. Each week, they've tackled a different topic, and they've made sure that the resources that have been deployed during COVID from various levels of government, including the \$350-million investment that our province made to support our social services agencies, that that money is getting where it needs to go quickly and efficiently.

Seeing the remarkable work of these agencies has been truly, truly inspirational, Mr. Speaker. It's been nice as a politician—because I think all of us in this chamber always hear about, “Okay, what are you doing to combat one particular issue?” Let's say, gendered violence. And you hear, “Oh, there has been an investment made of X million amount of dollars.” But then you never hear what the next step is. Where does that money go? What are the outcomes that come about from that investment?

This community response table has been wonderful, because as a politician, as a member of this government, I've been able to talk to those organizations and find out right away how those dollars are going to impact folks in the community, to hear about the stories—like the new initiative that the Ottawa police developed in partnership with some of our Interval Houses to develop an encrypted text network for women who were dealing with violence in the home—and to hear about different efforts that have been brought about to help expand food security support to some in our rural areas across Ottawa. Of course, my colleague the member for Carleton will know that Ottawa is a very, very large city, and a huge proportion of the city is rural. Making sure that those social supports are getting out to the rural areas has been so vitally important.

The collaboration that we've seen, Mr. Speaker, across all three levels of government, with all three of us represented at the table, has been nothing short of remarkable. It has reminded me quite a lot of somebody who was a mentor to me. His name may not be familiar to many in this House unless you lived in Ottawa at some point in your life, but he was a fellow named Max Keeping.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I knew Max.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: There you go.

Max Keeping was the CTV Ottawa anchor. For many, many years, he was a close mentor of mine, and Max was a titan in the community. Whenever there was a crisis, whether it was youth suicide or support for our children's hospital or whatever it might be, Max was at the forefront, pulling everybody together and making sure that we were working collaboratively to tackle our biggest challenges. I know that Max is smiling down at everyone in Ottawa right now, at the example that has been shown throughout COVID-19—businesses, charities, government officials, everyday people coming together during this crisis to show what leadership means and to deal with this crisis—and that warms my heart.

2020

Again, I'm going to be supporting this motion brought forward by the House leader. I don't believe that the

amendments are merited in this particular case, so I will not be supporting the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present today.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise once again in this House and speak to the work that our government is doing, not just today, but this week and also in previous weeks. In great contrast to the federal Parliament, we're actually open and we're working, and we're here because we want to make a difference.

Interjections.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'm glad that the members opposite are paying attention now, instead of having their backs turned and engaging in private conversations like they were with my colleague for Ottawa West–Nepean. It's great to see that they are paying attention to what I'm saying tonight, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate that we're really focusing on getting people involved and getting feedback from everyone.

The reason this motion is so important is because committees are what allow parliamentarians to get involved in legislation. I've served on various committees. I currently am the Chair of the Standing Committee on General Government. It's such an important committee that we have. In fact, we've been sitting since mid-May. Even during the whole COVID-19 pandemic, we were still meeting, and we had attendees through Zoom. I think it's a testament to the fact that the people of Ontario expect us to work and they expect us to be here and they expect us to do the job that we were elected to do. So that's one example.

Prior to that, I sat on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, with the Auditor General. Again, that's such a critical committee, because that committee looks at the audits and it looks at the books. The Auditor General always made it very clear that her position is to look at where the money is going and to provide value-for-money audits in that sense.

I remember when we first got elected back in 2018 and when we were sitting on that committee—one of the things we receive from the Auditor General is a chart, and in that chart, it shows her recommendations versus the response she has received from the ministry, as well as a timeline of when things are going to be getting done. It's such a huge contrast today—where we are versus where we were two years ago. When we first got elected two years ago, the charts that she was providing to us were essentially responses from the previous Liberal government, which was supported by the current opposition, and pretty much every single box in that table from the Auditor General said that the ministry hadn't responded or hadn't done what it was supposed to do or had completely ignored her recommendations.

Well, fast-forward to a year or two years later, now that the Auditor General has been looking at the current ministries, up until the point when I was still on the committee for public accounts—when we were getting those charts from her and looking at the updates, it was a huge contrast, because it went from “not responded” or “in

progress” or “ignored,” or whatever the case might be, to “It's being done,” or “Here's the timeline” or “The ministry has accepted the recommendation and is looking to implement those recommendations.” So I think that speaks to how our government is taking its role really seriously, and especially the ministries.

It's interesting, because committees are supposed to be non-partisan, but I do recall, having sat on that committee, the Auditor General having to remind members of the official opposition several times that her job isn't to comment on policy, her job is to just look at the money and the figures. I think that speaks to the fact that committees are supposed to be non-partisan, and it's an opportunity for all legislators to get involved.

That's why I think the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight is so important. Not only does it allow members of the government to get involved, but it also gives an opportunity for the official opposition as well as one independent member to also get involved. So that committee as a whole works together to be advised and to give advice, when they're being briefed by the Premier or any designates from the Premier, on the state of emergency and any future orders. I think in that sense, that's why this committee is so important, and I'm happy to support it.

Interjections.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'm not quite sure why members of the official opposition continue to heckle or laugh. It just seems very strange, because earlier, I especially remember the member from Toronto Centre was pleading with us to give her an inch. She said, “Give us an inch.” So I don't understand why they're heckling now, because we're literally creating a committee that includes members of the official opposition who will be briefed by the Premier or his designate on the state of emergency. Yet apparently she's just sitting there laughing, so I'm not quite sure why that's so funny.

But I think ultimately it just goes to the fact that when the people of Ontario were looking at who to elect and who they trust to run the province, they trusted us. They certainly didn't trust the official opposition. They didn't like their platform, didn't like what they stood for, didn't like how they ran. So it's pretty obvious: The fact that our party and our government has not just a government but a super majority—I mean, we don't even have enough space for everyone to sit on one side of the House. We have to creep over into the other side because there are just so many of us. I think that, in and of itself, is a testament not just to the faith and the trust that the people have put in us as a party, but also the fact that they don't trust the official opposition to get the job done.

I think the fact that we're even giving them an opportunity to be involved and to come to the table and to collaborate speaks to the fact that we, as a government, have always wanted to collaborate. We've always taken every step to work with the official opposition. We continue to do so and we're always here to collaborate. Not only that; this also speaks to accountability and transparency, something that we campaigned on, and something

that we continue to do and promote. If we didn't want to be accountable and transparent, why would we even create a committee that would allow members of the official opposition and an independent member to be involved and to hear directly from the Premier or his designate on the state of emergency orders? If that wasn't the case, why would we do it?

So it seems kind of strange, Mr. Speaker, when we're being accused of all these things, and yet it seems to be the complete opposite of what it is that we're doing, and I think, ultimately, Ontarians realize that. Ultimately, Ontarians realize that actions speak louder than words. It's really easy to stand up here and yell and cause a scene and be dramatic and take that video clip and post it on Twitter and show everyone that you're taking a stand and making a difference. But, ultimately, what people prefer is humility, and they prefer it when you just get the job done instead of grandstanding.

I think the fact that this committee is being created speaks for itself. And I think the fact that, so far, I haven't heard really anything from the official opposition—in fact, after my colleague from Ottawa West–Nepean spoke for 20 minutes and, Mr. Speaker, you asked for further debate, no one from the official opposition even bothered to stand up and speak to this bill. So I think that just shows how serious the official opposition is about actually getting involved and debating, because I would love to hear their opinion on this, and I would love to hear what they think about the creation of this committee. So far, I haven't really heard much, except for heckles and some laughs.

2030

I hope, at least, that the members of the official opposition will take this motion seriously, and I hope to hear from them. I hope that they will at least comment. I hope that they will support the creation of this committee, because if they are so desperate for that inch, we're providing it to them. I think it's actually more than an inch; I think it's certainly more than that. But they want to be involved. They want to be at the table, they want to be part of the decision-making process, and they want to give advice. This committee, essentially, gives them the opportunity to do that. So I would love to hear their thoughts and comments on that, because I think, ultimately, Ontarians expect us to work together. I think Ontarians expect us to get the job done for the health, safety and benefit of everyone else.

Earlier today, we were speaking to government notice of motion number 84. There were claims about the government wanting to consolidate power. Again, I don't see how that's the case, especially with this motion, where we're literally creating a committee that is comprised of members from various parties. That committee is there to take direct reports and advice from the Premier and his designates. If, as they claim, we're so into consolidating power, why would we then even bother creating a committee? Why would we then even want to get the official opposition involved?

Again, Mr. Speaker, this just goes to the fact that actions speak louder than words. I think it goes to the fact

that we, as a government, take our job as legislators very seriously. And when we're here, we understand the important role that committees play. Ultimately, committees are supposed to be non-partisan. I think one of the reasons that we've been so successful in Ontario in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic is that everything that we've done, every decision that we've made and every step that we have taken as a government has not been political. It's been based on medical advice from top medical experts—SickKids Hospital; we've had extensive consultations. Also, of course, Dr. Williams is working around the clock tirelessly. I do want to thank him for all the hard work he's put into this because I don't think any of us ever really expected to be in this sort of situation.

Again, it speaks to the fact that, given the pandemic and given the extraordinary state of affairs, the decisions we've made have been based on facts and have been based on sound medical advice. These claims and these allegations that we're trying to consolidate power or to extend the state of emergency for some sort of nefarious purpose is completely unfounded, and I think it's inappropriate, quite frankly. I also think that there are no facts to back it up.

Ultimately, we do have something called the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and we do have the Constitution. That makes it very clear that people do have these freedoms, and those freedoms are enshrined in the charter. There are, obviously, reasonable limits. I think in this situation people realize and they understand what those reasonable limits are, especially when you compare it to what's going on in the States, where the situation is so bad.

I was driving in this morning from Ottawa, and I always listen to *The Morning Rush*, CFRA, with Bill Carroll, to get the morning news and also his commentary. He is funny at times. He was talking this morning about hockey sticks. He was saying how he wants to see real hockey sticks—that he wants to see the curve of a real hockey stick. He doesn't want to see the curve of the Florida COVID trend, which looks like a hockey stick. When you look at statistics, he wants to focus on sports stats and hockey stats, because everything we've heard so far is statistics and numbers dealing with COVID.

He also did point out how much of a stark contrast it is between Ontario and the United States. We're not that much different in terms of location or geography. Obviously, our historical background and culture are much different, especially when it comes to the rule of law, our democracy and how we run things. But ultimately, when you're looking at comparing similar countries, I think Canada and the US—it's fair to say that you can definitely compare them because they are similar in a lot of ways. They are our biggest trading partner as well.

But with that comparison, you can see the huge contrast between how our government has dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic versus what's been going on down south below the border. I think that speaks to the fact that when you politicize something like this, when you politicize a pandemic, all it does is it just makes the people suffer. When you focus on the politics of a situation instead of focusing on helping people, it's the people who suffer.

I've been watching the Premier since day one, since this all first started. Every day, he has been doing his media announcements and it's been really inspiring to watch him, because he always focuses on the facts. He has never stuttered or made anything up or had those infamous 22-second pauses, like we see at the federal level.

The one thing he has done really well and I think has not just inspired me but inspired all of us here—it's a sign of a true leader—is when faced with so many unknowns and the questions he has received, if he didn't know the answer, he wouldn't make it up. He would say, "I don't know, but I'm going to find out," and then he would go and he would find out the answer. I think that's a testament to true leadership and that speaks to the fact that when he does these media announcements, it's not about making himself look good or about a photo opportunity. This is literally about reassuring the people of Ontario that he is there, that he is working around the clock, that he is taking advice from the experts and that the decisions we are making are not political; they are based on science, and they're based on facts. They're based on the best possible evidence and advice we receive from not just the Chief Medical Officer, but from others.

We're all debating government notice of motion number 85 right now, Mr. Speaker. The fact that we are here—it's 8:37 p.m. on a Monday night. We've been here since 10:15 today. We've been going pretty much non-stop. We're still debating, and I think this is going to go on for quite a while, Mr. Speaker. I'm okay with that because the people of my riding, the people of Carleton, elected me to be their voice, to be their representative, to support them and to work for them. I'm happy to be here; I'm happy to be here late. I'll be here late every night if I have to if that means getting the job done, because people rely on us. And in a time like this, people look to their representatives for leadership and they look to them to help them out and to get the job done.

That's why it's so critical, Mr. Speaker, that we are here tonight and that we are debating this motion. I'm fully in support, again, of creating this committee, because ultimately—a lot of the things that people don't realize and one of the things I didn't know until I got elected is how important committees really are, because committees take the partisanship out of the process. In a committee—at least when I'm Chair of general government, I make sure that everyone acts in an appropriate way and that there's no partisanship and it's cordial. Thankfully, so far it's worked out really well. To the members of the official opposition who are on the committee, I'd like to thank them for their co-operation in helping to make sure that we all work together very well.

The important thing about committees is that they are non-partisan. They're run by the Legislature. What that means is that you all come together for a purpose, and that purpose is to serve the people of Ontario. Again, the fact that this committee is going to include not just members of the government, but also members of the official opposition and an independent member I think speaks to our commitment, not just as a government but also as a

party—it's something that we ran on—to be open and transparent and accountable to the people of Ontario. It speaks to our commitment to work with everyone. It speaks to our commitment that we are here to get the job done. We're always here to get feedback and input from everyone.

2040

I really hope that members of the official opposition will support this motion. I really can't see where they wouldn't, and I would hope that at least one person will stand up and speak to it so I can at least get their thoughts on this. I really hope that this is an opportunity for us to come together from both sides of the House, put our differences and our partisanship aside and really work together to serve the people of Ontario because I think, ultimately, this committee is about ensuring that we protect what matters most, and what matters most is the people of Ontario.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate. I'm proud to support this notice of motion and I hope that everyone will as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate on the amendment to the motion.

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's always a pleasure to be in the House, and that's what we are here for. I was listening to the member from Ottawa West-Nepean and I was also listening to the member for Carleton.

Almost four months back, on March 17, in a swift and decisive response to the global coronavirus pandemic—we call it COVID-19—Premier Ford declared a province-wide state of emergency. This action was in step with the governments across the world and was a necessary move in our battle against this deadly virus. It was a decision made on the guidance of public health officials, and it is their sound and expert advice that has directed all the decisions since then.

Today we are talking about another important day for our province. For the last many weeks, we have seen the numbers going down and staying low consistently. That is why we can confidently talk about the next steps, although with the new normal. That is why this afternoon, Premier Ford has announced that 24 out of the province's 34 public health units will enter stage 3 of our reopening.

Throughout the global pandemic, our local manufacturers and businesses have been working extremely hard to ensure Ontarians receive the essential goods and services they need to remain healthy and safe. From facilities manufacturing PPEs and ensuring food supply, to the restaurants providing takeout and delivery, we have seen the province coming together. Our local businesses have been supporting us. We've talked again, many, many times about the restaurants, other organizations coming forward, helping the community, thanking the front-line workers.

As we navigate through this tough time, I think it is our turn as Ontarians, as consumers, to give back to those manufacturing sectors. And how can we do it? Very simple: We need to buy local products and mobilize our economy. The government of Ontario has launched an Ontario Made program to help consumers and retailers

support their local businesses. It is our time to give back to those who gave it to us during this tough time. I will urge everybody to go and shop local. Go and shop products which are made in Ontario. Support the Ontario Made program.

Next time you shop local, look for the Ontario Made logo to buy the quality. Again, you won't have to compromise. We have Ontarian organizations who are producing quality products. All you have to do is look for the Ontario Made logo: bingo, products that are made right here in our province. This is the way we are going to support those who supported us.

While we step outside and buy local, let's also be mindful of the way we interact with each other. Don't forget, we are still in COVID-19. Let's continue to practise social distancing. We do our part. When we are indoors, whenever it is required by the bylaws of that place, we make sure we wear the masks and follow the safety guidelines so that we can smoothly transition into stage 3 for the rest of the health units as well.

Now, more than ever, we must work together, support each other and build an economy stronger than before. It is time for us to look at how we as a Legislature, how we as MPPs can work together and handle this new normal.

Mr. Speaker, talking about this new normal—as much as we want, things are not the same; they have changed since March. It's a new normal that means continued restrictions on public gatherings, a new normal that means we may not be able to go to those concerts so quickly. But it is still a step forward from where we were just a month ago. The number of active cases continues to fall, the number of people released from hospitals continues to increase, and overall it feels like we have flattened the curve that threatened us in March—so we are still going through the process. This is primarily due to the efforts of every single Ontarian—the Premier calls it an army of 14.5 million Ontarians—who stayed home and the tireless work of the millions of brave front-line workers: our doctors, our nurses, our paramedics, our lab techs, our personal support workers, our respiratory therapists, our radiologists, our grocery store workers, our delivery drivers, our construction workers, and so many more dedicated individuals who have risked their lives for the last few months. What they do goes above and beyond just doing their jobs. They are both warriors and heroes.

I know many of those heroes from my riding, as well. I'll give you some examples. Some of them work in the hospitals. When they go back home, they don't go into the home at the front and the top; they actually go to the basement or the separate entrance. As the family lives on the main floor, the front-line workers coming in from work use the separate entrance, go down in the basement, take a shower, change their clothes and keep themselves away from their family. They're doing this because they don't want to jeopardize their family, but they love their job, so they don't want to jeopardize their job either. It's not easy. The people making those sacrifices to serve the community go above and beyond, and that is why we call them heroes. We can't thank them enough.

Thank you so much to every front-line worker for doing what you've been doing, from the bottom of our hearts.

Reopening and rebuilding: The proposal to create a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight, with representatives from all parties, is a logical step. It is a responsible and responsive way of moving forward through these uncharted waters. It allows our colleagues from all parties to understand that rationale for each extension of the emergency order and discuss it with the decision-makers—so it's working together. This proposal is done in the spirit of co-operation that has been the highlight of Canada's response to COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to recognize the collaboration between all political parties and between all levels of government over the last four months.

This kind of concerted effort to combat this deadly virus could also be seen among many community organizations, who have stepped up in a big way to join the fight. I would like to highlight the work of some of these organizations.

The first one is the Malayali Association of Social Workers, a registered organization of professional social workers, with many members from Mississauga–Malton. The association has 262 members across Ontario, who are employed in various non-profit and government agencies. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, MASWO has launched a crisis helpline to deliver short-term counselling and support services for the community members to cope with the current crisis. In this crisis response initiative, the experienced professional counsellors provided virtual support for their members, the general public and newcomers who were isolated due to social distancing and closing down of businesses and services across Ontario, also finding safe spaces to self-isolate for those in need and helping to fill out the CERB applications. Along with the crisis line, MASWO has launched virtual sessions and awareness campaigns on COVID-19-related topics. I want to say thank you to the members of MASWO for doing an incredible job in supporting the communities.

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The Premier always talks about the Ontario spirit. These are the organizations that have gone beyond the call of duty. The Malton Black Development Association has been working in my riding of Mississauga–Malton for the last 40 years. The MBDA applied for and received funding from the Local Love emergency fund to provide culturally sensitive hot meals to 20 seniors, telephone calling cards for 50 people needing connections with families abroad and Zumba classes to relieve stress and provide social inclusion. They also checked in on needy persons and those feeling scared about the virus and other crisis situations.

MBDA has worked with SHIP, Services and Housing In the Province, to distribute perishable food kits to Malton residents, and will be distributing wellness kits this week. I want to say a special thanks to MBDA members: T. Virtue, S. Weir, S. Douglas, C. Wilson and the rest of the members for their commitment. That's another way of saying thank you to the community, Mr. Speaker.

During COVID-19, we have seen many organizations come forward to take care of the food security and well-being of affected Ontarians. The Canadian Italian Heritage Foundation is another one. The president, Frances Tibollo, founded Pasta it Forward, a new initiative to feed those in need during these trying times as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the corresponding economic difficulties. It's not easy, but their mission is very simple: to support anyone in need, from seniors to families to front-line workers who are living and working in tough conditions. Whether seniors were house-bound or front-line staff could not have access to healthy meals in hospitals, Pasta it Forward wanted to help fill those gaps, and they've done an incredible job.

With the generous support of the community, many businesses, her family, friends and many dedicated volunteers, they were able to raise funds and in-kind donations to prepare and deliver over 75,000 meals so far. Pasta it Forward has delivered food to almost every hospital in Toronto and the GTA, has delivered to towns and cities all across the province, as well as many First Nation communities, having travelled as far as Manitoulin Island, to Wiikwemkoong First Nation. On weekends, they continue to serve over 200 portions of pasta to seniors and families across Toronto, Vaughan, Mississauga, Brampton, Markham, Stouffville and beyond. When we talk about organizations, these organizations are representative of the Ontario spirit.

United Sikhs is a UN-affiliated humanitarian relief and development organization aimed at empowering those in need. In the times of the COVID-19 outbreak, United Sikhs has taken an active role to help the community. Upon the opening of their food bank at Gurdwara Guru Nanak Mission Centre, they have helped provide close to 25,000 prepared meals. When I spoke to them last time—that was, I think, June 12—it was 18,000. I recently spoke to Jagdeep Singh, one of their members, and it was 25,000 prepared meals—in partnership with the Sikh Motorcycle Club across the GTA, as well as London, Ontario. They have collaborated with Bombay Bistro to serve 200 front-line workers as well.

I'd like to say thank you to all these organizations for going above and beyond in the COVID-19 pandemic to help serve the community. When we talk about a tough time, we always say, "Tough time is a test time"—a time when we see organizations coming together, helping each other and serving the community.

We talk about how these organizations did the work, but I want to give a shout-out to our government as well. We've seen many things come forward as a government, as I just spoke about, launching the Ontario Made program.

The next one: We were going through a problem with the agri-insurance, so the government partnered with the federal government to enhance the agri-insurance coverage.

We introduced the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act: This act will restart job creation by getting key infrastructure built faster. As we know, as we transition

from COVID, we have to consider the economic recovery as well. The economic recovery act will strengthen communities by allowing these municipalities flexibility to fund critical services and continue to hold electronic meetings—as we've talked about, the new normal.

The government invested \$3 million to provide free online health and safety training, for the first time, to up to 100,000 job-seekers through Employment Ontario. And we invested a combined \$18.5 million, with all levels of government, for five road and bridge projects in eastern Ontario. This is the way the government has invested. This is the way the government has shown leadership.

We invested more than \$4 million through Skills-Advance Ontario to support a local construction training program in Georgina and train up to 100 job-seekers for construction-related professions to help build more affordable housing and create jobs in the area.

We talked about food safety and food security. The government has provided municipalities and urban Indigenous community partners with an additional—and the word is "additional"—\$150 million to continue to protect people in need from COVID-19 by improving homeless shelters and creating opportunities for longer-term housing. This funding is part of Ontario's contribution to municipal support through the federal government's Safe Restart Framework. As you can see, this is the way the government is supporting.

We provided an additional \$10 million in funding for the Connecting Links Program, to help support road and highway projects in nine more municipalities across the province, to create jobs and help communities recover.

Time and again, we talk about our seniors. On June 26, our government provided up to \$4 million for seniors' community programs to help non-profit organizations, local services boards or Indigenous groups develop programs for seniors that focus on combating social isolation, promoting senior safety and well-being, improving financial security and making communities age-friendly. So I will encourage all those who can and should apply and support those seniors with the respect that they deserve.

On June 25, we invested \$30 million to support community-driven and youth-led projects to improve the well-being of children, youth and families facing social and economic barriers. These are some of the examples we've seen of how the government has come forward.

We talk about the new normal. We talk about Zoom meetings. The only way we can only have Zoom meetings is if we have Internet, and there are certain communities who don't even have good Internet. So in partnership with the federal government, we announced the \$57-million Digital Main Street program that will help up to 22,900 Ontario businesses to create and enhance their online presence and generate jobs for more than 1,400 students.

Along with this, the government is working on the broadband strategy, which will bring in more Internet to the rural and far-off communities as well. We invested \$150 million in the broadband and cellular coverage in unserved rural communities as a part of the Improving Connectivity for Ontario program, or ICON.

We talked about the hardship. We talked about how we can help the communities. Another example: We announced \$9 million for the COVID-19 Energy Assistance Program, which will provide a one-time payment to the consumer to help pay down electricity bills that they incurred during the COVID-19 outbreak, and provided \$8 million for the COVID-19 emergency assistance program for small businesses, to support businesses struggling with electricity bill payments as a result of the outbreak. These are some of the examples of how the government has supported communities during this tough time.

All of these efforts underline the extraordinary response the province had during this unimaginable crisis. It shows what we can achieve if we work together. The Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight is exactly an example and an opportunity to work together. As Premier Ford said, “If passed, the proposed legislation would allow us to chart a responsible path to economic reopening and recovery without putting all the progress”—all the progress which I just spoke about—“we’ve made in fighting this deadly virus at risk.”

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Even as we continue certain emergency orders under the proposed legislation to protect public health, we will always be a government accountable to the people of Ontario. This committee will provide the people of Ontario with the accountability and transparency they deserve about our continued fight against this deadly virus, while providing the government the flexibility required to continue to effectively combat it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation, and I believe all those who care for Ontarians will support this motion.

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

Mr. David Piccini: I am pleased to rise today to join the debate on this motion. I will not be supporting the amendment, Mr. Speaker, but I am pleased to rise to debate this motion to strike a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight.

Since declaring a provincial emergency back on March 17, the government has taken a careful and measured approach to protect Ontarians from the COVID-19 global pandemic. It’s not without a significant effect—a significant effect on our families, on our friends and on the local communities we represent.

The declaration of emergency that the province declared supported our comprehensive response to COVID-19. It gave a temporary platform for decisive actions that carried Ontario through these unprecedented times, the challenges, and that helped us initiate the important steps of reopening the economy. Because that’s where we want to be as Ontarians. We want to return to some level of normalcy. We want to get this economy going. We want to get people back to work. That’s what folks in my riding tell me each and every day.

The fight against COVID-19 hasn’t been easy. It’s taken its toll on Ontarians and it’s taken its toll on the people of Northumberland–Peterborough South. But we’ve made progress. Thanks to the collective efforts not of the people in this House but of Ontarians, we are making

progress in this fight. Businesses are putting Ontarians back to work. People are reuniting with their loved ones. I think of some of the conversations I’ve had with constituents: being able to hug a grandson or granddaughter; being able to hug your grandparent; being able to say “I love you” and hug your parents and see your loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, over the last number of months we’ve made significant strides in the fight against COVID-19. I think to some of the key things that this government’s implemented to help us get there. The testing: I would like to give a credit to the Trent Hills Family Health Team. I’m from a resilient rural community. I’m proud to represent rural Ontario. It was Ontarians that came together—our paramedics, our Trent Hills Family Health Team, our hospital that came together to launch testing so that the elderly, people who are scared in our communities could get tested, so that people could feel confident knowing that they were healthy and getting back to their day-to-day lives.

In fact, this impressive result—we’ve seen upwards of 20,000, 30,000 tests a day in this province. Case management and contact tracing have also been implemented to ensure that we can manage this rapidly changing global pandemic and deal with potential outbreaks as they pop up.

I think of some of the ingenuity, the Ontario Together portal. When COVID-19 hit, I was, as were most of my colleagues—we had calls from our constituents. But what really impressed me were those calls, every day: “How can I help? How can I help in the fight against COVID-19?” I’d venture to say that every single person in this Legislature had those calls: “How can I help?” Moreover, Mr. Speaker, it’s not asking; it’s the people who are doing.

I’m reminded in my riding of the Northumberland producers’ alliance, a collection of folks in rural Ontario—we don’t have the big industrial manufacturing that we see in the GTA. We had more manufacturing, and we’re working to restore our manufacturing might after the previous 15 years, but we’re working hard. A collection in rural Ontario of producers came together under the name of the Northumberland producers’ alliance with the support of Venture 13. They came together and they built face shields. They divided that, not only to our essential heroes on the front lines, but they did it to isolated seniors who needed face shields. They did it to our grocery store clerks. They supported our LTC facility and our front-line first responders.

When the Premier says “an army of 14.5 million,” the face of that army is like this producers’ alliance in Northumberland–Peterborough South, like Canada Rubber in Clarington, who responded to produce face shields en masse, Mr. Speaker; like the elderly seniors who came together in Campbellford to knit masks for the front-line workers at Campbellford Memorial Hospital. When we talk about that army, it’s a proud army. It’s an army that comes from rural Ontario ridings like mine.

As we walk on the road to economic recovery, it’s a road we take together. It’s not a road without its bumps, and our government and our Premier have been frank

about that. He has come out every day to speak to Ontarians, to acknowledge the challenges where they arise. Those people have called me and said that they've appreciated a Premier who has been real with Ontarians, who has acknowledged government shortcomings and who has worked hard, and that brings me back to Ontario Together.

When we made a commitment to learn from the lessons of previous pandemics—Ontario Together is part of that solution. What is it now? Twenty-thousand-plus submissions we've received through that portal? We're seeing funds flow to help manufacturers retool to respond in the fight against COVID-19.

I worked internationally prior to becoming an elected member, and I'm glad to say that Ontario is now in a better position, not reliant on the turbulent global supply chains that quite literally meant planes taking off on runways not knowing where they were going to land. But our Premier said, "We don't need to look to other countries. All we need to do is look to Ontario's army; look to our backyards; look into our rural communities. We can overcome this pandemic."

When we first heard of COVID-19, there were a lot of unknowns. Dare I say, I think everybody is imperfect, but we came together as a community to respond. We came together. And while the provincial declaration of emergency may come to an end shortly, it was discussed during the previous government notice of motion earlier this afternoon and earlier for the past number of days that the danger posed by COVID-19 will continue for months ahead—the unknowns relative to COVID-19. It's unlike any pandemic we've seen in previous decades in this province, but as I said, we can and must learn our lessons from pandemics past. Despite the good work of Ontarians, we know that we need to return to work with COVID-19, with the reality that this is something that we will have to deal with for the days, weeks and months ahead.

We only need to look south of the border to see alternatives to how other governments have handled this global pandemic. Again, it's not just about governments; it's about our people coming together. I'm pleased that the Solicitor General has put forward Bill 195, which is giving us a flexible response.

The declaration of a state of emergency is a very real thing. I receive calls, as all of my colleagues do, from constituents. It's a tool that governments must have. God forbid we end up in tragedies—not of a global pandemic nature. Terrorism is a very real threat on the world stage, and government needs to have tools to protect its citizens, but as we now return to work, as we gradually reopen the economy, as we learn about the effects of COVID-19 and deal with it on a day-to-day basis, this bill allows our province to continue on the path to recovery by easing the restrictions where possible, while maintaining select tools to address COVID-19. The Solicitor General talked about bridging the gap. I use the analogy of slowly taking our foot off the gas. It's not giving us tools to hit the gas even harder. For that, we'd have to come back to this place and declare another state of emergency. It's allowing us to ease the restrictions.

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Ontarians want to get back to work. It was our innovative spirit, resilience and hard work that made this province great.

And it's that spirit that exists in my riding of Northumberland–Peterborough South, in response to COVID-19. People have come together. They've looked out for one another. It's not uncommon to find a young student who just graduated from Port Hope High School or from ENSS in Brighton doing the grocery runs to deliver groceries for seniors in their neighbourhood. Those are the faces of our young heroes.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about responding to this, I'd like to credit our businesses. Despite all of this, they have responded to keep their clients and their workers safe and have said, "We want to work. We want to return to normal. We want to get this economy going, and we can do it in a safe manner." Every day, I get those calls.

In response, we have a finance minister who chairs the jobs and recovery committee, who came out to a riding like mine, who saw the arts and culture community, who saw our artists coming together on how we can do displays of our remarkable youths' paintings, who heard of steps our farmers were taking in the horticulture sector to protect their workers and to ensure that we kept thinning our apples so that we could maintain our food supply. Our finance minister heard of our health and wellness, of spas who, at every step under the previous government, were faced with red tape and a government kicking them when they were down, and who, in this pandemic, struggled over the actions that government had taken, but understood that the safety of Ontarians was paramount and have responded with safe back-to-work protocols, with ensuring the safety of their clientele.

Mr. Speaker, we have a resilient and remarkable community. That remarkable spirit doesn't exist solely in this Legislature; it's out in our communities. We hear it each and every day.

As we ease our foot off that pedal I referred to earlier, we need to ensure that we have the ability where certain outbreaks may occur—but that we ease that foot off the gas. We don't need to be in a constant state of emergency. We need, though, to be able to respond to this ever-changing pandemic.

This select committee that would include members of this Legislature would respond to each and every issue brought forward. It would be required to report regularly to the public on any orders that continue to be enforced. Unlike the declaration of emergency now, where we would have debate, I think, 100-plus days later, this select committee, as we ease that foot off the gas, as we safely and gradually return to reopening the economy—they would come before this Legislature to present. They would come to present the interim reports that would be considered by this Legislature. Having legislators from all parties involved in this select committee is intended to produce robust evaluation.

Mr. Speaker, when I've sat before, as some of my other colleagues, on finance committee, over the last number of

12-hour or 13-hour days—we've had, dare I say, a select group here who have a very unique experience to really hear from every sector of this economy. We've had some great ideas. We've had robust debate. We've had ideas brought forward by the opposition that I and many others disagree with, but we've had ideas brought forward that we do find common ground on. We've heard from speakers. We've heard from people speaking and we've responded. Whether it's negotiating an expanded rent subsidy program with the federal government or expanding the wage subsidy, whether it's applying immediate electricity relief or whether it's standing boldly to get broadband into our rural communities, where people can't even do their studies, can't even bring their business online, this government has acted.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure, who came before this House, implemented a bill leveraging up to half a billion dollars of support for broadband. It's so that we can harness the ingenuity, the spirit that exists in rural Ontario, that we've acted swiftly. It's through that spirit that we'll bring together members in a select committee to debate these ideas. We want to get this economy back going, and we've developed a tool here through a select committee to work together.

This Legislature has a proud history of producing robust recommendations and findings from select committees, and that's exactly what this select committee will do. In 2010, members of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions produced recommendations on how to improve the mental health framework for Ontarians. Then, within 10 years, those recommendations laid the foundation of this government's response to mental health.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious subject, because in our communities we hear that we want to get back to work. We need to get back in the schools. Our students need to continue learning in a safe manner. We've listened live to parents, to educators, to our school boards. We need a flexible solution, and that's what our Minister of Education has put forward: options to return safely to school, because what happens in downtown Toronto, contrary to some in this Legislature, is not the reality in rural Ontario. It's not the reality in the rolling hills of Trent Hills, into the county of Peterborough and the remarkable portion of Clarington that I represent. To get back to work, we need to lean on the resilience and the ingenuity of our rural communities. We need to have the tools in place to allow them to get back to work.

Implementing this level of accountability through this select committee is not new for our government. We were elected with a mandate for accountability and transparency. Mr. Speaker, I—like you, I'm sure—have had those Facebook posts about electricity. Then, when we call up those constituents, they see that they were hoodwinked on their electricity bills. But thanks to measures this government has taken, they can see the true cost of electricity.

Our municipalities, when they came to us to work together—all levels of government—this select committee proposed to bring all parties together, but this is a government that's working together at all levels. I've convened

weekly calls with all of the mayors and First Nations chiefs that I represent in the Legislature, our partners—our Indigenous partners, my mayors that I work closely with, and our municipalities. They applaud a government who knows that key to economic recovery is going to be infrastructure.

That said, under the Investing in Canada plan infrastructure program, we're going to accept applications, and two months later, we're going to start getting those applications out the door. Thankfully, the federal government is now approving projects in my riding, so we can get shovels in the ground, so we can get expanded accessibility, so we can get expanded transit, so we can get broadband shovels in the ground and we can get roads and bridges that forever were plagued by the inaction of the previous government. We can get those potholes fixed. We can expand the highways. We can get people to work.

COVID-19 has been something that we all wish never happened, but it also gives us an opportunity to pivot our response. Justice reforms that would have taken 25 years have been done in a matter of weeks. Calls for broadband reform that were taking years of talk are now getting the action they deserve. I'm working tangibly right now with our economic recovery committees to get applications in to the government that will, in turn, be funded. We've seen arts and culture communities in our ridings have round tables with the minister and then within weeks get the Celebrate Ontario or the Trillium funding that they need to keep them afloat so that they can look to next year.

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Mr. Speaker, when I talk about restoring trust and accountability, that means accountability in many forms. I'm reminded of a recent funding announcement in my riding to fix the medium-sized hospital funding formula. Not only are we pivoting and responding to COVID now, but we were doing that before the pandemic, and it has allowed us to respond even stronger. Our medium-sized hospitals are able to deal with the challenges and, after years of underfunding, are now getting the funding they need to separate the in-patient units, to deliver quality patient-centred care, to work in collaboration with their partners through our new Ontario health teams and to better look to the future to support an aging population with increasing levels of acuity and increasing levels of care and complexities. This is a government that knows that now, Mr. Speaker, but this is a government that prepared prior to COVID-19.

We need to ease that foot off the pedal. We need to work with our partners, and that's exactly what we're doing. I'm proud to support this amendment in the Legislature, this select committee, and I'm proud to work with a government, with members of this Legislature who are listening and who know that we can and must do better. That's exactly what we're going to do with this select committee.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to all the members of this House for being here this evening. It is my pleasure to

speak to the motion regarding the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. As we all know, currently we are going through a very challenging time. Businesses have had to close down, elective surgeries have been postponed, schools have been closed, and a very unknown, unpredictable phase of our lives has begun. No one could have imagined everything except essential services would completely shutter.

I would like to take a moment, though, to thank all of those essential services workers for going to work day in and day out, whether they were the front-line health care workers, grocery workers or our truckers ensuring goods get to our stores and food made it to our tables. I'd also like to take a moment to thank members of this Legislature, our Clerks and our Speaker for also being here to support all of us to ensure that we continue to move Ontario forward. Thank you very much.

We all agree that nothing is more important than protecting the health and safety of all Ontarians. That is why, since we first learned of COVID-19, our government has responded to the situation and continues to act decisively to contain the spread of this deadly, horrific virus, using whatever tools we have at our disposal in order to protect the health and well-being of all of us.

Speaker, Ontarians have made significant sacrifices over the past four months to help stop the spread of COVID-19. We must not allow the progress we have made to be undone. We must maintain our vigilance until an effective vaccine is available, and we must gradually and safely reopen Ontario, recognizing that COVID-19 still poses a threat even after this declaration of emergency has ended.

We need to continue down the path of recovery by easing restrictions where appropriate while maintaining important select measures to address the ongoing threat of COVID-19. Of course this would include the ability to extend and amend certain existing orders to best protect all of Ontario, such as those related to workplace rules or practices. Of course, this includes restricting gatherings and events, and compliance with public health advice. Updates to the orders would be guided by public health advice and our resolve to stop the spread of COVID-19. We need to continue to support our front-line workers and ensure the health and well-being of all Ontarians. Our government will continue to take a balanced action that allows Ontarians to respond quickly and prudently as the situation continues to evolve.

We all agree in this House that a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight can receive and review reports from the Premier or his designate on any extensions of emergency orders by the Lieutenant Governor or in Council that relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee shall be comprised of seven members of the government party, three members of the official opposition and one independent member, and this allows us all to work together.

The committee is going to meet at the call of the Chair with up to 30 minutes for the Premier or his designate to make an opening statement, and it gives up to 60 minutes

for members of the recognized parties to pose questions to the Premier or his designate. That's a significant time for everybody to really talk and be together.

I'd like to talk a little bit about what's been happening in my riding, in Mississauga and across this province. I've worked with numerous organizations. I'll talk about one in particular right now, which is Eden Food for Change. Eden Food for Change is a designated area that provides meals on wheels, not just in Mississauga but also in Milton. I've taken the time to help raise funds for Eden Food for Change and providing donations of food. They've done such significant work by ensuring that not just those who previously frequented food banks, but as we've seen through the pandemic, lots of new people who never thought that they would have to go to a food bank have finally said, "We need help."

We've worked together with my colleague here from Mississauga–Malton with Sai Dham Food Bank, who have been providing meals to all people across Ontario, and the Canada India Foundation. One day we served 1,400 meals to Trillium Health Partners, and we also came right down here to the Toronto rehab centre, where we provided meals to all of the staff. My Indians in Canada Association have been supporting international students who now no longer have a job to go to. It's been extremely difficult for them because they've not been able to go to class, they've had to do online learning and English is not their first language. It's been a very difficult time for all of them. And Yogi Divine have been packaging foods for one month's supply and giving it to families in need. I really have to thank all of the organizations for the great work that they've been doing.

Another one that is close to my heart is Shubh Helping Hands. They've been hiring students and still continue to hire students with donations from the community to be able to help provide food, helping many seniors' organizations. Seniors, those who are at home, have been feeling very alone, and through Zoom meetings and other ways they've been able to contact them continuously to ensure that they're able to not feel lonely, to help them with meditation, to help them understand what's happening, and to make sure that everybody has the ability to not go hungry.

Speaker, I would like to talk a little about what's been happening in other jurisdictions and what they've been doing in dealing with COVID-19. They've all enacted emergency measures. Some of them completely locked down. Many of them opened too early. We've seen what's happened in the United States, in many of their states, where we're seeing not just significant numbers of COVID-19 in the tens of thousands, but many, many, people dying. In the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister contracted COVID-19 and had to be hospitalized. Australia, unfortunately, now has had to go back into lockdown. I have family in Melbourne, and they've completely shuttered everything down—very difficult times for everybody around this world. We all know our own first lady here in Canada contracted COVID-19 while she was in the UK, and she had to come back and quarantine.

Viruses, illnesses, diseases do not look at who you are and what you are, what the colour of your skin is, how much money you have. It doesn't look at that. If you're going to contract it, it's going to come after you. It's such a devastating illness, and some people have really, really had a tough time. We understand the need to allow this Legislature to function, to support Ontarians, which is why this motion is so important. All members of this House on all sides were elected to represent their respective communities, and I truly believe that although we may occasionally disagree with proposed motions or legislation, the end result for all of us is a better Ontario.

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The people of this province have really stepped up. They've stayed at home. They've continued to physically distance. And I want to take a moment to really thank the businesses who have stepped up with providing personal protective equipment, PPE, something I never heard of before COVID-19. It's become such a household word today, just like COVID-19 has. Many, many of our companies retooled their organizations. They really came to us—I've spoken to many of them who are looking at developing cures or at least finding ways that people may not need to be on a ventilator. It's really been heart-warming.

At the same time, it's put us to the test as Ontarians. It's put us to the test as a society. It's put the whole world to a test, to see how we can cope and how we can find solutions. I think that's what this Legislature is all about: finding solutions.

But it's also been extremely heartbreaking. The number of deaths, especially in our long-term-care homes, has been extremely devastating. What can be more sad than not having a loved one visit you when you're in a long-term-care home or in hospital? To not be able to visit your nearest and dearest in long-term care or hospital is equally heartbreaking. For those who have lost a loved one, they may not even be able to attend the funeral, or family members may not even be able to grieve together. But we can only move to open our province as long as our COVID-positive numbers go down.

We have seen our communities really work hard, which is why parts of our province will soon move to stage 3. On the advice of our chief medical officers of health across this province, many more businesses can now open. We all know that restaurants have been significantly affected by this pandemic, but we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Larger gatherings, couples finally being able to marry with more guests—it's something that I think we can all start to look forward to.

In the region of Peel, along with many other regions, we will not be moving to stage 3 yet, but we are looking to join and open soon as long as our COVID numbers continue to decline.

Each day, our Premier continues to speak with the public, with media, and consults with all of us. I have hosted a number of round tables during COVID-19. I've met with the business community, the Mississauga Board of Trade. We came together and we discussed with a

variety of different businesses, where I asked them to provide us with solutions. What will they do to help us open the economy, to help us open their businesses? What will they do as far as sanitizing? What will they do to make sure that people do maintain physical distancing? What can they do to allow us to convince the Chief Medical Officer of Health that they will do the right thing? And they really stepped up.

I've had a round table with gym owners. We spent two, two and a half hours talking about what each different location was able to do to make sure that they kept sanitized. It's really exciting to see that some gyms will be able to open very, very soon. I know that for many of my constituents that is a significant part of their health and well-being. It's very, very important.

For restaurant owners: I can't imagine what's been happening to the restaurant business. I myself went to visit a patio on Saturday night. I felt great that I was able to support a local business, that I was able to get out with a couple of members of my family and be able to have a drink and be together and socialize once again. I've really missed that part of our lives.

Our business improvement associations, my local Streetsville one—where most of them are very small businesses, mom-and-pop shops, a pub on the corner of the street, where they've really, really been suffering. It's been nothing short of devastating.

I did a faith group round table, an interfaith group, so I heard from people from different faiths on what they would do. Similarly, I asked them to come to me and say to me how we can physically distance and how we can make sure that sanitation will take place. I talked about, if they have a Sunday congregation, perhaps splitting it into two or three congregations, perhaps having one on Saturday, one on Sunday, making sure that members of the congregation would book in advance so that everybody had the opportunity to go back to church.

What is very difficult, when we talk about our seniors and perhaps having Zoom meetings with them: The church, for many people, is the only social activity they have in their lives. So for them, it was critical for us to potentially get our churches up and running, and our faith groups, our temples, our gurdwaras and our mosques. That is such a significant part of their lives, and for many of them the only part of their lives where they're able to meet with other members of their community.

Whereas we're still seeing many of our seniors, we really don't want too many of our seniors going out as it seems that COVID-19 is specifically more devastating to the senior population. A lot of them have really thanked our government as a whole and all members for really looking out for them, for making sure that we're taking a slow approach to ensuring that we don't move things too fast so that we can hurt people.

Through our Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade we were able to do many Zoom meetings, for example, with the BIO conference, which was supposed to take place in San Diego. We were going to visit. We had a significant number of Ontario companies that we were still able to do the business-to-business

meetings with, and through those meetings we still got significant interest in companies investing in Ontario.

In Ontario, I'll say, compared to no other jurisdiction, our universities, our colleges, our schools: We're churning out some of the best and brightest, and I say that with significant confidence. Do you know what? The world knows that, which is why they want to come here. They want to utilize our talent, and they want to make sure that their companies can grow and thrive.

Another of the conferences where I joined our minister on round tables was the Collision conference, where we have members of the information and communication technology group. We talked about data mining. Do you know what? I put them together with our Minister of Colleges and Universities and I said, "Why are you not coming here and teaching in those colleges and universities? Be part of our curriculum so that when our students graduate, they know exactly what the job ahead of them is, what companies are looking for, what they need to know." I was able to put them in contact with those ministries and with other organizations and other businesses here locally, and they were very thankful for that.

The new world that we are in is this virtual world, where perhaps—I don't believe it changes—face-to-face meetings will always be significant, but in today's world, the virtual reality that we're living in and having these global meetings in is significant.

Although Peel, Toronto, the greater Toronto and Hamilton area and other jurisdictions like Windsor-Essex will not be joining in stage 3, I'm very optimistic. I'm optimistic because the people of Ontario and the people of our regions want to move to that next step. I believe that they're going to continue to take the correct measures. I also believe that our businesses have been wonderful. They've been prepared, putting stickers on the floor, making sure that we're ready to support our businesses and to support our consumers so that they have the faith to go back and start purchasing items for their homes and for their families.

In my riding, my staff and I and volunteers have taken the time to contact our constituents, to talk to them just to make sure they're okay, just to say, "If there's anything you need, if there's anything that our office can support you with, we're there. We are open and we're there to support you."

I spend a lot of time talking to our local mayor, our councillors and our federal counterparts so that, together, we can collectively work to ensure that our Ontarians, our customers and our clients and our constituents are well served, to make sure that things like CERB is available to them, that rent relief is available to them, that business loans are available to them, and to manoeuvre in the system. It's extremely difficult. When you're a small business, sometimes you just don't have the same tools that you can use to tap into all the available assistance that's out there.

2140

Each Friday, my colleagues from Mississauga and from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and I chat with Trillium Health

Partners, and we have a weekly update on what's happening at the hospital—the testing that they're doing. Do they have an outbreak? What about patient visits? I spoke earlier about how difficult it is for those people who are in hospital, not allowing families to be able to come and visit with them.

I did that first-hand this weekend, Speaker. My brother-in-law has stage 4 cancer and he's in Credit Valley Hospital, but none of us, not even his family, can go to visit. But he was luckily on the main floor, so we did a window visit. We went to the window yesterday, and the nurse was wonderful. She called us. She FaceTimed us. We were able to wait for him and talk to him through that, and—it was sad. Even though we were there to pep him up a little and to talk to him, it was sad. The sad fact that his wife, his children, his grandchildren, his other family members were not able to be with him when he's in pain—he doesn't know how long he has. He's not end-of-life, which is why he's not palliative in that sense, which is why they're not letting us.

But I called the hospital and they said, "Do you know what? We have an outbreak." My answer to his family was, "Well, they have an outbreak. If you go, you could potentially make it worse. Other people could come in and make it worse. We have to follow these guidelines, because it's for the safety of all of those patients, all of that staff and for you too."

I'm going to conclude very shortly, Speaker, and just talk about this motion as it is. We understand that there's an amendment to the motion, but I'm going to not support the amendment, and I'm asking the members opposite to support the motion, so that we can move forward, so that we can ensure that the people of Ontario have something to look forward to. We're seeing our numbers go down. We're seeing the people of this province work really, really hard. We don't want to go the way of the United States.

I was watching what Australia was doing. They were very careful, but still they got a second wave. We don't want that to happen here in Ontario. We want to ensure that we can move forward. We want to ensure that our government has the tools to be able to extend these measures, to be able to have this select committee, to listen to the Premier and ask questions of the Premier or his designate so that we can make sure that the people of Ontario are in the right place, at the right time, as we move forward with the advice of our Chief Medical Officer of Health.

I'd like to thank everybody in this chamber today. I'd like to thank you, Speaker, and everyone else and the Clerks once again. I do ask the members opposite to please support the motion.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I will not be supporting the amendment to motion 85 that was brought forward by the opposition, but of course I will be supporting the motion itself.

Mr. Speaker, it was only just over six months ago when the world first heard about this very mysterious virus that was presenting itself in Wuhan, Hubei province, China.

We really had no idea how dangerous this virus was. We knew it was making people sick, very sick, but we had no idea what this virus would do to the world.

I want all of us to think back to March, when we rose for what we thought might be a week or two when the House adjourned and we left the chamber. Within days, the world changed. I remember being at home and thinking, “I can’t believe that the world, that we, are experiencing this.” It was quiet. The message that was resonating, the message that our leaders, our community leaders, our political leaders, our medical efforts were sharing was, “Stay home. Don’t go out. Please, please stay home.” Do you remember that? Do you remember how eerie it was? Open the door and you heard birds. It was quiet Saturday afternoon, Friday evening. There were no cars. There was no traffic. You’d go for a walk. There were no people. It was so eerie. It was if our communities were lifeless. We were doing what we were told. We were staying home.

And then some people took it upon themselves to do the right thing. They opened their grocery stores, and as a government, we asked people to help us ensure that we could get important goods, food to the people of Ontario. And the people of Ontario rose to the occasion—young kids, children. You’d go to the grocery store and see this young face, a young girl, and think, “Thank you for putting yourself in such a dangerous position so that we all can get food.”

People rose to the occasion. The people that needed to work, our front-line workers—our PSWs, our doctors, our nurses, our medical experts, our police, our firefighters—and those people who work behind the counter rose to the occasion. They kept us fed, and they tried to keep us safe. But Ontarians also did their part by staying home. I remember those words. We heard it so often, on radio shows, in newscasts, when we listened to the Premier every day at 1 o’clock: “Please, if you don’t have to go out, stay home.” That was only a few months ago, but it seems like forever. That was back when this province was in the first stage of trying to fight this COVID virus.

Throughout the past four or five months, we have been doing our part, but it has taken a tremendous amount of effort and sacrifice on the part of so many people. We have stayed home. Our government made a very, very difficult decision and shuttered a number of businesses. It wasn’t easy. And the pressure facing government officials, the pressure facing our Premier to make those decisions was enormous, because we heard from average Ontarians, from people who had worked tirelessly all their lives to make their business successful, that they were hurting, that they were afraid that the business that they’d poured so much into would simply not survive. It was difficult to hear these messages, but we knew it was too dangerous to allow business to open up. For months, we said, “Keep your doors closed,” and Ontarians did just that. They kept their doors closed. But it was tough.

I remember one phone call from a young woman. She and her husband had a little satellite gardening centre. It was just around Mother’s Day, and she was in tears pleading, begging, “Please, can I sell these products? I’m

going to lose something I’ve worked for all my life.” It was gut-wrenching. On one hand, you want to say, “Yes, we want your business to survive. We want you to be able to bring your customers in. We want you to make enough money so you can keep your doors open, so you can pay your staff, so you can pay your bills.” But we also must make sure the people in Ontario are safe. So while the first few weekends those doors weren’t open, she was able to open in time to keep her business going. Today, she continues to operate. But it was gut-wrenching to listen to this woman in tears, so afraid that everything she’d worked for would be for naught. But she persevered, she worked hard and today her business is open.

2150

It’s been tough. My son has a business. He has a hair salon, and he has 10 employees. He was one of the first businesses that had to shutter, like so many businesses where you have that personal contact. It was very difficult. The bills kept coming in. He had to pay his rent. He had to pay for supplies. He had to pay the bills, and he’s just a young man. But he also knew that in the type of work he was in, it would be almost impossible in the first stages of COVID-19 in Ontario to open his doors. How could he ensure that the women he worked for—the one woman who, for example, is pregnant, how could he be sure that she would be safe? How could he ensure that his customers would be safe? He couldn’t; nor could we. And that’s why his business wasn’t able to open in the first stage or actually even until after some businesses across Ontario were able to open. But now he has opened his doors.

Miss Monique Taylor: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain has a point of order.

Miss Monique Taylor: Sorry to interrupt the member, but I’m hoping that she is going to bring it back to the actual motion. It’s a compelling story. We all have them, but it’s the motion that is in front of us that I’m really hoping to hear her perspective on.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the intervention. I am listening to the member. Obviously, we have to have our remarks relevant to the motion that is before the House, but I find that the member’s remarks are, in fact, relevant and I’d ask her to continue.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, my son has a business, and in the early stages of COVID-19, like so many other small businesses in Ontario, he had to shutter his business. But today, he is open, and today, his business is actually thriving. He is booked up for months, and I’m proud to say that.

Like many Ontarians, he paid the price. It was a sacrifice, but these are the decisions this government had to make to ensure that Ontarians were safe.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, in her eloquent comments to you, asked me to mention why I was sharing some heartfelt examples of how COVID-19 and how the emergency measures that this government has taken are impacting Ontarians. Why I believe I can’t support the amendments put forward by the opposition, but do indeed

support the motion to have a select committee on emergency management oversight, is because we are going to see all of these emergency measures, as we move through this uncharted course—it's territory we've never been in before. We don't know if we will see another resurgence of COVID-19.

The member opposite is from Hamilton, as am I. I was just checking the numbers of the cases in Hamilton, and they're up slightly since Friday. Even though we are able to start to see some improvement in the numbers of COVID-19 in my city of Hamilton, there's still much more that has to be done to ensure that Hamiltonians and people right across Ontario are protected from this deadly virus. That's why it's important to have measures in place. That's why it's important to share with the member opposite and let her understand the importance and what goes behind these decisions. They're not easy decisions.

No one wants to be able to stand here and say, "You must close your doors." As Conservatives, we understand what small businesses go through. They struggle every day. It's a very, very, very difficult—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Mr. Speaker, it may be very difficult for members opposite to understand how hard it is to run a business, but it can be tough at the best of times. It's very difficult when you're dealing with a crisis like COVID-19, when you have all of these strict regulations put in place, when you can't even open your doors. But, Mr. Speaker, as you've heard so many times from our Premier, our priority is the health and safety of Ontarians. That's why we had to take the measures that we took. That's why we put in place the restrictions that we did. That's why we are taking such a cautious and measured approach to reopening our economy. But we are reopening our economy.

In the early stages of COVID-19, I was very proud to see our Premier stand in front of the camera every day and take questions from the media. He listened. He responded. He has shown that he is a man who can act. He has taken responsibility. He is showing leadership.

The provisions that we're putting forward in motion 85 will give the people of Ontario confidence that if we see anything occur over the course of the next year, over the course of the next six months, over the course of the next month, we will have the ability to react and to once again put in place measures that are necessary to either protect Ontarians' health and safety or perhaps even their economic health.

I'm sitting on a committee, as many of us do not only on this side of the House but also in the opposition, and we are dealing with hundreds—I believe by the end of the summer, when this committee rises, we will have met with over 1,000 stakeholders from across Ontario. They're sharing their stories. They're sharing their concerns. And they are sharing with us advice on what they think we need to do, as a government, to allow them to move into the next stage faster, and also what we can do to help them in their economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, we have learned a lot. I recall a particular—and the member opposite may recall this, as well. One of the stakeholders from Hamilton was so supportive of the measures that our government had brought forward. Hamilton is one of the communities that led in the recovery process by—Hamilton city council took the initiative—working with many of the restaurateurs in the city of Hamilton to come up with a plan to open their patios quickly once the government said they could move into stage 2. I recall a conversation—I'm sure the member opposite will recall it. These were very supportive comments from this particular stakeholder, who was impressed with what we were able to do to expedite the process in expanding liquor licences for these restaurants. So, yes, he understood that as a restaurateur there were big challenges, but he was proud and impressed with what we had done. He also recognized that he would have to work with us probably over the next 18 months to two years—his words—to come up with a long-term plan, because the economic recovery from COVID-19 is not going to happen overnight; it's going to be a very long process. He recognized it, but he also recognized that he's working with a government that understands business, a government that is supportive of business and will put in place a plan that will help our economy recover over the next 12, 18, and 24 months.

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: Hamilton is lucky to have you.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, since declaring the provincial emergency back in March, we've seen, as I said, so many ups and downs. Parts of the province are now moving into stage 3—not all parts. The GTHA and Niagara are still probably weeks away from being able to move into stage 3. But I think as a province, we have shown that when we are facing these challenges and something so unprecedented as a global economic crisis and health crisis, we can come together and rise to the occasion.

2200

I want to go back to when we talked about when this virus first hit. We started talking about it in March and how the message by our community leaders was to stay home. We've moved beyond that. I didn't think we ever could, but we have moved beyond that. And today, we're talking about stage 3. This stage 3 comes with certain restrictions as well, and not everyone in the province is able to move into stage 3. Even stage 3 has its parameters. Not every business within these regions can open, and when they do, they still have to follow certain protocols to ensure the health and safety of their workers, of their customers, of their clients.

But we need to have a system in place—and I'll go back again to motion 85. This allows this government to react quickly if—and I hope it is an "if" and never happens—but in the event that there is any sort of a change in the virus, if we see an increase in numbers as we move into stage 3 and, if there is a stage 4, we see more interaction with people and we see the virus start to reoccur, we must have measures in place to react, and this particular motion gives us that. The amendments are unnecessary.

I'm hoping that after sharing my examples with members opposite, they would recognize that what we're trying to do is to allow businesses to move into the next stage, to allow families to come together to meet their loved ones in long-term-care facilities. But we also have to have measures in place in the event that this virus changes, that the pattern changes, and we see an uptick in the numbers across Ontario.

We don't want to have to go back to something like a stage 1. We want to be able to react. We want to be able to ensure that we can put measures in place so that businesses don't have to close their doors. Perhaps it's just a change here or a change there. We don't want to have to see what we saw back in stage 1. We don't want to prohibit families from visiting their loved ones in long-term-care facilities. We don't want to keep families apart. And we do want to see businesses right across this province thrive.

It's going to take a lot to recover financially right across Ontario. Businesses are struggling. They are still facing challenges, and they will continue to face challenges. I fear, as many medical experts have said, that there will be a second wave of COVID-19. This motion, motion 85, will help us deal with that in the event of an uptick. I think it's important for the opposition to recognize we need this motion, we need this authority, so that we can react in the event of a change to protect business and to protect the health and safety of Ontarians.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank my colleague from Flamborough—Glanbrook. It did bring us back to a time where we were scared. We can all be honest: It was a scary time back in March break. I was on my way to Tremblant to see my stepdaughters. We were on a ski trip. The night before we left, the mountain actually closed. They live out in Rockland, so they live a distance away.

When we got to the mountain, we were a family, together. I was watching TV every day. My husband and I said, "Let's try not to scare the kids." They're older; they are 19 and 16, but still—

Interjection: They're kids.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: They're kids, and we want them to be kids, because we should really let kids be kids.

So much has happened since then. I remember, we did cut our trip short, and we dropped them off at home. Paul and I said to each other, "When are we going to see the kids again?" Because it is a distance to travel.

My phone was going crazy, listening to what was going on. We were watching the news constantly, and as we got back to Ontario, our world had changed. I couldn't see my mother; I couldn't see my sister, my brother-in-law or my nephew. They were in South Africa. And then we were scared. The Prime Minister said, "People, come home. If you are out of the country, come home." This is when you realize that family—how important they are and how you want them to be in Canada, because we have the best country to live in. We are very, very lucky.

When you talked about it, I just wanted to share my story and what my family went through and how important family is. There were so many families out there that

couldn't see one another. We all have a story. As the members opposite said, we all have a story to share, and it's okay to share them. That's part of our mental wellness, sharing those stories, because it's important that we share these with others, because we have all been through something. I would never say to anyone, "Please don't share your story," because I think that's important for us, as we learn from what has happened through COVID.

This amendment that we're talking about today is—it's an important motion, but I cannot support the amendments to the motion. I will be supporting the motion. It's motion 85, and it's about putting together a select committee on emergency management oversight. It's a committee like anything else we have, and members from all parties will be sitting on that and report to the House and report to the Premier. It's important that we have committees like this.

We all sit on committees daily. In the last couple of weeks, we've all had the opportunity to sit on committees and hear from the people of our province. It's actually been a great experience—many long days, but we have been doing them through Zoom and it's been an opportunity for people of all abilities to participate in a process. So I think it's been quite a new experience for all of us, a different way of governing. Just like anybody else around the world and not just Ontario, we've all had to find different ways of doing business and living our lives, because our lives changed.

We talked about stories and we talk about our kids. Just when COVID happened, my step-daughter Bryanne—her brand new dog fell off the bed and broke its leg. It's a little French bulldog. What happens when the dog is a puppy and breaks its leg? Well, they said they had to amputate it. Now I have a three-legged grand-dog. The dog is fine because it was a puppy, but because of COVID, she wasn't able to get the surgery done right away, and puppies grow so fast.

People's lives have changed, but this is something we will never forget as people. We have learned and we will read about this in the future. We'll read about how things happened, how communities got together. We have some wonderful community stories. I'd just like to share a couple of stories from my own community. We have this gentleman who is a very proud grandfather, Mr. Mulligan, and his grandson and five of his buddies—six young men—because they were camp councillors and they didn't have a summer job, decided they were going to organize a canoe trip starting in Thunder Bay and going to Ottawa. It was Canoe 4 Covid, and their goal was to raise \$60,000 for Food Banks Canada. I think they just reached \$53,000 today in fundraising.

I chatted with these keen young fellows just before they left. I had a conference call with them. They were quite excited. They were off to—well, they were hoping they were off to university in the fall, but I think a lot of it will be virtual learning. It would be their first year of university and they were very excited. I guess the mom came out in me and said, "Make sure you bring your masks with you and your gloves and your Purell." But they're very excited, these young fellows, and I hope that they're doing well.

They started on June 24 in Thunder Bay and I know they were making their way. I know the grandfather had called our office just to share a couple of videos with us, which we posted to our website. We wish them well.

But these are great stories of just humankind, nice things that people do. Young people, they need things to do. When we were all young, we would go out. We would go here or there to a pub, to a patio, and that doesn't exist for our young people these days, so they have to come up with other ways to enjoy and be social, but be social at a distance.

To be young today is a little different than it was just last year. Just in the last year, things have changed so much, just as the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook said. Our world has changed, and we have to be adaptable to those changes. That's why we have to be careful that this doesn't happen again. We need to be prepared and we need to take precautions, because we have worked so hard as a community to be where we are today.

2210

Today there are places in this province that can open up to stage 3. Some people can go to the gym. I know that I need to go to the gym, although I'm not able to go yet because my riding is in Toronto; I live in Toronto. We will get there. People of Toronto, we will get there soon, I know it, because we're all working hard to do so.

These are people's livelihoods, when we talk about these stages and these businesses, people who have worked so hard. My girlfriend is a grocer, and when COVID hit—we were on the phone. I wasn't in the city when she called, and she said, "What do I do? Can I get some advice?" She didn't know if she should open or if she should close. And I said, "People need to eat," so she opened her store and they put up lines and people were coming in. She was one of those who ran out of toilet paper in one day.

But you know what? It's adaptable. As we have conversations about the grocery store business, it's just a new normal now. It's a new normal, and as employers, you want to look after your staff to make sure they're safe and they feel safe in their place of business, just as we do as employers of our constituency offices. We want to make sure our staff are safe and that they are comfortable in their job. That's part of our responsibility.

All these employers have a new way of doing business, and it's so important that we care. We know that these business owners care, but they want to be in business. They want to work and they want to employ others, because if their businesses aren't working, people aren't having jobs, and that's how the economy goes. We really need to make sure these businesses are going and running and selling their products, so we can have an economy and people can have jobs, pay their rent, buy their food and go buy something nice for themselves.

I know that all of our spending habits have kind of changed over the last little bit. Some of us may have gone to get our nails done and maybe we don't anymore, or we will, eventually, as we feel more confident. But one thing we have to do as leaders in our communities is to be out

there in our community and know that we can shop with confidence, know that we can shop safely and support our local economy.

Etobicoke—Lakeshore is just a 17-minute drive down the street and we have wonderful restaurants. I encourage all of you, while you're here in the city, to just hop in a car and go down the road.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Are you buying?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Maybe—who knows? I just encourage you, because—guess what—the traffic is a lot better right now than it normally would be, especially at this hour. I don't know who is out there.

We have the restaurants along the Kingsway. We have ViBO, which is an amazing restaurant. We have amazing restaurants along the Queensway. We have amazing restaurants on the lakeshore, in Mimico Village, in Islington Village and in Mimico-by-the-Lake.

The Premier was very kind to drop by my riding on Friday to visit a family-owned bakery, SanRemo, which is in Mimico. I don't know if anyone else knows—I know Rudy has been there, because I have seen it on his Facebook. They have the best doughnuts, I would say, anywhere. They can compete—

Interjection.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: And that's why we have to go to the gym.

So I just want to thank the Premier for stopping by and supporting a small, local family business that had to change the way they do business in a flash, just like everybody else. We had to change the way we do business—or how life is, in a flash. Some people were at home with their children. Some people had to become teachers overnight. My sister was saying, "I don't know anything about French and I have to teach French," so she asked my husband to help because he's a francophone.

We all had to do different things. Our lives just changed in a snap, and that can happen again. So we have to be so careful about where we go and how we do it. And those people in the city of Toronto, those people who didn't make it to stage 3 today: I know we'll make it soon, but just stay with your bubbles of 10. We just have to be careful when we're out there.

I also would like to thank our first responders. We've talked about our front-line heroes and our first responders, our fire and our police. Because a lot of people don't have a lot of things to do in the evening, a lot of people are coming to Etobicoke—Lakeshore. They're on our waterfront, and they've decided to start some bonfires along the waterfront. So our police have been out doing double time, trying to look after our waterfront because you can't build a fire under a tree. Anybody from northern Ontario knows that. You should be careful, and it's also against the law.

I want to pass that along for the members of Humber Bay Shores, who write us a lot of letters, and the same with Marie Curtis Park: We have to be careful. Those people live in that area and we just want to make sure—please do not start bonfires, especially if there's a tree over overhead. I want to thank 22 Division for being out there. I

know on the weekend they were out there patrolling. They were doing double duty, trying to stop the cars.

Just to conclude my earlier story, my girls actually came last weekend. It was Bryanne's 19th birthday. They drove up so we were able to see them again, which was wonderful. We hadn't seen them since March break. We had a little birthday party and then we took the dogs—the three-legged one and my own—down to the dog park. We saw all the bonfires and the police there, and it was so busy.

I just want to make sure that everybody follows the law. I know some people are bored at night and there's less to do, but please still follow the law because we need to be safe. We need to be safe, and we need our first responders doing what they should be doing and not putting out bonfires along Lake Ontario. I see a member shaking her head. I think it's your riding as well where people seem to be lighting these fires.

I just want to talk about a couple of more people in my riding. Our Franklin Horner Community Centre—we have a great community centre, and they've started a program called Faraway Friends. I visited the Franklin Horner Community Centre in Alderwood in my riding. Laura is the executive director there, and she's put on a great program for seniors because a lot of seniors don't want to get out of their houses right now. They still don't feel comfortable. Someone like my mother, who would like not to be called a senior, but she is, is a little bit hesitant about getting out and about. So I went down to see Laura at Franklin Horner. I was there actually with our federal MP and we handed out some lunches. It was a way to get seniors out of their homes with somewhere to go. They put together a little café, which has socially distanced chairs, so people can have a conversation from a distance. Because our mental health is so important, especially for our seniors who are stuck at home—a reason to get out.

I said to my mother that she should go and she said, "Well, I know. I'm not sure." I said, "Well, you know what? They give you a free beer at lunch." The beer is from Great Lakes Brewery, which is another local brewery in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. If anybody is looking for a good craft beer, I have six breweries in Etobicoke–Lakeshore and Great Lakes is one of them. I said to my mother, "Maybe you'd come for that lunch and then you get a free drink."

I think we have to look for reasons and for how to get our seniors to come out of their homes and how to have them feel comfortable, because we have been talking about—you know, if you're over a certain age, you're more susceptible, especially if you have heart or lung conditions, and my mother has both. They're a little leery about going out, but it's so important that we encourage our seniors to go out for their mental wellness, and that's important.

We were all together as a family yesterday, but my mother, as I said, is still a little leery about hugging because we come to work and other people are at different places. We still go shopping for her, so she doesn't have to go out in public.

We all have a responsibility—and once again, life is different. Life is different since March. Life is very different since March break, and life is entirely different than it was last year when we were all making our summer plans for this summer. Well, those are all gone, and no one's really talking about travelling anywhere.

I know last year we were in Nova Scotia at a House committee. It was a very nice event, and now we're not even talking about going to different provinces or different countries at this moment, and you wouldn't have thought that because life is very different than it was.

I want to make sure—I don't want to miss anybody I was talking about.

I just want to chat about another organization that's in my riding. I'm sure we have all heard about it; it's called GlobalMedic, a very good organization. They have really stepped up to the plate to help out others during this time. I've probably visited them about four or five times. Humber College's North Campus has donated some space for them, so they can do some packaging and they don't have to move from place to place. They do packaging of dry goods and sometimes they do hygiene kits for men, hygiene kits for women. I know a lot of my colleagues have gone up there, spent some time with their staff and helped seal some bags and then deliver them out to those in need. I was there I guess it was last Thursday, up at the Humber Bay campus. It's run by Jamie. It's an all-female team that runs the centre out there, so it's a great job that she and her team are doing.

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We brought some dry goods down to LAMP. LAMP is one of the community health groups in the lower part of my riding, and Jasmin does an amazing job running that centre. We brought her some dry goods—and it's just her heartfelt thanks of this little gift of food that she can give out to those in need. I think that's what's so exciting about our jobs, that we can make those connections for people in our community to help people with food. It just seems so simple, but it's just such an important part of our job that we're able to help make those connections. So I thank the ladies and men at LAMP who helped unload my car. I know that they're going to be giving out those products to those people who actually really do need them.

I have some great restaurateurs in my riding. Dino Ari from Dino's Pizza, who has been a huge advocate and a huge help for front-line workers. When COVID first hit, he was giving away free pizzas to any front-line worker who had come in. He had just opened two new businesses in February, so he had three. Unfortunately, he had to close one of those restaurants, because it's tough. It takes a toll on you as a business owner, so you have to make some tough choices.

Business owners had to make tough choices, just like our government had to make tough choices. That's about leadership, that's about governing and that's about surviving. Our government did have to make some tough decisions, and the last thing we would ever want is to say to a business, "You can't open." That's just not the Conservative mentality. That's not what we believe in, and we

had to. I know it was hard to do that, but we did that to save lives. We did that to save our grandparents, our parents, people we don't know. We did it to save their lives, and I just really have to thank our Premier and our Minister of Health for stepping up so quickly to the plate to ensure that our communities, our province are safe.

If you look across the border, we see the news every night, and it's just hard. I have cousins who are American, and I see what's happening in Michigan and I worry. We had a big conversation about that yesterday, about what's happening in America. We're not there, but we have to be careful with everything we do. We cannot take what we've got and what we have achieved for granted, because things can turn on a dime. Go back to March and March break: Things turned on a dime. We were here one day; we were ready to break for March break, and then things changed.

So we still need to be vigilant. We still need to be safe. I encourage everybody to wear a mask when they're out in public. I encourage everyone to continue to social distance and please keep your bubble to 10, or now, if you live outside of the Toronto area, if you're on that list and you're open to stage 3, just remember to be vigilant. Please don't jump the gun. I just want everyone to be safe out there, because we've come a long way and we need to protect what matters most, which is the people of Ontario.

I just want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to the amendment to the motion before us. As I look up at the clock, it's about 20 after 10 in the evening, so certainly a late night in the Legislature. I suspect the government members will carry on the debate right until midnight, which I find fascinating, because we're here talking about the implementation of a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. But it's been a difficult go at the Legislature the last little while in terms of, procedurally, how the business of the House has been proceeding. We've seen a complete breakdown of the relationship between the House teams on the government and opposition side. The few committees that have been allowed to proceed have gotten quite heated. We have tried to put forward a number of constructive amendments that are specifically COVID-related to the non-COVID-related bills the government insists on calling forward.

I think back: We were in committee last week on Bill 184, which is the protecting tenants act that's actually being called the eviction bill in my riding. I put forward a motion at committee to legislate a ban on any COVID-related evictions through that bill, but that was blocked by the government members of that committee.

So what we've tried to do with this motion here is strike a better balance of membership on this committee so that the government would still maintain control and authority over the committee as the government, as they have a right to do through the Chair, but really equalizing the membership so that we could more fairly work together towards a solution in the emergency that we find ourselves in. I think that the more balanced membership on the committee

would have been a good first step to start addressing the really damaged state of relationships between the government party and the opposition in this chamber right now.

Instead, we're here in the evening hours. I'm sure many of us would like to be at home going over our notes and our schedules for tomorrow, but on our side that's kind of hard to do when we don't know what the day will bring tomorrow. We don't know what we're going to be speaking to tomorrow. We don't know what business is coming before this House, and it makes it really hard to plan our work as members.

Again, going back to the motion, it's proposing a more balanced—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker. We have sat very attentively and listened to the members opposite for the last little while give their remarks and I would kindly ask for the same respect. I think I've gotten—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Toronto Centre has the floor.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you very much, Speaker.

But here we are. I'm frustrated to hear that the government members don't intend to support our amendment to the motion that, again, really just rebalances the membership of the select committee, but that's their right as the government to do that.

Instead, we've had the members here tonight take this as an opportunity to talk about the ways that COVID has impacted all of our ridings and to share some of the stories from our ridings related to COVID. So with the indulgence of the Speaker, I'd like to take a few moments to do just the same, if slightly off-track from the motion. I understand that's the debate that's happened today.

I would like to say that one of the most critical issues in my community that's come out of COVID is the amplification of the housing and homelessness crisis because of COVID-19. What we haven't seen from this Conservative government is any real effort to protect the tenants of this province. We have been calling, on this side, for a residential rent subsidy program. Over and over and over again, we have been asking for this. Our proposal included a rent subsidy that would be paid direct to tenants for 80% of their rent for up to four months to help carry folks through the COVID-19 emergency because we can't, as a community, afford to let people fall into homelessness because of the pandemic that we find ourselves in.

We haven't seen any positive reception from the government benches on that particular policy, nor have we seen any positive reception on any actual legislated protections to stop evictions in the province of Ontario. No one in Ontario should lose their home as a result of COVID-19.

We saw the government come out with a temporary ban on evictions at the board, but it was really just a temporary pause on eviction hearings. Meanwhile, landlords have been still continuing to file eviction notices at the Landlord

and Tenant Board, effectively getting in line to toss their tenants out as quickly as possible.

In my riding, what that looks like—apologies, my eyes are watering; it's getting kind of late. In my riding, we have some of the highest rental prices anywhere in the country. The average price of a one-bedroom apartment in my riding is more than—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Speaker, on a point of order.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I knew this was coming.

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Mr. Mike Harris: If you knew it was coming, you shouldn't have fu—oops. Apologies.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence is asking to be recognized for a point of order, and I recognize her.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Speaker. I know the member said that she was going to tell stories about her riding, as other people were doing, but unfortunately she is actually speaking about another piece of legislation which I believe will be coming forward for debate, and not—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. It is 10:30 at night. We're all glad to be here. I'm listening to all of the speakers who have presented their thoughts and ideas. We're speaking broadly about COVID-19 and, of course, the establishment of a select committee of oversight. I would ask all members to recognize that each of us has an opportunity to present our thoughts with respect to our riding. I've heard speeches from the government side. I'm listening to this one.

I find that your comments are in fact relevant to the debate, and I appreciate your contribution.

The member for Toronto Centre has the floor.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you so much, Speaker. Right as the member stood up to raise her point of order, I did hear quite an unparliamentary comment from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

I don't know if you perhaps wanted an opportunity to withdraw that.

Mr. Mike Harris: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I didn't hear the comment. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: I caught myself before the comment was completely uttered, but I do apologize to the member from Toronto Centre if she inferred something otherwise.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Again, the member for Toronto Centre has the floor.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you so much. As I was saying, we have a housing crisis in my community, in Toronto Centre. We have some of the highest rental prices anywhere in the country. The average price for a one-bedroom apartment, pre-COVID-19 and still, is—I think we're up to \$2,100 to \$2,300 for a one-bedroom apartment. The minimum wage in my riding would have to be upwards of \$35 to \$40 an hour for a single mom in my community to afford rent. When we look at that in the context of COVID-19—folks have lost their jobs, they've lost their employment. The CERB payments from the federal government aren't enough to pay the rent. If you're

getting \$2,000 a month from the federal government and your rent is \$2,300 a month—I know the government likes to accuse us on this side of not being great at math, but that's pretty difficult math. I don't know how anyone would do that. How do you choose what bills you do and don't pay? How do you choose whether you're putting food on the table for your kids, whether you're keeping the phone lines connected? How do you make choices about that kind of poverty?

Like I said, we haven't seen any real action from this government to protect tenants, specifically. When we came to committee on Bill 184, the government blocked our amendment to the bill that would have prevented by law any COVID-19-related eviction, which I was quite disappointed to see. So my call to the government members is—

Interjections.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Is there some sort of cross-banter going on?

My call to the government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Apologies, Speaker. It's late, and I'm a little tired. And I've had a lot of espresso today, but clearly not enough.

Mr. Mike Harris: You can do it.

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: Another 10 minutes. You can do it.

Applause.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you. I think this is the first time the government members have ever cheered me on. Thanks, guys. We're in this together.

The point I'm trying to make is that I'm calling on the government members to really come to the table with meaningful action. A rent subsidy program is a great place to start. An actual ban on evictions is a great place to start.

Most concerningly, I'm worried about what happens when the temporary ban on evictions at the Landlord and Tenant Board lifts, and folks who are no more able to pay the months of back rent that they were staring down two weeks ago are even less able to pay five months of back rent come August 1. When the state of emergency in the province is lifted, it has really just kicked these evictions—it's kicking the can down the road. Folks are going to come before the board with months of arrears and no support from the government and without any meaningful action. This government stands to preside over the largest mass eviction in the history of our province.

Where are folks supposed to go? Our shelters are over capacity and underfunded. The municipalities are running out of money to keep those shelters funded. We've heard over and over again calls from the municipalities to ease their budget shortfalls right now. They have decreased revenue from things like transit not operating at full capacity, so decreased revenues from transit, decreased revenues from other sources, and increased expenditures in public health and increased expenditures in supporting

the homeless population right now. They can't balance the books.

The city of Toronto, the fifth-largest government in Canada, is about to be in financial crisis. They're calling on any level of government that will listen to support them, and no action from this provincial government. Instead, they've turned around and said, "No, go cry to the feds. Go cry to the feds and see if they'll cut you a cheque." That's not going to fly in my community, where we are the epicentre of the homelessness crisis. There is no space in our shelters. When people become evicted as a result of COVID-19, they have nowhere to go, Speaker. There are no beds.

I would challenge any of the government members—you're so close to my riding; we're just right next door. The other side of Bay Street all the way over to the Don Valley Parkway—that's my riding. If you walk the streets of my riding, not 10 minutes by foot from where we stand right now, you'll see the encampments and how large they've grown. Walk through Moss Park. Go into the Village. Go walk through Barbara Hall Park. The Premier has had nothing to say to those folks except, "Well, they just shouldn't be doing that. They just shouldn't be pitching tents in our parks." But where else are they supposed to go?

Without any meaningful protections for tenants, the numbers in our parks are only going to get larger. The number of folks having to pitch tents is only going to grow larger. I am calling on you, please: We need rent support. We need a subsidy. We need actual legislated protection against COVID-related evictions. We need supports for our municipalities to weather this storm and get through the financial crisis.

I can see I've irritated the member from Carleton in my remarks, who seems to think that I am not speaking to the motion, but again, through you, Speaker—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Suze Morrison: As I predicted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Carleton has a point of order.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'm not sure why the member opposite is saying that I am complaining about anything, because I did not make a point of order prior to this. For her to assume intent, I think, is—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Not a valid point of order.

The member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you so much. It's the late hour. I think we're all getting a little punchy. With the indulgence of the House, I'll continue.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: If you're going to accuse me of something, you could at least wait until I do it.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Why are you such a child?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay, order. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The House will come to order.

Interjections.

Ms. Jill Andrew: You're such a child. Shut up.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the member for Toronto–St. Paul's on her inflammatory language.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I didn't realize. Sorry. I didn't know it was a swear word.

Interjections.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: She does this all the time, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Wow. I wonder why. Look at the lips over there running—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay, I'm going to start to call people to order by name. The member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order. The member for Toronto–St. Paul's, come to order. Over here, the member for Carleton, come to order.

The next step, of course, is a warning. After that, we'll start naming if that's what we have to do to maintain civility in this House at this late hour on this Monday night.

The member for Toronto Centre has the floor.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker. There are only a few minutes left on the clock, so the last point that I did want to make about this motion, again, tying back to what I said at the beginning of my remarks, is that the very process of committee work in this Legislature at this moment—I know that as we've extended our spring session for the summer months to come back into this House, there have been various iterations of negotiations to get to what this summer extension looks like.

Unfortunately, again, as I was saying before, because of the breakdown in the relationship that has happened between the House teams—I know that we had pushed really hard to be able to sit an extra day on Thursdays, where we could have an opportunity to bring forward COVID-related business through private members' bills, which we are no longer able to do. As a member of this Legislature, I currently have no mechanism to bring forward private members' bills for second reading. We also know that the government has blocked the ability, through the extension of the summer session, for both the public accounts committee as well as the public appointments committee. Is estimates meeting either?

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Miss Monique Taylor: No.

Ms. Suze Morrison: No—or estimates. So any of the opposition-chaired accountability committees are not able to meet in this Legislature.

I heard the member from Carleton, in her remarks earlier—I was listening quite intently—speak about her time on public accounts and how important public accounts is to this Legislature. I agree wholeheartedly: It's one of the most important committees in this building, because it follows the money of the government of the day.

To the members opposite: You might have had a good amount of fun with it in the first year and a half in this Legislature, looking back at the cooked books of the Liberals, and I will say—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga will come to order.

Ms. Suze Morrison: It was quite interesting particularly to go through the Hydro One scandal that the Liberals cooked up, through public accounts. That was certainly interesting days. But now, here we are, and we're a year and a half into the mandate, and you can't sit there in public accounts anymore and blame the former government for the state of the books and the state of the audits. We're following your money now. It takes about a year for that delay to kick in. Now, all of a sudden, when we're getting to the timeline when we'd be reviewing the books under the PC government, we don't want public accounts to sit anymore.

So here we are. Everyone has been talking tonight about the importance of the committee process and accountability—and even the member from Carleton talking about public accounts—and so I challenge the members: All right, let's get to work. Let's bring back Thursday sittings so that we can have private members' bills. Let's make sure that public accounts is able to meet. Free the auditor. Let her back in the—

Interjection.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Hashtag #FreeTheAuditor—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I'm going to ask the member for Kitchener–Conestoga to come to order.

I'm now going to ask the member for Toronto Centre to bring her remarks back to the motion.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker. Apologies; it's late, and I'm getting punchy.

Free the auditor. Let public accounts sit. Let estimates sit. Let public appointments sit. We have no ability, as the official opposition—the few tools that we have in our official opposition toolbox are these accountability committees. If they are not able to sit, we are hindered from doing our job effectively. The government is currently able to proceed with public appointments to boards and commissions, completely free of any oversight or accountability. We don't have the estimates process and we don't have public accounts, and I don't think this makes this Legislature better.

Yes, we are in a state of emergency, and yes, we are in an unprecedented situation with COVID-19. But it doesn't mean we stop doing our jobs and stop getting to work for the people of Ontario.

In the last few seconds I have on the clock, to tie it all back in to the motion before us: The amendment to the motion that we've put forward was to strike a more fair and equal balance on the emergency management oversight committee that I think would have benefited the legislative process on committee and allowed for greater accountability of the government and better partnership so that we can get to a better place where we can work together and not be bullying each other across the aisle and heckling as bad as I've seen it today and treating each other as poorly and taking potshots at each other's House leaders. This is not the way I want our Legislature to proceed in the midst of an emergency. With that, I'll conclude my remarks.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: As always, it's a great privilege and honour to be able to rise and stand in this House and speak on behalf of the good people of Niagara West. I want to thank them for the trust they've placed in me by sending me to this place to do the work that is required of all of us and the work of important deliberation with regard to the issues that come before this chamber.

I also want to thank my colleagues. I want to thank the members of our cabinet, who have put together important legislation—legislation that I believe will benefit the people of this province. With that in mind, I have the privilege this evening of speaking to the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight, which has been moved by our government House leader, Mr. Calandra.

This motion reads as follows:

“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”—and therein reads the body of the motion, to which the members opposite have brought forward an amendment. I don't want to call it a reasoned amendment, but it is an amendment nonetheless to this particular motion.

I also want to, before I get into some of the substance of my contributions this evening, thank my wife. I know she is watching right now—my strong, beautiful and kind wife. I'm very happy that she was willing to stay up and watch me. I know she has also been watching other members, so just so you know, I'll get the analysis when I go home.

This evening, it's a privilege to be able to speak to this motion that's before the chamber, because I also served for over a year and a half in the opposition benches. I served in those benches and I have a lot of respect for the members opposite. I want to thank them for their role. I want to thank them for the work that they do. I know that the work can be difficult. It can be sometimes thankless, in that it can be challenging to always be—I'm not going to say criticizing, but always being the one to challenge decisions made and not necessarily making those decisions for yourself.

I know that to be the case for even the brief time that I served in opposition—although, again, a great privilege to hold the former Liberal government to account on behalf of the people of Niagara West–Glanbrook, which was the riding I represented at that time, but currently the riding of Niagara West. In a government capacity, I do recognize the importance of the role that the opposition plays, and I want to thank them for bringing forward amendments to the types of motions that we have been debating here this evening.

The reason for that is because I work, I live and I'm raising my family in a region that I am the only government member in. We're a region of almost half a million people, the region of Niagara—a growing region, a

bustling region, a region that has gotten through the worst of COVID-19 by the grit, determination and sacrifice of so many constituents. The people in Niagara West—from the Dillon's distillers of the world, who have come together to create hand sanitizers, to the Stanpacs, the West Lincoln firefighters, the organizations across the region, from supports for women's shelters to those who have organized bottle drives for local food banks and who have stepped up, time and time again, to help those who are the most vulnerable in our society. I live in a wonderful place in this world. I live in a wonderful part of our province. But I also have three New Democratic colleagues who serve alongside me in the region. And we disagree at times—philosophically, of course. I know, as I often reference, my dear colleague from Ottawa Centre once referenced himself as a proud, young Marxist—or maybe it was socialist, I believe he mentioned.

Mr. Mike Harris: I think it was communist, actually.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I don't believe it was communist; I think it was socialist. But I then referred to myself as a proud, young free marketeer, and I will stand by that definition. But that can be challenging, working alongside colleagues from the region who don't believe in the free market, who don't believe in the desire for opportunity and personal responsibility for freedom that we, as Conservatives, do believe in. I recognize that that has its challenging moments, but it also has its beautiful opportunities, where we can find ways that we work together.

I have the opportunity to work with members from Niagara Centre, from St. Catharines, from Niagara Falls to fight for and to speak for the issues that matter a great deal to my community. I don't say this as a criticism of our particular government; it's a government of all stripes. But it's sometimes very difficult for people in Niagara to feel that those who are governing in Toronto understand that the world goes past the Burlington Skyway. You would know that, Speaker, being in the chair as someone from the north today. It's of course a challenge when, if it's north of Bloor, it seems north. That's something that in Niagara, although we're the southern portion of the riding, we recognize that that can be challenging. So I want to thank my colleagues who I serve with who are in opposition for the times that we can work together constructively.

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Today, we have the opportunity also to speak to an amendment that has come before the House from members of the opposition. I think that, too, is an excellent statement of where we stand here today in Canada. We have seen governments across the world use this pandemic, unfortunately, as a means of seizing power without particular deliberation. We've seen governments that have failed to adequately engage with opposition members. We see, for example, perhaps in Hong Kong, where we have seen the Chinese Communist government crack down on pro-democracy protesters. But here in this particular place, what we're actually debating, the substance of what we're debating, is not whether or not oversight is a good thing. We all agree that oversight is important, and that's the

beauty of what we're debating and really what we're having this conversation around: the composition of the members who will sit on a committee on emergency management oversight.

These particular members who are going to sit on this committee will have the opportunity to meet at the call of the Chair to ask the Premier to make an opening statement and to pose questions to the Premier or his designate in rounds. This is very important because this is one of the fundamental understandings we have as a western democracy, as a democracy founded on the rule of law, as a democracy founded on the importance of the popular voice and representative democracy for accountability: having people who come forward and hold to account and who question those who are making the decisions.

So I recognize and I understand the need from the opposition to speak today to make their suggestion. Of course, I understand how they would want to have more people on that committee. I would respond by saying we won a majority government by going to the people of Ontario with a clear mandate, and part of that majority government also ensures that we have the right to hold the majority of seats on particular committees. That's understood. When people in my riding or other parts of this province voted for us in a majority government, they understood as well that part of the effect of that was that we would have a majority of members on these types of committees.

But I think it's such an important thing that we recognize, as we have these discussions at night and as we have these conversations about whether or not the composition should be with this many members of a particular stripe or that many members of a particular stripe, that we still live in a place where we are able to argue, where we are able to debate, where we are able to speak passionately about the things we can agree on and the things that we disagree on, regardless of our political stripe. I don't always agree with my colleagues opposite and I know they don't always agree with me, and that's completely understandable. That's the beauty of the diversity of the democracy we live in.

Speaker, one of the questions I often receive—or, I should say, I used to receive, is about my age. As you know, I am one of the younger members of the Legislature. So I got asked, when I was first elected, at 19, whether I thought that a Legislature should be full of a bunch of 19-year-olds. I responded, "No, I don't." But I also don't believe a Legislature should be full of a bunch of 80-year-olds, and that's the importance of our democracy: We have people from every walk of life, I believe, represented in this chamber. We have people from every different background, every age group and every upbringing, and even people from many, many different places outside of Ontario where they may have been born. They came to this country and they came to this province ready to work hard to create a better life for themselves and their children and ready for the free exchange of ideas, for the accountability that comes from a democracy that is based on representative and accountable government. And that's something we can all be very, very proud of.

I have spoken, Speaker, in the past about actions that our government has taken—ones that I never thought we would take. I've talked about, if you had come to me in January of this year and you had said, "Sam, you're going to be voting for legislation that is going to shut down your neighbour's place of employment, is going to shut down your neighbour's soccer team, is going to shut down your neighbour's church and is going to shut down your neighbour's ability to gather and have a barbecue with friends," I would have laughed at you. And I talked about the reason why I believed it was important that we did that: for the protection of life, for the respect for our neighbour, for the love of the dignity of each and every person, and for the importance of that preservation of life and dignity that is inherent, I believe, in each and every one of our callings, representing 100,000 people, most of us, give or take. I think there are a couple of ridings that have slightly different populations.

So I spoke extensively about that, and I'm not going to go as much into that today because I know I've covered that; I know it's understood in my community. I know that today when the decision came forward from the Premier, from the chief medical officer with regard to what these stages were going to look like reopening, I was reminded of some of those comments that I made at that time because it is still challenging. We've come through so much in the last few months, and people get tired because this is not a sprint. It's not a sprint; it's a marathon. But we've been elected as members of this chamber to run that marathon and to run that marathon together. That means also making sure that as we discuss these types of ideas, we keep our eye on the prize. We keep our eye on ensuring that Ontarians of every background and of every political stripe are able to see a better province for them and for their children.

What we are doing, when we bring forward these select committees and other types of committees that provide that oversight—we are recognizing that what we have been entrusted with as a government is a sacred trust. We have been entrusted with the torch of democracy and also the torch of responsibility. That is something that we never, ever take for granted on this side of the House and it's something that we recognize that the members in opposition have an important role in. They have to cup that torch. They have to surround that torch by ensuring that it burns brighter. That brightness, Speaker, similar to if you have your particular torch and you blow on it and it burns brighter, it might be smaller for a moment but it will burn brighter afterwards.

I think that here in this time that we've been put into a unique amount of pressure not just as a government but as governors. If you think of us as members in this Legislature—absolutely the governing party has a unique position in that it has an agenda that it has been elected on and cabinet has a unique position in that they have executive roles to fulfill in that, but in a sense this is a board of 124 governors. This is a board of 124 people who have been called upon to make the best decisions for the people of this province. We recognize, of course, that Premier Ford

has a unique role within that. Our cabinet ministers have unique roles within that. But that's still a unifying factor to all those of us who sit in this chamber. It's one of the reasons we all look to you, Speaker, to help regulate this board meeting, if you want to call it that, these conversations that help inform those particular decisions.

It's because of that that, as we move through this, we can never lose sight of that responsibility we have to give an answer for why we've done what we've done, because we've taken severe actions. We have. The Premier said it; I've said it. None of us want to take the actions that we have taken, in and on themselves. I don't believe there's anything inherently good about shutting down a business. I don't believe there's anything inherently good in forbidding people to gather in anything larger than groups of 10, but we recognize that that is a means to the purpose—the purpose of which is to save life, to promote the dignity of those whom we serve and to promote respect for and consideration of our neighbour, and that's something I believe we can get behind.

It's why, as we have these conversations, Speaker, that I hope the members opposite will also rise and speak about the legacy they want to leave in this House. We hear a lot about challenges that they might have, concerns they might have, stories of their constituents—all very, very important things, but when we think about what the legacy all of us as a group is going to be leaving in this province when they look back at this time, we are in a unique—and I know that the word has been over overused, but we are in an unprecedented time. This is going to be a time in world history where people will look back and recognize that the decisions we've made are going to have far-reaching ramifications for generations to come. For years, for decades, those who will follow us in this House—and I recognize that I am not the member for Niagara West forever, and none of us are the members for Niagara West forever, although you never know how long I'm—anyway.

The point is that no matter how long any of us rest in those particular seats, we still have a responsibility to pass that torch for our local area to the next person, whatever their political stripe might be, to serve those people well, and to do so with pride in the decisions we've made as a member of this governing body, with pride in the way that we've answered the concerns that come from the opposition and those who are stakeholders, those who are our neighbours, those who are in our communities, those who are, yes, business owners, those who are renters, those who are from particular backgrounds that we engage with, who we might not always have had the same lived experience—but bringing their lived experience into this chamber and allowing that to permeate our conversations, to permeate our actions, and to permeate the legislation that we bring forward, and doing that all cognizant of the fact that we will have to give an answer. As a Christian, I believe I'm going to have to give an answer to an almighty God. I know that for many in this House, they may have a different belief or no belief, but they're going to have to give answers to their constituents, as will I, in just a short couple of years.

2300

In the meantime, we also have to recognize the particular institutions that we have in place to act as checks and balances, and one of those that I think is so important is that check and balance of committees. Committees are uniquely positioned, I believe, to deal deeply with the issues that come before this House. We can talk in broad phrases in front of the membership of this chamber about particular issues, but there's something about the back and forth of a committee, there's something about the energy and spontaneity and dynamic action that happens when you have stakeholders with their deputations, when you have respondents questioning, delving into those questions—there's something about that that adds another dimension to this place. We bring what we learn in those committees back here, and they inform all of us.

One of the most interesting things I've found about elected office is that although many people here have a wide variety of different backgrounds—very accomplished in the private sector or working in NGOs or various other areas—all of us have to be generalists, and I say that not to say that we don't have particular areas that we have knowledge in or expertise in. But we do have to be generalists, because as elected officials, we respond to constituents on everything from labour to housing to roads to bridges to pandemics to health to education. There are so many different areas that, as elected officials, we are called upon to speak to and to make judgments on—that it's through the committees, such as this Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight, that can go and delve deeply into an issue, and spend hours and hours, as so many of the members in this chamber have done over the last weeks on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, digging into some of the more difficult questions and finding those solutions and bringing them back, and having those conversations with cabinet ministers, with members of the opposition, with those of us who are in caucus, and having those debates that strengthen, as iron sharpens iron, the solutions that we can bring forward and then put before this chamber.

I'm so pleased to be able to stand on behalf of my constituents, who have put in so much work over the past several months, and who are waiting to be in stage 3—they know that day is coming very soon—and who are waiting to be able to spend a bit more time with friends and to have larger social gatherings, to go out to the pub, to go to the gym, and know that when I speak with them about the actions we've taken, that there will be a committee such as this committee that will come back with recommendations, that will interrogate, essentially, the Premier, that will speak to people who have had to make those decisions, although we are all partially held accountable, and they will be tabling a report to ensure that the actions that are taken are transparent and accountable. For that, I am very proud.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I was listening intently to the remarks of the member opposite. As I was listening to the member opposite, something came to mind. The member

opposite was talking a lot about this language we often hear from folks, who say you can get at it on your own, that through opportunity and through—“Pull yourself up by your bootstraps” you can make it in tough times.

We are in the context of a global pandemic right now, where millions of people in Ontario and across this world are struggling in poverty—not from any choice of their own, not from any bad business decision of their own. They're struggling right now. Where is the opportunity in that? How can the government speak so callously and say, “There's an opportunity. If you're struggling right now, you've got to pull yourself up”? You can't pull yourself up when your store has been shuttered for months. You can't pull yourself up when you're in an economic context where you can't even know if your next paycheque is coming or you're struggling to survive on \$2,000 a month. Where is the opportunity in that?

Time and time again, we hear this rhetoric from the government about the fact that people can just get at it on their own. Now, more than ever, we need to help people out. We need to create supports for individuals. Now, more than ever, we must create supports for individuals. If we look at the current situation, when we have people who are struggling at \$2,000 a month, barely able to make ends meet, and instead of actually putting forth support from this government, what have we seen? Other provinces in Canada rose to the occasion and they brought rent support for small businesses. They helped out people who fell through the cracks of CERB. They provided support to those people in need. And instead, what do we see from this government? Nothing in action.

I meet with small businesses, and do you know what they tell me? They say that they are incredibly saddened. They're hurting, they're struggling, that this government has decided to take no steps to support small business. We put forward a plan from the NDP, Save Main Street. What does that mean? Lease support; rent support; help out small businesses in need.

Interjections.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: The government will heckle; the government will yell instead of actually listening to the truth. Where is the support you have for small businesses? Show it forward. I'll tell you where the support is: nowhere. Small businesses across Ontario are struggling, and this government has made a very conscious decision—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga must come to order.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Quite frankly, this is the fragility of this government. As opposition, I'm calling them out on their actions. I'm calling out government on the fact that they don't have a platform or support for small businesses. What is the response from government, time and time again? Heckling; yelling. You are in debate right now. Write your comments down; when I'm done, respond to them. That's the process that we have in the Legislative Assembly. That's an appropriate recourse you have, but instead of taking the appropriate recourse, government will instead detract from the real issue at hand.

People are struggling. They need help. You have an option: Support small businesses by giving them rent support or lease support. You have an option: Support individuals who fall through the cracks of CERB by providing an economic support system for them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga is warned.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: This is how the government can take action. They can actually solve this issue. They're in a position to solve this issue. But instead, we see inaction. And who is suffering? I don't suffer from your heckles. You know who suffers? Small businesses suffer from your inaction. People in Ontario struggle from your inaction. Take the energy in heckling and put it towards helping people in need. That's what the real role of government should be in this context, instead of the fragility you have at being criticized, the fragility you have at having exposed in front of your lack of action in terms of helping people out.

If we look at what is ahead of us, what is before us, we know the economic dark times are coming and are here, that people are struggling. What is going to happen in this current context? Those who are already marginalized are going to be pushed further into the margins. Those who are already struggling are going to be struggling further. That means that in Ontario we know that we have case and case again of systemic racism. We have issues of institutional racism in Ontario. That means that if people in COVID are struggling—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Do you support what your brother said about that?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Carleton is warned.

Before I allow the member for Brampton East to continue, I'm going to say, yet again, the debate is on COVID-19. The specifics of the debate are related to the establishment of a select committee. We are dealing with the amendment to the motion. I have allowed considerable latitude on both sides of the House to allow members to bring forward their views on the issue, generally speaking, as well as what they're hearing in their ridings. I think that it's essential that members be able to talk about this issue tonight, but, again, I would ask the members to, to the greatest extent possible, speak to the motion.

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The member from Brampton East again has the floor.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Within the context of COVID-19, we know that COVID-19 is going to impact Ontario dramatically. Economically, the impact is going to be incredibly devastating. COVID-19 is resulting in an economic devastation to our province. In a context where we have economic devastation, people who are marginalized are going to be further marginalized. That means that if we know in Ontario we have institutional racism, obviously institutional racism disproportionately impacts racialized individuals. If we have economic devastation coming, it is going to disproportionately impact people who are

marginalized: racialized individuals, people in poverty, people who are struggling.

If we are putting forth legislation, we have to keep in mind this understanding that if the economic context is going to disproportionately impact racialized individuals, then we as government have a responsibility to address these gaps. We as government have the responsibility to look forward and say, "What are the potential areas in which inequity is going to be increased, and how can we put forth policy to address it?"

I'm now outlining these different areas of inequity because, quite frankly, when you have economic devastation it's going to impact every single aspect of Ontario, and the legislation being put forward right now is here to address that. It's talking about a way to address this management and the way that we're going to approach this context of collectively coming together to address COVID-19. But to do so, and to understand the importance of having a process that has the input of parties across the board, we have to also identify what the issue is that we are talking about.

Why is it so important? Why are people so impassioned? We have to understand the breadth of it all, and that means going into these different aspects of it. And it may be uncomfortable, and the government might get uncomfortable from this. Yes, there is institutional racism in Ontario. There is institutional racism in Canada. There is institutional racism that impacts this entire world. You can heckle and get annoyed at it, or you can do the responsible thing and say that, in the context of COVID-19, if we know people are going to be devastated, what can we do now to prepare for those dark times?

Why it's so important that we ensure that here, as a legislative body, we are putting forth the correct measures to address this issue head-on—to understand why that's important—we have to have a conversation about the current context. The current context is to say that if we have a context where people are struggling, where people of colour are struggling—because we know that people of colour are disproportionately impacted by poverty. We know that people who are racialized or who are new Canadians are disproportionately impacted by lack of employment or employment that is often insecure. We have a responsibility to create a safe structure and a safe ability to approach that.

We know, across the board, that we have seen that when people are struggling economically they are often put in desperate situations and they have greater interactions with the justice system. That often happens in the intersections of poverty and other intersections, and the way we integrate and have relations, and in the way we are able to interact with different proponents of government and the judiciary and things across the board.

So if we have a situation where economic devastation is coming, where poverty is coming, we have a great possibility of once again a further marginalization of people of colour and a further interaction of people of colour with our justice system. And what does that look like? That can result in the further marginalization of racialized people in

our justice system. We are already seeing, across the board in the past few months and weeks, a situation in which this issue of institutional racism in our justice system has come to the forefront. It has become a central discussion in the context of COVID-19 in our current era.

The injustice of the killing of George Floyd has brought forth a discussion of the interaction of our justice system and racialized people in the context of COVID-19. That was at the forefront of global discourse, and what did we see from there? We saw that when people are struggling, when people are in desperate situations, when people are not economically able to see a light at the end of the tunnel, it often results in greater interactions with our police system. If there's institutional racism in our police system, then that will result in a further policing of Black and brown bodies; the further incarceration, often, of Black and brown bodies; and, in a context in which we need serious change in the way that we're policing right now, the further deaths of Black and brown bodies. You need only look at Peel. In the past two months, we've seen the shooting and killing of D'Andre Campbell and we've seen the shooting and killing of Ejaz Choudry—issues that are being decried across the board because of this intersection.

These are the issues that we need to address as a Legislative Assembly and as representatives of our community. My job as an MPP is to bring these issues forward and say that these are the multitude of issues that we are impacted with, these are the multitude of issues that are really hurting people right now, and these are the multitude of issues that we need to get right.

COVID-19 has a real impact on every single aspect of our province, every single aspect of who we are. If we don't get it right across the board, from small businesses who are struggling to workers who can't make ends meet to people who have lost their jobs, who are struggling to get by on \$2,000 a month, to individuals who are going to be further policed and further marginalized because they're being pushed further into poverty, to their interactions with the police system and how that can result in further killings and brutality towards them—this is what is at stake right now. This is the great issue that we have to deal with. Instead of feeling fragile or getting annoyed or getting angry at it, deal with it. Deal with these issues, because that is the responsibility we have as government: to deal with, to take care of it, to address.

When I talk to folks in Brampton, in the riding that I represent, they are struggling right now because of COVID-19. The amount of folks who are literally out of work and the sense of hopelessness—there is a sense of hopelessness. I try to stay ever-hopeful, but the reality is—how are you going to feel if you just lost your job and that business has shut down? It's not a temporary layoff; it's a layoff from that institution for as long as you can think of because there's no hope of it coming back. They're already struggling with so much economic uncertainty because of the current context.

They're also struggling with bills that are piling up on bills, and it comes back to the situation of this government's failure with respect to a response on COVID-19

and affordability. If you're not helping small businesses, if you're not helping people who are struggling because they can't get by on \$2,000 a month, if you're not taking the role of other provinces in Canada and providing a support system from the province and not just relying on federal monies, then the impact is that people are going to struggle.

If you're not regulating billion-dollar insurance companies—the decision, the choice, is in the hands of this government. People are struggling right now because of COVID-19. They are not driving their cars. There are far fewer accidents happening on our streets. Billion-dollar insurance companies are still making money hand over fist at this current moment, and the government has the ability today to fix this issue. They have the ability today to regulate insurance companies and ensure that they're not overcharging Ontarians. We see inaction from this government once again on this issue. Once again, we are seeing the government take the side of the haves and not the have-nots, and the result? People in my riding are struggling.

So yes, I'm going to stand up. Yes, I'm going to call you out. Yes, you're going to feel a little bit fragile when people are calling you out, and that will result in you heckling. That is not the solution. The solution instead is to understand that this is the dynamic of this Legislative Assembly.

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I look up to a hawk to ensure that I am hawkish upon you. You look up to an owl—be wise. You've started getting criticism? Think about it thoughtfully, write it down, ponder upon it and let it percolate. Don't heckle; don't get annoyed; don't take it personally. Just have a conversation about it, have a debate about it. That is what our role is supposed to be here in this Legislative Assembly. Don't be a weakness to your fragility; instead, take these criticisms, understand them and respond to them accurately. Because at the end of the day, the people who are being impacted are everyday folks in Ontario. The people who are being impacted are working-class folks, families, children, parents, individuals who are struggling right now to get by. If we do nothing, then they struggle.

Right now, the Conservative government has decided to make a decision to not act to support small businesses and workers; to not give relief to individuals who are struggling with auto insurance; to not give relief to folks who are—right now, their cars are parked in the driveway, parked on the street, but at the end of the day, they're still paying the same rates and, in many cases, higher rates, because this government has approved increases to auto insurance rates. This is going to ultimately create a further tough position and tough situation for people who are struggling.

This circumstance of COVID-19 is something that is going to have impacts for months and months to come. It's clear that the worst impact of COVID-19—many people are saying—is actually not purely the health devastation, which is incredibly tragic, but the looming economic devastation, which is something where we're all going to have to see what's going to happen. But if we are

thoughtful, if we are wise, if we take our jobs seriously, the impact is going to be that we can actually work to help people. That's why I'm imploring the government to take these amendments seriously, listen to the opposition, listen to the people of Ontario.

If you think the people of Ontario are not struggling with auto insurance rates, I'd ask you to think again. If you don't believe me, ask them. If you think the people of Ontario and small businesses are not struggling right now because they don't have access to some support by way of rent relief, just ask them, and they will tell you. Look at the stores that are shuttering across Main Streets across your communities and mine; restaurants that are shuttering across your communities and mine. That is the kind of action that is required right now.

When you talk to the people, they will tell you that—\$2,000 a month? How are you going to get by on \$2,000 a month, after you pay rent? Rent in the city of Toronto—what are those numbers looking like?

Interjection: It's \$2,300.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: It's \$2,300 a month—

Interjection: One bedroom.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: For a one-bedroom apartment, \$2,300. A basement apartment in Brampton—you're talking about rental apartments, rental housing; people can't get by on \$2,000 a month.

If the Conservative government doesn't step up and provide this kind of support, people are going to continue to struggle, and people are going to be pushed further into the margins. When people are put further into poverty, we know that there is further policing of people in poverty, there are further interactions with people in poverty in the justice system, and ultimately, in a greater context, when those supports are also being cut, it's going to result in a further marginalization of our province between the haves and the have-nots. It's going to result in people who are poor and struggling becoming poorer and struggling further.

We have a very important responsibility right now. We can't do this on our own. This rhetoric, this language of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps does not apply to the context of COVID-19, when amazing entrepreneurs and small business people are struggling right now, not because they did not pull themselves up by their bootstraps, but because of the devastation of a pandemic that has wrought havoc upon our entire province.

Act wiser; act better; act for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Mr. Speaker, since my riding of Markham–Unionville entered stage 2, I have been going around and speaking to local businesses and owners to hear about how they are adapting to the new normal. Last month, I toured Main Street, a historic suburban community of Unionville filled with local and family-run businesses. During my tour, I had the opportunity to speak to Unionville Arms Pub and Grill, Eyes on Unionville, Old Firehall Confectionery, Main Street Dental Team, and Casa Victoria Fine Dining and Banquet. I also had the opportunity this past weekend to speak to owners from

Amazing Seafood House, 369 Shanghai Dim Sum, Top Choice Restaurant, Xiang Yu Tang Herbal Store and Ajisen Ramen.

I appreciated the opportunity to speak to owners and staff and to be able to observe how businesses are following health and safety protocols and guidelines. This includes providing gloves and masks to employees, Plexiglas, hand sanitizer for customers and limiting building capacity to allow physical distancing.

Our local businesses are the backbone to our economy, and I want to thank them for their efforts and contributions to help our province fight against COVID-19.

At the beginning of our province's COVID-19 outbreak, our government established Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19, a plan to deal with COVID-19 in three different phases. The name is Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19, A Framework for Reopening our Province.

Phase 1 is named "Protect and Support" and is about putting \$7 billion in targeted support for support and relief in Ontario's business and health sectors. Phase 2 is: "Restart." That's a gradual, staged approach divided into three stages. Phase 3 is "Recover." That will be long-term growth designed for long-term recovery.

The timeline is, on March 17, we declared a state of emergency; on March 25, the economic and fiscal update was released; April 9, the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee was announced; April 27, the framework for reopening was launched; May 19, stage 1 begins; June 12, stage 2; and July 17 will be stage 3, we just announced today. We are looking forward to phase 3 very soon.

We can see this is a well coordinated, sustained response and integrated strategy for recovery, especially on phase 1. We outlined a \$7-billion response to ensure our health care system, communities and economy are positioned to weather the challenge that COVID-19 will bring. As part of the action plan, it will provide \$7 billion in additional resources for the health care system and provide direct support for people and jobs. This includes \$3.3 billion in additional health care resources.

Mr. Speaker, when we look into the different stages and different phases—when we declared stage 1 and phase 2, it's just like it was yesterday. That helps to guide our province reopening through a gradual, staged and regional approach. Ontario's phase 2 introduced three stages. Through all stages, public health and safety will remain the number one priority, while balancing the need of people and the economy.

Now, today, our government announced that 24 regions in Ontario are ready to start stage 3. This is great news for Ontario.

2330

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Let me start by saying it's a pleasure to be here and rise in this House to speak on behalf of the residents of Eglinton–Lawrence, my riding in Toronto. It's a great privilege to have been elected and also to be here to bring their voice to this chamber.

I want to start also by saying that I will not be supporting the amendment brought forward by the opposition to government notice of motion number 85, but I am pleased to join this debate today and talk about the importance of this motion, government notice of motion 85, to strike the select committee and to talk about why I wouldn't support the amendment.

Ontario has been on quite the journey since March 17. Really, it's been an extraordinary journey, I think. I know other countries are going through this, but for our own experience, each of us really has never lived through a time like this. The word "unprecedented" has been used to describe it. I think that's an accurate word. It is such an unusual time and such an unusual experience that everybody has gone through, and we're each facing different issues with respect to the crisis, the pandemic, as it's unfolded, but it's been an interesting journey is what I would say.

I reflect on how much we took for granted before, that after we had a chance to be in our homes and pretty much in lockdown, we now look out and think, "Wow, those were some great freedoms that we really did take for granted, because we could do them all without concern." We could travel anywhere. We could do all of those things. We could meet our friends anytime. Now all of those freedoms seem like freedoms we're just starting to enjoy again, and we really treasure and relish them. In some ways, we've learned an important lesson: to not take for granted all those important things that we probably did take for granted before.

But we've also had to focus on some very serious issues facing the province. We had a declaration of emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act on March 17, a step that was not taken lightly, but a step that we felt we had to take to protect Ontarians from the threat of the pandemic. Really, it was a threat to all of our families, our friends and our communities, and the province of Ontario itself. What the declaration did was it allowed us to be able to have some comprehensive responses and control over the situation, as needed, through emergency orders, to allow us to address critical needs that were facing the people of Ontario each and every day.

We faced a number of issues we have never faced before—certainly in my lifetime, and I'm not the youngest member of the Legislature. We have never faced an issue like we've been facing in the issues surrounding this pandemic. For example, the issue of personal protective equipment, the issue of everybody needing personal protective equipment and lots of it at the same time all over the world: I can't remember a single—

Miss Monique Taylor: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the Clerks to determine whether or not there is a quorum in the House.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence has the floor.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you so much. I was just saying about personal protective equipment—such an extraordinary thing. I cannot remember a single product in my entire lifetime that everybody in the world wanted at the same time, but that is what happened with personal protective equipment. Not only did they want it, they needed it desperately. To me, this is unheard of. It was an extraordinary event. It crystallized in my mind just what an extraordinary time we were living in where everybody in the world was seeking the same product and there wasn't enough of it for everybody in the world to have, and it was an absolutely necessary product. I think that really was an awakening for people about how serious the pandemic was and, frankly, how serious it is, because let's remember: Although Ontario is doing much better now and the numbers have been coming down for weeks and we have about 120 cases a day—I think it was 116 today—it's not like this in every other jurisdiction in the world. Some jurisdictions—our neighbours to the south in many of the states are very much struggling with the ongoing struggles of rising COVID-19 numbers and ICUs that are overwhelmed. It's very frightening to think of that.

Thankfully, because of the measures taken in Ontario, we didn't end up in that situation. Because of all of the hard work of the 14.5 million Ontarians being responsible and following public health guidance, Ontario is in a much better place.

But I do look around the world and worry about some of those other jurisdictions, and we have named a few. Some have come through it and gone back into a second wave or a bad outbreak again; I think Melbourne was mentioned by my colleague for Mississauga–Streetsville. I also have a friend there, and that has gone back into a lockdown of sorts.

Here in Ontario, we have managed to keep the lid on it a bit. I think it's because of all the hard work of every single Ontarian, frankly, and of this government and our leader, our Premier, who has been working on this every day with our members of cabinet, bringing forward the necessary emergency orders to try to get us to the right place and, thankfully, working together with other levels of government, with members of the opposition here in our Legislature to try to get us through what is a very, very extraordinary and difficult time.

The response was necessary. It was challenging. The emergency orders were a platform that we used, through the declaration of a state of emergency, to help us deal with these unprecedented challenges.

It has been very hard, I think, for all of us. It has been a very difficult time for all Ontarians, and we're not out of the woods, as it were, yet. We know that COVID-19 is an ongoing threat to the people of Ontario, that we too could have a resurgence of the virus, and we don't want that to happen.

I actually get many letters from constituents that start off with a comment that says something to the effect of, "Don't let all the hard work go to waste. Don't let all the

hard work be in vain. Don't throw away the progress that we have made by getting the numbers down." These are people who are expressing concerns about maybe reopening too quickly, or maybe they're concerned that the border with the United States will be opened too soon—any number of possible concerns, but I do get those letters from constituents because they are concerned about that.

As a government, we have been working hard to make sure that we can reopen safely on the basis of the public health guidance we have. We're always listening to the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the public health team, and we have been working very hard to do it in a measured, gradual approach. Maybe you could say that that is a very Canadian approach to it. We're not going to rip the Band-Aid off and go from closed to open, as some jurisdictions have done, because we think that could imperil some of the gains we've made.

Instead, what we've done is taken a gradual approach to releasing some of the restrictions. A few weeks ago, we decided to do a regional kind of approach, which I think it makes a lot of sense. Unfortunately, in Toronto we tend to be the last region that gets opened or gets the restrictions lifted, but I think that in such a huge province as we have in Ontario, which is bigger than some countries, it makes sense for us to have a regional approach to the reopening. I think that has been working quite well.

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We're now at the stage of—we've just announced today, moving into stage 3 for some parts of the province; I think 24 out of the 34 public health units. And that is an important step. But stage 3 will come, I hope, for the other public health units that weren't included today as well. But they'll come if we all work together to make that happen, and we have to be careful.

As I was saying, it is the gradual, incremental approach that seems to be getting us to the place that we want to be. Frankly, from what I'm hearing from my constituents, it's how they want us to proceed. They like that cautious approach, the step-by-step approach. But if we don't have this select committee, then we will not be able to have the gradual, incremental approach that we're looking for. We'll either have the declaration of emergency or it will end, so we'll either have all of the provisions we have now or we will have none. It's kind of an all-or-nothing thing.

So I think that's what's so important about what's being proposed is, the select committee, which will have a balance of members—because I will be voting against the amendment—that reflects the proportion of members in the House. But, importantly, as my friend from Niagara West was saying, it will allow the Premier to be called every 30 days to report to the committee. It will allow the members of the government and the opposition and the independent members to ask questions of the Premier.

The time allotted is 30 minutes for the Premier to speak, and up to 60 minutes, in rounds of 10 minutes, for each party, three times. So it doesn't matter how many members the opposition party has at the committee, they will get their 10-minute round of questions of the Premier three times. So the numbers reflect the way that people voted us

into the government, but they also are still making sure, in this motion, that the members of the opposition will have three 10-minute rounds of questions. So I think that's an important point.

The member of Niagara West was talking about the importance of accountability of the government, especially on something like this. We do think that is very important. The opposition members will have an opportunity to have the Premier answer questions that they ask, which is the essence of accountability. So I also just want to say how I am proud of the work that has been done by the Premier and by cabinet on these very, very difficult and trying circumstances, to get us to where we are today.

But I'm also proud of every Ontarian, because this has given us an opportunity to see people take responsibility for what they can control and do what they can, even if that means following the public health guidelines, staying at home, wearing a mask, washing their hands. Sometimes people feel unconnected to the government and the state, to the province or to the country. This has been an opportunity where we've all needed to contribute. Even if it's just as little as following the rules around public health guidance, we're all doing that, not just for ourselves, but for each other. I think that's actually something that we're seeing. That kind of dedication to a common cause is a wonderful thing to see in modern Ontario. So I'm quite proud to be an Ontarian and to see that everybody has really stepped up and done what has been asked of them. So I think it's an important motion, and I look forward to working with members of the opposition on the select committee.

At this point, I'd like to talk little bit about easing some of these restrictions and how important that is. The difference in this legislation is that the legislation allows us to continue emergency orders in effect under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act for an initial 30 days. It allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to further extend these orders for up to 30 days at a time, as required to keep Ontarians safe. It allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to amend certain emergency orders, continued under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act if the amendment relates to certain things, and those are:

- rules related to gatherings and organized public events;
- compliance with public health advice;
- labour redeployment or workplace and management rules; and, finally
- closure of places and spaces, or regulation of how businesses and establishments can be open to provide goods or services in a safe manner.

It does not allow us to have new emergency orders; it just allows us to work on the existing emergency orders, to amend those, and it allows emergency orders to be rescinded when it is safe to do so.

I think those are all important things to mention. As we said, COVID-19 is still a threat around the world. I think we can expect it to come back here as well, and what we're hoping is that instead of having a forest fire of COVID-19,

as it initially felt like, I think—all across the province, we were quite concerned—we're having more of what you might call brushfires. There are outbreaks in certain areas which we're trying to get on top of and make sure that we can stop the virus from spreading beyond a very small area or a very small number of people. That is critical to managing this infectious virus.

Those are some of the things that I think are most important about this, but I think we have to look at what the bill was all about. It was about giving us a framework and tools. The initial emergency declaration gave us tools, and it gave us those tools to address this ongoing threat. It gave us the ability to work on what we thought was needed, frankly, and now what we need is not all the tools in the toolbox; we need just some of the tools, those specific things that I mentioned. And we can release gradually as needed. That's what this whole thing is about.

What it allows us to do is to work between—to bridge the gap, I think the minister had said—the public health measures that we thought were necessary initially and immediately to address the large threat and those that are needed now to support Ontario's safe recovery. There is a difference between the initial large threat and what we're facing now, obviously, because we've come a long way together.

I think those are important things to look at as what we might see in this legislation, and I'm really pleased, frankly, to be supporting the motion—not the amendment

to the motion—because I think the select committee will provide a valuable service to hold the government and to hold the Premier to account, and to allow people to ask important questions. Our Premier has been answering questions every day from the media.

With that, I will move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Martin has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, the bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I will ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1151 to 0021.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Martin has moved the adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 19; the nays are 6.

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

It being past 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): Later today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Oh, later today, of course. Thank you for the correction.

The House adjourned at 0022.

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Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
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Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
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Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
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Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

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Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
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Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
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Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
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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

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