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Lundi
20 juillet 2020

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 20 July 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 20 juillet 2020

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Jill Andrew: I stand honoured today in solidarity with the tenants of 440 Winona Drive in our fabulous riding of St. Paul's. They are seniors; young people; people with disabilities, physical and mental health challenges. They are racialized, working class, on a fixed income. They speak many languages. They're immigrants, LGBT, and they are hard-working. They are pet lovers. They're humans trying to get through COVID-19 without an ounce of direct tenant support from this government, a government that stripped away rent control and hasn't offered any direct rent relief or rent subsidies, emergency basic income or a rent freeze to any tenants in Ontario, let alone 440 Winona Drive; a government that will end eviction bans and, in a matter of days, will send the tenants of 440 Winona Drive into homelessness.

Speaker, 440 is managed by the Myriad Group. During this pandemic, Myriad property management has intimidated my constituents with countless eviction notices, demanding the removal of their air conditioning, although they have submitted letters from their doctors, their mental health counsellors that their air conditioning is central—no pun intended—to their health.

Today, I ask the Premier and this government what he will do to ensure that our renters at 440 Winona Drive are taken care of, especially the most vulnerable and immunocompromised, and that they have access to air conditioning.

1020

INVESTMENTS IN SARNIA–LAMBTON

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise today and speak about a number of terrific investments that this Ontario government has recently made in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton.

On July 14, it was a privilege for me to announce that the Ontario government is investing \$1.5 million in Sarnia–Lambton's much-called-for oversized load corridor project. This investment was made by the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade and will help bring this vital project one step closer to completion.

As a community, we have been working on getting the funding for this project for nearly a decade. Once complete, the oversized load corridor will help to support our world-class fabrication shops and local industry partners by making it easier to move large industrial components to and from Sarnia Harbour.

Additionally last week, the Ministry of Transportation confirmed funding for two projects to repair and improve safety on Highway 402. Construction will begin next month on the installation of Bluetooth readers, static border wait time signs, and other safety measures near the US border. The second project consists of a rehabilitation of the airport road structure, including interchange improvements, ramp paving and electrical upgrades.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, our government recently invested \$1.89 million in critical infrastructure funding for Bluewater Health, plus \$4.5 million in increased budget funding for the Bluewater Health hospital this year.

Mr. Speaker, these are all terrific investments by the province and good news for everyone across our community.

OHIP+

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today because of something that is going on not just in my constituency but across this province. As you know, there is in place a drug plan that is supposed to pay for medication for people who are younger—people under the age of 25. That is there to ensure that those people get what they need when they need it so that they stay healthy and survive.

This government, back in April 2019, decided, “No. If you need the medication and you have a private plan, you must go to your private plan in order to have that paid.” But here's the kicker: If the private plan doesn't pay it, the government doesn't want to pay it either. So people are having to pay for medication that otherwise should be covered by the plan that is currently in place in the province of Ontario.

I have a constituent with a little baby who is six months old now, who is on a feeding supplement that costs \$80 for two days. They go to their private insurer and the private insurer says, “No, we're not going to pay.” So when they come to the province, the province says, “No, we're not going to pay because you have private insurance.”

The government has got to stop this. This is about people's health and this is about them being able to get what they need when they need it. I call on this government to reverse the decision that they made in April 2019

and to allow medication for people under the age of 25, such as nutritional supplements, to be paid for as they were before, because otherwise it's a grave injustice and you're putting people in a position they should never be in.

RON HARDMAN AND STEFAN
SCHULTZ

Mr. Will Bouma: I stand today to recognize the dedication and service of two Brant county OPP constables. Yesterday marked the 50th anniversary of a horrific collision involving two constables of the Brant county OPP.

Early in the morning of July 19, 1970, Constable Ron Hardman and Constable Stefan Schultz stopped a vehicle with five occupants. When a vehicle struck the two officers as well as the vehicle they had stopped, Constable Schultz was tragically killed, as were four occupants of the stopped vehicle.

Constable Hardman was thrown nearly 100 feet and was left with severe injuries. With one leg amputated and the other one reconstructed, he was able to return home after nearly seven months. Despite the collision and his injuries, Constable Hardman returned to work with the OPP on May 4, 1971. Hardman clearly demonstrated his commitment to serving the community by continuing to work another 25 years following this terrible incident. Hardman and his wife still reside in the city of Brantford.

As we recognize 50 years since this collision, I would like to honour Constable Schultz and Constable Hardman for their commitment to our community. I wish to offer my condolences to the family of Constable Schultz, who lost his life in the line of duty. I would also like to thank retired Constable Hardman for his years of public service, even after his life changed so much.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Wayne Gates: I rise today to call out corporate greed in my riding.

Niagara Falls is the world's greatest destination to visit. Every year, our tourist industry brings millions into Niagara, and none of these visitors leave disappointed. We have a reputation for going above and beyond and delivering the vacation of a lifetime. The reason we have that reputation is because of the front-line staff. They're the first and last ones visitors meet, and because of their hard work, visitors return.

Right now, in the midst of this pandemic, it is those front-line workers who risk their health every single day so they can keep these attractions open and ensure our guests remain safe. Yet, at Ripley's Believe It or Not! on Clifton Hill, front-line staff were told that their wages were being slashed when they returned. Do you know who owns this site? His name is Jim Pattison. He is Canada's third-richest man, and he is worth \$7 billion—that's with a B. Yet this billionaire is ripping wages away from our front-line workers.

I am asking the Premier to stand with me and the people of Niagara Falls to tell Jim Pattison that this greed is

unacceptable, to apologize to these workers and give them the wages that they had before the pandemic.

Jim Pattison, you have brave workers working right now that have made you a fortune. Treat them with respect.

Also, let's get the \$4 pandemic pay into the hands of our essential workers.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I recently met with Amy Greer, a constituent who is a Canada Research Chair in Population Disease Modelling at the University of Guelph. Amy wrote an op-ed with two other renowned epidemiologists in the *Globe and Mail*, and her message is clear: Students who are healthy and able should be given the opportunity for in-class learning five days a week in September. This can be done through the innovative use of community spaces, outdoor education and new types of classrooms.

But this planning should not be on the backs of school boards alone. The Premier has said he wants students back in schools five days a week, but he is prioritizing opening bars over schools.

Speaker, school is five weeks away. We have heard no clear plan for how the province can open up for five days of in-class learning for our students. School boards have not received the funding they need to open safely. We must prioritize our students because the return on investment in our children is priceless.

NORTH YORK CENTRAL LIBRARY

Mr. Stan Cho: Last week, I had the chance to visit the North York Central Library, one of my favourite spots in Willowdale, and chat with the incredibly knowledgeable and friendly staff about the measures they've taken to keep our community safe, as well as how they're preparing to enter stage 3 of our province's reopening.

North York Central is no ordinary library. It's one of two reference libraries in Toronto, and it's home to amazing things—like a 3D printing lab, a green-screen movie studio and a state-of-the-art sewing centre—and wonderful programming like afternoon tea and movies for seniors, not to mention the massive collection of books in dozens of languages to serve my very diverse community.

But, like all of us, our library has to adapt to the new normal. So the seating areas are closed, books are quarantined for 72 hours before being returned to the shelves and the 3D printers have been loaned to the University Health Network, where they run around the clock making face masks for our favourite heroes. While Willowdalers still can't use many of the amenities the library usually offers, they can still borrow books and movies by appointment, use the library computers to access the Internet and count on masked staff to help them for advice.

Libraries are an essential part of our communities. They're about much more than books. They're often the first stop for new Canadians settling in our neighbourhood, cooling centres on hot summer days, free workspace for

entrepreneurs starting up a new business, or simply a safe place to sit.

This morning, I want to thank the Toronto Public Library and all of the incredible staff at North York Central for all that they do and for their tireless efforts during this challenging time. I can't wait to go back, Mr. Speaker, and visit the North York Central, and you should all join me in Willowdale.

REGAN RUSSELL

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Regan Russell was a friend to so many, and I'm honoured to say that she was a friend of mine. Regan was run over and killed by a transport truck outside of Fearmans slaughterhouse on June 19. She was there with others to bear witness.

1030

I last saw her in my office with another friend, Julie. They were opposed to Bill 156, very concerned that it would suppress free speech and make common acts of protest a crime. Of free speech, Regan said, "How do you think women got the right to vote? How do you think slavery was abolished? People stood up!"

No one could imagine such a violent death for a woman who spent her life confronting injustice. Her husband, Mark Powell, said, "She was a constant voice for the voiceless." Mark, along with his son Joshua and her parents Bill and Pat, still have one another. Her mother said, "She doesn't belong to us anymore. She belongs to all these people here," and that is so true.

Her death has sparked outrage around the world. The Parliament of Portugal held a moment of silence. Joaquin Phoenix said, "We will honour her memory by vigorously confronting the cruelties she fought so hard to prevent by marching with Black Lives, protecting Indigenous rights, fighting for LGBTQ equality, and living a compassionate vegan life."

I'll end with the beautiful words of Anne Bokma: "Regan took the world into her arms. She embraced her partner, her parents and her many friends—human and animal alike. She held us all close. And now we are faced with the sad task of letting her go."

ENERGY COMPANIES IN OAKVILLE

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Today I have the honour to acknowledge local companies that have been working hard to keep our community of Oakville safe during this pandemic. My riding of Oakville is a hub for the nuclear energy sector. Oakville is home to companies such as Promation Canada, Laker Energy and Terrestrial Energy, among others.

Last Thursday, the honourable member for Huron–Bruce and I joined an event hosted by Promation and Bruce Power, with Promation president Darryl Spector; Bruce Power's CEO, Mike Rencheck; and Bruce Power executive vice-president James Scongack. These two companies have partnered together to undertake Bruce Power's MCR project. This project will support 22,000

jobs, inject \$4 billion into our economy and, most importantly, provide Ontario with reliable, low-cost, clean energy.

Not only are these companies involved in providing us with power, but they also answered the call to produce and donate PPE during COVID-19. Promation has retooled their operations to produce ventilators, and Bruce Power has been leading with PPE donations. Moreover, several of Promation's employees have gone above and beyond on their own time to produce face shield frames using 3D printers, and this has translated into Promation producing 650 frames a day.

Finally, I want to highlight one more company: Aecon. Their ongoing effort throughout the pandemic providing donations for the community has been admirable.

I want to express my sincerest thank you to each of these companies. This is a testament to those helping those in need. Each company is a made-in-Ontario story and demonstrates genuine Ontario spirit.

IGNAT KANEFF

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I rise here today to pay tribute to a great Ontarian, a visionary, a businessman, a larger-than-life community leader, and one of the greatest philanthropists in the history of Peel region. Ignat Kaneff came to Canada as a young immigrant from Bulgaria in 1951. He had no friends, no family, and spoke no English. He had very little education and no money. He spent his only \$5 to take a taxi from Union Station to Mississauga, where he lived in a garage, learned a trade and went to work in construction, building the neighbourhood of Applewood Acres in Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Over the next seven decades, Iggy came to exemplify the very best in Canadian values: hard work, dedication and community service. He built a real estate empire, became a successful GM dealer along the way, and gave back tens of millions of dollars to schools, hospitals and charities, starting with a \$2,000 gift to build the Mississauga Hospital in 1955, the largest gift by an individual at the time, only four years after arriving in Canada.

Iggy gave generously to the University of Toronto in Mississauga and to many groups that helped children with intellectual disabilities, including Community Living Mississauga. For this, Iggy was appointed to the Order of Ontario and the Order of Canada and recognized as the Mississauga Citizen of the Year and with Bulgaria's highest civilian honour.

His legacy will live on and have a positive impact on many lives for many years to come. So thank you, Iggy, for everything you have achieved, and most of all, for showing us that there's no limit to what you can achieve in Ontario. Farewell, my friend. May you rest in peace.

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

That concludes our members' statements for this morning.

The member for Timmins has a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd ask for unanimous consent to stand down the leads till the Premier gets here.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last week, the government of Alberta announced that they would be asking a third party to conduct a review of how that province responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. My question to the Premier is: Has he discussed this review with his friend the Premier of Alberta, and if so, is the Premier willing to consider conducting a similar independent review here in Ontario?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. Our government has been clear that we are committed to an independent commission. It will have public hearings, a public report and the transparency involved in this process is our commitment.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week, the Premier said that the government was prepared for a second wave of COVID, but was unwilling or unable to share any details of that. Families have heard assurances from this government before. This is the same Premier who insisted there was an iron ring around long-term care while COVID-19 was spreading through long-term-care homes and killing over 1,800 seniors. An independent preparedness review could look at what worked and what didn't and ensure that we are actually prepared for a second wave. Will the Premier launch such a process today?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, our government has taken progressive and prudent measures to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians, including our residents in long-term care.

We are carefully and gradually reopening the province, and the people of Ontario will remain at the centre of those decisions. Those decisions are being advised upon by world-wide experts: our Chief Medical Officer of Health and the experts in science and evidence on COVID-19. We are moving forward to make sure that all our residents in long-term care and Ontarians have the utmost of our commitment to their safety and well-being.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My final supplementary is to the Premier, Speaker. As the Premier knows, there's a lot

at stake if a second wave of COVID-19 hits our communities. Our ability to work, the health of our kids in school and the safety of our seniors in long-term care are all at risk if we aren't fully prepared for a second wave of COVID-19.

The Premier is once again insisting that he's fully prepared. That wasn't true last time, Speaker, and it's no wonder people don't believe it's true this time either. So why is this Premier afraid of having an independent review of what he has done so far and what he needs to do better?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you once again for the interest in this matter. We have been clear and transparent about having an independent commission that will get to the bottom of the issues in long-term care. It was clear, even with the Justice Gillese report back in the summer of 2019, that our system was strained under COVID-19, which affected global long-term-care homes and our most vulnerable people worldwide. We are going to find out what happened. We will be having that commission, and announcements will be coming.

We are very pleased that we are getting to the bottom of this. Ontarians deserve answers to their questions. This will be independent, there will be public hearings, and there will be a public report. We will get to the bottom of it, and we will fix long-term care.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, with all due respect, Justice Gillese's report, apparently, was not taken into consideration, and now we have over 1,830 seniors who have lost their lives in long-term care. It's a tragedy that should have been avoided.

My question is to the Premier. He might think that the government has nothing to learn from an independent review, but families across Ontario have real concerns about the province's readiness for a second wave.

1040

Last week, the Premier rolled through Essex for a series of photo ops, but local mayors were pretty frustrated when the Premier didn't take time to hear their concerns about the desperate need for a coordinated response to ongoing outbreaks amongst migrant workers. Unlike other provinces, Ontario has failed to protect these workers and the communities they live in from COVID-19.

Why is the Premier opposed to an independent review that would point out what he could be doing better in preparation for the second wave?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: We had a great visit to Essex. I talked to Mayor Santos and Mayor MacDonald and followed up with phone calls to make sure they were in touch with Matt Anderson if they had any concerns at all. I thought it turned out extremely well, visiting the people out there and seeing first-hand and talking to the farmers in not only the Essex area but up in the Chatham-Kent area as well. There's nothing better than getting out there and meeting the people.

I'm the first to admit: Did we all have challenges right at the beginning? Yes. But I don't know if you saw the

article or the newscast on CNN: Do you want to crush the curve? Do what Ontario is doing. The rest of the world, Mr. Speaker, is watching what we're doing—and we have a long way to go. By no means is this fight over. We aren't even close for this fight to be over. But maybe the rest of the world could pay attention to some of the things that we're doing, working collaboratively with the municipalities and with the federal government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I find it really quite unbelievable that the Premier thinks that 1,838 lives lost in long-term care is a victory.

Last May, the Premier claimed that he had actually established an iron ring around long-term care. We know that, even as he was saying those words, residents were enduring conditions that were so bad, in some cases, that police had to be notified. And, as I said, over 1,800 long-term-care residents have died from COVID-19.

This matter desperately needs an independent public inquiry. The Premier blocked that and has promised his commission, which is still nowhere to be seen, months after it was promised. In the immediate term, though, families really do need to know that their loved ones will be protected. So will the Premier put in place an independent review before the second wave hits?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I guess the Leader of the Opposition is putting words in my mouth. I never declared victory on this. This is an ongoing battle, continuously. The only people who deserve any kudos are the people of Ontario—not even the government, not me, but the people of Ontario. That's why we're working so hard, again, with the municipalities, working with stakeholders right across this province and working with the federal government. We're very fortunate because of the great work that everyone has done.

Now we have additional support to the tune of \$7 billion, thanks to the federal government. We appreciate their support, and their financial support as well. It's going to go a long way for transit and large urban areas, along with municipalities. All 444 of them are going to benefit from the funding here.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Whether it's parents who still don't know when school is going to be resuming for their kids or front-line staff in our hospitals and long-term care, people need to know that Ontario has the equipment and the resources we need and the right plan in place, should a second wave occur.

They also want to know where their government went wrong and how they can do better. The Premier's top priority may be staging photo ops with Conservative Party donors throughout southwestern Ontario, but there is still much, much more that needs to be done.

So my question is pretty basic: Why won't the Premier agree to an independent interim review in preparedness for the second wave, as his friend from Alberta is doing as we speak?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, we're reviewing this every single day. I get questioned every single day at 1 o'clock, and they aren't softball questions, by any means. We're going through a review every single day and correcting the issues, because by no means is anyone perfect when we're dealing with COVID. It's something that the world—it just attacked the world, basically, and we're dealing with it.

I think, overall, everyone in Ontario has done an incredible job in following the protocols, the procedures and the guidelines. That's the only way we're going to get through this: if we continue listening to the health and science that our health table is giving us, and the rest of the people are following the proper protocols, social distancing, and so on and so forth. That's how we're going to get through this.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier, but I really don't understand why the Premier is avoiding having a hard look and taking some accountability around what happened with COVID-19's first wave so that we're ready for the second wave. I just don't understand.

Anyway, my question to the Premier is: Last week, the government was forced to admit that they're not going to keep their promise of building 15,000 new long-term-care beds, which isn't surprising, because in two years they've only built 34 beds—literally 99.99% short of their goal. The Premier announced a new funding scheme, as we all know, last week, to construct homes and install air conditioning, but no new money was announced.

So my question to the Premier is: Will private, for-profit homes be accessing the existing pot of money under the new funding scheme, at the expense of municipal and not-for-profit homes?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again for the question. It has been clear that over the decades leading up to this date and the beginning of COVID-19 and its havoc that it has wreaked all across the globe and in Ontario, equally, that there was neglect of the long-term-care system. Our announcement, our modernized funding model is a start, and we've been absolutely clear about that.

The neglect that we are catching up on, as a government that is committed to long-term care, is unprecedented in Ontario's history. I will repeat: unprecedented. The funding that is being put behind our plan: unprecedented. This is a jump-start. We will create an environment with which long-term care can be built. It was not built under the previous government. Allocations were made; they didn't go forward. They never got built. This government is putting dollars behind its commitment. It will make it happen. We will rebuild, advance and repair long-term care.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I've watched the Premier talk real tough about those greedy, for-profit operators at some

of his press conferences that he is so proud of. But it looks like his plan is to put even more public money into private pockets.

Months ago, when the Premier first promised a commission, he claimed that all issues would be on the table. Well, if that's the case, why is the Premier already moving ahead with policies that will entrench the role of for-profit companies in the long-term-care system and shovel millions of dollars out of the health care system and into the pockets of their shareholders, the private profits of their shareholders?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: You see, that's the difference between ourselves and the Leader of the Opposition. I don't look at non-profit, profit and so on and so forth. I look at the individual that's sweating their back off when it's 28 degrees because you guys did absolutely nothing for 15 years.

We're going to make sure we get air conditioning in every single room. I don't care if it's profit or non-profit, and the families don't care, as long as their elderly mother or father or grandparent is being taken care of. That's what they care about.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Stan Cho: My question is to the Premier. Premier, during this time of uncertainty, many municipalities have stepped up to continue to provide vital services for many of our constituents. As we continue to work towards economic recovery, all levels of government know we have to keep working together to keep people safe.

As Willowdalers return to work, they need to make sure that they get there safely. No one should have to turn down a job because they don't want to risk their health during a crowded commute. We must also continue to help people, enterprises and communities adapt to that "new normal" we hear so much about.

Investments in municipalities and transit systems require a shared level of responsibility between all levels of government, particularly the federal and provincial governments. Speaker, can the Premier please tell us about the negotiations with the federal government regarding additional financial and health supports?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank our great member from Willowdale.

Last week, the government, in coordination with the Premiers, reached a historic agreement for all people of Canada, right across the board. It was \$19 billion, and it was a tough negotiation. Again, I give all the credit to the Premiers. I want to give a shout-out to Scott Moe. He did an incredible job. I want to give a shout-out to the Deputy Prime Minister, Chrystia Freeland, who negotiated hard but fairly.

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It's going to be beneficial for every person in Canada and every single province. We're covering everything from testing and tracing to mental health to health to supplies of PPE, making sure everyone has enough PPE right across

the board. It was great. There are eight different categories, Mr. Speaker, and I think the people of this province and this country—everyone's going to benefit from that. So thank you for the question.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: That new deal, Premier—though you, Speaker—is incredible, incredible news for the people of this province. It's important that we continue to work towards better outcomes here for the people of Ontario.

This new agreement will mean additional supports for all 444 municipalities throughout our great province and help for their transit systems. It will mean that we can strengthen our health and long-term-care systems. It will mean that we can provide a more efficient, effective system for expanding COVID-19 testing, contact tracing and stockpiling our PPE. It will mean new funds to help get our economy going again, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, your leadership has been made Ontario stronger, which means that Canada just got better. This is progress that we can all be proud of. Speaker, through you, can the Premier please share with my constituents and all Ontarians the significance of this agreement?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, I thank the member from Willowdale. Through the action plan for restarting the economy—\$3.3 billion in additional health care investments, including \$2.1 billion in new initiatives to respond to COVID-19 outbreaks, and the province is increasing the capacity in Ontario's hospitals to the tune of \$935 million in the hospital sector, comprising \$594 million to accelerate the progress of addressing hospital capacity issues and \$341 million for additional acute care, critical care beds and more assessment centres.

This is about, again, working together with municipalities. I want to give a shout-out to all 444 municipalities that helped us. We all stuck together. The provinces stuck together. And, again, the federal government stepped up. Again, I want to thank the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister for supporting the entire country. This is great for everyone.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Ian Arthur: All the way back in April, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities released their report with estimates that municipalities were going to be facing enormous budget shortfalls of anywhere between \$10 billion and \$15 billion. While I'm glad to hear about the agreement with the federal government where they're feeding federal money through the provinces, we have had no clarity on the details of where that money is going to go. Leadership is fighting against some of that money being used for paid sick days for workers who are going to have to stay home. That is not leadership from this Premier.

Since the days that downloading on municipalities began, their budgets have been incredibly tight. They have struggled to maintain property tax increases in line with inflation. This government has yet to provide details of what funding they're providing to these municipalities that are facing these tremendous shortfalls.

Will the Premier tell us today what that money is being spent on and if the province is going to add increased funding to that money for municipalities across Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the member opposite: I think when the Premier answered this question earlier today, he sold himself short. As I have said and Minister Phillips and many others have said, at that table with the other Premiers and the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, there was one person that led the way in terms of not just speaking on behalf of Ontario municipalities but speaking on behalf of all Canadian municipalities wanting a fair share, and that's our own Premier, Premier Doug Ford.

Our government continues to work with our municipal partners and with AMO. As the member opposite notes, very early on the Premier and I and our government supported the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' ask of the federal government. We all knew, given the scale and the magnitude of the hole that our municipal partners were in, that we needed a federal contribution. Again, I want to commend the Premier for this tremendous \$19-billion COVID-19 recovery package, which clearly includes the dollars that our municipal partners have been asking for.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: I didn't actually hear an answer as to whether the province was going to add any additional funding or they were just going to entirely lean on the feds for that money.

The budget shortfalls are tremendous, and the amount of money that the feds are giving us is not going to be enough to balance those budgets; it's just not. They're not allowed to run deficits, so we are faced with either dramatic service cuts or the province stepping up and supplementing the federal package with actual dollars that go to actual programs.

Because of the lack of an answer that I was given just now, I will ask again: Will the province be adding to the federal package? Will they provide the funding that municipalities need simply to get through this year?

Hon. Steve Clark: Well, again, Speaker, I think it's very important to note that the \$19-billion COVID-19 deal with all of our provinces and territories really was that significant because of our Premier's work. We acted immediately, right at the very start, to work closely with our municipal partners. We were there for them right from the start. We put a package in place that all parties agreed to to allow councils to operate in the early days of the pandemic. Early on, we provided \$200 million to help our most vulnerable. I followed that up as part of our commitment to the safe restart package with an additional \$150 million even prior to this deal being arranged.

So, with all due respect, we've been there. We've put money up. We'll continue to work with our partners. We're going to make sure—and I've said this in the House many times, Speaker—that municipalities are going to lead the recovery, not just in Ontario but right across Canada.

EDUCATION FUNDING

M^{me} Lucille Collard: My question is for the Minister of Education. We are in the middle of the summer, which means that back to school is around the corner. This is normally the time when parents start planning for the return to school. Parents in my riding are worried. Anyone who is a parent understands the need to prepare their children. We need to prepare them mentally and we need to make logistic arrangements for a return to school. But they don't know what to prepare for, and this is creating additional stress to the already unstable situation. Education is the anchor of our society, and we need some confidence that we are moving forward with a concrete plan that can be effectively implemented.

When will the minister provide the needed guidance to parents so that they can stop worrying and prepare for a full-time return to school?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Indeed, I think we all appreciate that many parents in this province have faced difficulty as a consequence of COVID-19, as well in the context of wanting certainty about the way forward. What we can confirm to parents, to students and, of course, to our education staff in the province is that we will be prepared to respond to the local challenges and the transmission risk that may arise as a consequence of COVID-19. We'll be ready for three scenarios, and boards will have those due to the province by the 4th of August to provide that certainty to families across the province.

But our commitment, our solemn responsibility to the people of this province, is to do whatever it takes to keep families safe. That is precisely what we will do with more funding and more training to keep all students and all staff safe in the province of Ontario.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Again to the Minister of Education: School boards are being asked to prepare for three different scenarios. Unfortunately, they were not consulted on the feasibility of these scenarios, and we are seeing all sorts of different propositions from different school boards that raise concerns, such as a plan to remove French lessons from the school year.

School boards and school staff are waiting impatiently for a decision from the minister to ensure that all students can receive quality education. They need the minister to let them know how he will ensure that all students will have an equal opportunity to learn this fall. The minister is running out of time: We only have a few weeks left to get ready.

Will the minister provide the necessary resources to school boards to bring every student every back to school with an equal opportunity to learn for each of them?

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Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, indeed, we are ensuring that the funding and resources are in place to our school boards so far.

In the context of the member opposite, in Ottawa-Carleton their funding is up \$25 million. In the areas of

Ottawa Catholic, their funding is up just shy of \$25 million. Speaker, these are incremental enhancements to students and to those school boards.

But they recognize, Speaker, that there is more to do, and we are working closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, with the command table, with our boards and with our union partners to ensure that all students and all staff remain safe. It is our commitment. By having three plans we can, with confidence, respond to any challenge that arises this fall.

CONSTRUCTION ROUTIÈRE HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

M^{me} Robin Martin: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Avec la réouverture et la relance économique de l'Ontario, l'investissement dans nos infrastructures de transport n'a jamais été aussi important. Ces investissements ont toujours été une priorité pour notre gouvernement et ils le demeurent aujourd'hui, malgré le climat d'incertitude actuel.

Our government is not only investing in highway projects, Speaker, but we're looking to streamline their construction. Can the minister share more about the work she is doing to build and repair Ontario's highways network?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for the question.

Comme ministre des Transports, assurer la sécurité et la fiabilité de nos routes est une priorité. Maintenant que nous nous remettons des impacts de la COVID-19, notre gouvernement réalise ses engagements afin d'améliorer nos infrastructures de transport et de créer des milliers d'emplois. C'est pourquoi nous investissons 2,6 milliards de dollars dans le rétablissement et l'expansion du réseau autoroutier de l'Ontario.

Speaker, we're investing \$2.6 billion to expand and repair Ontario's roads, highways and bridges. And last week, we launched an online tool that provides all Ontarians and businesses with information about highway projects that are under way or planned for construction. I encourage all Ontarians to use the new highways program online tool. It's searchable and interactive. It has a map for all Ontarians to see, to learn more about the important projects that we're undertaking in their communities right across the province.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the minister for her response. Ontario's highway network is the backbone of our province. Highways are critical links connecting people to cities and towns across the province, and it's so important that they remain both reliable and safe. Getting down to work on planning and construction will not only achieve this goal, but will also help create thousands of good Ontario jobs. And that's because highway construction is such an important part of Ontario's economic engine.

Can the minister tell us about the work under way on the highways file?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you to the member for the question. It's time to get our economy back on track in our province and get people in Ontario back to work. Transportation-related construction drives economic activity. It puts people to work. It increases money spent in nearby communities, and it provides Ontario with infrastructure that keeps people and goods moving.

Last week, we announced our government's commitment to fund Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph. This project will include 18 kilometres of a four-lane freeway and a brand new crossing over the Grand River. We also announced our government's commitment to move forward with the expansion and the improvement of Highways 6 and 401 from Hamilton to Highway 401, which will cut congestion in Morriston and improve traffic flow between Hamilton and Guelph.

Speaker, these are just two examples of the projects that will improve our network, get people moving and kick-start our economy.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Remarks in Oji-Cree.

My question is for the Premier. During the pandemic, children and youth in care have needed more protection than ever before, yet the government has made it more dangerous for them by loosening the safety rules meant to keep them safe.

Ontario has also been stalling on providing the number of deaths of children and youth in care during this pandemic to the public. Will the minister do the right thing and share with the public how many children and youth have died while in care during this pandemic?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for your question. I am aware of the recent article published by the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network and the concerns that it raises. The death of any child or youth in care is a tragedy, and we take our commitment to public sector transparency and accountability very seriously.

The length of time and the fee for the disclosure of a freedom of information request may vary based upon the work needed to collect those records. As minister, it would be inappropriate to interfere with the ongoing process.

But I can say what we are doing to improve the child welfare system. Our vision for Ontario is where every child and youth has the supports and services they need to succeed and to thrive, and we are committed to making this goal a reality.

Redesigning the current child welfare system won't happen overnight, but we are committed to the long-term work that is needed to achieve success and promote positive outcomes for children, youth and families in this province. We will have more to come in the following weeks.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Mr. Speaker, through you, I think the least they could do is waive the fee.

The government has refused to complete the freedom of information act requests to disclose the number of children that have died or been seriously injured in the child welfare system since COVID-19 began in March. This information should be readily available to the public, Mr. Speaker. The fact that the government makes it so difficult to access these numbers doesn't create any trust. Why does Ontario not want us to know how our child welfare system has not protected children and youth during this pandemic?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for your question. Our top priority remains the health and safety—well-being—of children, youth and families in Ontario, including those who are supported in the child welfare system.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, children's aid services continue to operate and provide services to children, youth and families. Societies have been encouraged to find alternative methods for providing services while observing public health recommendations and using technology where appropriate.

As part of this government's commitment and efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19, we have invested up to \$40 million to support organizations that provide residential services, including residential services in settings for children and youth.

Our government is further committed to better protecting vulnerable populations by delivering a new COVID-19 Action Plan for Vulnerable People. This action plan focuses on three specific areas: enhanced screening and reduced exposure to prevent the spread; infection control, such as managing outbreaks and limiting spread; and sustaining staffing and managing staff shortages.

As the situation with COVID-19 evolves, we will continue to communicate with children's aid services and partners and understand the challenges that they may be facing.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. A few months ago, the Ontario Superior Court overturned the minister's decision to cancel the Nation Rise Wind Farm. It ruled that the minister's decision did not meet the requirements of transparency, justification and intelligibility. Now the government wants to hand the minister even more power to pick and choose which projects get a full environmental assessment.

Fired Environment Commissioner Dianne Saxe said that the changes in Bill 197 would create an enormous risk of corruption and undue influence. Speaker, can the minister explain why he should be trusted with even more scientific power, given that the minister has already been caught by the courts ignoring scientific evidence?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. I do know that the member opposite sat

through a technical briefing. What he's asking doesn't correlate with what he learned at that session.

We are modernizing the Environmental Assessment Act, which hasn't been modernized in over 50 years, Mr. Speaker. That was when Pierre Elliott Trudeau was still Prime Minister. Some of the caucus here weren't even born yet. So what we're doing: If this legislation is passed, we'll begin consultation to create a list of projects which will need environmental assessment, much like Canada has already done in the majority of other provinces. That's what we're going to do going forward. Once that regulation is ready to go, after consultation with community members, municipalities, other stakeholders, Indigenous communities—once that comes to cabinet, like every other regulation that's made in this province, cabinet approves it. There are not going to be one-off decisions made at the cabinet table. That is utterly and completely not true.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, I find it interesting that the minister's defence of Bill 197 is "modernization" of the environmental assessment. I guess that means hollowing it out and getting rid of the transparency around it.

The government could, if it wanted to modernize the EA process, make all large private sector projects subject to an environmental assessment. The Auditor General pointed this out when analyzing the huge financial risk of such projects to taxpayers. Her 2016 report showed that there are over 5,000 abandoned mines in Ontario, with a cleanup cost pegged at \$3.1 billion.

Speaker, will the minister modernize the Environmental Assessment Act to protect taxpayers by making large-scale private sector projects subject to an automatic environmental assessment before being approved?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks again for that question, member opposite. Through the modernization of this Environmental Assessment Act, and if this legislation is passed, what changes immediately is that we'll be exempting environmental assessments for land claim settlements and other projects with Indigenous communities, projects in provincial parks and conservation areas, and, for the first time in the history of the province, we're going to give municipalities a say in whether they want a landfill sited in their municipality or not.

What will also happen, if this legislation is passed, is it will enable the government to start consultations on the project list that the opposite member has mentioned. That is going to have a detailed consultation throughout the entire province. We'll take our time and make sure we get it right so that we align ourselves with the federal government and other provinces.

I implore the member opposite, during that consultation time, to be part of that. Bring forth those ideas so we can hear what he has to say, the reason behind that, as we create that list—much like I worked with you over the permission to take water with his own area, with the Guelph region, and your own, Mr. Speaker.

We're a government that wants to work with you. We're going to have that consultation process. We'll discuss what you want to add to that, as we're going to talk to all Ontarians—what would they like on that project list? Whether it's going to be what the Indigenous communities want, what stakeholders want or what municipalities want, we're going to have a clear and concise list brought forward which will be approved through the cabinet and put in force, just like the rest of the country.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Here in Ontario, we have a world-renowned resource-based tourism industry and often have people lined up from all around the world to “tuna” in to an experience of the great outdoors in the northern parts of our province. Hunters and anglers spend more than \$560 million and \$1.6 billion respectively each year in Ontario, supporting jobs in many of our rural and northern communities, like Barrie–Innisfil.

COVID-19 has hit the resource-based tourism industry especially hard. Could the minister please share what our government is doing to help outfit and tourism operators through this difficult period?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank the great member from Barrie–Innisfil for that question. Our government is committed to supporting the resource-based tourism sector, one that was hit particularly hard by COVID-19, where most of their clientele, in particular up in northern Ontario, comes from outside of Canada. With border closures, it has dried up completely.

So we appointed a ministry advisory committee, which helped us in advising us what we could do to help this sector. I had conversations with my colleagues from northern Ontario, including members of the opposition, and we have done something that Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario is very thankful for: We are not charging them for certain fees and licences, as well as refunding anyone that has already paid for 2020. This will help to support those local business that mean so much—as my colleague has said, \$560 million and \$1.6 billion respectively in this province.

Resource-based tourism is something that was particularly hard hit. Our government recognizes it, and we're doing what we can to help them.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Minister, for your actions to bait more people into the great outdoors. After 15 years of neglect under the Liberals, we are fortunate to have a government and a minister that understands and cares about the issues facing the north and rural Ontario.

The resource-based tourism industry involves the use and enjoyment of all environmental and natural resources on crown lands and waters, including hunting, fishing, visiting provincial parks and conservation reserves, camping, canoeing, hiking, snowmobiling and wildlife viewing.

Of the over 1,600 operators in the province, many are small and medium-sized family-owned businesses. These

businesses provide stable, local jobs that sustain communities over generations.

Now that everyone is perched up and listening, could the minister please share what initiatives our government has undertaken to support fishing, hunting and the resource-based tourism industry?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thanks again to the member. As she has pointed out, these are small businesses. When they lose 80% of their revenue, it's a big blow. We recognize that.

I had a great conversation with Laurie Marcil, the executive director of NOTO, last week, and they are over the moon that our government, by consulting with people that are in the business—boots on the ground—and also members of the opposition as well, recognize that this is a big deal for this sector. So, waiving the fees and refunding those fees that have already been paid is important.

We also last year appointed the big game advisory committee, which has also brought forth new regulations and new numbers and surveys for hunting, which is going to help to ensure that this business that is a cultural right for people across the province of Ontario will be around for generations to come.

And I want to say to the people out there, too: Remember, we're not having the Americans come up this year because of border closures. If you have a plan to do some travelling in Ontario, get out to one of those northern Ontario tourism outfitters. Support our people in Ontario. They could use the business. They're backbones of our economy.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Jamie West: My question is for the Premier. Meredith is an elementary school teacher and solo parent from my riding of Sudbury, and what she heard from this government about a return to school this fall ignores the fundamental needs of children and ignores the pressures on working parents. Many of Meredith's students are not equipped to continue distance learning, and their parents will be unable to return to work if there isn't a full, safe reopening of school. In many cases, women are being forced to step out of the workforce or they're being forced to reduce their hours in order to care for their children.

Speaker, Meredith wants to know why the government continues to leave education workers and parents in the dark.

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Our government announced, when it comes to expanding child care capacity for parents, that we'll be doing so by moving to a cohort from 10 to 15, providing upwards of 91% of pre-COVID capacity available to working moms and dads in the province that we know need to have that assurance, need to have that commitment by government that their child could be cared for safely. We have done so in this province with great success. We're grateful to the ECEs and our operators for adhering to the very strict health and safety protocols we've put in place.

In the member's riding, for example, in the Catholic district school board, they received an additional \$3 million to ensure that that community is better prepared to respond to the challenges of COVID.

We're ensuring that they have three plans in place and more funding for technology. Every high school in the province and in the member's riding will have access to Internet. We're doing that to get ahead, to make sure that we're prepared and to keep all students safe in Ontario.

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

Mr. Jamie West: Back to the Premier or back to the education minister: Parents and educational workers across this province are calling on the government to finally recognize that we need a comprehensive plan that considers the needs of communities, families and workers.

Meredith told me, "For many young kids, school is a safe place, and I worry every day about some of my students that have been home for so long. The stress of their needs, compounded by the stress of their parents, is making some of their little lives very volatile."

Meredith deserves answers. She wants to know why the government is taking a wait-and-see approach while parents, education workers and students continue to suffer.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite. Obviously, Meredith has noted a variety of concerns which are shared, particularly in the context of the children being out of school for such a prolonged period of almost half a year by the time September rolls around. It's why, when it comes to the mental health and the wellness of our children, we're putting in place an additional \$10 million in net investment in mental health to hire more psychologists and psychotherapists in the province, reduce wait times and improve care for those very kids. It's why we put in place more access for technology to make sure that we universalize access to the online learning, should that be required in those communities.

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We recognize the difficulty, particularly in remote parts of our province. That's why we're putting more funding in place in remote northern boards in this province to give them every tool and resource to succeed in September.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. We all know the neglect that the long-term-care system endured for decades, and we all saw the effects this had both before and during the pandemic. We saw wait-lists grow for years and years before the pandemic. During the pandemic, we've seen the spread of COVID-19 amplified in old homes with ward rooms. So the need for new beds and the renovation of old beds is critical, and that critical need is being underscored today.

The minister has frequently spoken in this House about the ongoing work since before the COVID-19 pandemic that has gone into repairing and rebuilding the cracks in the system. Last week, the minister did make a very important announcement regarding a modernized funding

model for long-term-care development in Ontario, and I'm wondering if the minister could speak to this this House and tell the House what the modern funding model will do to help fix our long-term-care system.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I'd like to thank the member from Niagara West for his good work with his constituents and for his concern about long-term care.

The modernized funding model is a new approach that will break down barriers to building much-needed long-term-care spaces and accelerate the creation of new and redeveloped beds. Over the next five years, the government is investing \$1.75 billion in long-term-care homes. By recognizing the differences between regions in our province, creating four new regional categories and tailoring an increased construction fund subsidy to each of these categories, we are enabling the government to address the barriers and needs of different communities. We are providing development grants of between 10% and 17% for upfront costs like development charges, land costs and other construction expenses, and we are helping small operators in rural communities navigate the high cost of development while ensuring that larger urban centres can secure the loans and real estate that they need.

Together, all of this will get shovels in the ground faster and get residents into their new homes more quickly.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you to the minister for explaining the modern funding model. I know that "shovels in the ground faster" is music to the ears of people across this province.

She's right, also, when she speaks about and acknowledges the difference between regions and communities, and that each faces unique challenges in development. I know that in Niagara, the region I'm proud to represent in this House, we have communities that range from rural to urban and mid-sized. Each of these communities requires slightly different approaches, and I'm glad that the minister has put flexibility into this policy. I'm also glad that flexibility is being accompanied by new funding dollars and new supports for the development of long-term-care homes.

So my question to the minister, in looking at the Niagara region, is if she'll tell this House what this new funding mechanism will do for the Niagara region.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thanks again to the member for the question. In St. Catharines, there are three projects in various stages of this development model, with 109 new beds and 464 being redeveloped. In Welland, there are two projects with 130 new beds and 62 redeveloped beds. In Niagara Falls and Virgil, there are two projects with 81 new beds and 340 redeveloped beds. These are in various stages of development, with two projects already under construction and with all of them expected to be complete by the spring of 2025.

Like Niagara, regions across the province need more capacity and shorter wait-lists. Older beds need to be upgraded to modern design standards. We have all seen the harm done during the COVID-19 pandemic associated

with ward rooms, which need to be replaced. The modernized funding model represents a significant step toward repairing, rebuilding and advancing long-term care in Ontario. There are more steps to be taken, and they will be taken soon.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Ontario drivers have been taken for a ride during this pandemic. During the lockdown, accidents were down by over 70% throughout Ontario, meaning that insurers have been paying out less claims and pocketing even more money. But instead of taking a strong approach to protect Ontario drivers, this government's opt-in rebate plan has left Ontario drivers haggling with their insurance companies, with predictable results.

InsuranceHotline.com reports that only 30% of drivers have received some relief, and in most cases, it was next to nothing. For instance, Jim Kenzie wrote in the Toronto Star this weekend that he only received a discount of \$7 a month during the pandemic. By the way, forcing drivers to park their cars and switch their policy to comprehensive coverage is not relief. Whether you drove or not, the risk of accident was way down.

Will this government do the right thing and make these companies give an immediate three-month, 50% rebate on all premiums, retroactive to the start of the lockdown?

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

Hon. Rod Phillips: I appreciate the question. Frankly, the opposition has been AWOL on this issue. They talked about it at the outset, but then this government took action.

The insurance industry talked about \$600 million of savings across Canada. Because of the specific actions that this government has taken, the independent board FSRA, which reports on and oversees the insurance industry, reported that \$650 million of savings had been put forward to Ontario drivers alone. But, Mr. Speaker, that wasn't enough.

We asked the industry, and they said that there were regulations that were impeding their being able to give rebates. So this government acted on that, and we will continue to act so that drivers get a fair deal from their insurers.

We agree that there has been less driving and less accidents. That's why we've taken real action and we got real savings for Ontario drivers.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: The proof is in the premiums. We've seen this minister and we've seen the Premier being frustrated out of their minds in press conferences. Now he's doing PR for the insurance companies. Even worse, Premier, I'm hearing from many drivers that they're getting massive rate increases when they're renewing their policies now.

Barry from Oakville reached out to my office and said that his premiums are set to go up by 28%, and he's not alone. Of course, nobody knows what's going on because

this government has taken the unprecedented step of hiding this year's auto insurance quarterly rate approvals. If, in fact, the rates have gone up, it will have been the 10th straight auto insurance rate hike in a row.

So, Minister, has your government approved yet another increase to auto insurance rates during this pandemic? Because if so, you've been AWOL.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Of the 14 insurance companies that make up 95% of the insurance industry, 12 of those have now provided rebates as a result of what this government has done. But that is not enough. I agree with the member; more needs to be done. That's why we are pleased to know that FSRA, again the independent oversight regulator, is going to be, as I've said in the past, producing a transparent report on what insurance companies have done. We all look forward to seeing that.

We know we've been seeing less driving, we know we've been seeing less accidents, and we know that Ontarians are under severe pressure in terms of costs for auto insurance. We will look forward to that report. We expect to see it later this month, and then we will all look to see what insurance companies have been doing, and I'll look forward to making further comments at that time.

ASSISTANCE TO TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Stephen Crawford: My question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. As the province moves into phase 3, many Ontarians are still adjusting to the new normal. As a community, nothing brings people together more than festivals do. They play a pivotal role in community-building, bringing people together from different religious, economic and social backgrounds. We are about halfway through our regular summer festival season. As you know, many festivals across this great province have had to cancel their events due to COVID-19.

At the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, we have heard testimonies from many festivals across Ontario, including TIFF, Pride Toronto and the Shaw Festival. Some of these organizations have had some great, innovative ideas on how to bring us together during these unprecedented times. Minister, can you please tell us how Ontario's festivals and events are continuing to innovate and bring us together?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to say thank you to the member from Oakville, who recently took me on a tour of his community as they entered into phase 2. Of course, we still have more exciting news across the province as we begin to slowly and gradually reopen our economy into stage 3.

In the early days of COVID-19, we recognized that our artists and the festival sector would be hard hit and would likely take the longest to recover, so we invested, along with the music industry, \$150,000 into something called Music Together, so that musicians across the province would be able to perform from the safety of their own homes.

I've still been flowing funding for festivals because we want to make sure that next year they'll come back bigger

and better than ever. So we will be funding TIFF. We will be funding the Markham Jazz Festival, the Fergus Scottish Festival, the Hamilton Supercrawl, Bluesfest in Ottawa and a number of other festivals across the great province of Ontario.

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We're also working with a number of different organizations on drive-through and drive-in experiences, and I'll have more to say about that later today. In addition, we're working with the Canadian Live Music Association and Festival Events Ontario to see how we can have a safe return to festivals when it is safe to do so.

But Mr. Speaker, make no mistake: We still are dealing with a social crisis in the province of Ontario where people are very reticent to get back to their old habits. Therefore, it will take some time for us to get back to the festivals that we used to know and love, but we will be there and we remain committed to them.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the minister for your insights there. Minister, we're starting to see some innovative ideas when it comes to drive-in and drive-through experiences here in Ontario. We've seen you recently visit the immersive Vincent van Gogh experience and, most recently, the African Lion Safari.

One of the latest examples of an innovative drive-in experience is the Lavazza Drive-In Film Festival, which is set to launch today through July 31. This festival will be a celebration of Canada's diversity, featuring an incredible lineup of international films representing countries hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This event will be hosted at one of Ontario's most prestigious venues, Ontario Place.

As a citizen of Ontario, it makes me proud to know our government is investing in this premier entertainment venue. Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister elaborate on the government supports into Ontario Place?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Obviously we're very excited that tonight the Lavazza film festival, the largest film festival of its kind currently in the country, is taking place starting this evening at our wonderful Ontario Place.

Many members across Ontario will recognize that we have three parts to Ontario Place. We have the current board, which is winding up its old business; we have the current redevelopment ongoing, which has four criteria that we're looking at, which are alignment to the government's vision, concept viability, delivery certainty and cost/benefit to the province; and finally, we're continuing to program at Ontario Place.

I encourage all Ontarians to check out some of that live programming this summer, whether that is the Toronto Shines festival, which is run by Canada's Walk of Fame, Jeffrey Latimer and Canadian Idol Farley Flex; obviously tonight, *The Cuban*, a proud Ontario production by Sergio Navarretta, is going to be playing on opening night at Lavazza film festival; and we will be ensuring that TIFF goes on this year. It's a little bit different than in previous years, but we'll be joining today with Cameron Bailey and Joana Vicente of the Toronto International Film Festival

as we continue to support that prestigious organization and make sure that they are well positioned after COVID-19 to become the premier film festival internationally.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, last week the Premier kicked off his summer election tour, and by Friday he was in my riding of Kitchener Centre. We have seen the Premier use this tour to speak to PC Party donors and friends of the Premier's office, but unfortunately for business owners like Danny Fetter, superficial tours of my city won't save his business. Danny owns a small fitness studio in Kitchener. His business has been closed for four months. He wrote to my office pleading for help because he lost 100% of his revenue due to the pandemic. He told me, "My landlord has given me a few options but all they would do is defer payment which really does me no good."

Danny looked to us for help, but this government continues to ignore the fact that landlords like Danny's are still refusing to apply for the government's broken rent relief program. Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell Danny why forcing him to take on more debt is all that this government is willing to do for small and medium-sized enterprises like his?

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

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member for the question. Small businesses and medium businesses like Danny's are an important priority for us. That's why, starting with the \$17-billion program which had \$7 billion of direct support and \$10 billion of indirect support—tax deferrals and others—and working with our federal partners, as the Premier did with the \$19 billion that will support communities and support municipalities, we continue to support those small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, most important for these businesses is getting them reopened. That's why we are so pleased and look forward to today's further announcement about the reopening of the Ontario economy. We have taken a safe and gradual approach to make sure that we don't see the sorts of challenges that we have seen in other jurisdictions, to make sure that businesses like Danny's can stay open once they're open and to make sure that they're able to get their feet under them, and we've worked with our federal colleagues. In fact, there was a further announcement last week about a further extension of the wage subsidy program—again, something this government has lobbied for steadily.

Mr. Speaker, I believe one of my colleagues may want to speak further to the rent program in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Back to the Premier: Danny is a sole proprietor. When he lost 100% of his revenue, he lost 100% of his income. And when he reached out to us for help, he deserved more from this government. Instead,

the Premier's only solution was for him to accrue more debt.

If we want to stimulate the economy, we can't leave people like Danny behind. SMEs are vital to our economic health. Business after business has presented at the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and they've told this government what they need. They need direct financial supports; grants instead of loans; direct rent subsidies. We need to have these in place for as long as it takes to get our main street businesses back on their feet.

Again to the Premier: When can everyday Ontarians like Danny expect this government to step up with the supports that they need? Or do they have to take out a PC party membership before this government will do anything to help them?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The response? The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Our government has been working hand in hand with Ontario's business community from day one. Ontario has not seen such a business-friendly government in over 20 years. We know that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on small businesses that make up our strong Ontario economy.

These small businesses are essential if our province is going to have the economic recovery that we're working so hard to have. As Minister Phillips said, that's one of the reasons why we paused the commercial evictions, so that landlords who have commercial tenants eligible for the rent assistance program through the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program—so that they can use that. I'm very, very proud to say, Speaker, through you to the member, that just under 20,000 tenants representing 120,000 employees have already taken advantage of this program.

There is much more to do. But we will continue to stand up for small businesses in the province. And the Premier will continue to stand up—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. That concludes the time we have available for question period today.

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAPIR CORPORATION ACT, 2020

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr25, An Act to revive Tapir Corporation.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 89, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

COOTES PARADISE WATER ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2020 LOI COOTES PARADISE DE 2020 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DANS LE DOMAINE DE L'EAU

Ms. Shaw moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to public reporting on the discharge or escape of polluting material / Projet de loi 198, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne la déclaration au public de rejets ou d'échappements de matières polluantes.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd like to invite the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas to give a brief explanation of her bill if she chooses to do so.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I so do. I am proud to introduce the Cootes Paradise Water Accountability Act. This bill marks an important step in better protecting our water. It amends section 30 of the Ontario Water Resources Act to require the ministry to notify the public of discharge or escape into our water in accordance with the regulations.

The massive community response to four years of sewage seeping into Cootes Paradise has shown that we all deserve to know what's in our water, and by knowing, we are more likely to act. We all have a responsibility to protect our water, Mr. Speaker, because water is life. Thank you.

GROUP SEVEN CONSTRUCTION LIMITED ACT, 2020

Mr. Gates moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr27, An Act to revive Group Seven Construction Limited.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 89, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Jill Andrew: I present this petition on behalf of the fine residents of Toronto–St. Paul's. It's a petition to establish universal basic income in Ontario.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the financial hardships of residents across Ontario, and especially in Toronto–St. Paul's. In St. Paul's, more than 12,500 of our people needed the help of a food bank in 2018, including nearly 3,000 of our kids. In St. Paul's, nearly 2,500 children are living below the poverty line and

the riding unemployment rate is 6.3%, which is higher than Toronto as a whole.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas more than 67% of Toronto–St. Paul’s residents are renters, many of whom are seniors on fixed income, single-parent families and people who depend on the Ontario Disability Support Program who are facing eviction on August 1, putting more of a demand on our already at-capacity shelter system; and

“Whereas the costs of poverty are borne by us all, Feed Ontario’s 2019 cost-of-poverty report found that each household in Ontario is losing more than \$2,300 each year because of the economic costs of poverty; and

“Whereas Ontario families need support to be able to prioritize their health and the health of their families, no one should be forced to choose between feeding their family, buying medication and paying rent; and

“Whereas the previous Liberal provincial government failed to implement the substantial minimum wage and ODSP increases that Ontarians required. Instead, it decided to cut funding for social housing and privatize Ontario Hydro. The Ford government in 2018 cancelled the Ontario Basic Income Pilot project before collecting any substantial data; and

“Whereas the provincial NDP committed in 2018 to making a universal basic income a reality within a decade and has, during the pandemic, proposed a plan to ensure every household receives \$2,000 a month and an annual increase with inflation; and

“Whereas Ontario has the opportunity to be a provincial leader in championing basic income for all and to work in partnership with our federal leader Jagmeet Singh, who, in April, called for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit to be turned into a universal benefit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Ontario government immediately establish a pandemic-related, direct emergency basic income plan to ensure every household receives \$2,000 a month and an annual increase with inflation;

“That the pandemic-related emergency basic income project be considered phase 2 of the Ontario Basic Income Pilot project, with concrete plans to study the results with a view to establishing a permanent basic income program as we recover from COVID-19.”

I overwhelmingly support this petition, affix my name to it and hand it to the usher.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition entitled “Framework for Reopening the Economy.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians have been working relentlessly to adhere to physical distancing guidelines, limiting themselves to necessary travel and protecting their loved ones; and

“Whereas our health care professionals are working long hours in our long-term-care homes, doctors’ offices, community care, and hospitals; and

“Whereas other essential workers such as grocery store clerks, farmers, meat and produce processors and transport workers keep our shelves stocked and food on the table; and

“Whereas the province has made significant progress in the fight against COVID-19 with decreasing infection and hospitalization rates, domestic production of personal protective equipment, and crucial financial investments in health and social services;

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

“That the government continues its methodical, cautious approach to reopen the economy so that people can get back to work, businesses can recover and people can regain a hopeful optimism for the future of this great province.”

Of course, I affix my signature.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition entitled “Support Ontario Families with Autism.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every child with autism deserves access to sufficient treatment and support so that they can live to their fullest potential;

“Whereas the Ontario Autism Program was badly broken under the Liberals, and the changes introduced by the Conservatives have made it worse;

“Whereas the new funding caps are based on age and income, and not the clinical needs of the child;

“Whereas Ontario needs a true investment in evidence-based autism services that meets the needs of autistic children and their families;

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“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to invest in equitable, needs-based autism services for all children who need them.”

I support this petition, and I’ll be adding my signature to it and taking it to the table.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

Mr. Robert Bailey: “Proposed Changes to Justices of the Peace Act Petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this, Mr. Speaker, and send my signature with this petition. I’ll send it down with Ilhan.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Petition for the Creation and Implementation of the Regis Report,” and this is signed on behalf of constituents.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on May 27, 2020, Regis Korchinski-Paquet’s mother called 911 for police assistance during a family dispute. Within minutes of the police arriving, Regis ended up deceased on the ground 24 floors below. A call for assistance, ended in death;

“Whereas other calls for assistance that ended in death include April 6, DeAndre Campbell-Kelly, shot to death by police in Peel; May 8, Caleb Njoko in London, fell 15 floors from his balcony while police were present; and June 20, Ejaz Choudry, shot to death by police in Malton;

“Whereas the provincial government has a responsibility to ensure all residents are safe and will not be subject to differential treatment by law enforcement based on race, religion or mental state;

“Whereas a report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) titled Under Suspicion: Concerns About Racial Profiling by Police, found that case law recognizes that racial profiling is a systemic problem in policing;

“Whereas in an interim report, A Collective Impact, the OHRC found that Black people are grossly overrepresented in cases involving police use of force that results in serious injury or death. Despite making up only 8.8% of Toronto’s population, Black people were overrepresented in use of force cases (28.8%), shootings (36%), deadly encounters (61.5%) and fatal shootings (70%), and 20 times more likely to be shot by police;

“Whereas Toronto city council, acknowledging the existence of anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and its connection to police brutality, passed a motion on July 1, 2020, calling on the provincial government to address police violence and systemic racism;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a human-rights-based provincial strategy named the Regis report that includes the following:

“(1) The immediate implementation and expansion of the existing crisis intervention teams to be available 24 hours a day to accompany police officers to all calls for mental health and wellness checks, to de-escalate crises and prevent unnecessary use of force by police officers;

“(2) The reinstatement of the Safer Ontario Act, 2018, along with the recommendations made by Justice Tulloch’s police oversight review that would apply to the SIU and other police oversight agencies;

“(3) The release of the names of police officers present at any incident investigated by the SIU should any member of the public request it;

“(4) A thorough review of the equipment and use of force regulation, R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 926, so as to emphasize de-escalation and address the use of deadly force;

“(5) The immediate divestment of the associated budget lines towards equitable community-centred and harm-reduction focused first responders ...;

“(6) A commitment to ensure COVID-19 recovery efforts include measures to end anti-Black, anti-Indigenous racism and address the mental health challenges exacerbated by COVID-19 for many Ontarians.”

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I propose the following petition: “Proposed Changes to the Environmental Assessment Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone in the province, creating personal and financial hardship and resulting in losses far greater than anyone could have imagined. Individuals, families and businesses have risen to the challenge and supported each other through one of the darkest periods in Ontario’s history; and

“Whereas Ontarians are looking for decisive action to be taken to restart the province’s economic engine in a safe, yet effective, way; and

“Whereas now more than ever, critical infrastructure projects are desperately needed to stimulate recovery to ensure thousands of Ontarians can get back to work and reverse the serious economic impacts of COVID-19; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has endeavoured to update an almost 50-year-old environmental assessment program to build a modern, practical process that supports strong environmental oversight and a strong economy; and

“Whereas the province must focus resources on projects and reduce wait times for assessments up to 50% for the largest projects, while also matching assessment requirements to the level of environmental impact so critical projects can get off the ground without undue delay;

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

“Pass the much-needed legislation, Bill 197, An Act to amend various statutes in response to COVID-19 and to

enact, amend and repeal various statutes, to respond to the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the people of Ontario.”

I affix my signature.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jill Andrew: This petition is on behalf of our community in St. Paul’s.

“Petition for Real Protections from Above-Guideline Rent Increases:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas housing is a human right;

“Whereas rental rates in Toronto–St. Paul’s and across Ontario are increasingly unaffordable;

“Whereas we need to protect our affordable housing stock in Ontario;

“Whereas paying to maintain a building should be the responsibility of the landlord;

“Whereas above-guideline rent increases can increase rent well over what people can afford;

“Whereas inaction on this issue will mean thousands of Ontarians will be forced from their homes;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately review above-the-guideline increase rules and regulations, and ensure that rental housing remains affordable in Ontario.”

I couldn’t agree with this petition more. I’m affixing my signature and will hand it to the usher.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Mr. Michael Parsa: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone in the province, creating personal and financial hardship and resulting in losses far greater than anyone could have imagined. Individuals, families and businesses have risen to the challenge and supported each other through one of the darkest periods in Ontario’s history; and

“Whereas Ontarians are looking for decisive action to be taken to restart the province’s economic engine in a safe, yet effective, way; and

“Whereas now more than ever, critical infrastructure projects are desperately needed to stimulate recovery to ensure thousands of Ontarians can get back to work and reverse the serious economic impacts of COVID-19; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has endeavoured to update an almost 50-year-old environmental assessment program to build a modern, practical process that supports strong environmental oversight and a strong economy; and

“Whereas the province must focus resources on projects and reduce wait times for assessments up to 50% for the largest projects, while also matching assessment requirements to the level of environmental impact so critical projects can get off the ground without undue delay;

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

“Pass the much-needed legislation, Bill 197, An Act to amend various statutes in response to COVID-19 and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes, to respond to the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the people of Ontario.”

I will add my name to this and pass it on to one of the ushers.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Jill Andrew: This is the “Petition for the Creation and Implementation of the Regis Report.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on May 27, 2020, Regis Korchinski-Paquet’s mother called 911 for police assistance during a family dispute. Within minutes of the police arriving, Regis ended up deceased on the ground 24 floors below. A call for assistance, ended in death;

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“Whereas other calls for assistance that ended in death include April 6, DeAndre Campbell-Kelly, shot to death by police in Peel; May 8, Caleb Njoko in London, fell 15 floors from his balcony while police were present; and June 20, Ejaz Choudry, shot to death by police in Malton;

“Whereas the provincial government has a responsibility to ensure all residents are safe and will not be subject to differential treatment by law enforcement based on race, religion or mental state;

“Whereas a report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), titled Under Suspicion: Concerns About Racial Profiling by Police, found that case law recognizes that racial profiling is a systemic problem in policing;

“Whereas in an interim report, A Collective Impact, the OHRC found that Black people are grossly overrepresented in cases involving police use of force that results in serious injury or death. Despite making up only 8.8% of Toronto’s population, Black people were overrepresented in use of force cases (28.8%), shootings (36%), deadly encounters (61.5%) and fatal shootings (70%), and 20 times more likely to be shot by police;

“Whereas Toronto city council, acknowledging the existence of anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and its connection to police brutality, passed a motion on July 1, 2020, calling on the provincial government to address police violence and systemic racism;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a human-rights-based provincial strategy named the Regis report that includes the following:

“(1) The immediate implementation and expansion of the existing crisis intervention teams to be available 24 hours a day to accompany police officers to all calls for mental health and wellness checks, to de-escalate crises and prevent unnecessary use of force by police officers;

“(2) The reinstatement of the Safer Ontario Act, 2018, along with the recommendations made by Justice Tulloch’s police oversight review that would apply to the SIU and other police oversight agencies;

“(3) The release of the names of police officers present at any incident investigated by the SIU should any member of the public request it;

“(4) A thorough review of the equipment and use of force regulation, R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 926, so as to emphasize de-escalation and address the use of deadly force;

“(5) The immediate divestment of the associated budget lines towards equitable community-centred and harm-reduction focused first responders ... ;

“(6) A commitment to ensure COVID-19 recovery efforts include measures to end anti-Black, anti-Indigenous racism and address the mental health challenges exacerbated by COVID-19 for many Ontarians.”

Speaker, I overwhelmingly support this petition with everything inside of me. I have signed my signature to it, and I will hand it to the usher.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I move that, pursuant to standing order 50 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 195, An Act to enact the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020; and Bill 197, An Act to amend various statutes in response to COVID-19 and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes;

That, when Bill 195 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of Bill 195 is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill with 50 minutes allotted to Her Majesty's government, 50 minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and 20 minutes allotted to the independent members as a group; and at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, when Bill 197 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of Bill 197 is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill with 50 minutes allotted to Her Majesty's government, 50 minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition and 20 minutes allotted to the independent members as a group; and at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall

put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, except in the case of a recorded division arising from morning orders of the day pursuant to standing order 10(c), no deferral of the second or third reading vote of either bill shall be permitted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 86.

Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today. I think we've all been getting a lot of emails from our constituents, from both landlords and tenants alike. I think it's a contentious issue. We get a lot of emails during regular times, but during COVID-19, it has exacerbated the difficulties. It's always going to be a contentious issue. Tenants feel things are favoured for the landlords, and landlords feel that things are skewed in favour of the tenants.

What we need is to find that right balance. It's not perfect for everybody, but we want to find a system that's reasonably fair to everybody, so that people have the housing that they need and families aren't being forced to move unnecessarily, while on the other hand recognizing that landlords are running a business, and they've invested in the properties, and most landlords have their tenants' best interests in mind.

I just want to mention that York region is going to be moving into stage 3 Thursday night, so right away I am thinking of a few weddings where I've been talking to the parents, to the bride, to the groom, to the siblings—everybody involved—and they're asking me if, in the next couple weeks, we're going to be moving to stage 3 so they can go ahead with having more people and greater groups together for the celebrations.

Part of that reminds me that one of the couples is looking to move; they're looking to purchase a small property. I asked them, “Well, is your lease up on your apartment?”, thinking about what their closing date is going to be and if it's going to be a problem. And what they said really warmed my heart and made me think about this new piece of legislation, because basically what they said is that their landlord is letting them pay month to month and letting them go ahead with—

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm going to be speaking to Bill 197 and Bill 195. I'm sorry. I'm focusing on Bill 184 right now. I'll switch to it in a minute.

I'll just finish by saying that even though the lease is up, the landlord said to them, “You can just go month to month. I know you're looking to buy a property, and I'll be very flexible with you. You've been fantastic tenants.” Those are the stories we don't often hear, because that's not why people are contacting our offices.

I spoke last week on the economic recovery bill and the emergency order bill. I just want to ensure that I'm able to continue speaking to those bills, because if it's the same time frame—is that an issue? I'm just checking that that's not an issue, because I know—just for people at home to understand—that once you've spoken on a certain

rotation, you cannot necessarily go ahead and speak in that rotation.

I just read a petition, actually, in the Legislature from some constituents who are happy with the balanced approach—just as I was saying about a balanced approach between tenants and landlord—that we're taking between the safety of the public, the safety of the employees and, of course, getting the economy back and supporting our businesses of all sizes.

I think that Ontario has probably been—and I'm not just saying this because I'm involved in government right now—I think we can all agree Ontario has been one of the best places to be in during this pandemic. We certainly saw that people wanted to come back to Ontario when things got a little scary around the world. We're hearing it from our constituents that overall, people feel nervous about the pandemic and what it means for the economy, what it means for their job, what it means for the health and safety of themselves and their family. But they feel that, overall, this is the best place to be. I have certainly not gotten any emails from somebody saying, "Do you know what? I should have stayed in another country, or another province or another region."

1330

I just want to say that it has really been an honour and a privilege—I've said it before—to be part of the government during this difficult time, to get to see the businesses opening. As I said before, in York region, at midnight early Friday morning, we'll be going into stage 3. Only Peel, Toronto and Windsor-Essex are, unfortunately, still staying in stage 2. We've been taking a very cautious approach, and I think the word that just keeps coming back is "balance." I think we've all been using that word a lot—that it becomes a balance to find just the right direction to take so that we're keeping everybody safe, that we're flattening the curve and stopping the spread, that we're supporting our front-line healthcare workers, because they have to go to work every day knowing what they're facing and the risks that they're taking. They have to feel supported if we're going to get them to continue at those jobs.

I want to take the opportunity to thank all those front-line health care workers, but to also thank everybody who has been doing their part to keep their region, their family, their neighbourhood safe during these difficult times, and I want to thank all of my colleagues here in the Legislature for all they have done. It has been a difficult time, it has been a challenging time, but it has been an honour and a pleasure to work with all of you.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, the government is talking about balance; it sounds like the scales of justice have tipped over to one side, not in a balanced way. I fail to understand how time-allocating two bills, Bill 195 and Bill 197, in one motion—both of the bills are controversial. Bill 195, Mr. Speaker, as you know, allows the government to amend and change emergency orders by decree of cabinet, and the mechanism that we currently have, where the Legislature has a role to play in approving

and making sure that these things are done in the light of day, is being taken away. There are a lot of people out there who are not happy about that. I wouldn't say that every Ontarian is aware of Bill 195 and Bill 197—far from it—but those who do pay attention to this place and those who are involved in emergency measure orders etc. are paying attention and are not happy with what the government is doing.

In Bill 197, we have a bill that purports to prepare us for the reopening of the economy and doing great things for helping the economy move along as we come out of this pandemic. Well, the bill essentially monetizes the environmental assessment process. I'm stealing the comment from my colleague behind me—I hope you'll allow me to plagiarize.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Do it justice.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much. I got permission.

The issue is that the government is changing the environmental assessment process in a way that is going to become much more friendly for developers and is not necessarily going to give the kind of safety that we need when it comes to making sure that certain projects are given the scrutiny that they need.

Now, people will speak to Bill 195 and people will speak to Bill 197 when we get to third reading, but I want to speak to the time allocation motion, because the part that's really offensive about what the government is doing in this time allocation motion is that they're bypassing the committee process. Nobody in Ontario is going to have an opportunity to apply to come before committee and have their say. Even if it's a short time in committee—which I disagree with; I think these types of decisions need more time in committee, but obviously the government doesn't agree with me. But anybody who wants to speak to it has been disenfranchised. The government has taken away their voice. The government has taken away their ability to say, "I like or dislike what the government is doing, and here's what I propose."

In a democracy, that is not a good thing. In a democracy, you have to have a mechanism, especially in this day and age, that allows you to bring the public into the process. The beautiful thing about the British parliamentary system is that we have a committee process: that bills normally, after second reading, go to committee, and the opposition or any member of the government has the ability to force things into committee—unless the bill is time-allocated, such as what the government is just doing.

Mr. Ford speaks a good line when it comes to, "I want to work with people. We're in this together." He uses all the right words. I can't argue with any of the language that he uses.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, you can applaud all you want, but the problem is, you should be judged by your actions. I want you to applaud that because the actions of the government are, quite frankly, wrong-headed. You cannot take bills such as this and bypass the committee process, cut out the public, and expect that it's a good thing. "It's

balanced.” It’s not balanced. This is tilted towards the government, so they can get what they want, when they want, how they want. That’s not the way this place is to operate.

The best, best work that this Legislature has done—over the 100-plus years that it has been here—has been the work when we give due time for debate at second reading. The government listens to what members have to say. We then go to committee and, more importantly, listen to the public and take into consideration what they have to say, and then amend the legislation in order to reflect the wishes of the people.

This is the people’s chamber. This is not my chamber, Mr. Speaker, or your chamber only. It is the chamber of the people. They send representatives here to be their voice when it comes to these debates so that they can be heard. But the beauty of it is, we also have a mechanism where we allow them in the building or we travel out to them, and we hear what they have to say on committee.

Mr. Speaker, you’ve been here almost as long as me—probably two seconds different. I think one of us probably got declared before the other person, back in 1990. But anyway, I digress. I’m no longer on the topic of the bill when I talk about your election and my election in 1990, along with Mr. Wilson’s.

But I would say that this decision on the part of the government to bypass the committee process is, quite frankly, cynical. I think it says to the public—“I don’t care. You can think what you want. I’ve made up my mind,” says Mr. Ford. That’s essentially what this is. As New Democrats, we don’t believe that that’s the right thing to do.

I was a member of a government, as you remember well, back in 1990, when you came here. There were things that we did that the people didn’t like, but we always gave them the opportunity to come to committee. Sometimes, yes, we amended legislation. I’ve spoken about some of those things over the years, where it was a regular course of business in this Legislature that when we went to committee, bills were amended—not just by what the government wanted, but by what the public had to say.

That’s when this place works well. That’s when people look at this Legislature and the institution of Parliament and say, “This thing is working.”

But more and more, this place is not working, especially under Mr. Ford.

Mr. Ford is very good at communicating. He has gotten—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You need to refer to him by his ministerial title.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize. I stand corrected.

The Premier stands at his press conferences or wherever he is and he says the right things. I give him full credit for saying those things, because I think it needs to be said. But it’s the actions that are troubling. When you look at what the government doesn’t do—after they’ve said the words, they do the opposite.

How can the Premier stand at a press conference or anywhere in Ontario and talk about, “We want to work together. This is all about us,” meaning the people of Ontario, “and we want to include them in our decision-making process”—well, you can’t do that if you don’t send bills like this to committee. I just think that it’s a bad move on the part of the government to do that because I think it really is showing disrespect to the people of Ontario.

I would urge the government to reconsider this particular motion. The government will argue, “We need this for Bill 195. It has to be done now.” Bill 195: We can pass another emergency order by way of a vote in this House, and the opposition is not going to slow it down or oppose you. We would have time to have proper committee on this. The House can sit longer. If the government wants to have the House sit beyond next week, New Democrats are fine. We’ll be there—not an issue.

Mr. Wayne Gates: All summer.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The whole summer, into the fall; whatever the government wants to do. That’s fine. That’s why we’re here. But I suspect that the government doesn’t want to do that because they are content having all of the power on their side of the House and at the cabinet table and making the decisions they want, with the least amount of scrutiny possible, so that they can change Ontario into the vision that they believe in their hearts is right.

1340

I don’t argue for one second that Conservatives don’t believe in what they’re doing. I think they believe in what they’re doing. I just happen to disagree. I don’t think this is a good way to run a government. I think a government has to listen to the people. Sometimes you’re not going to like what they have to say. And sometimes the government is going to have to do what the public doesn’t want. I understand that. Sometimes there are decisions that are very difficult to make, and governments of all stripes have come across having to make those decisions. Nobody likes doing that, but that’s what governing is all about. But when you cut the public out, I think it’s a problem, and it’s a problem that’s getting worse and worse the longer I’m here. Members come to this place now, as in the last election—they have never seen the place run the way that it used to, that was much more inclusive, that gave members a role when it came to what was going on when it came to legislation, that gave the public a role. No member who was elected in the last election ever saw that.

Who even knows what Committee of the Whole is anymore?. The last time Committee of the Whole happened was, what—1997? Was it during the Tory administration? I think it was under Premier Harris’s administration, if I remember correctly. Was it a dilatorious tactic on the part of the NDP, at the time, in order to try to stop and make changes to the City of Toronto Act that they were doing, where they were amalgamating all of the cities across Ontario—Sudbury, Hamilton etc.? Yes, we were being dilatorious; there’s no question. But we were utilizing the rules of the Legislature in order to exert pressure on the government to back down on things. The government somewhat backed down. They got what they wanted.

We didn't get half a loaf, we didn't get a quarter of a loaf—we only got part of a loaf of what we were looking for. But those were the tools that we had in order to be able to exert pressure on the government to make changes, and it allowed the public to organize and come to committee in large numbers.

Even the Harris administration, Mr. Speaker—Premier Harris allowed the committees to operate. You were here when we had the City of Toronto Act or the amalgamation of Ottawa—there were five major municipalities. I think they were Hamilton, Ottawa, Sudbury, Toronto—I forget what the last one was.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Chatham-Kent.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Chatham-Kent. That's right. I should have thought of that.

If I remember correctly, that bill may have travelled into those cities. I think that was one of the things we pushed for when we forced the bill into Committee of the Whole and we held up the House for 10 or 11 days—24 hours a day we were here in the House.

I'm not threatening that we, as the opposition today, would do that on any particular bill. My point is, the system has been designed in such a way that it gives an opportunity for the public to be heard and gives the opposition an ability to slow the government down. In the end, the government will always pass their bills, because they have a majority. There's nobody here on the opposition side who is saying, "No, the government shouldn't have the right to pass legislation." Absolutely, they have the right and the responsibility to pass legislation. But with that responsibility comes a duty, and that duty is to respect the public and allow the public to have their say.

When a government decides to time-allocate a bill in the way that they are, so that the public is cut out of the process, it's disrespectful to the people of Ontario. At one point, the government will be judged by these decisions. As we move our way through this pandemic, and the more people start realizing that the government says one thing but, quite frankly, doesn't act on the things they say in the way that they say, I think people are going to start realizing that it's a problem.

A good example is the example that my leader, Andrea Horwath, raised today in regard to long-term care. The Premier said the right things—"We're going to get to the bottom of this, when it comes to long-term-care institutions. There are some bad actors in the private sector." The majority of the large problem we had in the long-term-care system was in the private homes. So he was sort of giving the impression that something was going to happen to clean that up—we weren't going to expand the private sector; if anything, we might go in the opposite direction. Even right-wing radio show hosts that I've done shows with over the past three or four months through this pandemic have agreed there is a problem in our long-term-care system. The Premier agrees there's a problem in the long-term-care system, and part of it is the privatization of long-term care.

We got an announcement on Thursday or Friday that the government is going to reduce their expansion of long-

term care from 20,000 homes to 16,000 homes because they want to give more money to the contractors who are building the homes, because they can't bid on the contracts to make money at the current level. Rather than increasing the budget, they decrease the number of units that they're going to build, how many beds. So we've gone from 20,000 beds to 16,000 beds, and we're allowing the private sector to bid in. The Premier didn't say that, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier spoke about long-term care. He said he was going to get at the bottom of it. He's not getting at the bottom of it; he's putting the private sector at the top, and I just think the public should have the right to speak to that.

Bill 195 and Bill 197 are an opportunity for people to come into this Legislature, go to our committees and say what they have to say, at least be heard. You're never going to win all your arguments with the government when you're in the public, but you at least want to be heard.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No? Okay. I thought my colleague wanted to speak. I noticed that she gave me the sign that she didn't want to speak.

My point is, the public has to be heard.

I know, Mr. Speaker, there are other people in my caucus who want to speak to this, so I will at this point end my part of debate and just say to the government, you should reconsider this, because this is very anti-democratic. This is very unparliamentary, in the sense of trying to keep the public out. And having time allocation when the government says it wants to work with people—it cuts the public out, to be heard—I think it goes in the complete opposite direction the government is stating.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to thank my honourable member for borrowing a phrase, "monetizing the environmental assessment." You did it justice, because I think what we need to understand, and what you've explained to us, is, the government says what they think people want to hear. They use those convincing words. They use words like "monetize" and "digitize," but what they're really talking about is the idea that there's nothing in this province that isn't up for sale. And my guess is that, given this time allocation motion, it's proof positive this is a government that wants to ram legislation through the House before the public—who are recovering from COVID-19, who are recovering from the economic impacts that this has had on their lives, from the disruption on their lives. They don't have the time to follow up on the words that the Premier said. They're taking the Premier at his word, and I think, as the member has said, once people start to understand that the Premier says one thing and his actions display another, people will become very disappointed.

I would say that there's no better historical evidence of this than the Harper regime. I know there are many people in this House who served with Harper or worked there. What I would just say is, they're importing those strong-man tactics here into Ontario, and that's evidenced by their lack of interest in the democratic process. Harper's record of denying legislative members access to important

documents has been clearly established. Harper's fight with the parliamentary budget officer, particularly around denying documents around the cost of CF-18s—that kind of behaviour eventually was the kind of action that the public got tired of and they soured on, and that is a legacy and a reputation that Harper will continue to wear, and the Conservatives will be mindful not to repeat in this House.

Why is it that this government wants to ram through this legislation with such lightning speed? There are many things that we could talk about—what is not in this legislation. My constituents are worried about the condition of long-term care, and they also support a call for a judicial inquiry. They're wondering why the conditions are so bad in long-term-care homes and they're wondering, as we all are, why it is that their families don't have air conditioning, as we've just gone through a number of these heat waves. The Premier talks tough: "Oh, I'm shocked—shocked—that there's no air conditioning in long-term care." And the evidence is that he was asked the question—he was asked in this House the question about air conditioning in long-term care, so it's hard to understand how it is that he didn't know about this. He had every opportunity with this legislation to relieve the suffering of our loved ones in long-term care by ensuring that they had air conditioning, but that is not in the bill.

1350

We will talk about this when we get to third reading of these bills, but there's so much missing in both of these bills. Really, as we've described, what is in there has literally nothing to do with the relief that people are looking for from the suffering that they face with COVID-19.

I will just focus a little bit on the changes to the environmental assessment. Under the cover of COVID-19, this government continues to wage its attack on the environment. They are no friends of the environment. They've shown it time and time again. Protecting the environment is an inconvenience to this government. The very fact they want to make it so much easier to water down environmental assessments is kind of on brand for this government, so I don't know why we would be surprised to see a government that wants to push aside people's genuine concerns about our environment.

But while people have been attending to their families and concerned with their loss of jobs, concerned with their economic status, making sure their families are healthy and safe, it doesn't mean the environment isn't a concern to them. It doesn't mean that this is not something that eventually they will come to really hold the government in contempt for—because they have shown that they themselves hold the environment in contempt. All the litter bills in the world aren't going to address climate change.

The people of Ontario deserve an opportunity to weigh in on these bills—these bills that the government puts forward as addressing COVID-19 when they, in fact, do not at all address the concerns of people who are struggling with COVID-19.

In this instance, they're bypassing the committee process. Again, Harper was notorious for disregarding and holding in contempt the traditions of parliamentary

democracy. We see these tactics here. It's clear the architects of what Harper did are sitting before us today. What I would say to the people of Ontario, who have naively trusted the government to protect their democracy, is to hold it in trust, because this place doesn't belong to the government—despite the fact that they have a majority, democracy doesn't belong to them. It is not yours to give away; it is yours to hold in trust for our constituents. But you're standing up and, with two hands, giving it away as fast as you can while your constituents are looking the other way, because they're busy dealing with the chaos that's in their lives right now. I would say that taking advantage of people's struggle right now to get by day to day, and being able to sneak this kind of undemocratic, autocratic change through is something that the people of Ontario will finally come around to recognize, and you will pay the price for that at the ballot box—if not in the least.

While we are not in this instance even taking this to a committee—I would like to also say that I participated on so many of this government's committees. It absolutely is important that the people of Ontario are given a choice to come to this House and provide input into the bills that will have meaningful change and impact on their day-to-day lives, and they do come. They travel on their own expense, they take time out of their own day and they come with all good faith and goodwill and sit in front of government representatives on the committee and the opposition.

I would tell you, in my experience, when the report comes back, you would be hard-pressed to know it was the same committee, because the government uses their majority to shoot down any amendments that are put forward to make the bill better—amendments that we put forward to make the bill better based on what the people of Ontario have told us. The government denies all of those amendments. Then when it comes time to write the report, the government again uses their majority to muzzle any statements that they don't agree with.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Shame.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is a shame. It's absolutely shameful.

The government can hide behind the idea of a committee process that will allow for some kind of democracy, but in my experience it's hollow. It's hollow, and the government gleefully uses the heavy hand of their majority every single time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Bill 195 is a great example.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's a perfect example

If we were to cycle back to what this bill is doing to, again, attack the environment, to show their complete disregard for the things that are of importance to people in Ontario, we have to look no further than the Harper government.

The Harper government—the architects of his strategy are sitting here in the House. The Harper government muzzled scientists. We know that they did, and we know that that muzzling of scientists cost us not only faith in government and faith in our democratic institutions, but it

also cost us time that we needed to address the urgency of climate change.

So I say shame on that government and shame on this government for repeating the same heavy-handed tactics that became an issue during the election, and in fact many would say cost Harper his government, and is the reason why, to this day, the Conservatives at the federal level have not found a leader that anyone can trust—because they know that they say one thing and do another.

I would say to this government that there's no reason for you to ram legislation through this House. My guess is that you just like to do it because you can, and that's absolutely no way to conduct yourself as elected representatives of the people of Ontario.

With that, I'm getting my Irish up so I think I will pass out—who would like to pick up where I left off?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're going in rotation. Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Let's call it what it is this afternoon: This is about control. This is about the Conservatives controlling everything that's going on. There are a lot more important things, by the way—as you guys sit out there and you're not talking—going on out there than rushing bills through here.

Why not have families that had loved ones die in long-term-care facilities come to committee and talk about what happened and why they ended up dying in these long-term-care facilities, so if we happen to move into another stage, they would have some understanding of how to fix it so it doesn't happen again?

How about the fact that when they were in long-term-care facilities, they had no PPE? So what happened was, they ended up getting sick, particularly in some of the older homes that had wards where they had four people, or that didn't have enough staffing. They didn't have enough staffing and not enough PSWs.

And why is that? Because we won't pay them. We won't train them. We won't give them full-time jobs. That's what we should be talking about. We should be having committee hearings so they can come and say, "This is what we need to do our job better"—to save our parents, to save our grandparents, and maybe even save me. I'm getting a little older, with a little long hair.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Save Wayne. Save Wayne. Save Wayne.

Mr. Wayne Gates: That's it.

At the end of the day, that's what you need. Why aren't we doing that? Because you want control. You want to control everything. You don't want to hear from the residents out there that are grieving every day because of what happened with COVID-19 in our long-term-care facilities.

I stood up here and talked about Lundy Manor, not a long-term-care facility but a private-run retirement home; 19 people died there—19. Why are we not having them come to committee and say, "Why do you think?"

I want to say to my colleagues, and my colleagues over here: In two days in that facility, a mom and a dad,

husband and wife, passed away—within two days. Not one; two. Do you know what it's like to lose a mother or a father and how you have to grieve? I ask any of you over there; I ask my colleagues. How do you grieve when you lose one mom? How do you grieve when you lose your mom and dad—which was preventable, because they didn't have PPE, because they didn't have staffing, because they continued to eat in cafeterias? All these things should be discussed around long-term care.

1400

And what are you guys deciding to do? I know you don't like to hear this, and you'll probably attack me in your last 30-minute speech.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Sorry. I know you like to look at me; I appreciate that.

At the end of the day, they're going to privatize the system more. Yet, it has been proven: If you are in a publicly funded long-term-care unit, 79 cents of every dollar goes to care—to the care of your parents or your grandparents—if you're in a private home—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Tell us how much.

Mr. Wayne Gates: —49 cents. What's the difference? The difference is that the money goes to shareholders.

We had an article in the Star, which I read here. I picked it up, remember, Speaker? You said to me that I can't show that. Well, this isn't it, but I couldn't show it. At the end of the day, that's what is going on.

I'm saying to my colleagues: Think about what you're doing. We do not need more privatization in long-term care. What we need is more publicly funded, publicly delivered long-term-care facilities in the province of Ontario. You know how I know that? I may be out by a percentage so don't hold this against me, because I wasn't great in math, but it's around 85% of all the deaths in long-term-care facilities were from a private home.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Wow. Say it again.

Mr. Wayne Gates: That's 85%.

The chair of the Niagara region called me last week and he was saying we're doing everything we can at our publicly funded, publicly delivered long-term-care facilities, but do you know what they need? They need more money, because what we're doing is, we're taking that chunk of money and we're giving it to a private owner, who is then giving it to their shareholders, and then they're paying the CEO's wages. The dollars should be going to care. That's what should be happening.

So I say to my colleagues, I know you want control. I know you've got a majority government; I read the papers. I know that, but it should be about what's in our heart, my friends, and what's in the best interests of us, and our parents and our grandparents. And the proof is in the—I think my colleague used this earlier—the proof is in the pudding. It was something like that. It is very clear, my friends, that if you invest in publicly funded, publicly delivered long-term-care facilities, there is a good chance that you are going to live to see another day. If you put that money into private long-term-care facilities, there is a

better chance that you're not going to live. That's the reality. Every stat is pointing to that.

I say to my colleagues: Reconsider what you're doing. Stop pushing these bills through. Let's have committees. Let's hear from these families, and maybe you'll change your minds.

Thanks for giving me a few minutes, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I am remiss to have to stand in the House today and talk about time allocation. It feels like I'm often standing in this general vicinity talking about the ways in which the government chooses to leave the public out of the decisions that they're making.

While I was sitting and listening to the debate, I was also looking at the volume of emails that my office is receiving in Kitchener Centre about both Bill 195 and Bill 197. If there is a common thread in all of them, it's two things: (1) transparency, and (2) accountability. On both of those bills, people in Kitchener Centre—and I would argue people across this province—are worried that what is now being pushed through will end up being less transparent, not more transparent. We've been here for over two years, and I think that is a theme that we have heard non-stop as we've navigated these processes.

The public wants transparency. But if the public wants transparency—and now I'm standing here and having to speak to time allocation, which will avoid going to committee, which does not allow the public to have a way to navigate this. To be honest, the pandemic has opened up a way for people who typically would not be able to come to Queen's Park to actually participate. So as one of the members of the standing committee on finance and economic recovery, we've been able to hear from the public around what the plans are for economic recovery from all over the province, which we weren't able to do when we were relying on them only being here. Rather than the government taking advantage of that opportunity, we're now standing here debating time allocation to avoid that whole process. Why is it, on one hand, when we have this chance to take something as horrid as a pandemic and build within our systems opportunities for more of the public to actually be able to participate, we would choose to push through two big pieces of controversial legislation without actually having the public have an opportunity to fully engage? That leads me to (2): Because nobody on the government side is willing, able or courageous enough to be held accountable, and that is problematic.

What the public needs during a pandemic is that transparent and courageous stand—being bold enough to allow themselves to be critiqued, to have a discussion, to talk about what the pros and cons are of the legislation that they're putting forward. Instead, what we're doing is avoiding accountability altogether. I think that that part has to be put on record and said repeatedly. I don't know if anybody on the government side is going to listen to it, but I can guarantee that the public will. The public has been demanding accountability for the loved ones they've lost throughout this pandemic, for the unsafe work environments they've had to go through throughout this

pandemic, for the emergency orders that have passed with no real clarity around why people are doing what they're doing on the government side.

It's interesting that we're having this conversation again. It's kind of like Groundhog Day, except there's nobody in the galleries because of the pandemic. So again, we're taking advantage of some of this situation to ensure that we can get what we want, and it doesn't matter what anybody says. But we're not being honest with ourselves if we think—well, I think that with government, it is the royal “we.”

Interjections.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: The “they”? Okay, it is “they.” People are upset. People are upset with “we.”

They are not being honest with themselves if they believe that not being held accountable is a sign of good leadership. It is not. Real leadership and what Ontarians need right now is the opposite of time allocation. They need opportunities to actually have a voice and feel like they are part of the solution to navigate us through this pandemic. What's happening right now, unfortunately, is that our offices will be inundated with emails from people complaining that they were not part of the solution. When I, as an MPP, should be able to say, “Here is the route for you to have your voice heard with government,” and have to instead tell them, “The most I can do is read a quote from you during question period or maybe put it into a debate, because the government doesn't want to hear you,” I think that that is a very, very sad day for democracy.

I hope that they will choose to do better. I hope that they will, at some point, listen. We'll see what happens.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm honoured once again to rise on behalf of the residents of St. Paul's to talk about this government's decision to push through time allocation with regard to these two bills, Bill 195 and Bill 197.

The first thing I want to say is that our fine member from Niagara Falls actually—

Interjections.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Yes, absolutely—actually mentioned to us a little earlier that the Conservatives used to vote against time allocation. So it's very interesting that here we are today during this debate—you, Mr. Speaker, have offered the government opportunities to speak as to why they want to time-allocate this legislation and to let Ontarians, their own constituents, hear why they'd like to time-allocate, and they have chosen not to. So here we are; the NDP official opposition is once again being the voice—proudly so—of Ontarians.

On the note of Ontarians, I want people at home to know what exactly time allocation means. It's something I had to learn as a new MPP myself. Time allocation essentially strips away an opportunity for residents, for voters, for our constituents, for our family, for our loved ones to have a chance to speak their mind, to have their words documented in this fine building we call the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It takes away their opportunity to come to committee and to share opinions with the government. Sometimes they may be good opinions. They

may be good ideas. They may be ones that the government adopts, but far too many times what happens is, when this government hears an opinion they do not like, that opinion is denied. We've seen time and time again, whether we're talking about the Tarion bill that our wonderful MPP from Humber River–Black Creek put forth—once again, the NDP amendments on that Tarion bill were denied.

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Here we're at a time of COVID-19, when folks are just distraught. They don't know what they're going to do. They're taking the left hand and paying to the right hand, right hand to the left hand and vice versa. Instead of us here in this Legislature, led by the majority government—rather than taking the time to talk about the pieces of legislation that we should be talking about, the government is choosing to waste Ontarians' time by pushing through a time allocation. Quite frankly, time allocation on these bills, Bills 195 and 197—we hear about front-line heroes all the time from our Premier to his caucus members, “They're health care heroes,” but yet this time allocation that we're talking about—and frankly, these two bills that we'll talk about in third reading say nothing about increasing the wages of PSWs. It says nothing about getting loved ones—we're not just talking about social visits here, Speaker, but loved ones who are actually essential caregivers to those who have starved and who have dehydrated to death in long-term-care homes. This says nothing about how we're going to connect those loved ones back to those seniors in long-term-care homes.

We're not debating here about hazard pay. We're not debating here about paid sick days. I can't say enough how many people I've heard from in St. Paul's who are afraid. We hear the Premier say, “We don't want to have a second wave. We're doing this; we're doing that.” But what if I have to go to work sick? What if I'm in a situation where my only choice as an essential worker is to quit, because I can't get sick days? What if I have no access to vacation? I can't tell you how many PSWs I've spoken to from our riding—heck, from across the province, because frankly, many, many, many—and maybe Ontarians don't know this and maybe the members on the other side don't know this, but when they don't check their email or answer their voicemail, they often call the official opposition to do that job for them. We rise to the occasion every time. If you can't get a sick day off work, you may unknowingly contribute to that second wave of COVID-19 that we are all so desperately afraid of. These are the kinds of issues that we need to be addressing in this Legislature.

I couldn't be more proud to stand here representing Toronto–St. Paul's as a member of the NDP official opposition, because we have listened from day one. We have listened and we have put forth COVID-19 proposals that put Ontarians first, at the centre of it all. We have shared these, and because of childish pettiness and partisanship—it's like, if an idea comes from the NDP, “Ah, let's just throw it in the trash.”

Now is not the time for us to be picking and choosing based on partisanship. Now is the time for us to be listening to what Ontarians are saying. Whether it's more

supports for long-term care, whether it's more supports for housing, whether it's a real plea—I was just talking to Jody this morning. I had the joy of babysitting her cat a few months ago, before all of this hit. And she was just saying to me, “Jill, we can't have a COVID-19 recovery plan that completely rides on the back of our environment.” We have to understand that environmental protections and COVID-19 are inextricably linked because, quite frankly, these pandemics don't just come from anywhere. I think, to some extent, this is Mother Nature as well speaking to us in the way in which we have chosen—some more than others—not to respect the environment, not to respect our climate.

What I want to say as I wrap up here is that I'm hoping that while we're talking about COVID-19 recovery plans, the government can take a moment and really stop and think about what time allocation does to the integrity of a debate. It, frankly, ruins it, and it really ruins the opportunity for Ontarians to be able to call my office, call the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and say, “Hey, what's up next week? What are you all debating? How can I participate? How can we organize on the ground, Jill, to make the government hear our voices?” When we come into this House not even knowing what's going to be debated, that takes away the opportunity for us to make those phone calls and those emails and those curbside visits to talk with our constituents, to be able to come here and bring their voices into this room. Not my voice—I'm just one person—but the hundreds and thousands and millions of voices that we were elected to bring into this building are muzzled. They are suppressed. They are disenfranchised by time allocation.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to speak a little bit on the motion that has been brought forward today, a time allocation on two very important bills. Mr. Speaker, as you know, these are bills that obviously require immediate passage. That is why we are taking the unusual step of bringing forward time allocation in this House to do that.

I think it worth noting that Bill 195, in particular, brings into force a number of emergency orders and puts them into place for a number of weeks and months, potentially, as we deal with COVID-19. It is worth noting that these emergency orders have been voted on by this House on a number of occasions through a state of emergency and have always received the unanimous support of all members of this chamber, on both sides of the House. So I find it somewhat ironic now that the members opposite have changed their mind and have decided that somehow these emergency orders are not important in the context of keeping the people of the province of Ontario safe.

In fact, I was somewhat concerned when I heard the member from Kitchener talk about emergency orders. I wrote it down: that emergency orders were without clarity. I'm somewhat surprised that the members of the opposition, at any point in time, especially during a pandemic, would pass orders through a state of emergency and not have had the clarity that is so important in making a decision of this magnitude.

The province of Ontario has not moved into a state of emergency—in my lifetime, at least, it has not been in a state of emergency. These are very, very serious times. This is the first pandemic we've had in over 100 years. Bringing forward a state of emergency and the emergency orders that come with it—some of the orders which, in fact, put in place safety precautions that the members opposite said were so important in helping to protect our long-term care, which they, themselves, in their speeches have said are important going forward in protecting long-term care. They now want to not pass a bill that would continue to protect the people of Ontario through emergency orders that they have already agreed to—and not only they, but that members of the other opposition parties as well have agreed to unanimously. So I'm somewhat surprised by that, Mr. Speaker.

It's obvious, when you hear the members opposite speak—I guess if they did not understand the importance of the emergency orders or they somehow were unaware of the nature of the emergency orders throughout the months of March, April, May and June, it strikes me as being more of an indication of the work they're doing on that side than it does on this side.

When members talk about the committee process in this place, I think—in fact, I know you won't be surprised, Mr. Speaker, but since the opposition has brought it up, let's take a look at what some of the work is that we have done. Now, it is worth noting, and I know the member for Humber River–Black Creek, who did work on Tarion—the member for St. Paul's suggested that the work that he did was somehow not listened to. It's worth noting, as I mentioned in my speech, that that committee actually travelled twice, once after first reading, because we knew how important the topic was. We went into communities around the province; we didn't just stay at Queen's Park. We knew that we had to get the bill out and travel. We haven't travelled committees in quite some time in this place, but this government decided that we would begin travelling committees again.

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The member for St. Paul's will know that, through the good work of the member who sits behind her, not only were changes contemplated after the first reading debate and the committee travel that came with it, but some of the suggestions that the member himself brought forward were actually enacted when the bill came back to this House. I congratulate him for that hard work. I congratulate him for getting the amendments done in a bill that came back to this House with some of the suggestions that he did. Were all of his suggestions put into place? Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. Not all of his suggestions were put into place, but through his hard work, we were able to get a better bill. We were able to travel that bill not once—but we were able to have two sets of committee hearings on that bill, and I think that's a testament to the spirit that this government has taken to the importance of committees.

When you look at what we've done on committees, the standing committee on—again, the member from Kitchener, I think, brought up the standing committee on finance. Now, let's remember that the standing committee

on finance is a committee that will be going throughout the summer and into the fall, given the importance of charting a course into the next budget, which will happen in November. This, of course, is a committee that the opposition did not want to have take place. They argued that we should only meet for four weeks. We said that certainly wasn't enough. That committee alone, Mr. Speaker, has had over 225 presenters and has sat over 100 hours. I think that is a huge testament to the members who are serving on that committee every single day.

Bill 159 sat for 11 hours and had over 23 presenters. Bill 156: 39 presenters, 16 hours. Bill 161: 48 presenters in 21 hours. Bill 175: 43 presenters in 22 hours. Bill 171: 29 presenters in 17 hours. Bill 184: 57 presentations in 23 hours.

The common thread on all of these was that, because of changes that we made to the committee process—we said that we wanted to make sure that anybody who wanted to have a voice in committee was going to have a voice in committees, Mr. Speaker. So what did we do? We changed the way committees met so that we could have panels of more than one person. This, of course, is something that the NDP fought. They thought we should go one person at a time and that we should somehow turn away people who wanted to appear before committee. The members on the government side said that that wasn't acceptable and that we would hear from everybody, and that's what we are doing. That's what we did on all of these committees.

Everybody who wanted to speak was heard. Their voices were heard. We did not turn away anybody, and on the standing committee on finance, we are still not turning away anybody because we know how important it is, as we deal with COVID-19, to continue to prepare, not only for a second wave but more importantly, or equally importantly, to make sure that we have an economy that is strong and stable, that is able to address some of the hardships that we're hearing from people across the province—and not only across the province, because what we're seeing in the province of Ontario is similar to what we're seeing across the country.

We know that our municipalities need assistance, not only in Ontario but throughout the country. That's why it is so important that the provincial government work with its municipal and federal partners in order to bring forward legislation that properly addresses the issues that Canadians are feeling across the country. That's why the Council of the Federation, led by Premier Moe, has been meeting regularly to ensure that some of the common things that we're hearing we're able to address.

We've been working very closely with our federal partners with respect to border issues. Some provinces had different desires when it came to whether the border should be open or not. Our Premier was very clear that the border needed to stay closed because we needed to put the protection of the people of this province first. While we've made some very good progress, Mr. Speaker—and when you see today's numbers, I think today's numbers were 135 new cases. When you compare that to any other jurisdiction in the world, that is something that we should

be thankful for. Not only have the decisions that we have made, not only as a government, but as a Legislature, given us the capacity in our health care system so that we could deal with the emergencies that come with COVID-19, in our emergency rooms, our hospitals—we were never in a situation where we did not have the capacity to deal with the emergency that was put before us.

There's been lot of talk about PPE, Mr. Speaker. There is not one jurisdiction that has dealt with the global pandemic that hasn't had a challenge when it came to PPE. We could have done one of two things: We could let things continue on the way they had, or we could make a different choice. We decided to do a different choice. We decided: Let's meet the needs of our front-line workers, whether they're health care workers, long-term-care workers, ambulance, fire, people who are working directly—whether it was in the private sector, in making sure that their employees in grocery stores had appropriate PPE. We did that. We met the emergency needs. But at the same time, we learnt from this, as has every other jurisdiction dealing with COVID-19, that it is not enough to simply look for sources of PPE around the world; we had to change the way we did things and make sure that we could meet those demands internally.

What we're seeing is—and again, I spoke about this the last time I had the opportunity to speak. When you try to find positives in this, it is a positive thing that the province of Ontario is retooling itself and that its manufacturing is retooling itself to meet those needs of Ontarians right here at home. That is very, very good news. Not only is it good news for our front-line health care workers, but it's very good news for our manufacturers. When it comes to manufacturing, I think all colleagues will agree, Ontario is second to none. When we put our mind to it, there is very little that the people of Ontario can't accomplish. I think, when Ontario puts its knowledge and know-how to work on this, we will become an important jurisdiction for the entire country. We've seen this.

When we talk about the economy and Ontario's importance to Canada, the entire country relies on Ontario to be strong. It relies on Ontario to have a vibrant, robust economy because, as Ontario goes, so goes the rest of the country in a lot of cases. The things that we manufacture here are in demand all across the country. We should be proud of that. The same thing will go with PPE. As we transition here to make our own PPE, we will ensure that other jurisdictions across this country have access by working together, because it is very important, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at why we brought time allocation in on these two bills—as I said, Bill 195 is all things that have been already approved by the opposition through the months of March, April, May and into June. When you look at Bill 197, almost every item in that—the Marriage Act, the business act, the Provincial Offences Act—was approved by this Legislature through the COVID-19 emergency orders.

Development charges were something that was dealt with in a different bill. We listened to some of our

municipal partners and made changes to the regulations on that to better represent what our municipal partners want. That was debated in this place, went through committee hearings in this place and brought back.

When you look at some of the things that we're doing on education, Mr. Speaker—very important. I've said this a number of times: We were faced with a situation back in March where our schools were on March break at the time, and everything changed very, very quickly during March break. In a very short period of time—our educators, our boards of education and the Ministry of Education. I have to congratulate the Minister of Education. He has done such tremendous work on this file. I think that lost in all of this is that, despite the hyperbole and all the huffing and puffing from the opposition, this government was able to come to a negotiated agreement with all of our partners in education. We didn't have to do back-to-work legislation; we were able to sit down at a table and improve education by working with our friends in the labour movement. I'm quite proud of that. We're seeing some additional investments that will go into education because of the pandemic.

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When the minister brings forward changes to the Education Act on how we do things, we know full well that as we deal with the pandemic going forward—and look, it is our goal, as we would desire as a parent—as a father, I want my kids, I want my daughter who is going into grade 9, to be in school full-time. That's what I want. I want my other daughter, who's going into grade 7, in school full-time. I think all parents want that.

But as a father, I also want to make sure that if they do go back, they're going to be safe. I want to make sure that the teacher who is teaching them is safe, because as a parent it does me no good to have different teachers in the classroom all the time because we haven't done our job to make them safe. As a parent, if that means that somehow the return to school in September can't be guaranteed to be safe, as we have seen in almost every other jurisdiction worldwide that has gone back—they have had to rethink how they have gone back. If that's the case, then we will be prepared for that.

What government wouldn't prepare for a back-to-school situation that could see things change, depending on what happens over the next number of weeks and number of months? How this pandemic is working is completely different from region to region across this province. Some of our rural communities have not had outbreaks of COVID-19 or have not had an active case of COVID-19 for many, many weeks, so they may be in a position where they can have a full-time return to school, but there are other jurisdictions where that has not been the case, and I don't think that parents in those jurisdictions would suggest that we should rush it and put them back to school.

What we're going to do is to make sure that if that is not the case, then we learn from what other jurisdictions have done and how other jurisdictions have tried to meet with this and the shortcomings they had. We've learned

from what some of the better jurisdictions in the province have done when it comes to online learning. It has been very different, online learning. Even in my own community, from one school board to the next school board, whether it's the Catholic board or the public board, parents on either side have a complete difference of opinion on how the online learning worked for them. We can learn from both boards, because both boards did some things that were unique. Both boards did things that were good, but it is our job as a Legislature to take the best of all of them and put it into place.

Overwhelmingly, as a parent, I frankly don't care what the members opposite say; my number one responsibility as a parent is to my two daughters. If they're not safe, if I'm not certain that this government and this Legislature have put in place a return for them that is safe, I frankly do not care that the opposition are upset about it; what I care about as a parent is that my kids will be safe and that my kids' friends will be safe. I'll let them complain all they want, but I'm going to do my job.

We all get elected in this place and we all say, "Oh, we do it for our kids. We do it for the next generation." Now we have the opportunity to make sure that that's in place. We have the opportunity through these two bills to make sure that in the worst global pandemic, something that has never stricken this province in over a hundred years, we can do our job to make sure that the people of this province are safe, and we will do that. We're doing that in a way that, unlike almost any other jurisdiction, we're actually in this place. In the month of March, we came back. In April, we came back. In May, we came back. In June, we came back. In July, we're here. We're having question period, because it's important that people have the opportunity to question the cabinet—and it's not just important for members of the opposition; it's important for members of the government who have had serious questions for members of the cabinet. That's why we've had question period, and that's why we're here today dealing with these COVID-19-related matters.

So again, when I hear the members opposite talk about, "Well, we really didn't know what we were talking about when we gave unanimous consent for the emergency orders back in March, and then when we renewed them in April, and when we gave unanimous consent and we approved them in May, and when we approved them again in June, and when we recently reapproved them until July 24"—they're suggesting that they weren't properly understanding the significance of those orders. To quote the member for Kitchener, she said that the emergency orders were passed without clarity. Mr. Speaker, these were debates that were held in this chamber.

At no time did any of those other emergency—the state of emergency did not go to committee. We passed the extension of the state of emergency a number of times. We passed a budget in March that did not go to committee. We passed important labour legislation that did not go to committee, Mr. Speaker, because we understood the importance of moving very quickly during very difficult times. When you look at these two bills, by and large they

are a compendium of the things that we have done as a Legislature to deal with COVID-19. As I said, I'm quite proud of both of these bills.

It is not to suggest that the opposition haven't had an opportunity to make amendments, Mr. Speaker. As you know, one of the guiding principles, when a bill is introduced, is that the government always looks forward to, "Will the opposition amend the bill before you can start debate?" On Bill 195, the opposition House leader did provide an amendment. As you know, when an amendment comes forward, it delays debate by two days in this place—in other words, killing committee—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You're just obsessed with him; just obsessed.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member for Hamilton-Ancaster says that I'm obsessed. Yes, I'm obsessed with parliamentary procedure and parliamentary tradition. I'm obsessed with keeping the people of the province of Ontario safe. That's why I ensured that this House was still in session late in July. I'm obsessed with making sure that my daughters, who haven't been in full-time school since March, have a quality education. I'm obsessed to make sure that the health care system can respond to the people of the province of Ontario. I'm obsessed to make sure that long-term care meets the needs of our seniors. I'm obsessed by the fact that my father-in-law is at home and requires care from a nurse—

Interjections.

Hon. Paul Calandra: And somehow it's funny for the opposition. They find it funny. And this is why they've had one Premier in this province in history—one Premier. He was so embarrassed by his own party, he quit it and joined the Liberals.

The funny thing is that the opposition House leader, ironically, talks about how embarrassed he is by his time in government as well. As you know, Mr. Speaker—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Get a room.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I wish the people at home could hear what comes out. Honestly, it's shameful, frankly, and ultimately I feel sorry for the people of Hamilton-Ancaster that their member has so little to offer in debate that she thinks that those types of derogatory comments across the aisle somehow add to debate.

The opposition House leader was so embarrassed by his own party and his own time in government—because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the opposition House leader is the father of time allocation. It was an NDP government that thought up time allocation and really became masters of time allocation. He talks about—not to digress too much; they talk about the Conservatives' time in office, and they talk about the Committee of the Whole. Well, whilst the NDP government, between 1990 and 1995, was dreaming up time allocation, the Mike Harris government of 1995 was allowing the House to go into the Committee of the Whole and to debate things for months. So I'll take that legacy over the legacy of the members opposite.

You don't have to look too far, even in this place. While the members of the opposition were fighting tooth and nail

to bring SCOFEA, the standing committee on finance—for the people at home, the standing committee on finance is doing tremendous work, dealing with sectors, whether it's our municipal partners, whether it's tourism, culture; they're going to be talking with our friends in the infrastructure and building community, small and medium enterprises. The opposition wanted to bring that down after a month. So they wanted to hear from three weeks' worth of people, report-write for a week and then call it a day and go home. And they wanted to meet one person at a time over that three-week period, Mr. Speaker, and we said no. But I digress too much.

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When you look back at these two bills—so Bill 195: The opposition gets the first opportunity to debate it and they get the opportunity to put down amendments. As the government, you wait for an amendment, because you think a reasoned amendment is going to be something that they've had an opportunity to take a look at—it's going to be something productive. Maybe it will be something of value, Mr. Speaker. But here's the reasoned amendment from the opposition House leader: "That the motion for second reading of Bill 195, An Act to enact the Reopening Ontario ... 2020, be amended by deleting all the words after 'That' and substituting ... the words 'this bill be not now read.'" That's the grand total of their amendment.

You could think that maybe they just didn't like the bill, and maybe it's a one-off, but then Bill 197 comes forward. Here's the great amendment from the great members opposite, the democrats opposite who fight tooth and nail—they want bills to go to committee because they have so many suggestions. This is from the opposition House leader: "That the motion for second reading of Bill 197, An Act to amend various statutes in response to COVID-19 and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes, be amended by deleting all the words after 'That' and substituting ... the words 'this bill be not now read a second time.'" There you go.

So you think, maybe that's it; maybe it's just those two bills, colleagues. Maybe they don't like those two bills. You think, "Give them another chance." You go to Bill 171. They have an opportunity. They delay debate. They have the best NDP minds that money can buy thinking over up on the third floor, "What can we do? How can we amend the bill?" They're the guardians of democracy. And their amendment? "That this bill be not now read a second time." Whew, hard work.

So you think, okay, maybe—maybe—it's just the three bills. Bill 115: I can read it all over again, but ultimately it is, "That this bill be not now read a second time." Working hard for the people of the province of Ontario, the NDP.

Let's go back to Bill 108—hard work. Now, they struggled on this for a while, colleagues. I can tell that they struggled on this reasoned amendment, because it took them a while to get the reasoned amendment in. This is a bill that they didn't want to have discussed in the House. Their amendment? Delaying it by two days—so taking away two days' worth of committee hearings. And what is it? "That this bill be not now read a second time."

Colleagues, I know what you're thinking, that it was just a few bills. Maybe there's something else, Mr. Speaker. Let me see if I can find some other ones. Yes, again, Bill 108: "That this bill be not now read a second time." It's on and on and on. The best and the brightest—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to interrupt the government House leader. There have been comments on both sides of the House that are less about the actual text of the motion. It's degenerating into a series of personal jibes back and forth. I don't think that's helpful or necessary.

I'm going to ask both sides of the House to think about that for a minute, and I'm going to ask the government House leader to sum up his remarks.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments. Not to disagree with your fine judgment and ruling—and I apologize. I assumed that, given the fact that so much time was spent talking about the Harper government and a number of other things, a great deal of latitude was going to be permitted.

I only brought up the reasoned amendments as a way to get back to why we're unable to go to fuller committee hearings on this. The NDP had an opportunity to allow us to get to committee hearings and decided that they would delay debate on this bill for two days. Now, in their speeches, they're talking about, "Let's get a day out of committee hearings." Well, they delayed debate on this bill for two days with a reasoned amendment, which really was a cut-and-paste from every other amendment they have brought forward in this place. So when it comes to the opposition, they have nobody to blame but themselves. And the people of the province of Ontario—you're right—will hold the members opposite accountable for this.

But ultimately, Mr. Speaker, when I'm talking to the people of the province of Ontario, overwhelmingly, they're saying a number of things—they're saying, "Keep the province safe." They're saying, "Keep doing what you're doing, because it is important to our families. It's important to our small businesses." And we are going to keep doing that. They're saying to us, "Make the investments that you need to make to get the economy going again," and we've done that.

I couldn't help but notice that the member from Willowdale was talking just this past weekend. I noticed a number of things that he was doing. He was talking about transit and transportation. Well, this is something that we've progressed forward on since June in this place. These are all very important items, so why are we bringing in time allocation? We're bringing in time allocation, again, because these are items that had been approved by this Legislature unanimously. Every single one of these emergency orders has come to this place and has been approved by this place. The member opposite even suggests that it's not a problem: "Just bring it to us, and we'll approve it every single time."

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, depending what it is.

Hon. Paul Calandra: So now that's changed. Now it's "depending." But when they get up and speak in here, you

get—I've often talked to colleagues about the Jekyll and Hyde of the NDP. I've done that. What they say in person and what they then scream out when the microphone is not on them are usually two different things, Mr. Speaker. We should almost put Hansard inside the NDP benches so that they could get everything, all of the comments that they're saying.

In the speeches officially on this, they say, "No problem. These emergency orders, we agreed with them. Bring them back to the House, and we will give you approval for them right away. It won't be a problem. No issue." But there's an issue with Bill 195, which does exactly what they approved for four months, which does exactly what the people of the province of Ontario have asked us to do to keep this place safe. So that is why we are bringing in time allocation, because we do not want to spend 24 days in the Committee of the Whole, like the member opposite who just—in his own speech he said they were doing it at the time because they wanted to delay and be obstructionist, Mr. Speaker, just like the delay of the reasoned amendments which were no amendments.

Now, we are government. We can play the opposition games. I've said it a number of times: The opposition has very important role to play, and we have to respect that. But we will not play games with the health care of the people of the province of Ontario in a pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

It is wonderful how good the people of this province have been for months—and how difficult the circumstances have been for everybody in this province. It is breaking everybody's hearts when they go on their Main Streets and they see businesses that are closing because they have not been able to open for months.

Ms. Jill Andrew: You did that.

Hon. Paul Calandra: And I don't know of any business person that planned for a pandemic and for an inability to be open, Mr. Speaker.

This Legislature came down. So the member from St. Paul's says that we did it—we somehow created the pandemic on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. So was their confusion, like when this House was not sitting—

Ms. Jill Andrew: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order.

Ms. Jill Andrew: The House leader is putting false, untrue words into my mouth—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): First of all, that's not a point of order. Secondly, I have to ask you to withdraw now.

Ms. Jill Andrew: What am I withdrawing?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Your unparliamentary remark.

Interjection.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Sorry for saying "false."

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You have to say, "I withdraw."

Ms. Jill Andrew: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I remind the House that we're in the midst of a state of emergency. There is a pandemic, and I think the people of Ontario

would expect us to be debating this issue in a professional manner, devoid of gratuitous personal attacks on each other. That's what I hear in my riding; I know that's what you hear in your ridings.

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The government House leader to wind up his remarks.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is precisely—

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: If there is an opportunity for the member opposite to speak, and his comments—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay, the House will come to order.

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, sir. I know that there are 10 minutes left on the clock for the opposition. They will have the opportunity to debate this as much as they like. They've had a number of speakers come up.

When it comes to this motion for time allocation, here's a fact: We will pass, hopefully, this time allocation with the support of the members of both sides of this House, because the emergency orders that have been put in place have changed how Ontario has done during this pandemic.

Fact: We have been better off as a province because of the emergency orders that have been approved by this Legislature since March. That is a fact, and that is why we're bringing this time allocation.

Fact number 2: This could have been debated earlier had the NDP not delayed the beginning of debate on this by two days, Mr. Speaker. That's a fact. That's what happened, and that's why passage has been delayed.

Fact number 3, Mr. Speaker: When a global pandemic hit in March, none of us expected that to happen, and that's why this Legislature unanimously gave the support to me as the government House leader to have this place sit in a different way for months.

Fact number 4, Mr. Speaker: Everybody has had to move very, very quickly, whether it's our educators or our small business people, to try and survive and still do well during a pandemic.

Fact: The emergency orders in Bill 195 will give us the opportunity to continue to respond not only today and not only tomorrow but for months to come, because that is what the people of the province of Ontario want.

Fact: The issues in Bill 197, which are also part of this time allocation motion—the Marriage Act, proposed during the global pandemic and approved by this House, was put into this act. Changes to the business act: proposed during the pandemic and put into this act. The Provincial Offences Act: proposed during the pandemic, approved by this House and put into this act. Development charges previously debated by this House were modified by this House to respect what our municipal partners wanted changed and put into this act.

These are the things that we're debating. This is why we want to get moving very quickly, and this is why we have decided to move time allocation on these bills at this time, Mr. Speaker.

The people of the province of Ontario, when they look at what we have accomplished as a government and what they have accomplished as a people and what they will continue to accomplish by working very hard—I am very confident that, unlike the opposition, they're not asking us to slow down. They're asking us to keep going. They're asking us to continue to do all that we can to keep the people of this province safe, and that's what we're going to do by bringing in time allocation on these two items, Mr. Speaker.

I do sincerely hope that the members opposite will reconsider. I don't know when it was that they changed their minds with respect to the emergency orders being important or when they changed their minds that a state of emergency that had been unanimously approved by this place for months was somehow no longer in the best interest of the people of the province of Ontario. They'll have an opportunity at third reading to better explain to the people of the province why it is that they do not support the emergency orders—what part of the emergency orders they feel somehow are no longer needed now and going forward. They'll have an opportunity to do that at that point, Mr. Speaker. And they will have a continued opportunity, with respect to Bill 197, to highlight the things that they do not approve of and that they do not like. But ultimately this House will have an opportunity to vote on those items. I hope that the House will approve of those measures, because I believe we have to do this and we have to do this as quickly as possible if we are to continue to make the progress that we are making on COVID-19.

With that, I'll yield the floor so we can hear some additional comments from the opposition.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and debate—today on government motion 86—time allocation. First, just a couple of minutes on time allocation: Remember when a few of you were probably on this side, when we were debating when the Liberals put time allocation—and there were a couple of great speakers. One of them is now the Minister of Natural Resources, and he is responsible for comparing time allocation to the guillotine. Whenever the Liberals put forward time allocation, the whole Conservative caucus would go, whoosh, like a guillotine because those were the days when Conservatives seemed to have a principled stand against time allocation. You should look it up in Hansard. Some of the best speeches are from the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Municipal Affairs—fantastic speeches on time allocation, better than we could ever do, and I would advise you to go have a look.

Now, on this one—this is a unique time allocation motion. This kills two bills with one stone, and it eliminates committee altogether, which is an affront to democracy. But specifically we are now in a state of emergency, because of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, and this Parliament gave the government the right to invoke emergency measures. The government House leader himself said that those emergency measures were passed unanimously in March, in April, in May, in June, and at no time

did the opposition—we realized the issue at hand, we realized how important it was and that the government needed to move, and those emergency measures were granted.

But now, the government wants the right to have emergency measures, and these are very serious issues—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Emergency orders.

Mr. John Vanthof:—emergency orders—the right to close businesses, the right to limit how many people can assemble. Those are very serious issues—issues that should be brought back to the Legislature, not to a committee created by the government.

This isn't just day-to-day stuff, folks. And you are taking a pretty big leap, and if it was just the opposition saying that because it's our job to oppose but to take an emergency order that you were given and now somehow cloak that with this time allocation, it's an overreach. It's a possible abuse of power.

You can say, "Well, that's the NDP saying this," but I would advise you to read the National Post—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A very Liberal paper.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. Normally the NDP does not quote from the National Post a lot, but on July 20, in the opinion column, "Ontario's Semi-Emergency COVID-19 Bill Is an Attack on Our Rights"—I advise you to read that article. It's written by Christine Van Geyn.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I remember her.

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Mr. John Vanthof: I don't often agree with Christine either, but on this one she's right on, because we are in a state of emergency and you are slashing the democratic process to give yourself more power. Are you going to abuse it? I don't know. We don't know. But you're giving yourself the ability to abuse it.

You know what that reminds me of? You will recall when you were first elected and you had the "For the people" signs and you had all that stuff, and things weren't really going well for you in the polls. The Premier stepped up to the plate in COVID-19. He stepped up to the plate. But this bill has echoes of the pre-pandemic Premier, the one who was willing to challenge the Constitution to halve Toronto council. This one is the start of the end for you guys. Seriously. This is such an overreach of power.

The government House leader is a very good speaker. He was talking about how the amendments brought forward—the way the system is supposed to work, like in a bill like 197, which is an omnibus bill, which does a lot of hacking and slashing to our environmental regulations, something that no Ontarian called my office or no one in Timiskaming-Cochrane called my office on, and I don't think very many other people got calls: "The thing that we have to use to fight COVID-19 is to slash our environmental regulations, pronto. That is the number one issue." That's what you're doing here.

That is why you need to bring a bill like that to committee—so people can actually come to committee, and then you make amendments based on what the people actually say. But you don't want to listen to the people on this one.

These two bills put together are, mark my words, the beginning of the end of this Conservative administration.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I hear the debate that is going on this afternoon, and I have to tell you that these are unusual times. They're times that require action. Normally, this House does not sit in the summer—something we're doing because people are expecting that we do all we can to bring this province back and reopen it.

I have met with many businesses and individuals that are suffering from the impact of this pandemic. Many of these businesses will never open again. It's not something they're looking forward to. They've invested all their money into it. A lot of people, whether it be—I sat on Bill 184 over the last number of weeks. Small landlords that have bought houses—they're renting them out, and that's their retirement. They don't have pension plans; they don't have other means. Now they have no ability to collect rent, as an example. So they expect this government to come up with programs, and those are the things we're doing to make this happen.

Some of these bills, like Bill 184, were put in before the pandemic hit us. It had regulations in it that would help both sides: It helped the tenants and it would help the landlords.

We're moving into Bill 197. Same thing: People are expecting us to take the moves necessary. I had a tour with the minister of tourism on Saturday. We met with some businesses and facilities in our area that are facing closure—a large hotel in my area, but small compared to the province of Ontario, sitting there with no residents. They were lucky they had some work from CP Rail that's going on. It keeps a few rooms in their hotel. But they're having a very hard time, and they don't know if they can survive this.

We need to make changes. We need to do things. And of course, if you look at this bill, we're not talking about putting in new regulations; we're talking about allowing us to continue with what's here and make changes without coming back to the House. We'll be back in a month's time, and I think it's reasonable to assume that we have the authority to make the changes that our populations expect, no less. I heard some of the amendments made by the opposition. Really, many people might perceive that as not helpful. If you're sitting there and you're waiting and dealing with another client—it wasn't in my riding but in a nearby riding—and they're looking at not surviving the season if they don't get a chance to open this summer.

We can't sit around. Summer is fairly short in Canada. Even at our local grocery stores, they depend on the tourism that comes out of Quebec to fill up the campsites. They wouldn't be there if it wasn't for this market. So we have to do things to make that tourism—and not to the numbers we had before, but they need those customers. And if they hear, "Well, we'll be back in September"—by September, it's too late.

I think that's the message that we're trying to get here. This is not business as usual. And yes, we haven't seen a government maybe do some of the things that we, as a

government, have done over the last six months, but we've never seen anything like this since the pandemic of 1918. In those days, with the lack of travel and the lack of opportunities, it was different. We're talking about trying to figure out how to get our children back to school in the fall, and that's not an easy decision, because there's still a lot we don't know about this virus. Every day we learn a little bit more, and lots of times we find out that what we thought yesterday is not correct.

I think that when we're looking at allowing some of our procedures to move on through until September when we get back, we need to make some of these decisions and we need to make them in a timely manner. That's what this bill allows, and it also allows the infrastructure to get built so that—for people who can work, it gives them the purpose of getting back.

I know we've approved a large number of infrastructure projects. Last summer, they were waiting for federal approval. But it just speaks to how slow government can move sometimes. These are projects that my municipalities are waiting for, and it would put people back to work. We need to look at what else we can do to put people back to work.

Anyway, I just wanted a chance to get up, and I know we have other members who want to speak on this side, so thank you for the opportunity. I think that this is not business as usual, and I think we should treat it as not business as usual.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: Madam Speaker, I've been listening attentively to all my colleagues across the aisle as well as on our side. Our government House leader, as always, has done a great job articulating why it's so important for us to get things done for the people of Ontario, as he's done. He's got a reputation both here and at the federal level for his constituents, and I have an immense amount of respect for him.

But this is an important request that I have for all colleagues in this House. I've spent, like you, the entire time reaching out to my constituents; in particular, our small business owners, who, by the way, are our family members, our cousins, our next-door neighbours etc. They have a simple message for us: They need support now. They need help now.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Absolutely. They need our help now, which is why our government has been so clear and so nimble to make sure that we support them every step of the way, whether it's rent control, whether it's energy support, whether it's just to provide them with deferral of payments. Our government has been nimble.

But we've done it together up until now. In the spirit, you've been with us throughout, and our government House leader alluded to this in his speech. Don't shy away from that. This isn't the time to do that. This is a time to make sure you stand behind us, united, to make sure that the people's concerns are met. This isn't a time to play partisan politics. This is a time for us to work with one

another to make sure those families and businesses are supported. They need us now, more than ever. Believe me, I know, like we have, you've done your part to speak with your constituents. Please make sure that you reach out to them. Please make sure that you hear them, and you will know why it's so important to make sure when issues arise, we're there to address them right away.

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We've worked well together on this. We've done a good job to get to where we are today. But you can't take your foot off the pedal now. People need us now more than ever. In particular, as the province starts to reopen and we go into a recovery, they're going to need us more than ever. There are 124 of us elected, who have the honour to represent 14.5 million people here. We've got to take that seriously.

They rely on us. Every day, they tune in. You've seen the ratings when the Premier goes to address Ontarians every day. You've seen the ratings. Why? Because these are very important decisions that people rely on every single day. You simply can't play politics with them. Every single day, people tune in to see if there's a better day, if there's hope in the future, and they look at all of us.

This isn't a time where people look to see if you're orange or green or red or blue; they look at you, as they look at all of us, because they rely on us, and we cannot let them down. I know for a fact that the Premier hasn't, and I thank the member across for pointing out the fact that the Premier has been so incredible since pretty much getting elected—but absolutely the leader we need during this pandemic.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Oh, my God. He has been delivering every single day—every single day for us, no doubt about that. He's the mailman—no doubt.

Mr. Speaker, families, small businesses—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Madam Speaker. I apologize; I didn't see the change. Forgive me.

It's so important. Again, I plead to my colleagues across—because I've had conversations with them. I know that we all care about our families and small business owners. I know you do, just like we all do. Please, I beg you to make sure that we continue the process, that we work together to make sure that we serve the people now more than ever. They're relying on us. I look forward to your support as we continue to serve to the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: As a new member in the Legislature, I learn something new every day. One of the things that has certainly been a study of the Legislature is, what are the effects of power to individuals? What's it like when someone goes from a position of being in opposition to a position of government? There are so many opportunities for irony that come out of it.

I never, never heard the story about the guillotine—that the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry would actually come and break out the guillotine every time

allocation was introduced under the Liberals. In fact, it's interesting; many years ago, I sat in the gallery once. I came out when the NDP was front and centre, fighting against the privatization of hydro. I actually got to hear, amongst other things, that same minister speak, and it was a great speech. What was the speech? He took out the Hansard and he literally read, over and over, multiple Liberals who were speaking against the privatization of hydro—which they did, under Harris—and I was sitting there watching this and thinking, “Oh, my God. How ironic, how embarrassing, for the Liberals.”

Since my time that I've been in here, I've seen that same irony. I've seen that same irony in Bill 159, that I was a critic of, in terms of seeing the government's perspective shift and switch. Actually, earlier, a government speaker spoke about his past work on delegated authorities and how we need to inject transparency in it; we need to bring it subject to FIPPA. I thought what he introduced was brilliant, and it's something that I support, that New Democrats support. And yet, here, again, we're going to be debating the creation of potentially a new delegated authority, one that will give opportunities to the development industry to once again now intercede and have decision-making over no less than the building code. In my notes and some of my speech later today, if I have an opportunity, I'm going to talk about, again, what happened out in BC when you gave said developers that type of power over the building code.

But the most interesting thing is that irony is alive and well, and the government is certainly teaching us a whole lot about that.

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

Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 86 relating to allocation of time on Bill 195, An Act to enact the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020, and Bill 197, An Act to amend various statutes in response to COVID-19 and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes.

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

I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

“Pursuant to standing order 30(h), I respectfully request that the vote on the government notice of motion number 86 be deferred until deferred votes on Tuesday, July 21, 2020.”

Vote deferred.

PROTECTING TENANTS
AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY
HOUSING ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 VISANT LA PROTECTION
DES LOCATAIRES ET LE RENFORCEMENT
DU LOGEMENT COMMUNAUTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on July 15, 2020, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 184, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the Housing Services Act, 2011 and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and to enact the Ontario Mortgage and Housing Corporation Repeal Act, 2020 / Projet de loi 184, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment, la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation et édictant la Loi de 2020 abrogeant la Loi sur la Société ontarienne d'hypothèques et de logement.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 184. I think this bill is timely, and it's a balanced approach. I myself have been both a landlord and a tenant. I know that there are good landlords, there are good tenants, there are bad landlords and bad tenants, but I think this bill takes a very even-handed approach to both. I think it's going to be a positive bill for the province of Ontario.

With that, as we emerge from COVID-19, we need to ensure we have a system that works for both parties, both landlords and tenants. We all know that there are delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board, and our government continues to work to ensure that resources are being used effectively and efficiently to support program and service delivery. That's why this bill is so important.

Our proposed changes allow for mediation outside the Landlord and Tenant Board, freeing up resources and reducing delays.

First, I'd like to bring attention to the eviction process. As we know, the eviction process has five basic points: notice, application, hearing, order and enforcement. Those are the five basic steps. In most cases, the first step is for the landlord to give the tenant a notice in writing that they want the tenant to move out. Landlords must use the official notice form that is given to them by the Landlord and Tenant Board. The notice includes details of why the tenancy is ending, and it may include information on what the tenant can do to prevent evictions; for example, repairing damages or paying overdue rent. An eviction notice is just the first step in a five-step process.

A tenant who receives an eviction notice does not have to move out, and the form says that quite clearly. If the tenant does not remedy the situation or move out on the deadline listed on the notice, the landlord can move to the second step and apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to evict the tenant.

How is this particular bill helping tenants? Let's take a look at some of the aspects of how we're helping tenants in this province. Speaker, Bill 184 does not harm tenants and speed up evictions, as the members on the opposite side have been proclaiming. Instead, this legislation protects tenant rights, and would even afford more rights for tenants and their protection. We do not want to cast a blanket over all landlords saying they are bad, but when there is a problematic landlord, we do want tenants to feel that they do have hope.

I want to mention the key ways for how this legislation will protect tenants in this pandemic. An avenue for protecting tenants is adjusting the compensation that a

landlord must pay the tenant. We have heard time and time again that renters face a problem with renovictions. These types of evictions are seen in the media to occur. Just to provide clarification, a renoviction is when a landlord evicts a tenant to repair or renovate a unit, which is quite common.

We know that housing stability is a key part in overall well-being. We have heard these concerns, and we are addressing this problem. We're also increasing the fines for those who break the law. I think that's important.

1520

This proposed legislation would require tenant compensation of one month's rent for a no-fault eviction where no compensation existed before. Additionally, it would allow the Landlord and Tenant Board to order up to 12 months' rent in tenant compensation for eviction notices issued in bad faith. Furthermore, right now, the law requires larger landlords—those with five or more units—to compensate tenants. Speaker, we are going to adjust those who must pay this compensation.

We're proposing that small landlords, of which there are many throughout the province—those with one to four units will also pay compensation to existing tenants if they are evicted for repairs and renovations. I hope the opposition would support this.

Landlords would have to pay compensation and give tenants the right to come back at the same rent. This is very important and very empowering for tenants across the province of Ontario.

In addition, we are closing the gap that currently exists that has a negative impact on renters. If the landlord evicts the tenant because someone else bought the home and wants to use the unit for themselves, they don't have to pay compensation. Our legislation would require landlords to compensate tenants in both cases: whether they evict the tenants to use the unit for themselves, or on behalf of a homebuyer who wants to use the unit for themselves.

Speaker, we want to make it very clear that we are protecting rights, and that is why this legislation would also increase fines for offences under the act. The proposed legislation doubles the maximum fine amounts for offences under the act to \$50,000 for an individual and \$250,000 for a corporation. That's up from \$25,000 for an individual and \$100,000 for a corporation. Stiffer penalties for bad landlords: That's what our government is focused on.

This legislation will also make illegal rent increases legal. We are making a very minor change to bring rules that have been in place since 1998 into alignment. A 2007 court ruling found a loophole in the Tenant Protection Act of 1996 that occurs in very rare circumstances. We are simply closing that loophole and bringing consistency to the act. Almost all tenants with landlords will not feel the difference. It's a technical loophole being closed.

Another important step for protecting tenants is strengthening the rental housing enforcement unit. This unit has the power to launch formal investigations and lay charges. We're enhancing those enforcement activities to be more proactive when they suspect someone isn't

following the law: for example, contacting landlords and tenants when they feel that there is credible information to believe an offence may occur.

Our proposed changes would also allow investigators from the rental housing enforcement unit to get a court order to access financial records more appropriately. This would help them investigate offences relating to filing false and misleading information with the Landlord and Tenant Board. We're also proposing to give them more time to enforce the rules when the landlord fails to reimburse a tenant for a refundable key deposit.

As I've stated earlier, Madam Speaker, not all landlords are bad. The vast majority of landlords operate in a fair way towards their tenants and in good faith, but for those who do not, we want to make sure there is a record of their past actions.

We are proposing that landlords must disclose to the Landlord and Tenant Board any attempt to evict a tenant under the "own use" or repair or renovation provisions in the last two years. This would help adjudicators at the Landlord and Tenant Board to look for patterns and identify landlords who may be breaking the law.

I know that our government has been committed to transparency. This is transparency for tenants, it's transparency for the board, and it's a more open system.

In terms of protecting landlords, we do need to protect landlords as well. We have committed to finding a balanced approach with this legislation. We understand that everyone deserves a place to call home and expand rights to achieve that end, protecting from evictions and enabling renters to seek compensation.

But the legislation also addresses concerns that have been presented by landlords, and make it easier to become a landlord, which, as my previous members have spoken about, is the dream of many Canadians and the pension plan for many Canadians who become small landlords.

This bill encourages people to become landlords. As we all know, with more landlords in our community, it not only helps renters and potential renters. By encouraging more people to become landlords, it's going to help increase the supply of rental housing. Subsequently, it's also going to increase housing choice for renters to find the perfect home to rent. Most importantly, it's going to make housing more affordable for people across this province.

The legislation addresses the concerns of landlords and streamlines the process in two main ways. The first includes proposals to allow landlords to recover costs for certain tenant behaviour. The second is moving certain complaints from the Small Claims Court process to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Again, everything we can keep out of the legal system and keep within the tribunal system will save time, money, and reduce red tape. Legal battles are often costly, waste time and money, and are overly burdensome.

Currently, landlords can only look to recover costs for damages. If passed, this legislation would also allow landlords to seek compensation for costs they incur due to bad tenant behaviour. I want to highlight this measure

using an example previously used by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. If a tenant pulls the fire alarm for no reason—which unfortunately some people do, believe it or not—the fire department may charge back that landlord. Or if there's a problem in the building with insects or mice, and the landlord hires an exterminator to treat every unit, but the tenant refuses to let the exterminator in, the landlord may have to pay the exterminator to come back for a second time, paying out of his or her own pocket. This is simply unacceptable.

A landlord can seek to evict the tenant, but we want to give landlords more options. Allowing them to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board to recover their costs would create an alternative to eviction. We all want to minimize evictions. Landlords do, renters do; I'm sure everybody in this chamber does. I believe this bill will help with that. This will help broaden the options for landlords and will also help tenants.

Furthermore, with the current system, some processes are handled by the Landlord and Tenant Board while some go to Small Claims Court. If a tenant physically damages an apartment, for example, by kicking down a door, punching a hole in the wall—I'm sure nobody in this chamber would do that, but there are some people who do these things—the landlord can seek compensation with the Landlord and Tenant Board. But if the tenant doesn't pay their utility bill, the landlord has to go to the Small Claims Court. This process can be confusing. It's time-wasting. It's inefficient for everybody in the entire system.

We're proposing to make the process simpler and more efficient for landlords. If passed, the changes would allow landlords to go directly to the Landlord and Tenant Board for unpaid rent, utility bills and damage costs for up to one year after the tenant moves out. This would bring additional fairness to the system by allowing landlords the same opportunity to access the board that is available to tenants after they move out.

For a landlord, their livelihood depends on their rent. When they are not collecting rent or have to pay expenses that should have been covered by the tenant, this directly impacts their ability to save for retirement, their pension, or pay their bills.

I believe this bill, Bill 184, will also help ensure tenants and landlords work together better. Speaker, I want to spend a little bit of time talking about tenants and landlords working together for an unpaid rental agreement.

Bill 184 proposes encouraging mediation or alternate dispute resolution between landlords and tenants, something that is already done in most other provinces—in fact, seven other provinces. With this bill, we do not want landlords and tenants to turn on each other. The job of a government is to bring people together. That's what our government is focused on here: trying to bring landlords and tenants into agreement as much as possible. It doesn't mean every dispute is going to be resolved, but if we can minimize the fighting, get dispute resolution, everyone is going to be happy and there's going to be less money and time wasted.

When rent is overdue, we want to encourage landlords and tenants to work together to come up with repayment

programs rather than simply resorting to evictions. Our province will not be the first at this alternative dispute resolution. Alternate dispute resolution is already available in seven provinces across Canada, including Quebec, Nova Scotia and Manitoba, to name a few. Ontario is merely playing catch-up with what the rest of Canada has already seen—and it seemed to be working.

I want to make this clear: Once there's a repayment plan, it gets sent to the Landlord and Tenant Board for review. Only if the board agrees does it issue a consent order, which sets out the terms of repayment. If the Landlord and Tenant Board does not approve the agreement, then the parties go to a hearing, so nobody is forced to accept a repayment plan. What this basically does is to try to get people to resolve their concerns, their issues, before it has to go through a proper channel and, again, waste a lot of people's time, energy and money.

1530

Even if the tenant receives a notice of eviction, they do not need to move out. The landlord will have to go through the board, and only after the Landlord and Tenant Board issues an order of eviction would that take effect. Currently, the Landlord and Tenant Board must review and consider each case's circumstance to determine whether or not the eviction should be refused or delayed. The proposed change was made at the standing committee in light of the pandemic. It would emphasize to landlords the importance of making efforts to negotiate repayment plans with their tenants, to help maintain tenancies. The change would require the Landlord and Tenant Board to consider, among other factors, whether a landlord allowed the tenant an opportunity to pay arrears before issuing an order.

One of the objectives of Bill 184 is to create more efficiencies. Speaker, I'd like to turn my attention here for the last five minutes on the efficiencies that this bill will create. This legislation would help create efficiencies at the Landlord and Tenant Board, as well. It would require tenants to give advance notice of any new issues that they wish to raise in an eviction hearing. This would help everyone prepare and would prevent hearings from being delayed and postponed. It would also clarify that the tenant has 12 months to dispute a potentially improper rent increase notice, similar to other disputes. As of right now, they can go ahead with this notice without even giving advance notice about what the issues are, coming from the renter to the landlord. Giving more information to everybody involved makes for a better, cleaner tribunal process. Having information is key.

I'd like to touch on changes that Bill 184 would make to other legislation. This bill is also proposing changes to the Housing Services Act. Our proposed changes are enabling and would create the foundation for a more flexible, efficient community housing system that would allow for more locally driven, flexible relationships between service managers and housing providers; help service managers and housing providers become more sustainable; incent housing providers to stay in the system and continue to offer community housing; and protect

tenants and public investments in community housing if a provider decides to leave the system. It would also give clarity to housing providers whose legacy agreements and mortgages have ended, and would also encourage innovation and creativity to offer a range of different types of housing assistance that meet people's varied needs. Service managers would continue to be responsible for local community housing administration, because our government understands that every community is different and we are committed to giving them the flexibility they require to meet their unique needs, now more than ever.

This proposed legislation is a needed step to creating more rental units and making housing more affordable. There is no doubt that throughout the province of Ontario, we have an extreme shortage of supply, and although with government legislation we put in earlier the number of rental units has been increasing in terms of the building, we're still in very short supply in this province, which is making prices very unaffordable. We want more individuals to become landlords, to create more suites and available opportunities in an efficient, effective system. Bill 148 would streamline and cut red tape at the Landlord and Tenant Board over time and, where appropriate, make it easier to access alternatives to formal hearings like mediation.

We in this province all know that we have far too many pieces of red tape: 380,000 pieces of red tape, more than any jurisdiction on planet Earth, period. Our government was committed to coming in and reducing some of these over-burdensome regulatory pieces of red tape that are obviously not affecting health and safety, but are burdensome to businesspeople and people living their lives. This is just one more way we are continuing with our promise when we were elected over two years ago.

This legislation also offers the means to make it easier for landlords to recover the costs incurred for not just damages but also bad tenant behaviour, which impacts their livelihood. We are also providing protection to tenants. Being a tenant can at times be stressful. This is why action needs to be taken to address their concerns as well. The proposed legislation would help to prevent unlawful evictions by increasing tenant compensation for no-fault and bad-faith evictions, including renovations. It would help identify landlords who are not following the rules and double fines already in place.

Having a system tracking bad landlords has never been in place in this province. Now, having a system, renters will be able to see if there's a pattern of bad behaviour with some landlords, because we want tenants to feel secure while they rent. These are direct measures which will help tenants in the province of Ontario.

I believe this legislation, which Minister Clark, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, brought through, is legislation that should be supported by this entire House. It's balanced legislation. It's fighting for the rights of tenants. It's supporting landlords. It's a reasonable, balanced approach. It's taking a hard line on landlords who are abusive, who are not following the rules. But it's also taking a harder line on tenants who abuse the rules and abuse their privilege of renting.

This is the right legislation for the province of Ontario right now. I certainly hope that, it being such a balanced approach, the independent members and the official opposition would support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and responses?

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank my colleague from Oakville for his excellent speech and for really highlighting the important measures introduced in Bill 184. I agree with the member. He mentioned that there are, obviously, good tenants and good landlords. I would say that for the vast majority, that's the case. But are there bad apples both on the landlord side and on the tenant side? I think everyone in this House would agree there are bad apples, and that's exactly what this legislation is trying to address. It's trying to make the system fair both for landlords and for tenants.

The member talked about some of the measures in this legislation to prevent renovations. I'm wondering if the member can speak to some of the fines that are introduced in this piece of legislation to discourage landlords from using renovations as one of the methods.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member from Milton. I think you have a good understanding of this legislation, obviously, because we are taking a balanced approach.

You talked about some of the additional fines that our government is putting out there. We are proposing to increase the fines for bad behaviour among landlords from \$25,000 to \$50,000. We are proposing to fine the bad behaviour for corporations that are landlords from \$100,000 to \$250,000. These are significant deterrents to bad behaviour, and I believe this will have a positive effect with the landlords in this province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The member from Oakville talks a lot about the word "balance," but it's my understanding that with this bill, landlords can pass illegal, above-guideline rent increases, and it's the tenants' responsibility to file an application with the LTB within one year, so it may even be that the tenant is not even aware that this is an illegal, above-guideline increase.

Essentially what you're saying is, the landlords can break the law, but it's the responsibility of the tenant to call them out on this. Can you explain to me how, in any way, that is balanced?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. This approach, contrary to what she's saying, is actually is a very balanced approach. We as a government—you know, good government is trying to bring people together. People have different opinions throughout our society, throughout the world. Good government tries to bring people together and come to terms, and that's what we're doing with this legislation. We're trying to get people to go through a resolution process before they even go to the tribunal. We are encouraging people to have a conversation. We are putting down harder fines, larger fines, on people who are doing improper things through being a landlord. So contrary to what the member opposite

said, we are taking a very balanced approach, which I think balances the rights of both tenants and landlords.

1540

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the member—and thank you for your speech; I learned a lot from it. In my riding, I had an email from Susan. She has power of attorney over her mother, who has COPD and collects OAS and CPP. They rely on an additional area that they rent out in their home for her mother's income to help her with her retirement; of course, she's a senior who, again, is on OAS and CPP. But unfortunately, their tenant isn't paying their rent. These are the situations we hear a lot about, and she's very vulnerable when it comes to COVID-19, being a senior and not being able to leave her home.

Can the member tell us how this bill will help individuals like Susan's mom?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member. That's a very good point. We don't want to vilify landlords. Some people have done that through this pandemic. There are a lot of great landlords in our great province and they play a very vital role in our province. Then there are some bad ones. Obviously, as a government, we want to make sure that those bad ones are not protected.

Now, to your question about what we are doing to help this individual who relies on a fixed income who has some rental income that probably pays their bills so they can live, and what we are going to do to protect them: Well, we're going to make things easier. They're not going to have to go through the tribunal for every little dispute. They're not going to have to go to small claims court. Maybe get a lawyer, maybe not, but certainly spend time and money to have to go through that process—we're not going to force them to do that. We're going to simplify things. We want to take some of the red tape out. We want to ensure that tenants are protected, but also that landlords like this get their rent cheque as well.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for your presentation. I want to address this question around a small-time landlord and a renter who is in a situation where they're not able to pay. In other provinces, such as BC, they've created a situation where we don't have to create an us-versus-them between landlords and tenants. They have introduced subsidies so that landlords get supplemental rent cheques, and they've also introduced a year-long repayment plan and are requiring landlords to move forward on that, so that tenants can pay back a little bit each month.

What is your plan to help tenants who have lost their job, through no fault of their own, keep their home? What is your plan for that?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite. There are some situations that you pointed out where some renters maybe lost a job, they're in a very bad situation, and we understand that. So what has our government done, and what are we going to do? Well, there are a few things. First of all, we're working in collaboration

with the federal government so that there are some income supplements if they've lost their job. I think that's certainly important. We've also provided \$350 million in a social services relief fund to improve housing and homeless shelters, including rent assistance for those most vulnerable as well.

To be able to say for anybody who has a bit of a tougher period that we're going to be able to support everybody is not feasible. But what we are doing is we are helping those who really need it the most in this dire situation. We're working in collaboration with the federal government and we're getting the support to the people who need it the most.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: During my time in committee over this bill, there seemed to be a lot of misunderstanding by the opposition over the ability to evict a tenant without a hearing if they do not meet or are unable to meet their agreement on repayment. I think our member from Oakville talked about some of the examples, and I think he did a great job of explaining that. Maybe you can just go over that because there seems to continue to be some misunderstanding in the ability that—the landlord cannot evict somebody without a chance for a hearing.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member, and you are correct. It's not going to be easier to evict. The goal of our government, as I mentioned, is to protect those who are vulnerable. They're going to have to go through a hearing. We're making things more collaborative. Where we can, we want to ensure that people who can pay the rent, do pay the rent. We're ensuring individuals and families can stay in their homes. We understand the urgency of having stable housing, particularly in this environment, and I believe this legislation meets the needs for those folks.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I just want to follow up on the additional comments that you made. To be very clear, I'm unclear about what the collaboration is. The federal government has moved forward with a CERB program to help people get by, and \$2,000 a month in Toronto is less than the average amount of rent that people have to pay for a one-bedroom apartment in this city. My question to you is, what has the provincial government done to help renters keep their homes?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: As I mentioned, I think it is important to talk about the collaboration of what we're doing with the federal government, because we are working in conjunction with them.

In terms of what the provincial government has done, I'm not sure if you've read the headlines in the paper over the last couple of months, but we've spent \$17 billion on pandemic relief. We have the most comprehensive provincial spending program in the history of the province to help the people of this province. Now, some of those are mortgage owners. Some of those are landlords. Some of those are renters. We've spent \$350 million in social assistance funding, as well, for those most vulnerable. So our government is focused on helping those most in need.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): We don't really have much time for a question.

Further debate?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: It's an honour to rise in this House, on behalf of the decent and hard-working people of York South–Weston, to speak today to government Bill 184, entitled the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act.

I want to express my disappointment with how this government is choosing to bring forward significant pieces of legislation without giving any prior notice to the official opposition or independent members. We have been dealing with an unprecedented shake-up of our civil and economic society with COVID-19. The end is still not yet in sight. Families, businesses, seniors and young people are in an era of uncertainty and disruption. People are hurting and struggling to deal with this crisis and just try to get by. At a time like this, in our province, we need a government that is willing to work with all parties and do their very best to have this Legislature collectively doing everything they can to work for the benefit of all citizens in Ontario.

This is unfortunately not the case. When we are given no notice of what bill we'll be debating until the government House leader calls it, all Ontarians pay the price. The quality of debate is enhanced and legislation is improved when, on this side of the House, we are properly given notice to prepare. This isn't only disrespectful to all members, it is showing disrespect to Ontarians, as bills like Bill 184 are rushed forward, with no opportunity for voices to be properly heard.

Upon reading Bill 184, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, it is quite clear that the only tenant protection is in the title itself. Why, in the middle of a pandemic, the government would choose to make over the landlord-tenant law is beyond me. At a time when tenants are struggling to keep their homes, and the ability to find other accommodations is next to impossible, this bill looks to allow tenants to be more easily displaced from their communities and pushed deeper into debt.

Everyone in Ontario deserves access to decent and affordable housing. That is a basic human right. When people have housing—and by that I mean stable, reliable housing—it only lifts a community and individuals in that community. It allows people to have employment, pursue education and raise a family. Knowing housing is there and not about to be taken away—or the rent suddenly skyrocketing—gives peace of mind and stability to citizens.

1550

COVID-19 has brought not only sickness but unemployment and instability. The mental health crisis, as a result, is significant. So why now would this government bring in Bill 184, which would only deepen the vulnerabilities that tenants face, very much like the crisis in long-term care that has been going on for decades—we, on this side of the House, don't need the military to tell us that conditions were horrible—the lack of affordable housing

and the shortages of protections that tenants have, we have long raised the alarm bells about.

So when Bill 184 makes changes that will make it easier to allow landlords to evict decent, rent-paying tenants, we wonder: What exactly are the priorities of this government and whom do they seek to protect? Bill 184 will provide a number of new ways for landlords to both evict and collect rent from current and past tenants. Even more disturbing is that these changes will apply retroactively to when the province first declared a state of emergency over the COVID-19 pandemic. All of those times the Premier stood at the podium and told people that he had their backs and would fight for them endlessly seem not to have been the case, Madam Speaker—at least not for everyone in Ontario.

Back in March, the province told tenants that hearings related to residential evictions would be halted until further notice due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, and that no new residential eviction orders would be issued during that time. Well, the reality is that thousands of tenants are fearful of losing their homes because they are falling behind on their rent because of the pandemic. Even though landlords are not able to execute the evictions just yet, that hasn't stopped their threats that evictions are coming.

Nobody deserves to live with the threat of eviction hanging above their head. In June, the Toronto Foundation released a report that estimated that thousands of people in Toronto were struggling with rent or had missed payments entirely. It is not an exaggeration, Madam Speaker, to suggest that unprecedented levels of homelessness could take place when the moratorium on evictions is lifted. Among the most vulnerable tenants in our society are newcomers to Canada and low-income families. Bill 184 takes direct aim at them.

Let us now look at how, under current law, disputes between landlords and tenants are handled. Under current practice, all disputes and rent that is overdue and owing must be heard by the Landlord and Tenant Board. In many cases, the resolution is a rent payment plan which ends up satisfying both the landlord and the tenant. Bill 184 eliminates the Landlord and Tenant Board from the equation and would allow landlords to determine their own repayment plan. This is a major shift in the power dynamic and leaves tenants at the mercy of their landlord.

There is an option, in that if the tenant rejects the landlord's payment plan, they can still proceed to the board. It is very unlikely that vulnerable tenants will know how to navigate that system. They will feel pressured into signing untenable agreements. In fact, Bill 184 permits the board to grant evictions if the tenant turns down a repayment plan. This clearly can lead to landlords offering a completely unreasonable repayment plan and then claiming the tenant's rejection as grounds for eviction before the board.

Madam Speaker, this contentious and harmful Bill 184 has been met with outrage from individuals and organizations province-wide. Kenneth Hale is the director of advocacy and legal services at the Advocacy Centre for

Tenants Ontario. Regarding Bill 184, Mr. Hale has suggested that “protecting public health must take priority over protecting the financial health. Putting tenants in jeopardy of homelessness and increased poverty is cruel and puts the lives of all Ontarians at risk.”

The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario is a community legal clinic with a mandate to advance and protect the interests of tenants living on lower incomes. Theirs is a voice this government should be listening to. In regard to Bill 184, they urged the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to act in the public interest and rewrite this bill. They set out five protections that tenants need during this pandemic crisis and post-pandemic, which are as follows:

- the continued restriction of evictions to urgent cases where public safety is at risk;
- restricting rent increases to maintain current rents, which already are untenable for nearly half of Ontarians;
- eliminate rent increases in newer units that are exempted from rent regulations as of November 2018;
- limit rent gouging by landlords by restricting rent increases between tenancies;
- ensure that the Landlord and Tenant Board's rules make ongoing preservation of homes the object of dispute resolution processes.

These points are all valid ones, and they came from a position of dealing with the front lines of tenant advocacy.

Back in 1979, 41 years ago, tenants in Ontario won important protections in their security of housing. It was established that nobody would lose their homes without due process of law. That due process included a hearing before an independent tribunal and a chance to plead their case. This was an important step forward in the rights and protections of tenants in the province.

In June 2019, the federal government passed the National Housing Strategy Act, which recognizes housing as a fundamental human right and that all levels of government have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right to housing.

Fast-forward to recent months, and this government, during a global COVID-19 pandemic, has taken the opportunity to weaken tenants' rights and take away the importance of someone having a secure home and living space.

A passionate society should be moving forward in advancing the interests and benefits towards its citizens. We should not be sliding backwards and increasing inequity, such as Bill 184 does.

Madam Speaker, I spoke earlier about the need for the government, the official opposition and independent members to all work together, especially during this difficult health, economic and personal time of a pandemic crisis. Back in late March, the official opposition suggested some real and achievable goals to relieve the pressure and uncertainty that tenants are facing. We called for a legal ban on evictions, lockouts and disconnections, including business tenants, for four months, and a legal ban on threatening to evict or disconnect a tenant's utilities. As well, we called for a provincially funded rent

subsidy of 80% of a household's rent, up to \$2,500 a month, for each of the following four months.

Our suggestions, very much like any dissenting voice the government hears, fell on deaf ears. We simply asked that when the Premier talks of having the backs of Ontarians—it was hoped that those backs were those folks who lost their jobs or lost income as a result of the pandemic.

Quite simply, with Bill 184, it is wrong for this government to make it harder for tenants to keep a roof over their heads, and especially when so many have fallen behind on rent during the pandemic, without any help from the province.

1600

This bill has many schedules that add up to a weakening of tenant protection in Ontario. I will touch on one of those schedules in particular. Schedule 4 is entitled the “Residential Tenancies Act.” There are a number of disturbing concerns about schedule 4 and the amendments that are being made to the Residential Tenancies Act. Incredibly, a rent increase that is imposed without the legally required 90 days' notice will now become legal if the tenant pays the increased rent for at least 12 consecutive months and hasn't filed an application to fight the increase. In other words, if that tenant does not really understand their rights and possibly finds out their rights have been violated months later, they are simply out of luck.

Our lack of housing often leaves people to rent seasonally, in trailer parks. Those tenants will no longer have the security of caps that have been loosened around above-guidelines rent increases. Schedule 4 limits a tenant's ability to defend themselves at an eviction hearing for being behind in rent payments by taking away their ability to raise new issues without prior notice.

Utility bills are often a significant portion of someone's rent. Now, for the first time, landlords with suite-metered units are no longer required to disclose those consumption costs to tenants.

I would very much like to know who has been asking for these changes, because it certainly could not have been coming from the tenants. And this government has the audacity to call this the “protecting tenants act.”

Madam Speaker, in my riding of York South–Weston, we have been inundated with phone calls and emails from renters who are fearful about Bill 184 and wonder exactly where this bill will leave them. So many people are struggling to feed their families and have a roof over their heads. These hard-working individuals don't have time to navigate complex legislation or even be aware of the rights they have as tenants. All they do know—and we hear this on a regular basis—is that tenants are often intimidated and bullied by their landlords. Many are fearful of even raising issues like poor living conditions, including repairs that are needed, because they are nervous about having to find other accommodations. This is no way to live, and Bill 184 just further tilts the rental playing field away from the interests of tenants.

It is said that nearly 50% of Ontario renters pay unaffordable housing costs. We know that the city of Toronto

is in a housing emergency and has been for quite some time. More than 100,000 households are on a waiting list to access social housing that is in short supply. The fact that millions of Ontarians are experiencing a loss of income during COVID-19 means that many renters are in very real danger of losing their homes. Urgent action is needed to address our housing crisis, and we are so very close to this crisis being a full-scale emergency. Bill 184 does nothing to address the housing crisis and only makes things worse by increasing the inequity of rights and adding chaos to an already troubling housing problem.

Currently, all disputes of evictions and rent in arrears must be heard by the Landlord and Tenant Board, some of which result in rent repayment plans. The bill will allow landlords to bypass the board and offer tenants their own repayment plan. Tenants might find themselves pressured by landlords to enter into unaffordable repayment plans in the offices of the landlords.

By removing a tenant's right to raise tenants' rights issues at hearings if they have not given written notice in advance—and also by creating a situation where, if tenants fail to meet the terms of the repayment plan, the landlord can get a quick eviction order from the tribunal without having to have a hearing.

The government continues to try and run through a bill, Bill 184, which will speed up that eviction process when it starts again, all in the context of mass unemployment, widespread hardship and, of course, a global pandemic. This is not the kind of bill that we need at this time. We need stimulus to support tenants. And I end there, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and responses.

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member for his remarks.

Madam Speaker, members of the opposition have been saying that Bill 184 would make illegal rent increases legal. But section 136(2) of the RTA has already said that rent increases paid for 12 months without dispute are deemed lawful. This has been the case since 1998.

Could the opposition please explain why they keep referring to the fact that this bill will somehow make illegal rent legal after 12 months?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you to the member from the opposite.

Exactly; this bill is exactly that. It tilts the power away from a balance, and now what you will have is going to be a mass of evictions. What we expect the government, at this time—in a crisis where we have a COVID-19 crisis, a pandemic time, to even change the Residential Tenancies Act—we expect that we give due process, that the landlord cannot force negotiations against the tenants and eventually evict them. That's why.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: Both of us represent ridings in Toronto—and I want to thank you for your remarks. We are facing a homelessness crisis in the city of Toronto. There are people living in tents in parks across this city. I understand this problem is not just in Toronto; it's across

the province. There is a homelessness crisis across this province.

Do you see anything in this bill that will address the growing homelessness crisis that Ontario is facing?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you for the question, to the member from the great riding of Spadina–Fort York.

Definitely, as I stated in my remarks, there are now over 100,000 members in only Toronto alone waiting on the waiting list for housing connections. People are waiting 18 years, 20 years for a place to live.

We have witnessed the homelessness in our midst, and there's also hidden homelessness that's going to grow. In this bill, Madam Speaker, it does not address that issue, and it should have been addressing the issue, which has existed over 30 years. Unfortunately, it does not even talk about how to address the concerns of homelessness and the long waiting list for subsidized housing.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Mr. Dave Smith: I was listening intently to the speech from the member opposite. I understand that sometimes there's some rhetoric that gets put in to try and emphasize some things. But he mentioned we have the audacity to call it the “protecting tenants act,” as part of the name.

Bill 184 doubles the fines for corporations and individuals who break the Residential Tenancies Act and increases the compensation to tenants, where they previously received no compensation whatsoever. Can you explain how that is not protecting tenants and how it is not doing something that is in the tenants' best interest?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

You see, when we bring in legislation, we have to have balance, and now the relationship between a landlord and a tenant is not an equal relationship. When you give more power to the landlord that allows them to draft their own negotiations and their own repayment plan, what that means is evicting hard-working folks. As someone who has been homeless and experienced eight months being homeless in the streets, I can understand how difficult—and how this bill is going to send more people into the streets. That's why what we need is balance.

We also propose ideas to say that we need support for tenants. MPPs from Toronto have written a letter collectively to address those concerns as well. It hasn't been addressed from that side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: The work of my colleague from York South–Weston with tenants is something that I've even heard of in my community. He has worked with so many tenants and he has spoken to them over the years. He knows, I'm sure, that many tenants face barriers: financial barriers and language barriers. Certainly, those who are facing barriers don't have the same access to justice.

The government member's first question was to say—it's a little bit of wordplay about illegal versus legal. This government was given the option—landlords charging tenants illegally above-guideline rents for one year. Rather

than make it illegal, they decided, “Who cares? Just take it all away.”

Do you think this might be an issue where people are paying rent without knowing, and being taken advantage of, and this is basically being allowed by this government?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you to the member from Humber River–Black Creek, my colleague, who is the most hard-working member from Toronto.

I think he touched on a very important point. The number one issue in my riding is housing, and I have worked as a front-line worker in working with homelessness in the city of Toronto. Definitely, this doesn't help. It doesn't provide protection. It further creates more homelessness, as the member from Spadina–Fort York has mentioned, and this will continue to create more catastrophes for our province.

What we need from this government is to support tenants, to provide a stimulus, to listen to our suggestions, to give relief or a rent break or a rent freeze or rent controls and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Questions?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleague from York South–Weston for his remarks.

Madam Speaker, earlier, one of my colleagues from Oakville talked about the fact that what this bill does is, it brings a balanced and fair approach to the relationship between both landlords and tenants.

Bill 184 proposes encouraging mediation and alternative dispute resolutions between both landlords and tenants, something that's already done in seven other provinces.

I'm wondering if my honourable colleague can point out why the opposition is so against mediation.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thanks for the question from the member opposite.

No one is against mediation. But when you legislate that one party has more power, that they can draft their own repayment plan, and not even agreeing or not even the ability to—the tenants cannot even afford to deal with that. Then that's where you are legislating it, where you're creating not a balance—but one side has the total power. And that's not fair. In negotiations, in my opinion, you come in an equal position, where you have, legally, a right to protect. These are the rights that the tenants won 41 years ago. And taking that right, to me, is wrong.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I've been listening very carefully through this debate, and we seem to be talking a lot about Toronto and some of the issues you have in Toronto. Yes, you have lots of issues in Toronto. But the reality is that this issue is in Niagara Falls. In my area in Niagara, we have a 14-year wait-list for affordable housing. Think about that.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Hamilton.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Hamilton. So it's not just a Toronto issue; it's a Windsor issue; it's a southwestern Ontario issue; it's going right across.

So my question to my colleague is: What in this bill gets us to a point where there's affordable housing so everybody in the province of Ontario can live in a home and be proud of living in a home? What is in this bill to help them?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: That's a very important question. You're right: This crisis is across the province. It's in every town and every city and every community, and it doesn't address that. It doesn't have a vision to build more affordable, more co-ops, more investment in housing in communities across this community, and not even stimulus or subsidy for those who are struggling, those who lost jobs. Unfortunately—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with the members from Ottawa–Vanier, Ottawa South and Scarborough–Guildwood.

Once again, Madam Speaker, with Bill 184, the government is showing that it's completely out of touch. In the middle of a global pandemic, as millions of people are out of work and unsure how they're going to pay the bills at the end of the month, when parents are scrambling to find child care so that they can take the limited shifts that they can get, when sons and daughters are concerned that the iron ring around their parent's long-term-care home is crumbling—while Ontarians are worrying about all these things and much more, the government is moving forward with legislation that will make life harder for thousands of Ontarians.

Thousands of Ontarians have been forced to make difficult choices during this pandemic. Out of work through no fault of their own, many have been forced to choose between buying groceries and paying the rent. Instead of offering financial support for these residents, instead of saying, "Neighbour, I'm here to help you," the Conservative government here in Ontario has been busy moving forward on their plans to make it easier for those neighbours to lose their homes. Instead of offering rent assistance to those in need of support, they sat back and watched the federal government do all of the heavy lifting.

Madam Speaker, the Liberal government in Ottawa has committed itself to supporting families with direct financial assistance to those in need, while here in Ontario, the Conservatives have sat on the sidelines. While the government has stopped evictions during the emergency, rent arrears continue to build up. The government has failed to put any support in the hands of Ontario families to help pay the rent, and as a result, we're facing a tsunami of evictions when the emergency is over.

Most landlords don't want to evict these tenants; most landlords want to have their rent paid. Many of the smaller landlords the Conservatives claim to protect may now find themselves in financial difficulty, all because their government failed to act. The government failed to provide rent support for tenants—support that would have also allowed small landlords to cover their mortgages and other expenses during these difficult times. What the government has

done is made it easier for large landlords to evict tenants when the pandemic is over.

1620

The government has defended their pursuit of Bill 184 during the COVID-19 emergency as showing the people of Ontario that they're hard at work, and certainly as we see the Premier being chauffeured across southern Ontario, eating potato chips in the back seat of his government SUV, it's clear that his MPPs are working hard to evict Ontarians here at Queen's Park.

There was no need for this bill to come forward now, during an emergency when millions of Ontarians are without work and have been unable to pay their rent. A responsible government would have said, "Wait. This is a problem, and we're going to support renters and landlords alike with a rent support program."

Bill 184 offers no solutions for tenants who are unable to pay their rent through no fault of their own as a result of COVID-19. There were pleas from residents to shelf the bill. There were pleas from residents to include measures in the bill to address the dire economic situation that COVID-19 has created. There were pleas from small landlords who wanted government to provide support to renters, and those pleas were ignored.

The government rejected amendments to address the COVID-19 pandemic in Bill 184, and they've done nothing to help small landlords and renters manage the difficult financial situations they now find themselves in. The only thing Bill 184 does is make it easier to choose eviction as the solution, but Bill 184 isn't simply about a failure to act; Bill 184 includes provisions that make it harder to be a tenant in Ontario.

In Bill 184, there is actually provision to make illegal rent increases legal. An illegal increase would be deemed legal if the tenant didn't challenge the rent increase for 12 consecutive months. If a tenant unknowingly pays an illegal increase, or one that has simply been calculated in error, they should not be required to keep paying it and it should not become the de facto baseline for rent on the unit. Surely, in a bill that has "protecting tenants" in its title, this must be a mistake, but alas, the government rejected efforts to remove this provision from the bill. Furthermore, tenants who are facing eviction won't be allowed to raise issues such as the disrepair of their unit, cockroaches and bedbugs at their hearing unless they can manoeuvre around a mountain of paperwork and red tape ahead of time.

This is a significant impediment to being able to defend yourself. Some tenants don't have the legal support or capacity to file this information. Legitimate issues impacting a tenant's case should not be dismissed or overlooked simply because the paperwork wasn't filed in advance. We're talking about the government making someone homeless because they didn't file a form properly.

Why would we want to limit a tenant's ability to defend themselves? This is a question that the government has failed to answer. Once again, the government for the people isn't very interested in defending the people.

The member for Ottawa–Vanier.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll echo the comments of my colleague except for the fact that I didn't see the Premier eating potato chips.

But I also want to raise some concerns of my own that I have regarding Bill 184. It is a fact that all Ontarians need a safe and affordable place to live. The pandemic has created many unique challenges for tenants and for landlords. The past six months have been difficult and stressful due to precarious economic situations for a lot of people. Tenants have suffered unexpected losses of income which made paying rent difficult and, for some, even impossible. The protection measures implemented for tenants were necessary but are by no means a permanent solution.

For small residential landlords who often rely on rental income to make ends meet, there have been heartfelt hardships from not receiving relied-upon monthly rental payments. As we begin to reopen, we need to start addressing the complaints from both vulnerable tenants seeking to protect their access to housing and from frustrated landlords who have had tenants take advantage of the emergency protections to withhold rent in bad faith. Both groups are there, and each deserve to have their complaints addressed fairly.

Hearings before the Landlord and Tenant Board are an important access-to-justice mechanism to determine the rights of both tenants and landlords, taking into consideration the specific circumstances created by both the pandemic's economic downfall and the measures adopted by government to address these negative impacts. An opportunity to address each situation on a case-by-case basis, taking into account each unique situation, is the only way to resolve important issues of access to housing and survival of small residential landlords in a fair manner. It is not only fair, it is necessary.

In the context of the crisis of affordable housing throughout the province—and even more severely felt in Ottawa–Vanier—it is important to recognize the importance of small residential landlords as part of the solution. Therefore, their survival is a community service. The affordable housing crisis also means that it is a challenge for people who depend on the financial support from social services to find suitable housing they are able to pay for. A balanced and sensible approach is therefore needed as we start to reopen the economy.

Unfortunately, what Bill 184 does is create an imbalance by providing landlords with avenues to get around a proper evaluation of the situation by the board to proceed with evictions. While this may be justified in cases where tenants have been abusive, it is also a tool for those landlords only seeking to find alternative tenants at a higher rent price during a housing crisis that gives them the upper hand.

I have heard too many sad stories about people taking advantage of this situation, and that's why the government needs to step up and prevent abuse. More needs to be done

by our government. Bill 184 brings forward a shift of support for tenants during the state of emergency to support for landlords afterwards. This is not a balanced approach that will ensure that Ontarians continue having a home and landlords are able to survive. If mass evictions occur because of the measures put in place by Bill 184, we will have much bigger problems on our hands throughout the province.

It is a reality that even before the shutdown of the operations of the board, there was a backlog, an important one, and delays were too long. However, the solution cannot be to cut corners to address backlogs at the expense of fairness. Hiring more adjudicators to ensure the fair resolution of all issues and more mediators to assist with the negotiation of fair agreements could go a long way in helping both tenants and landlords that are struggling to preserve their rights.

A responsible government needs to take into account the needs of both sides. I am worried that Bill 184 is not doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's an honour to rise today to debate on Bill 184. It is a bill that has very serious negative consequences for my residents in Scarborough–Guildwood, at a pivotal time when the COVID-19 pandemic is still taking its toll on my community. It's one of the hot spots in Toronto.

Bill 184 offers no solutions for tenants who are unable to pay their rent, through no fault of their own, due to the impacts of COVID-19. Just under half of the residents in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood are renters, and almost the other half own their own homes. One in three residents live in subsidized housing. So this is a really important issue, and one in which I urge the government to slow down and consider the needs of renters at this time, during the pandemic.

This legislation puts thousands of residents at risk of homelessness once the moratorium on residential evictions is lifted. There is nothing put in place to protect that from happening. Scarborough is still in stage 2 of reopening, and many aspects of life and work have not yet resumed. Stats Canada labour reports have shown an alarming trend: that women, youth and low-income wage earners have been slower than the rest of the population to recover economically from the impacts of the shutdown. Many families have had their finances decimated by COVID-19 and have not yet had the opportunity to recover.

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The timing of this legislation is particularly cruel, given that the government has done nothing to assist residential tenants to pay their rents over the last four months. Before our province has the time and investments needed for an economic recovery, the government is putting tenants at risk of homelessness during a global pandemic. Despite the evictions prohibition, rent arrears can still accumulate and may be used against tenants after the prohibition is lifted.

This government has not provided meaningful support to residential tenants or financial support to families. It has shirked its responsibility and has relied on the federal government to provide financial assistance. While the CERB and the wage subsidies are invaluable supports that we've heard about time and time again, they are not perfect programs. Some Ontarians have fallen through the cracks, and the support itself in many cases is not enough to pay the high and skyrocketing rents in Toronto.

I've received dozens of emails from residents outlining their serious concerns about Bill 184. I want to share one with you, Madam Speaker: "How can we stay on top of rent payments when the government only pays \$2,000 for CERB and when I pay \$1,500 for rent and have just a few bucks for food to survive in this pandemic situation?"

Bill 184 is out of step with the lived realities of renters in Ontario in the midst of COVID-19 and in the face of a potential second wave. This bill would expedite evictions for families who have fallen behind on rent during the shutdown. Under this legislation, if tenants are unable to fulfill repayment agreements, landlords would not have to go back to the tribunal for an eviction hearing. It makes it easier to do. Instead, the tribunal could issue a quick eviction order without a hearing. This expedites the evictions process while removing legal processes meant to protect tenants. While I agree with the member from Orléans that there are landlords out there who really just want to collect their rents, this bill does not protect tenants; it actually weakens their rights.

The previous government had amended the legislation to allow tenants to raise any issue that could have impacted the subject of a tenant application to the Landlord and Tenant Board at an eviction hearing. Bill 184, however, reverses this previous protection. Under these former protections, tenants were able to raise issues such as unit repairs at the Landlord and Tenant Board during a hearing, to make their case. Under Bill 184, these rights are just stripped away. Tenants facing evictions for non-payment at the Landlord and Tenant Board won't be allowed to raise issues at the hearing unless they make a formal application to introduce the issues in advance. Many tenants do not have the legal support or capacity to file this information, especially as the government at the same time has weakened legal aid and cut its funding and diminished the capacity of community legal clinics to provide assistance to those who are in need.

Legitimate issues impacting a tenant's case should not be dismissed or overlooked if they were not filed in advance. Now more than ever, tenants should not be punished for lacking the resources that they need to protect themselves. The government should be strengthening protections for the most vulnerable, not weakening them. Again, I question the callous timing of Bill 184 and the lack of support for tenants.

This bill also does not go far enough to protect tenants from one of the most common abuses in Toronto, which I want to call out today: renovictions. Although Scarborough's rental market is cooler than that in the downtown areas, there is still demand, and rents have trended

upwards. Renovictions are a threat to tenants in Scarborough. Tenants are at risk of losing their homes due to no-fault evictions so that the landlord can raise rents for the tenants to occupy the units. While this legislation would increase penalties for landlords who abuse the system, it does it after the fact. You have to prove that a trend is there. This is not about protecting tenants.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately this government is not concerned with effectively protecting tenants and thousands of Ontarians at risk of losing their homes, especially during COVID-19. Ontario is facing a tsunami of evictions post the pandemic. I urge the government to back off of Bill 184.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank my colleagues for their very apt debate.

I simply want to say this is the wrong thing at the wrong time. Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians have been out of work. They've been unable to pay their rent, and those rent payments missed are going to go into arrears and they're going to face eviction. We're going to have a tsunami of evictions.

Bill 184 doesn't do anything to address that. It leans into landlords when the simplest thing you could have done was to provide some sort of rent subsidy that would support families and help small landlords. That would have been a good action to take.

Renovictions: You still allow for that. You're allowing landlords to hide historical hydro costs, fast-tracking evictions. There's a disconnect with what's going on out there and what's going to happen.

I know my colleagues from Orléans and Ottawa-Vanier mentioned the potato chips. It's funny; I watched that potato chip clip on the weekend a couple of times, and I thought, there are a lot of people out there who are hungry—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: No, no. It's serious.

Look, the thing we have to be careful of, it's not business as usual. It's not business as usual. People are hurting, so we have to be sensitive about what we're doing and what we're saying.

If you can't get in to see your mom or dad who are in the hospital because of the restrictions that haven't been changed yet, how do you feel when you see that? It's not business as usual. This bill is your business as usual, and it's not the right time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and responses?

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank the members for their remarks. I was listening to them very intently and especially some of the comments made by the member from Scarborough-Guildwood. She talked about the advanced-notice requirement.

What's being proposed in Bill 184 is already in place in a number of other provinces, such as British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, which really allows landlords also the opportunity to

prepare for what they would be discussing at the Landlord and Tenant Board hearings. So my question to the honourable member is, why do they not think that landlords have an equal right to know in advance what they're going to be talking about at the Landlord and Tenant Board is a fair practice?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member for addressing this question. As I said to you at the outset of my debate, I'm here representing the people of Scarborough–Guildwood, half of whom are renters, a third of whom are living on low income.

This government has unfortunately cut supports and services to legal aid, and legal aid is something that would help those who are vulnerable get the help and the supports that they need to prepare for such hearings at the Landlord and Tenant Board. But unfortunately, those resources have been pulled back. Remember, these rights are rights that were given to tenants under the previous government to really think about those who are most vulnerable, yet this government has not thought about this legislation through the lens of those vulnerable tenants. I believe that it is a missed opportunity, and it puts those tenants at further risk.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: In 2003, I was part of a group called the Toronto Parent Network that had actually been founded by Kathleen Wynne to fight against the Conservative government of that time, and their plan to privatize education.

When the Liberals got in, I was disappointed, but I thought at least they're going to fix things. Instead, they left a \$15-billion maintenance backlog in our schools, they doubled tuition fees at the universities and the colleges and they left us with a housing crisis in this province. The number of people who are homeless in Toronto has doubled from 4,000 to 8,000 between 2014 and 2018. The Liberal government did not build social housing and they did not build co-operative housing.

So my question to the Liberal members who were speaking here is, why didn't you? You had 15 years of majority government and you left us with a housing crisis. Now we're in the middle of a pandemic, and this government is passing a bill that has nothing to do with anything that's going to actually fix it. But why didn't you fix the problem—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Response?

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Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member for the question. He may remember between 2012 and 2018 the work that was done with the federal government in terms of building housing.

The challenge of every government is not being able to do all the things that you want to do. It's quite that simple. You know that. I know that; you know that too. There's a lot more that can be done there right now. Look, no one is patting anybody on the back here. The reality is, you have choices, there's a limited set of resources here, and you have to try to do the best you can to allocate those resources.

I'll give you an example. I was visiting a grade five class. A young girl said, "What's the toughest thing about your job?" True story. I said, after I'd thought about it, "Not being able to do all the things that you want to do."

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to direct my question to the member for Scarborough–Guildwood as well. You were talking about tenants being evicted and the process being that much easier. I disagree with the premise of that statement.

But one of the things that this bill does is it says that the LTB has to take a look at whether or not the landlord has made an attempt to come up with an agreement for repayment before they would ever consider an eviction. Why do you think it's wrong that the landlord try to come up with a repayment schedule with the tenant before they're allowed to evict them?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have no doubt that there are many, many good landlords—small landlords, landlords of different sizes—who want to keep their tenants in their units. I know that. In fact, landlords have said that the government—the province, in fact—has not done enough to assist those tenants who are vulnerable to stay in their units by giving them some sort of rent supplement, as they have done already in BC, where they've given \$500 so that during this pandemic, people can pay their rents and can continue to pay their rents.

The reality is that a lot of people have fallen into arrears, and there are no protections provided by this government in view of the pandemic to protect those tenants and those rights that they have to remain housed. So the timing of this legislation, Bill 184, at this time during the pandemic is extremely unfortunate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Mr. Chris Glover: I appreciate the member from Ottawa Centre?

Mr. John Fraser: South.

Mr. Chris Glover: South; sorry. Ottawa South: I appreciate your response.

My supplementary question is, when the Liberals were in power, you spent \$1 billion on the gas plants scandal. The city of Toronto has a \$2-billion plan to eliminate the homelessness issue forever in the city of Toronto, or at least for the time being. That \$1 billion could have gone into eliminating at least half the homelessness crisis that we have. Why didn't you spend that money on addressing homelessness?

Mr. John Fraser: This is the first time I've ever gotten a supplementary on this side.

Look, we uploaded billions and billions of dollars in municipal costs. We worked with the federal government and municipalities to build thousands and thousands of units. Was it enough? No. Could we have done more? We would have had to choose to not do something else. There are limitations.

But billions and billions of dollars in municipalities, billion and billions of dollars in gas tax—it's incredible. For instance, the city of Ottawa was something—annually, it was about \$240 million, I think, uploaded to the city of

Ottawa. I don't know the number for Toronto. We worked with cities. We worked with the federal government—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Response?

Mr. John Fraser: Was it enough? No. We know that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the members. I was listening. Raj in my riding, after his retirement, got some money. He invested that money into a condominium near Square One. During COVID-19, he got a tenant, but the tenant is not paying the rent. Raj is always worried. He calls me and calls me and says, "I still have to pay the mortgage. What should I do? I invested my savings into it and I am at a loss right now."

My question to the member is: As the government is trying to make this process fair for both tenants and landlords with this legislation, what is wrong in doing this? Why are you against those landlords who have invested their savings into a meaningful investment?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I thank the member opposite for the question. First and foremost, I would tell Raj that his government hasn't provided a rent support program so that his tenants can pay the rent as a result of COVID-19. So I would ask where the rent support is coming from.

Furthermore, I would thank Raj for investing in Ontario's economy, for being a good landlord, and for ensuring that his tenants are given a fair opportunity to repay their arrears when the emergency is over by proactively working with his tenants ahead of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): We don't have enough time for another question. Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today to add to the debate on Bill 184, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act.

One of the interesting things about being an elected member of provincial Parliament is that we get to step outside our comfort zone sometimes and learn things that we wouldn't have the opportunity to. We all might read some articles in the newspaper or watch the news and learn a little tidbit about what's going on in terms of government, legislation and things like the Landlord and Tenant Board and how it all works. But unless you were a landlord or a tenant and you had some kind of disagreement, you might not know what goes on behind the scenes and just how complicated things are. I know that I, and I'm sure many of the members here, have personally had to deal with things like the WSIB when I had my optometry clinic. What always amazes me is just how complicated things are, how complicated it is to do your income taxes and when you look over a lease for your kids going to university, and how much more difficult it is for somebody whose first language isn't English and for a newcomer to our country.

That's why I was happy to hear the member from York South-Weston speak about all the organizations in his riding helping tenants. I'm sure that a lot of those organizations are helping a lot of newcomers, a lot of people for whom English isn't their first language, on how to navigate, how to understand the lease, how to understand what they're signing and how to deal with disputes, if

they're a landlord or a tenant, because problems are also going to arise. We all know that. There are always going to be issues, whether you're in an apartment, whether you're in a condo, whether you're in a townhouse, a house, semi-detached or what have you. Problems do arise. Now, on top of all the regular problems that we know were going on before this pandemic, here we are in the middle of a pandemic, four months into it, and it's going to be going on for months to come.

We know that there's an added burden for the tenants and an added burden for the landlords. I think that a lot of us here haven't touched on some of the issues, but a lot of us are concerned with repairs that need to be done. Winter is coming, we all know. Repairs do need to get done on a lot of the buildings, and if the tenants aren't able to pay their rent, the landlords often don't have the money to make those necessary repairs, and that's a concern, I'm sure, for all of us.

What are we trying to do here? We're trying to bring some fairness, some streamlining and some efficiencies, because we know that if the process gets too long and complicated, that doesn't benefit the landlords and it certainly doesn't benefit the tenants.

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Tenants, if they want to deal with their landlords, to the Landlord and Tenant Board, we're finding out that we consider 70% of small landlords—we consider them to have less than five rental units. Now, if there are disputes, if there are problems and fines have to be applied to the Residential Tenancies Act, if they're guilty of an offence, we see that the fines are going to be doubled. That's very serious, if we're doubling the fines. It will be, for an individual, \$50,000 and \$250,000 for a corporation.

A landlord, if they are renovating a unit or a property and the tenant has to move out for renovations, has to give the renter the first dibs on if they want to move back in and have that rental property again for the same rent. They're not able to grossly inflate the rent after the renovation. The tenant has two years to file a claim.

Also, landlords must disclose—and I thought this was actually very interesting, Madam Speaker—to the Landlord and Tenant Board if they previously filed for eviction in order to renovate a unit or to move in themselves. I guess that there must be a significant number of landlords who are constantly saying that they want a unit for themselves—maybe they move in temporarily or move a family member in temporarily—and it's just a way to get a tenant to move out. They're renovating continuously. It's interesting that they have to now disclose that.

We're trying to move towards more mediation. We saw that decades ago in terms of family law—that they tried to train mediators. I'm interested in what the training process will be for all these mediators we will need, to have mediation and alternate dispute resolutions, where appropriate, of course. We've seen that seven other provinces have moved in that direction. The idea is to show, before you have to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board, that you made an effort to go through some kind of mediation and dispute resolution process, which, I think we can all agree,

is a wise way to move forward. A lot of times there can be misunderstandings. Everybody always sees what everybody else is doing wrong, but they might not see how their behaviour is causing difficulties, and a lot of times they need somebody else. Two sides, if they get into a dispute, can't seem to have a civil discussion sometimes, and they need a professional to interact and get them talking.

Repayment agreements for arrears: Especially now that so many tenants are in arrears, we're encouraging them to work with their landlords. We're encouraging the landlords to work with the tenants. I know my office isn't the only one inundated with emails from both landlords and tenants—and phone calls as well, of course. The first thing we say is, "Have you spoken to each other?" It's shocking, Madam Speaker, how often people say, "Well, I was going to, but I thought I would call you first." We ask them to let us know how it goes. Very often they are able to work things out together—that the tenant will pay whatever amount of rent that they've agreed upon for the time being. The landlords have been quite reasonable in terms of sometimes even reducing the rent, putting off the rent to be paid later and working out some kind of repayment plan, and that's what we really need to see. We really need to work with the landlords and encourage the tenants to work with their landlords to see what can be done.

When we were talking during the debate, I was thinking back to when my sister bought her first home and it had a separate entrance, in Bathurst Manor. She and her husband fixed up—my father was alive then and helping them fix up—the basement unit so that they could rent it out. They had tenants down there for quite a few years, a wonderful couple. The wife was a nurse, and the husband was an engineer. They probably weren't born in Canada, from what I recall—but they stayed in touch and they still stay in touch with my sister and my brother-in-law. When there are big family events or parties or things like that, they would be there. So 20 years after moving out of their basement unit, they were still in touch. They were still friends. They supported each other and babysat each others' kids and helped each other out.

Those are the stories we don't hear. We hear all these sorts of problems, but we don't hear the good stories, so it's nice to share some good stories.

Another story that I want to share very briefly: I know of a young couple that's getting married and are looking to purchase some kind of home or a condo in the Toronto area. Their landlord said to them, "Don't worry. You'll just pay month to month until you find out what you're buying and what your closing date is"—completely accommodated their schedule. I think they were, actually, even surprised. They thought they'd have to sign a six-month lease and or a one-year lease and maybe be out several thousand dollars.

Tenants can call—and I'm going to give the number quickly, 416-585-7214—or visit the rental housing enforcement unit website to get more information. The Landlord and Tenant Board would need to approve the repayment agreement before allowing an eviction without notification. I also thought that was fair—that we're going

to have some professionals hopefully helping with some of these agreements that are going to be needed. They're going to have to be long-term agreements in terms of repaying arrears in rent.

We've heard a little bit today about some bad behaviour by tenants. We all hope that that isn't the case. We all know that when we get calls or emails, oftentimes there's more to a story. I would hope that during a pandemic, people are realizing that our first responders have enough to do without worrying about fire alarms being constantly pulled and people just generally causing mischief, disruptions or damage to rental units.

It's sort of been a bit of an elephant in the room during the debate that nobody really talks about the climate to create affordable housing. It doesn't just happen. You have to have a climate to create business, to encourage people to build the types of units we want to see.

Before the pandemic, I was at a ribbon cutting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. SmartCentres up in Vaughan was redeveloping a plaza near the Vaughan Metropolitan subway station to be affordable housing—a building. This is what we need to see more of. We need to see more of our partnerships with developers and people who will hire developers to build the type of housing we want.

That's a big discussion that I hope we're going to continue to have here in the Legislature, about what type of climate we need. Because what we saw Ontario move to, more and more, since I moved here just over 30 years ago, is that—we moved from people renting apartments to people renting condos. And why was that? Because people were building condos. People didn't want to build for rent. Landlords didn't want to have those big buildings. When I was a kid and when I was in university, there would be the big apartment buildings that we see in some of our smaller towns that just haven't gotten built in the GTA in so long. It's all condos, which are nice—condos are nice because individuals and families can buy just one unit. But on the other hand, it's not exactly affordable housing, and I think we all know that.

We need to see how we can create that climate to encourage the building and repurposing, because a lot of times houses can be changed into multiple units. Our municipal partners have moved towards approving what they call secondary suites. We used to always say "basement apartments"; now it's secondary suites, because it could be part of the house unit.

My daughter is at Guelph. Her apartment is not really an apartment; it's half of an old house or a third of an old house. She has sort of an apartment cut out from the house, with its own entrance. On the other side of the house is actually the woman who owns the house. They've really gotten through the pandemic together, sort of sharing food. The woman has two dogs; my daughter's a dog person, and the woman sometimes pays my daughter to babysit her dogs. Those are the stories you want to hear about, where people are sharing food, watching the property together, taking care of things together and looking out for each other.

1700

What can we do to encourage that climate? I guess that's the million-dollar question. We want to see what our developers and our landlords have to say, moving forward. I'm very worried that when the dust settles after this pandemic, many landlords are going to look to get out of the entire business altogether. They're going to want to turn their buildings into condos. They're going to want to find another place to invest their money. That is not going to help us in the long run in Ontario—that not everybody can own their own property, that we certainly need to have rental properties and we certainly need to have affordable rental properties.

I believe it was the member from York South–Weston who talked about people who live in trailer parks. Of course, we heard that that was a big challenge a couple of months ago, that people came back from the south—they spend their winters down south, in the United States or wherever—and then they came back and they have properties here, sometimes where they only have to have it open in some kind of a trailer park during the summer months. They were stuck without anywhere to live until those trailer parks opened up.

Well, winter is coming, and will those people be going south? I think that's another question that we have to concern ourselves with. People who go south and don't have winterized properties to live in—they live in a cottage or something like that—where are they going to live this winter if the borders aren't open and they're not able to get to their southern places? That might put some pressure in some of our communities in terms of finding housing for people who don't have any.

So we want to ensure that we support, of course, our landlords. We need to ensure that the landlords are able to collect the rent in order to pay whatever mortgages and expenses they have, and to do the much-needed repairs that we know are ongoing on any kind of property. If anybody here owns their own property, they know it's a constant struggle to keep up with whatever maintenance work needs to be done. So we want to ensure that our landlords feel that they're supported by our government.

Many, many landlords are going to have to be working on those repayment agreements with their tenants, and ensuring that they are going to be, some day, collecting all or most of the rent that is owed to them. I think that that's going to be the next wave that we're all going to be hearing about. We're seeing the economy opening up, moving into stage 3—except for three regions of the province of Ontario—are going to be entering stage 3 by the end of this week, so people are going to be back at regular life. Ensuring that their economy is moving along so that people are employed, they're able to pay that rent, that they feel supported by their government as well—and that's going to be a real challenge for all of us, in all of our offices.

I wanted to mention a little bit about housing in terms of being near transit. We see now that we're still moving along with a lot of business in the province of Ontario—where the pandemic isn't completely distracting us from all the other things that we need to be working on. One of

them is building better transit. Building affordable housing near that transit is going to be, I think—I would invite everybody in this Legislature, whether you're from government or opposition, to look at in their communities where transit is being built and what is going to be built near that transit in terms of housing that supports their communities and their residents.

We know that there are many subsidized units within apartment buildings for people with ODSP. They're on these incredibly long wait-lists. I've mentioned it before in this Legislature, but it bears repeating again that I had a constituent who lived for many years—she's still there—in an apartment building. She's on a wait-list. Her landlord, I guess, likes her so much. She told me that she helps him. If there are deliveries or repairs, she's around and she's kind of his little bit of a helper, unpaid, in his building so he wants to keep her there. He suggested to her that he would be willing to turn her unit in the apartment building into a subsidized unit. It would be a York region subsidized unit. He would be willing to turn it into a unit for her. She was very excited, and she sent his letter to York region administration. They said that would be very nice of him—to offer to have an extra unit subsidized. That means he would be reducing his rent and the region would be also supplementing, so they kind of meet partway. But they said, “That's very nice of him except the unit would go to the next person on the waiting list, not you—or not necessarily you.” I don't know that they said “not you,” but “not necessarily you.” Well, that's a woman in a wheelchair who has been waiting for years for a subsidized unit.

Those are the kind of things that I think we could work on with our municipal partners to find a better balance. That's where, I think, the public gets really upset, and they're right to get upset, when they feel that there are arbitrary rules that are completely inflexible and are affecting their quality of life or their ability to provide for their family. I think that that's our job here.

When we talk about red tape, we use certain expressions a lot around the Legislature and we talk about cutting red tape and things like that; that's what it's really about. It's really about supporting businesses, supporting individuals and families, and trying to find those unnecessary hurdles and paperwork and aggravation that people have to go through every day.

We talk about how this pandemic is impacting people's mental health. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that we've all been in those situations where we felt taken advantage of, as it were. “Who came up with these rules? They don't even make sense.” So I think that's up to all of us here to point out and to share what can be done better, what we can do to support our landlords and our tenants, and what we can do to build that affordable housing. As I said before, winter is coming. We have to help prepare ourselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and responses?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you to the member on the government side for her presentation on Bill 184. Interestingly, you mentioned accessibility and people who use

wheelchairs. I actually have a letter here from a constituent of mine, Kathleen, that I will read later on in my debate.

Since there is currently no law in Ontario that demands that housing be accessible, I'm wondering if this government would consider ensuring that all affordable housing, all new builds, all condos, all everything in Ontario, is universally designed so that every Ontarian with disabilities can live comfortably and move the way they move.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm glad we're discussing that a little bit, because our government has made some changes to support individuals with disabilities. I just got an email from—he actually apologized; he said that he meant to send it a couple of weeks ago—and I'm going to say his name—Ed Rice, because I've said it here before. He's actually from a disability branch of the B'nai Brith organization to support people with disabilities, and he wanted to thank our government for some of the work that we've been doing to support and to give additional funding.

I'm sure that the member opposite also heard from people that they weren't able to get wheelchairs fixed and things like that during the pandemic. We had to deal with things, as it were, as we could, and that was a big challenge.

So we definitely need more affordable housing for people who struggle and are on ODSP.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It was a great speech by my colleague here from Thornhill. But I had a couple of questions. I think we heard through committee and through the House debate here that obviously the previous government left a huge loophole around renovations.

Just to mention what the member thought—that we've made a requirement that the landlord disclose any previous renovations that they've done. We've doubled the fines for all landlords if they're a bad player or have been convicted of a play that's not fitting, and also increased the compensation for renters. I'm just wondering what the member thinks: Would this have an impact on stopping such a practice?

1710

Mrs. Gila Martow: Yes, it was a new term that I'm not sure who coined—"renovictions"—in the last couple of years. We want to see units fixed up, we want to see repairs, absolutely, but it shouldn't be that renovations are done for one purpose, and that is to move a tenant out because the landlord believes that he can rent it for more money. So we don't want to see unscrupulous practices by the landlord, but, on the other hand, we want to support our entire home renovation industry, which is massive, and we want to see units getting repaired.

I think that what we've brought forward here with this piece of legislation does bring some teeth and does support the tenants in terms of the fact that the landlords now—and I thought it was so interesting—have to disclose to the Landlord and Tenant Board if they've had to move a tenant out for renovations before. I thought that was very interesting. The fines have doubled, and obviously we're taking the matter very, very seriously.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: When I look at Bill 184, part of it allows the landlord to evict a tenant without having to go back to the Landlord and Tenant Board for a second time. One of the concerns that we have is what is being called the tsunami of evictions that's going to be coming up when the current freeze on evictions is lifted. This government hasn't provided any rent supports for residents. There are 260,000 renters in Toronto. Some 10% were not able to pay their rent for the last couple of months. There is going to be a tsunami of evictions that is coming.

My question is, is part of the reason for the government passing legislation that would bypass the Landlord and Tenant Board because the Landlord and Tenant Board isn't going to be able to handle all the evictions that are going to be coming their way?

Mrs. Gila Martow: The Landlord and Tenant Board is a little bit like a courthouse. You keep seeing the same people over and over, and that's not a wise use of resources. It's up to the tenant. The tenant is going to be offered another hearing if they want, and they can refuse to have that second hearing. It's not that we're not allowing a second hearing, if the tenant should so choose.

But what's important here is that we're coming up with a plan where the landlord has to enter with the tenant into a repayment plan for the arrears. I think that that's what we want to see. We want to see landlords working with the tenants, and if our offices and ourselves have to help with that, I'm sure we're all willing to, to sit down to work out a repayment plan—just like people sometimes get over-extended credit on their credit cards and they meet with the company and they work out some kind of agreement plan. So I'm looking forward to landlords being fair, but tenants have to be fair as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: The member from Thornhill talked about tenants being fair and landlords being fair. I wanted to ask her if she can talk about how this bill really strikes a balance between the landlord and the tenant so that it is fair for both parties.

Mrs. Gila Martow: We've been hearing from a lot of landlords and a lot of tenants, and I think that they want to ensure that the tenant is able to stay, but on the other hand, they need to collect their rent. They need to pay their mortgages, they need to pay their utilities and their expenses and do whatever repairs have to be done, especially before the winter comes.

I think that this bill is fair. I think this bill is balanced. I think that we are hopefully going to see a lot of very well-trained mediators helping out and ensuring that the landlords are able to eventually get perhaps all of the rent that is owed to them. But the tenants also have to understand that when we're saying no evictions and people aren't paying their rent, it doesn't mean that they're never going to have to repay that debt. It is a debt, and I think that hopefully some of the discussion around this bill is going to send that message out. I'm letting the tenants know in my riding, and I would invite everybody to let the tenants know in their ridings that they do have recourse.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Doly Begum: I've heard this government talk over and over and over again about landlords and how they're making it easy for landlords. But I fail to understand why it is, then, that they did not take our proposal to provide the rent subsidy that we had asked for right at the beginning of this pandemic. If that had been provided, that would have protected so many tenants and, actually, a lot of small landlords. I have a lot of small landlords in my riding, and they have deferred the rental income they would have made in the last few months. If that rental income doesn't come, these people will default on their mortgages, which means a lot of people will not only lose their homes in terms of tenancy, but there are a lot of small landlords who might actually lose their homes as well. So my question to the member is, why didn't they accept our proposal?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much to the member opposite.

I think we all realize as elected members of the Ontario Legislature that one of the toughest things that we face sometimes is, it doesn't matter what we're talking about, what we're working on, what we're debating, what we're focused on, somebody calls us or emails us or meets us and wants us to be focused on something else.

The reality is that we did focus on health and safety for all of Ontario. We did work with the federal government to ensure that people had a monthly income. We ensured that there were a lot of supports in place. We're now putting money towards homeless shelters and ensuring that people have support. Now I think the next step is to ensure that landlords want to build and maintain affordable housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, I'm always inspired by people like Janice Lowe, a Malton high school teacher who has started the initiative Grow, Lead, Excel, where she is reaching out to her network and collecting bikes and locks so that all kids have bikes to ride and can get out of the house for mental wellness. At this time, she has given out 44 bikes and locks to Malton youth, teens and young adults. Thanks to Janice for your community service. You're a community hero.

Clearly, there are people in the community who need help. There are renters who have been hit hard due to COVID-19, and they need help. Through you, Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member, what is the government doing to help those needy, hard-hit, good renters to stay in their homes so that they don't end up in shelters and out on the streets?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Unfortunately, we ran out of time for a response.

Further debate?

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm splitting my time with my colleague and friend the MPP for Beaches–East York.

The first thing I'd like to say is, I've sat here and I've listened to this government say how they have provided canoes for Ontarians—all kinds of support for Ontarians with regard to rent. I know for a fact that that is simply not

the case. I've got the eviction notices right here on my desk from folks from 440 Winona. I've got eviction notices in my email, up the wazoo, of Ontarians, of people in St. Paul's who are not able to afford their homes, because this government never gave direct support to tenants, to small business owners—which, frankly, would have helped landlords. None of that was done.

At the beginning of this pandemic, the NDP official opposition put forth a proposal that would have saved many, if not all, of our small businesses across the province from the bleak realities that they are now facing, even with the reopening strategy. We see at residential levels tenants who consistently get eviction notices time after time after time. In St. Paul's alone, we have 67.8% of folks who are renters.

We already know that this government has not given support to the municipalities in the way in which we need it. We know that Toronto itself is swimming in a \$1.5-billion deficit, and I have learned as an MPP, of course, that municipalities aren't allowed to operate in deficit. If this government continues to be opaque and not transparent and not share with our municipalities what kinds of supports they're going to have, it's just going to mean more devastation, because we're going to have less access to supportive housing, less access to affordable housing, less access to subsidized child care spots, less access to public transportation that runs in support for schools. All of this is happening on this government's watch. I just wanted to drop those facts.

1720

Back to Bill 184: The government consistently says that we are over here—that we're not working with them; we're not getting along with them; we're not propping up their legislative offerings. It's because we've heard from Ontarians that these legislative offerings coming from the government can't hold—they hold nothing substantial, for goodness' sake. But forget about what I have to say; let's go straight to the Ontarians. Let's go straight to my constituents.

Here's Patrick. He's speaking on behalf of the 100 Vaughan Road Tenants Association, which represents 28 tenants living in a 33-unit building in our riding:

"Today, I would like to voice our association's concerns with Bill 184. Our membership is deeply and unequivocally opposed to this bill and we are particularly alarmed that it is moving forward during a pandemic.

"On March 26, in response to Ontario's COVID-19 outbreak," the Premier "told tenants, 'If you can't pay rent and you're absolutely in crisis, then you don't have to pay rent.' At the same press release, he also said that if anyone had to choose between putting food on their table or paying rent, that the government of Ontario will make sure that no one gets evicted, adding, 'We are going to make sure we take care of these people.'"

For goodness' sake, on August 1, when the emergency measures and the extension on evictions are ripped away, we are going to see a mass exodus of folks being made homeless because this government never gave Ontarians,

never gave my residents, never gave our constituents support at the beginning.

This is not about whether you're NDP or Conservative or Liberal or Green. Someone on the government side said that; I completely agree. This is about listening to what Ontarians are saying, what they're begging for.

I go back to quoting Patrick:

"While we have several concerns with this bill, our association wishes to highlight one provision in particular. Under Bill 184, tenants who agree to a rent repayment plan will lose their right to an eviction hearing in the future. If they miss a single instalment for whatever reason"—such as, maybe, a job loss or something like that, but who's counting during a pandemic—"their landlord will be able to evict them without a hearing, regardless of the circumstance.

"Imagine a single parent who, prior to the pandemic, worked full-time as a bartender and who lives in rental housing. During the pandemic, this tenant has lost their sole source of income. In the months since, they have struggled to find new work, and without access to child care during the pandemic"—since there is no child care or education plan come fall—"they have had few opportunities to do so. Despite federal benefits, they remain unable to balance other critical expenses with rent.

"Following the enactment of Bill 184, the landlord applies for an eviction. At this point, the tenant is back to working full-time. However, they owe a substantial amount of back rent. To avoid eviction, the tenant agrees to a rent repayment plan with their landlord. What happens if they miss that payment plan? They could potentially be on the streets."

Here we have someone else, Lisa, who is the president of our Heath Street West tenants' association:

"I'm writing to you again"—again, because she wasn't answered the last time—"to ask for your government to scrap Bill 184, because I believe the changes proposed in this bill will impoverish and displace tenants in Ontario.

"This bill is out of touch with the challenges that many tenants face today. Why don't you consider updating the purpose of the Residential Tenancies Act to include improving public health in Ontario and recognizing the progressive realization of the human right to housing, as enshrined in the federal legislation."

That's just a snippet.

We go to Liba as well, who had time to write to the government but didn't get any responses from the Premier or from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing:

"I live in Toronto—St. Paul's. I have the good fortune to own my home"—look at that, a homeowner who is still concerned with Bill 184—"but know many people in this and other ridings who rent.

"I'm writing to register my opposition to Bill 184. Rather than protect tenants, this bill puts them at far greater risk of eviction.

"The Premier appeared to have some sympathy for tenants at first, especially during those pandemic times. The bill contradicts his statement of just a few months ago. Aside from the hardship it creates for individuals and their

families, it will also exacerbate Ontario's housing affordability crisis. I urge you to vote against Bill 184."

Let's see what Karen has to say. She's a tenant of St. Paul's too. My goodness, she cares about Bill 184. She said, "I was horrified to read the details of Bill 184, especially given the housing crisis Ontario is currently experiencing. It is hard to see how this bill would in any way help relieve that crisis. As a long-time renter who has consistently seen my landlords pushing yearly for above-guideline rent increases which have had to be fought in court, I'm also deeply concerned for myself, my neighbours and many others in similar positions. I am writing to register my vehement opposition to Bill 184. This bill will put tenants at far greater risk of eviction and will exacerbate Ontario's already housing crisis."

Please know—and the government, I don't care if they believe me or not, but these are unsolicited letters, and I've got hundreds of them on every piece of legislation that this government puts forth.

Here, we have Kathleen, who reminds us that universal design is necessary in every housing unit that Ontario creates: "Having the ability to live with a disability in a house should be a human right. Many people think that universal design costs a great deal more than conventional design; however, the cost of universal design in housing is only 1% or 2% more when planned from the initial design stage. It is renovation that is costly. I urge you to ensure the Ontario building code is revised immediately by making universal design mandatory in all rental and ownership apartments."

I have this to say in the last 35 seconds before I pass it over to my friend and colleague from Beaches—East York: Why has this government forsaken tenants, renters, landlords and mortgage payers in Ontario? Through you, Mr. Speaker, why did you all sit there with your hands behind your backs, waiting for Justin Trudeau to open his wallet? Why the heck didn't you do anything for people here in Ontario when they were begging for it, before all of our businesses—before we lost Dave's, before we were losing bookstores, left right and centre? Why don't you do something now? Why not?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Beaches—East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you to my friend and colleague the member for Toronto—St. Paul's. I want to continue on with the vein of what you were saying.

I really do hope, Speaker, that the government members are listening, because they didn't listen when people came to speak to them in committee. It's a terrible shame, because I sat in committee hearings when experts who know the law and who know how evictions work and who know how renters work told them that this tsunami of evictions that we keep hearing about was going to happen. I sat in committee hearings, listening to tenants speak with tears rolling down their faces about the terror that they feel, and yet the response from the government members was hard-hearted. And if I have time, I will share an anecdote from that, but there are more important things to say here.

There is nothing balanced about a bill that is pushing people into homelessness, and it is a mark of particularly cruel Orwellian doublespeak that the name of the bill purports to be there to help tenants.

I wonder if anybody on the government side knows how homelessness works. I wonder if anybody on the government side has ever spoken to somebody who is homeless or somebody who works front-line in the shelter sector or the drop-in or respite centre sector. I wonder if they've ever had conversations—and I am transported back to when the first minister responsible for homelessness used to say regularly in this House that the best social program was a job. What she continually inferred was that it was the choice of people to remain—to make lifestyle choices that in fact resulted in their being homeless.

1730

I'm going to take a moment to just say that the majority of people on the streets in Toronto, and there are well over 10,000—we don't know the number—and up to perhaps 15,000 in the GTA, because a lot of women's homelessness in particular is hidden homelessness. The majority of people who we know are experiencing homelessness are Black and Indigenous people. I want every government member here to be clear that homelessness is the result of systemic racism. I want every government member here to understand that a bill like this is pushing people further, is in fact exacerbating systemic racism and increasing the kinds of conditions that force Black and Indigenous people and other racialized people, even more than other Ontarians, into homelessness.

In Beaches–East York, in Crescent Town and Goodwood, for instance, there have been corporate landlords who have had their managers going door to door in the buildings, banging on doors in the middle of COVID-19 with no masks on and debit machines, forcing people to pay up on the spot, in contravention of the Premier's own advice.

I'm going to repeat what other people have said, but it bears repeating again: At the beginning of this pandemic, the Premier, your leader, the leader of the government, stood up and said to people that if you can't afford to pay rent and food, then for God's sake to eat, to pay for your medications. Ontarians believed that he was serious. Ontarians believed that he had a heart. Ontarians believed that he was absolutely going to protect them, and they did exactly that. What that meant was that they went into arrears. Some of these people were essential workers and they had to work front-line and they got COVID-19. They live in crowded apartment buildings where they can't self-isolate, which means that many of their family members got COVID-19 as well. We know this because Michael Garron Hospital kept statistics.

Some of these people were first to be fired in other industries that closed, so they lost their jobs. As the Premier will know very well, because he took away paid sick leave, when people lost their jobs because they were ill, they weren't being paid, so they couldn't pay their rent.

I want the members to understand this, because I need the members to hear that there are many reasons why

people who are trying very hard to work and who want very much to keep a roof over their heads, as well as keep their families fed and to be able to pay for the medication that people need, were not always able to do so. When landlords came and banged on their doors, they were forced to make payment plans. Now the Premier is ripping the rug out from under them. Now the Premier has said, "Okay, I know what I said, but I'm going to allow evictions. And not only that, but I'm shoving through a bill that makes it easier for landlords to evict you even if you're trying to pay." The landlords don't have to go back to the Landlord and Tenant Board before they evict you, before they call the sheriff, and it will be completely legal as soon as this bill passes and gets royal assent.

Where exactly does the Premier think these people are going to go? Shelters are full. There is no room. The province, as well as the city, is being sued in order to ensure that shelters in the city of Toronto are physically distanced, so there's less room in them. People are being pushed out into encampments, but the Premier doesn't want them there either. A couple of weeks ago, he said, "You can't do that. You can't camp under the Gardiner. It's an eyesore. You can't camp in public parks. You can't do that." But there is no room in shelters, so where are they going to go? Where is this tsunami of people that this government is forcing out of their housing—where are they going to go? And make no mistake: The majority of those people are Black and Indigenous and other racialized people. So don't stand up and tell us that you hate racism, because you are perpetuating it with this bill. Where are these people supposed to go?

When one of my constituents talked in committee about the fact that she was about to lose her housing because of a renoviction, one of the government members—it doesn't matter which one, so I won't particularly embarrass her because it could have been anyone—said, "But this bill is making things better because you will get a month's rent in compensation." A month's rent? That is a let-them-eat-cake moment if ever there was one.

She can't afford to move into another apartment because there are no affordable apartments. There is no affordable housing. There is nowhere for her to go. She will become homeless, and where will she go? And this is on you. This is what you're doing.

Instead of pushing people into homelessness, you should be standing up and saying, "We need a bill that says that there will be no COVID-19-related evictions. As long as the pandemic lasts, no COVID-19-related evictions." So if there is a COVID-19-related reason that somebody cannot pay their rent—because they lost their job, because they became ill—because there is going to be a second wave, that they will not be evicted.

The Premier needs to stand up and follow through on the promise that he made to not see anyone evicted because of COVID-19. If he doesn't do that and if you don't do that, then shame on you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?
Mr. Jim McDonell: I intently listened to the members opposite. There is no question that this government

inherited a mess. You talked about the homelessness, you talked about all the issues; we're not disagreeing with that.

I guess the question I might ask is: Why would it be up to the landlords to support or to fix this problem? This is a problem of government. This is a problem of the federal and provincial governments. Our Premier has, I guess, outlawed any evictions during this pandemic. There will be no evictions during this pandemic. But you've got to realize that the landlords have a responsibility too. They have to pay their mortgages. They don't want to lose their buildings either. A lot of these are small landlords' retirements. This is a plan that government must fix. We should not just dump it on the landlords, as I think I hear from across the aisle—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Response?

Ms. Jill Andrew: The government member answered his own question: Help the landlords. Help the landlords. Help the landlords.

Instate our Save Main Street plan, for goodness' sake. Give people direct rent subsidies, freeze rent, for goodness' sake; give them help so that landlords can get help. That is exactly how you do it.

How you don't do it is tell our city that you're going to help us build 18,000 supportive housing units and then give them jack-all so we only have 600. That's what you don't do as this government.

Actually help people. Give them rent subsidies. Help them pay their rent—not loans, not things where landlords have to opt in to some federal plan, but right here in the province. Help them directly. That's how you do it.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you for the debate today. Like the member from Toronto–St. Paul's, I also have members from Kitchener Centre who have been writing to the minister and to the Premier and receiving no responses, so I'll use this opportunity to ask you the question.

She wrote pleading—this is Leah Ludwig—that we not pass Bill 184. She says, “I already cannot afford to move. There is nowhere I can go that won't cost me another \$200-\$400 per month, or more. As it is, fully half of my take-home pay goes to rent and utilities. At some point, I'm not going to be able to afford to live without being forced into shared accommodations with one or more other people. I've worked my whole life, and I don't believe I should have to live with this fear, or with not having choices because everything is so far beyond my reach.”

She wanted to have a response. She wanted to know whether or not the government would add anything into this bill that would make life affordable for her. Is there anything in this bill that can help Leah?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you to the member from Kitchener for sharing this very personal account of an Ontario renter who is desperate and is trying to get some answers from the Premier and from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Like your constituent—I can't use props, but my constituents haven't received responses either. They have not received responses.

What the government doesn't realize is that August 1 is in a matter of days. So I want to know, are the government members opening up their backyards so that people can pitch a tent in their backyard? Is that the plan for where we're going to put people who are being evicted? Is that the plan? Where is the government going to put these folks?

I'm very sorry, member from Kitchener. I'm sorry your constituent hasn't gotten an answer; neither have mine. We gave this government an answer, and they turned their backs on it, because it was an NDP answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Mr. Will Bouma: It's a fascinating debate this afternoon. I appreciate the comments from the members from Toronto–St. Paul's and Beaches–East York. I've heard repeatedly from a lot of members across the way this afternoon, that we should have some sort of rental support or subsidy for people who are having issues. Since they all seem to be in agreement on that—this is kind of new for me just because I'm being exposed to the bill right now—I was wondering if they could give an accurate costing of what they thought that would be. How much subsidy would be enough for someone and about what would that cost?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: The answer is that it will cost a heck of a lot less to the province than making these people homeless and having to figure out the consequences of that. And that—

Mr. Will Bouma: So an empty promise, then?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: No, it is actually not. There is a figure, but the point is, what the government is doing is going to be way more expensive down the line, because there is study after study after study that shows that homelessness is enormously expensive—not just the cost of trying to support people who are homeless, but the cost of hospitals, of prisons, the mental health costs. So the cost that the government is racking up, the untold cost, is going to be way more than the cost of subsidizing rents so that people can remain housed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Just like my other constituent, we've also received a message in my office from Steve Lanys-Morris, who also wrote to the Premier and also wrote to the minister and received no response. So I'll read this and hope you folks can help answer.

He said, “It is unfathomable to me that, at a time like this, Ontario would introduce a law that makes illegal rent increases become legal if the tenant doesn't file an application to fight the increase within a year. This is yet another ablest administrative barrier which is also discriminatory, as it adds another barrier taking away the ability of poor and disabled Ontarians to defend themselves against eviction.”

I think that, on this side of the House, we agree that this is both ablest and classist. We've also noted that it's a

racist bill since it will in fact impact Black, brown, Indigenous people more so than their white counterparts. I'm wondering if you can take some time to speak to why it is inappropriate to keep inviting systemic discrimination in the legislation that passes through this House.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Here's what I'd like to say: When we don't provide housing as a human right, when people don't have a chance at housing, that has a ripple effect. They're unable to focus at school. They're unable to get employment, because that's the weird thing with job interviews: You need a stable address; you need a phone number, for which you need income to be able to pay that phone bill so that you can get the call for the job.

So this is actually a cycle of violence. When we create a bill—or should I take that “we” back, because I didn't create Bill 184; the Conservative government created Bill 184. When the government creates a bill that does not address those inequities, those roots of poverty, those roots of inaccessibility, it is absolutely contributing to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Question?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I've listened intently to my friends opposite speaking all day about this, and frankly, I am surprised that people who think housing is a human right don't seem to care about the changes to the Housing Services Act in our bill. Many housing providers' operating agreements and mortgages are coming to an end, and some housing providers are unsure if they'll be able to continue to provide these much-needed homes. We already have a housing problem for affordable housing, community housing, and our proposed changes in this bill, if passed, would help maintain our community housing supply by giving a housing provider with expiring agreements ways to transition to a new system and keep operating. I think that's an incredibly important part of the bill, because we do care—all of us care—about people who might otherwise be homeless. Nobody over there has a monopoly on caring.

So I'd like to ask you why nobody over there seems to be interested in this very important thing to build on our \$1-billion investment in community housing which we made last year.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Response? The member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: And if we weren't in the middle of a pandemic and we weren't on the verge of watching this tsunami of people be pushed into homelessness, we might be able to have a discussion about the elements that the member opposite has raised. But because we have a looming disaster, which this government has caused, it doesn't matter what other things are happening. The thing that matters is the looming humanitarian disaster that this government is causing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): There is not enough time for other questions. Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to speak on Bill 184. I've been listening intently to the debate today, and I thought, before digging into the details of the bill, it would

be appropriate to contextualize the challenges facing renters right now.

Prior to the pandemic, rental rates were soaring. For example, in Ottawa, over the past five years, rental rates have risen by 25%; 8.4% in the last year alone. A study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that a minimum-wage earner had to work 79 hours per week to afford the average one-bedroom apartment in Toronto. According to Feed Ontario, 90% of food bank users are rental or social housing tenants who spend more than 70% of their income on rent. Prior to COVID, a growing number of people could not afford their rent, if they could even find a place to rent. Zero per cent of the market rental housing is affordable for a full-time minimum-wage worker in Barrie, Guelph, Hamilton, Kitchener, Peterborough, Ottawa and Thunder Bay.

Speaker, this situation is not sustainable. That's why we need a housing bill that increases both supply and affordability, that mandates inclusionary zoning in all new developments, that makes more land available for co-op housing, that increases the supply of social and supportive housing. None of this is in Bill 184. Instead, Bill 184 makes it easier for tenants to be evicted. Think about that. It's exactly the wrong time for that to be taking place.

What troubles me most in this bill is the provisions that seek to bypass the Landlord and Tenant Board. I think it's dangerous to bring things out of the scope of this regulated setting and create a Wild West of private agreements that then become the basis for evictions. I worry about landlords pressuring tenants into signing onto repayment agreements they simply do not understand or don't have the resources to deal with without a proper hearing at the board.

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Community Legal Services of Ottawa has warned of this: “Individuals who are at particular risk of signing payment agreements that will result in their evictions are tenants who struggle with literacy, language, and other communication barriers.... Without the requirement that parties attend the Landlord and Tenant Board before an eviction order can be enforced, there will be no way to ensure these individuals do not fall through the cracks.”

Instead of creating alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in which landlords hold most of the cards, why not strengthen the existing process to be fair and more effective?

I'm also worried about provisions that limit issues that can be brought up in eviction hearings. For instance, the right of tenants to bring up chronic repair and maintenance issues is restricted in Bill 184, if they don't give advance written notice. I don't see the point of this loophole, unless it's to give landlords a free pass to not hold up their end of the deal to provide safe and decent housing.

Why would the government bring forward a bill making it easier to evict tenants while we're in a pandemic? There are currently about 50,000 arrears applications awaiting processing when the current eviction moratorium is lifted. If this bill passes, a larger number of vulnerable people who have lost their jobs, who are on disability or social

assistance, who have received no provincial relief payments will face eviction. To add housing instability onto the employment instability that so many people are facing is simply irresponsible.

A number of law associations have sent an open letter to all of us, and it says, “This bill is out of touch with the challenges faced by tenants, especially as the pandemic crisis has deepened the vulnerabilities of low-income Ontarians.”

Speaker, health experts are warning of a second wave, and I pray that we don't have to respond with another lockdown. But if we do, how are people going to shelter in place if they don't have a home to shelter in?

At the same time, I know there are a number of landlords struggling out there as well. They, too, have to pay the bills. But instead of making it easier to evict tenants, why doesn't the government deliver a rent relief fund that works for tenants and landlords? The Federation of Rental-housing providers came to the committee looking at economic recovery and put forward ideas for such a plan that can work. This is how we can find the kind of balance that so many members opposite have talked about during this debate. Those are the kinds of innovative housing-first solutions we need to search out.

I urge members opposite to just withdraw Bill 184. Let's debate this after the pandemic. Right now, the priority should be keeping people in their homes. It is far less expensive to house people than it is to deal with people who are unhoused.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I listened to my friend opposite intently. The member said that—he was reading from something that a stakeholder sent—there was no requirement to attend the Landlord and Tenant Board before an eviction order could be enforced. That is patently false, and the minister spoke here and went through all of the steps of the eviction process. The eviction notice is just the first one; the second one is an application; then there is the hearing, which is delivered—and the notice, by the way, comes with information that tells people what their rights are and that it doesn't mean that they will be evicted if they get this notice. Then there is the order and then there's the enforcement, which can only be done by a sheriff.

So I'd ask the member opposite why he seems to have misconstrued this provision and thought that you can just go directly to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm going to ask the member from Eglinton–Lawrence to withdraw her unparliamentary language.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

Mrs. Robin Martin: And why you think you can just be evicted based on a notice.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. The bill proposes alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. It proposes agreements that can be signed outside of the context of the Landlord and Tenant Board process. Numerous legal experts, particularly those who

work with the most vulnerable and the lowest income, have raised serious concerns about tenants unknowingly signing on to provisions that they will be unable to meet and therefore are the grounds for eviction notices. Speaker, I just think that's short-sighted and irresponsible, and a much better and fairer approach would be more appropriate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Ms. Jill Andrew: The member from Eglinton–Lawrence said a few moments ago, “It's just an eviction notice. It's just one eviction notice.” So I'm wondering, to the member from Guelph—and thank you for your presentation: Do you think this government understands the mental distress, the trauma, the anxiety, the depression, frankly—because I've got the medical notes here from some of my constituents in St. Paul's—that even one eviction notice brings onto a person's psyche during a pandemic?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. I would guess—and I'm assuming that this is for all members in the House, but I would say probably the most challenging and heartbreaking stories that come into my office are usually from people facing an eviction notice. It's one of the biggest challenges I face. So you combine the weakening of tenant rights with the cuts to legal aid—because oftentimes, these folks are desperate, and I'm sending them down the street; my office is about a block away from the legal aid office. I'm oftentimes sending them down the street to get some legal help to deal with the complexities that are part of the process. Now cuts to legal aid combined with reducing tenant rights are creating huge anxieties that are affecting peoples' mental health, especially at a time when we're being told to stay at home as much as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite for the interesting information you provided. I know you talked a little bit about balance, and that's something that we on the government side have been very focused on. I know that the official opposition is skewed extremely one way. I didn't hear any conversation about landlords that are going through a difficult time right now. I heard about tenants. And there are tenants. There are tenants. We empathize with them, and that's why we're putting this bill through.

My question is about information and about advance notice requirements, which are proposed in this bill and are in place in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, that allow landlords to prepare for hearings just like tenants do. Can you explain why you think landlords don't deserve equal rights to know what is going to be discussed at hearings? Or perhaps you do and maybe you can explain that too.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member opposite's question. I'm going to answer it in two parts. First of all, I just want to say that a number of legal associations reached out, I think, to every member. I'm assuming we all received their open letter. I just want to quote from their letter: “The bill restricts tenants' rights to bring forward

repair and maintenance issues in rent arrears cases, encouraging landlords to keep their units in a state of disrepair.” So I would argue that that’s not a balanced provision.

If you want to talk about balance, we’re on the committee for economic recovery. The rental housing providers of Ontario came to the committee, and they actually, I thought, had a pretty balanced proposal. I think we’re supposed to be there to listen and propose solutions. They said, “You know what? In any case where there is a tenant who cannot pay their rent because of a COVID-pandemic-related issue, why not provide a rent payment to their landlord so the landlord remains whole and the tenant is not evicted?” That’s a balanced approach.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Ms. Doly Begum: I heard the members opposite, members of this government, talk about: Why haven’t we heard anything about landlords? Well, why didn’t this government provide the support that we had asked for in the sense of rent subsidies right at the beginning of this pandemic, when we knew that people who were not able to pay their rent—all of these people are going to be evicted. Especially after this bill is passed and the eviction moratorium is lifted, there is going to be a tsunami of evictions.

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I’ve heard so many of my colleagues plead in this House to explain what’s going to happen. It just falls on deaf ears because, truly speaking, there is so much ignorance that is found on the other side. I am appalled to see the lack of compassion in this House. So my question to the member from Guelph, who had a—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I’m going to ask the member for Scarborough Southwest to withdraw her unparliamentary language.

Ms. Doly Begum: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Continue.

Ms. Doly Begum: My question to the member from Guelph is, do you think providing a rent subsidy would have helped all these tenants?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question. I’m not even going to give you my opinion; I’m going to give you the opinion of the rental housing providers of Ontario, which represents landlords, frankly, so we’re not even talking about a tenant advocacy organization.

They came to the committee studying economic recovery. They didn’t go as far as the official opposition has proposed, which is a rent relief program sort of across the

board, but they did come forward with, I think, a very balanced program that said that if you’re a tenant that cannot pay your rent because of the pandemic—you lost your job; who knows what happened; you have to stay home because you’ve got to care for your children or you have a sick relative or whatever—that if we had a rent relief fund targeted to those people in need, that would benefit landlords. They would receive the money and be able to pay their bills. And it would benefit those tenants, so we don’t evict them, because I can tell you, study after study says that it is more expensive to deal with people who are homeless than it is to house people.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: As you know, when our government was elected, we inherited a housing crisis in this province, where the vacancy rate just in 2018 alone was 1.8%. As the member knows and as he mentioned in his remarks, it’s a supply and demand issue and how he would like to increase the supply and demand. Well, obviously, that low vacancy rate is a big contingent of that issue and why there needs to be more supply built in housing and renting so there could be more vacancies and more people have access to rental units.

My question to the member is, if supply and demand is so important—affordable housing, attainable housing—and of course, if he acknowledges the vacancy rate, which does need to be improved, why did he not support the More Homes, More Choice Act?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question. I’ve always said that we need to increase the supply of housing, but we can do it without making it easier to pave over the places we love: our farmland, green space, wetlands, natural habitat areas. There is plenty of unused land that’s already been assigned for development in the whitebelt, so why don’t we develop that? There are huge opportunities for housing in the middle in many neighbourhoods. We don’t have to choose between single-family sprawl, which seems to be what the government likes, or huge condos. Why not build in the middle?

While we’re at it, I appreciate the fact that the government has talked about inclusionary zoning in transit hubs, but let’s bring in inclusionary zoning for any development. Any development should have inclusionary zoning. We mandate affordability so we ensure that the supply is affordable for people.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): We don’t have time for another question.

Report continues in volume B.

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Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Jill Andrew
Toby Barrett, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
John Fraser, France Gélinas
Christine Hogarth, Norman Miller
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Stephen Blais, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight / Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations d'urgence

Chair / Président: Vacant
Vacant, Vacant
Vacant, Vacant
Vacant, Vacant
Vacant, Vacant
Vacant, Vacant
Vacant
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell