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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

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21 September 2020

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Lundi  
21 septembre 2020

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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## CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 21 September 2020 / Lundi 21 septembre 2020

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

#### Shelter services

Ms. Catherine Fife..... 9153

#### Larry McDonald

Mr. Rick Nicholls..... 9153

#### COVID-19 response

Ms. Peggy Sattler ..... 9153

#### Human trafficking

Ms. Lindsey Park ..... 9153

#### Small business

Ms. Marit Stiles..... 9154

#### Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Mr. Jim Wilson ..... 9154

#### COVID-19 response

Ms. Christine Hogarth..... 9154

#### Student safety

Mr. Jamie West ..... 9155

#### Aerospace industry

Mr. Deepak Anand..... 9155

#### National Forest Week

Mr. Toby Barrett ..... 9155

#### John Turner

Ms. Sara Singh..... 9156

Mr. Mike Schreiner..... 9156

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney ..... 9156

Mr. John Fraser ..... 9157

### QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

#### COVID-19 response

Ms. Andrea Horwath..... 9158

Hon. Christine Elliott ..... 9158

#### Long-term care

Ms. Andrea Horwath..... 9159

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton ..... 9159

#### Long-term care

Mme France Gélinas ..... 9160

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton ..... 9160

#### COVID-19 response

Mr. Deepak Anand..... 9160

Hon. Doug Ford ..... 9161

#### Education funding

Ms. Sara Singh..... 9161

Hon. Stephen Lecce ..... 9161

#### Long-term care

Mr. John Fraser ..... 9162

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton..... 9162

#### Hydro rates

Mr. Stan Cho ..... 9163

Hon. Greg Rickford..... 9163

#### COVID-19 response in Indigenous and remote communities

Mr. Guy Bourgouin..... 9163

Hon. Christine Elliott ..... 9163

#### COVID-19 response

Mr. Stephen Blais..... 9164

Hon. Christine Elliott ..... 9164

#### Ontario Digital Service

Ms. Natalia Kusendova ..... 9165

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy ..... 9165

#### School transportation

Mr. Jamie West ..... 9165

Hon. Stephen Lecce..... 9166

#### Forest industry

Mr. Randy Pettapiece ..... 9166

Hon. John Yakabuski ..... 9166

#### COVID-19 response

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong ..... 9167

Hon. Christine Elliott ..... 9167

#### Curriculum

Miss Christina Maria Mitas..... 9167

Hon. Stephen Lecce..... 9168

#### Schitt's Creek

Ms. Jill Andrew..... 9168

#### Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)..... 9168

### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS

#### Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Mr. Jeremy Roberts ..... 9168

Report presented..... 9169

### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

#### Forest firefighting / Lutte contre les incendies de forêt

Hon. John Yakabuski ..... 9169

M. Guy Bourgouin ..... 9170

Mr. Mike Schreiner ..... 9171

**PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS**

<b>Long-term care</b>	
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9172
<b>Optometry services</b>	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	9172
<b>Documents gouvernementaux</b>	
Mme France Gélinas .....	9172
<b>Climate change</b>	
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	9172
<b>Social assistance</b>	
Ms. Jill Andrew.....	9172
<b>Long-term care</b>	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong .....	9173
<b>Long-term care</b>	
Mme France Gélinas .....	9173
<b>Long-term care</b>	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	9173
<b>Health care funding</b>	
Mme France Gélinas .....	9174
<b>Long-term care</b>	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong .....	9174
<b>Affordable housing</b>	
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9174
<b>Prévention du vapotage chez les jeunes</b>	
Mme France Gélinas .....	9174

**ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR**

<b>Franco-Ontarian Emblem Amendment Act, 2020, Bill 182, Ms. Kusendova / Loi de 2020 modifiant la Loi sur l'emblème franco-ontarien, projet de loi 182, Mme Kusendova</b>	
Mme Natalia Kusendova.....	9175
M. Guy Bourgouin .....	9177
Mlle Amanda Simard .....	9179
M. Stephen Blais .....	9180
L'hon. Caroline Mulroney.....	9180
M. Sam Oosterhoff.....	9181
Mme France Gélinas .....	9182
Mme Lucille Collard .....	9185
M. John Fraser.....	9185
M. John Vanthof.....	9186
M. Michael Mantha.....	9186
M. Jamie West.....	9187
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9188
Third reading agreed to .....	9189
<b>Not-for-profit corporations</b>	
Mme France Gélinas .....	9189
Mr. Jamie West .....	9191
Ms. Peggy Sattler .....	9193
Mr. Gilles Bisson .....	9195
Motion agreed to .....	9196

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO**

Monday 21 September 2020

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO**

Lundi 21 septembre 2020

*The House met at 1015.*

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

*Prayers.*

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**SHELTER SERVICES**

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's a privilege to share some hopeful news with legislators today. Over the past year, House of Friendship and their partner the Inner City Health Alliance developed a new ShelterCare system that integrates health care and other supports into a 24/7 shelter. The pandemic provided an opportunity to pilot and accelerate this innovative ShelterCare system in a local hotel, the Radisson.

The results speak for themselves: No positive COVID cases among those experiencing homelessness in Waterloo region; incident reports are down by 40%, meaning they are less reliant on emergency services; overdose rates are down by over 50%, despite increasing the number of people served; a 75% reduction in EMS calls; and improved mental supports for 40% to 50% of the men who experience active psychosis. Some 18 individuals were housed between March and July, and none have returned back to the shelter system.

To quote House of Friendship: "The people staying with us are more well than they've been in years and progressing much more quickly towards permanent housing, addiction treatment and health care supports."

In just a few months, the Waterloo region ShelterCare system has proven that we can end homelessness, and I hope that this is just the beginning of their transformative work. It can and it should serve as a model going forward for this entire Legislature.

Our thanks to the Inner City Health Alliance and House of Friendship for demonstrating such compassionate leadership.

1020

**LARRY McDONALD**

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** I am pleased and honoured to rise today to pay tribute to a good friend of mine. Eighty-three years ago, he came into the world, and he left us on August 19, 2020. He was known as "Mr. Wheatley." And as you know, Speaker, Wheatley is also known as the "Fresh-water Fish Capital of the World." Yes, Larry Allen McDonald left us. He left our community. But he left a huge mark on his community of Wheatley.

I remember many years ago, he was a charter member of the Wheatley Jaycees, and he participated in an international Jaycee hockey tournament that I organized in Chatham. As it turned out, it was Wheatley versus Chatham. The score was tied 3-3, and Larry came barrelling down on the right wing. He had his winger in the slot, and he let a quick shot go, and that puck went above the goalie's glove and into the net—the winning goal. I remember it well, Speaker; I was that goalie. I remember that very, very well.

Larry is going to be sadly missed by his wife, Sandy, and his children Mike, Juli and Duff, his seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. But he will not only be missed by his family, he will be greatly missed by his community. Larry McDonald, you left big shoes to fill. May you rest in peace.

**COVID-19 RESPONSE**

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I rise today on behalf of the people of Oakridge, a quiet residential neighbourhood in my riding of London West. The Oakridge COVID-19 assessment centre, one of London's two centres, opened on March 15 in the Oakridge Arena. It is directly across from Riverside Public School and within a kilometre of two other elementary schools, operating Monday to Friday, from 9 to 5.

Last week, I spoke in this House about the horrendously long lineups experienced by Londoners waiting for COVID tests—lineups that are putting vulnerable people at risk and could deter those who need tests from getting tested. At the Oakridge assessment centre, cars are lined up around the block from early morning, creating safety hazards for children walking to school and making it difficult for school buses to turn into the school. Residents fear that a child will almost certainly be hit.

On weekends, only the Carling assessment centre is open, and yesterday it reached capacity less than two hours after opening its doors.

Speaker, London urgently needs more assessment centres, extended hours, more staffing and more public health resources to respond to local testing needs. The provincial command table, and ultimately the Minister of Health, has the ability to direct these changes. Londoners and the people of Oakridge deserve to have these critical testing issues addressed now.

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

**Ms. Lindsey Park:** On September 11, I had the pleasure of joining my Durham MPP colleagues in Pickering,

including the member for Pickering–Uxbridge and President of the Treasury Board, to announce that our government is investing \$300,000 in the Durham Regional Police Service’s HALT Project so that the human trafficking unit can continue to fight the horrific and heinous crime of human trafficking and support the victims of it. This funding was made possible through the Proceeds of Crime Front Line Policing Grant. This grant repurposes the funds from the guns, the cash and the property confiscated from criminals to support victims of sex trafficking in Durham.

This project will do several things. It will add a second crisis intervention counsellor to the human trafficking unit in a collaborative strategy that has been developed right in Durham to identify trafficked persons and connect them to social services. It’s a multi-disciplinary approach to support human trafficking survivors, including a trauma-informed approach with trained social workers and survivors. It will allow the unit to implement a new component in this fight against human trafficking locally: a full-day annual symposium aimed at helping youth identify the signs and stop exploitation before it begins.

You can check out the latest updates at stopht.com. Together, Speaker, if we keep going and don’t give up, we will see the dying days of this awful crime and indeed halt it.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Good morning. Today I rise on behalf of small businesses in Davenport who have been hit hard by COVID-19.

Despite pleas for help from business owners and calls from the official opposition to provide immediate supports, it took months for the federal and provincial governments to deliver rent relief and protection from eviction. Now, with case counts quickly rising and the threat of another emergency lockdown looming, those businesses are looking for urgent help.

Little Portugal on Dundas BIA, along with 80 other BIAs across the GTA, wrote to the Premier, the Prime Minister and other elected representatives over the weekend to make their case. They’re calling for the CECRA rent assistance program to be retired and replaced with one that actually works—and doesn’t depend on the whims of commercial landlords. They want the federal wage subsidy to be continued through 2021 so they can keep people on the payroll. They’re calling for grants to help small businesses transition to online sales and alternative services, as well as to help cover the high cost of maintaining strict health protocols.

Speaker, many of these calls echo exactly what New Democrats in the official opposition have been calling for from the beginning in our Save Main Street plan. It’s time the government took heed of what these small, independent businesses are telling them, and act. I call on the government to bring forward a robust second wave plan before we lose even more of our vital neighbourhood businesses.

#### CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and I stand this morning to recognize the heroic efforts of a young constituent of mine who goes above and beyond every year to demonstrate his appreciation for the life-saving care he received as a child.

Raymond Hardisty of Stayner was born with a rare blood disorder. By the time he was four, he developed leukemia, and needed a bone marrow transplant. Fortunately, a donor was found. Raymond is now employed at Dairy Queen and is living an active adult life. Each year since 2008 he has participated in his employer’s Miracle Balloon fundraiser. Going door-to-door and attending social events to sell the balloons, he had raised more than \$60,000 for SickKids hospital and the Children’s Miracle Network.

This year, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and because Raymond has little or no immune system, he had to find another way to give back, so he launched a bottle drive. With help from community members and the Lions Club, and donations from Collingwood, Stayner and Wasaga Beach, Mr. Hardisty was able to raise an additional \$16,000. That brings his total to more than \$77,000.

Raymond Hardisty is making a genuine difference in the lives of young Ontarians who need our support. It’s a privilege to know him, and I’m proud to have him as a constituent and friend.

I’d also like to acknowledge Raymond’s parents, Mary and Steve, and his sister Lisa for their unwavering support of Raymond’s many worthwhile endeavours. Congratulations, Raymond.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, everyone.

I’d actually like to talk about a couple of front-line heroes in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I’ve had the opportunity to visit Jim and Maria’s No Frills grocery store in my riding on Islington Avenue, right down the street from my constituency office. Jim and Maria have gone above and beyond to make sure that their staff and their customers remain safe. When I toured their facility, they had the sanitization right at the door, and Lysol wipes for everybody when they walked in. One thing that was really important is their staff were confident to go to work every day, which allows us as customers to feel safe when we’re shopping. So I want to thank Jim and Maria for keeping our community safe.

Another company I’d like to talk about today is our Staples and Staples Canada. Minister Lecce, our Minister of Education, joined me for their back-to-school program, and what they did is they wanted to make sure that their customers remain safe as well, and they put together an outside curbside pickup for customers so they can actually call in their order, drive in and pick up their products with no contact.

I want to thank David Boone, who is the CEO, and John DeFranco for sharing their time with myself and the minister, and showing us how they can keep our parents and our loved ones safe when they shop.

I want to thank Jim, Maria, David and John for creating great jobs in Etobicoke–Lakeshore, and I just want to encourage everyone to shop local, shop safe and shop with confidence.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Before I recognize the next member, I'm going to ask all members to keep their private conversations as quiet as possible so as to allow the member who has the floor to be heard.

1030

#### STUDENT SAFETY

**Mr. Jamie West:** Today I want to talk about the mess the Conservatives created while reopening schools with their broken plan.

My Sudbury community office received calls from numerous constituents who are concerned about the reopening. The calls are not just coming from concerned parents; they're also coming from bus drivers. We had a bus driver call our office last Tuesday and tell us she was driving a bus with 43 elementary students first thing in the morning, and then she turns around and picks up a second group of 52 high school students. Speaker, this bus driver has no time to sanitize between the two pick-ups. She's concerned for the safety of her students and for herself.

Another concerned father called us about his frustration and growing concern for his children's education. It's a very close-knit family, and they have immunocompromised members who are at high risk of contracting COVID-19, so they decided to home-school their six children. Their son who is currently in grade 12 has been in cadets for several years now and he has dreams of attending the Royal Military College when he graduates. However, this son and his family are worried that without the proper supports for math, he may fall behind and not make the cut to the RMC, which will effectively crush his dreams. Speaker, he has worked so hard over the first three years. His parents have spoken with his teachers and school board. They all want to see him succeed. Everyone has done their part as much as they can—everyone, with the exception of the Conservative government.

These are just two of the many examples of Sudburians who want a meaningful back-to-school plan to protect their children's health and future. Speaker, it's frustrating that the government is refusing to take leadership on the issue that matters the most to people of this province.

#### AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Mr. Speaker, due to my background in engineering, I'm always fascinated with manufacturing facilities. Last week, I had the opportunity to visit and congratulate Paul Chana and Avion Technologies in my riding of Mississauga–Malton for completing 25 years. Avion, which means “airplane” in Spanish, is a

leading supplier of high-quality gears and precision components for the aerospace and defence industry, and an excellent example of the strong potential and impact of the aerospace industry on Ontario's economy.

Ontario is the home of many global aerospace success stories, from Bombardier's global series of business jets to the Dash 8 series of turboprop commercial aircraft—Diamond Aircraft, Canadarm2 and Dextre are some examples. Some 93% of aerospace manufacturers are, in fact, exporters. Ontario is also a world-renowned cluster for landing gear. Three out of four companies that make complete landing gear systems across the globe for commercial aircraft are here in Ontario. In 2018 alone, the aerospace industry contributed \$13 billion and 89,500 jobs in the Canadian economy.

As we all know, during COVID-19, with the decrease in air travel demand, the aerospace industry has been hit drastically and needed to retool themselves. Through this statement, I'd like to ensure aerospace companies that your government is here to work with you and support you through the Canada-Ontario Job Grant. It provides \$10,000 in government support per person for training costs.

Finally, I'd like to say thank you, aerospace companies in Mississauga–Malton, for your contribution to the growth of our community.

#### NATIONAL FOREST WEEK

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** This week marks the 100th anniversary of National Forest Week. It's a time to recognize the forest sector's incredible contribution to our economy, especially rural, northern and Indigenous communities. Over \$18 billion worth of revenues is generated every year, and it employs 147,000 men and women directly and indirectly. In southwestern Ontario, where my riding is located, there are over 5,400 jobs in forestry. A renewed focus to keep this industry vibrant and sustainable means more good-paying jobs and economic growth for generations to come.

Speaker, there are more than 71 million hectares of forest across the province. These diverse forests are renowned internationally for being managed sustainably, and obviously managed by very hard-working people. Every year, almost 73 million trees are planted and over two million seeds are spread through aerial seeding. Especially now with materials to make personal protective equipment like surgical masks, gowns and hygiene products coming from the forest sector, it's more important than ever to keep Ontario's forests healthy and productive.

I offer a hearty thank you for everybody who works in the industry. Thanks to our Minister of Natural Resources and our parliamentary assistant, Mike Harris Jr.

JOHN TURNER

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader has informed me he has a point of order that he would like to raise.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding tribute statements for the Right Honourable John Turner.

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

Government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I move that five minutes be allocated to the official opposition, then two minutes to the independent Green member, then five minutes to the government, then five minutes to the independent Liberal members as a group to make tribute statements regarding the former Prime Minister of Canada the Right Honourable John Turner, and that this be taken up immediately; and that at the conclusion of these statements, the House observe a moment of silence.

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

I'm pleased to recognize the member for Brampton Centre.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** It's my honour to mark this moment on behalf of the official opposition to reflect on the passing of former Prime Minister John Turner. On behalf of our leader and our whole caucus, we extend our condolences to the Prime Minister's wife, Geills, and their children and extended family.

I'll say a few words about Prime Minister Turner, although I never had the opportunity to meet him, but I hear from those who did that he had quite the zest for life. Prime Minister Turner came to Canada as an immigrant, as a child, from the United Kingdom, and was first elected in his early thirties to be a member of Parliament. At only 38 years old, he ran for the leadership of the Liberal Party, losing to Pierre Trudeau, and served as an MP for Ottawa-Carleton as well as Canada's Attorney General and finance minister.

As Attorney General, he introduced legislative changes in 1969 to Canada's Criminal Code and legalized some therapeutic abortions under certain conditions, what many consider a first important stepping stone to women's reproductive choices and rights. The bill also decriminalized some of the laws against gay men and ushered in the first steps towards equality for all LGBTQ2S individuals in our country.

When he won his party's leadership and was sworn in as Prime Minister in 1984, he called a general election nine days later that ended up cutting short his time in government, with a loss to Brian Mulroney. Four years later, he is most remembered as arguing against a free trade deal with the United States in the 1988 election, and the legacy of that campaign has deeply shaped Canada's trade policy ever since.

Prime Minister Turner was passionate about protecting the environment and served Canada as an honorary director of the World Wildlife Fund. He loved the outdoors. From his cottage on Lake of the Woods near Kenora, he cherished his time in nature, something that I think he encourages all of us to continue to do.

In a 2012 interview, he said, "Water is crucial and Canadians ought not to neglect this. It is one of our greatest assets." Speaker, in 2020, I think that's something that we

should all agree with, and something that we should endeavour to ensure that everyone in this province and country has access to.

I ask all members of this House to remember Prime Minister Turner's contributions to our country, his public service, and share in our condolences with his family. May he rest in peace.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll recognize next the member for Guelph.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** It's an honour to rise and pay tribute to the Right Honourable John Turner, Canada's 17th Prime Minister, and to recognize his distinguished career in law, politics, and as a champion for Canada, and especially the environment. He believed strongly in democracy and the parliamentary system.

As noted, as justice minister, he decriminalized acts against gay men, which paved the way to decriminalize and support the LGBTQ+ community in terms of rights and equality. He also paved the way for defending a woman's right to choose and decriminalizing laws against abortion in this country. Most notably, he set up the national legal aid system. He was a strong defender of legal aid in this country and created Canada's Federal Court.

**1040**

He was deeply committed to the environment and was a strong advocate for protecting water, especially. The World Wildlife Fund Canada called him "one of nature's true patriots and protectors." He, as noted, participated in the famous free trade debates, but one of the things he especially noted in the free trade debates was how essential it is to protect Canada's water. He opposed anything that would threaten Canada's water. He, most notably, stood up with First Nations in the Yukon to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

He will be remembered, loved and cherished by all Canadians. I want to offer my condolences to his wife, Geills, and his family.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Transportation.

**L'hon. Caroline Mulroney:** C'est un privilège pour moi de me lever aujourd'hui pour honorer le 17<sup>e</sup> premier ministre du Canada, le très honorable John Napier Turner.

Prime Minister Turner was born in England in 1929 to Phyllis Gregory and Leonard Turner. When Leonard died in 1932, Ms. Gregory moved her family back to Canada to her hometown of Rossland, British Columbia. At the height of the Great Depression and with work scarce, Ms. Gregory travelled to Ottawa to accept a position as an economist with the tariff board. She would go on to hold major positions within that board and others and, in doing so, she was the first woman to move into the senior ranks of Ottawa's civil service.

Ms. Gregory set high standards for her children, and John strove to meet them. In 1947, as a student at UBC, he set the Canadian record for the 100-yard dash when he ran the distance in 9.8 seconds. That same year, he also ran the fastest Canadian time for the 200-yard distance. He was an

Olympic-calibre athlete and he made the Canadian Olympic team for the 1948 games in London, but he was unable to compete due to an injury. But the future Prime Minister wasn't only a track star, he was also an outstanding scholar, and in 1949 he was named a Rhodes scholar, which paved the way for his future legal career.

Mr. Turner won election to the House of Commons for the first time in 1962 in the riding of St. Lawrence–St. George in Montreal. I learned over the weekend from the many interviews my father did on the news that my own grandmother, Irene Mulrone, was one of his early supporters. He would go on to contest six elections and he won all of them. In 1967, Prime Minister Pearson named Mr. Turner to his cabinet as Registrar General and then as Canada's first Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. He would then go on to serve as justice minister and as finance minister as well.

À titre de ministre de la Justice, M. Turner a présenté la Loi sur les langues officielles, qui est entrée en vigueur en 1969. C'était une loi historique déclarant que le français et l'anglais étaient de statut égal au sein du gouvernement fédéral, une réalisation importante pour tous les francophones au Canada.

Mr. Turner would leave federal politics in 1976, but returned in 1984 when he was elected Liberal Party leader and became Prime Minister.

Throughout his political career, Prime Minister Turner was concerned with establishing the foundations on which the economic prosperity of Canadians could be built. As Liberal Party leader, his campaigns were concerned with economic reforms that would unlock the potential that exists within this great country: jobs, technological innovation and skills training. These are the same concerns that we share in this House today.

It's often tempting to be nostalgic about the way things used to be, but one area in the past where things were different, and I think better, was in the understanding that sitting across the aisle from one another does not make us enemies, only opponents. We want the same things: prosperity and progress for our province and our country, even as we might have different ideas about how we can achieve them. That was something that Prime Minister Turner understood. He was engaged in political life to fight for ideas that he believed in, not to win partisan battles at any cost. He was, as has been described countless times in the last 48 hours, a gentleman.

As I was talking about Mr. Turner and his legacy with my parents last night, my mother told me that he sent her handwritten thank-you notes after every event that she hosted at 24 Sussex—a thoughtful gesture, rare and truly telling.

"Life is a trust," Prime Minister Turner once said, "and one has a fiduciary obligation towards one's country to put back into it what one has received. I've received a great deal, and I believe that a free society only operates properly if the best men and women offer to serve." Those weren't just words; they were how Prime Minister Turner lived his life and how he embodied so much about what is great about this great country. His coat of arms carries the

motto, "Esse quam videri," which means, "To be, rather than to seem." He was a great Canadian who dedicated his life to trying to make our country a better place.

To his wife, Geills; his children Elizabeth, Michael, David and Andrew; and his grandchildren Clare, Fiona, Dylan, Olivia, Robbie, Christina, Jack and Luke; and to his friends: On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I offer you our deepest condolences.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa South.

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's really an honour to rise and recognize the important contributions of the Right Honourable John Napier Turner, Canada's 17th Prime Minister, and to talk about his life of public service to others.

He entered politics in 1962, first running and winning at the age of 32—pretty young—and served for three decades in federal politics in various roles, as an MP, a cabinet minister of various portfolios, the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Liberal Party and a Prime Minister. He served during some of the most challenging and turbulent times in Canadian history. Most notably, as justice minister, he championed key reforms in the Criminal Code that opened the door to LGBTQ rights and a woman's right to choose. He also was a justice minister during the October Crisis, which was a very turbulent and scary time in our country. He was also the finance minister in 1972, when many of you probably weren't born, during the global oil crisis, a real financial challenge. He was the voice of fiscal prudence at that table.

One of my memories of John Turner is the 1988 free trade debate, and the passion and energy and the love that he had for Canada. I still remember it. And my wife jokes that it's the thing that got me off the couch and knocking on doors in 1988, which eventually has led to me being here. The most important thing is, what do the people we work with have to say about us? So one of his fiercest opponents, Minister Mulrone's dad, Prime Minister Brian Mulrone, said these things about him: "He was a man of high principle, conducted himself with dignity ... remembered as a parliamentarian who contributed a great deal to Canada.... He symbolized what is best about Canada ..." was a "rare person" and "true gentleman of Canadian politics."

He was an accomplished lawyer, a Rhodes scholar, a politician. Those aren't the things that are most important. It's how you connect to others. He was a devoted son, a loving husband, a loving father, and that was evident to everyone around him, and he treated everybody with a genuine interest and respect.

I'll tell you a little story: I first met John Turner on June 3, 1968. He was campaigning in Ottawa–Carleton, and he was up at the mall, so we all hopped on our bikes and we drove up to see him. He talked to us, and I've got this family-famous picture of me with him in 1968 on the campaign trail, in the Ottawa Journal. And I know that day that something clicked inside me. At eight years old, I don't know how, but it did inspire me that month to go and say, "I want to run in the mock election" we were having in grade 3. I was really excited. I got to be one of the

candidates. But then I learned there are great disappointments in politics: I won't be chosen to be John Turner; I had to be his Conservative opponent, Ken Binks. You can imagine how devastated this nine-year-old was, not being this person that he just met. What I also learned—I think John Turner is the epitome of this—is you can overcome great obstacles. I won the election, and it was the only time that I voted Conservative in my entire life.

1050

But more importantly, the genuine interest that he showed in a bunch of nine-year-old boys was not episodic. It was not something that just happened that day. It happened through his life. He remembered peoples' names. He remembered important things about them. He wrote notes to people to thank them. We can talk about our policies, and they're important, but they pass. Times change. Policies change. Challenges are different. People have different opinions about what your legacy is. But the personal things and connections that you do every day—the small ones are the ones that count and the ones that make the difference. John Turner was always a champion at that.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll now ask the House to rise to pay tribute to the memory of the Right Honourable John Napier Turner.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

## QUESTION PERIOD

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** In every corner of this province, people are watching with dread as COVID-19 surges back, and once again, the province scrambles to react. On July 14, nearly 70 days ago, the Premier declared that he had a detailed plan to deal with a likely second wave. In fact, he said, "I just got off a call with our health team and some of the best medical minds in the entire country, and that will be rolling out very shortly over the next little while ... we're prepared." Seventy days ago, that's what he said.

Why did the Premier claim he had a detailed plan and then fail to produce one?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I thank the leader of the official opposition for the question. We are prepared. We have had a plan prepared since July 30. This was a long time ago. Of course, we are ready to roll it out imminently. It is dealing with all of the issues that people are concerned about: dealing with testing; dealing with lab volumes; making sure that we can continue with the policies and procedures and surgeries that had to be postponed during wave 1; dealing with the upcoming flu season and making sure that we have the health human resources to be able to deal with a surge in cases, both in our hospitals and in our long-term-care homes, as well as in home and community

care. There is a plan, it is ready to go, and it is going to be released immediately.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Parents missing a day of work to stand in line with children for eight hours to get tested, or learning this week that their child's school is yet the latest one to be in an outbreak, don't need a government that promises a plan. They need a government that has a plan.

The Premier claimed that he was ready with a plan months ago. The minister is claiming that there is a plan that was ready months ago. Why, then, did the government claim that they would be rolling out this plan back in July? And yet, to this very moment, we have yet to see a plan, while kids are going to school and outbreaks are happening and while parents are waiting literally hours and hours and sometimes days on end in lines for testing.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** There is a plan, a complete, comprehensive plan, dealing with all of the issues that we need to face for a potential wave 2 of COVID-19. It is ready to go, and as a matter of fact, it is being implemented as we speak.

One of the issues that has arisen is the need for further testing. We are doing further testing, as I indicated last week. We are prepared to move up to 50,000 tests within the next week or so if we need to. On Saturday, we reached 40,000 tests in one day. That is a record for Ontario. We are moving forward. We have increased—we exceeded our capacity at 25,000 tests. We are now at 40,000, and we will be very shortly at 50,000 tests.

But with respect to the issue that the member has raised concerning the long lineups in testing, I can speak to the fact that we have significantly increased our capacity in a number of areas. I will deal with the east region, because I have heard a lot about Ottawa. We have increased significantly. I will speak further about that in my supplementary.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** When parents have to line up with sick children for hours and hours on end just for a chance to get a test result, something is absolutely not working.

On July 7, in a response to an NDP question, the Minister of Health admitted that we would need much more testing come the fall and promised that, as part of their detailed second wave plan for the fall, testing would be increased up to 50,000 tests a day. We're not there yet, so there is something wrong with the minister's claims and the Premier's claims that they made back in July.

If the government had a detailed plan, Speaker, why are parents waiting and waiting and waiting in eight-hour lineups with their kids and sometimes still not getting the tests they need?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** The plan is substantive. It is comprehensive. It is actually being rolled out, witnessed by the fact that we reached 40,000 tests on Saturday. We

are well on our way to getting to 50,000 tests, and we're going to increase from there.

But with respect to the issue of the lineups, we have increased significantly. We are planning a new location for Kemptville. Throughout the region, we have additional paramedic crews for surge testing and assessment. The Brewer Park arena, which serves both CHEO and the Ottawa Hospital, is a new location and increased capacity, plus 33% by October 1, plus 63% by October 31. Almonte General Hospital has increased capacity hours and is up by 140%. We anticipate that we will have a 133% increase in testing by September 30, and a 60% increase is planned for the whole region very shortly thereafter.

So the plan is there. The plan is working. We are getting to the testing that we need, and we are shortening the lineups.

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, it's September 21. I hope the minister realizes that the plan should have been in place and acted upon already.

My next question is also for the Premier. Thousands of people with loved ones in long-term care were told this spring that they were going to have no expense spared to protect their loved ones. This was a promise that the Premier made back in the spring. No money would be spared to protect people in long-term care.

1100

Today, the Globe and Mail reports that for three months, the government has refused to act on recommendations from senior experts in infectious disease in order to build what we need in terms of prevention and infection control in our long-term-care homes. My question to the Premier is: Can the Premier explain why he has not acted on the recommendations from his own experts?

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

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you for that question. I want to assure all Ontarians that action is being taken. Actually, we have a situation in Ottawa where three homes—two, particularly—are of concern. I want to make sure that Ontarians understand that 99.7% of our homes are managing very well with COVID-19. Our attention is focused on an integrated effort with the Ottawa Hospital, the medical officer of health in Ottawa, taking every measure possible and making sure that the dollars flow, the \$243 million that was set aside and allocated for improved staffing, surge capacity, infection and prevention control. We've taken regulatory amendments, three packages of those; four emergency orders; and our IPAC specialists going in. On April 15, we had an action plan ready to go, and I can start to list the homes and the hospital partnerships. I'd be happy to clarify this misunderstanding.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, there can be no doubt whatsoever that we are definitely in the midst of a second

wave, and once again, long-term-care homes are largely unprotected. You'll know—I spoke about this last week—that three more residents have died at West End Villa in Ottawa just over this past weekend. That brings the number to 11 deaths in that facility. Sixty-one residents now have COVID-19 in that facility.

Facilities across the province are scrambling—scrambling—to find enough staff. Experts have been clear on the need for infection control within long-term care and a plan to deal with the dangerous, dangerous lack of staffing that has existed for a very long time in long-term care. So why are seniors in long-term care still waiting for the government to act on recommendations that were made three months ago—three months ago—by their own experts on long-term care?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you for the question. Actions are being taken, and they have been taken all along. Our IPAC program, part of our action plan, from April is absolutely clear and proof that our homes are getting infection prevention and control efforts and getting the expertise from the local hospitals. I have said many times here, in this chamber: This is an integrated response between hospitals, medical officers of health, Public Health Ontario, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontario Health, the Ministry of Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Health.

For a few examples, I can tell you that the homes are getting support. Over the last few months, Downsview and Humber River Hospital have been partnered; River Glen home and Southlake; Forest Heights and St. Mary's hospital; Woodbridge Vista and William Osler; Altamont and Scarborough Health Network; Eatonville and Unity Health—Extendicare Guildwood, Orchard Villa, Lakeridge, Villa Colombo, Humber River Hospital, Hawthorne Place, North York General, the Ottawa Hospital and our homes in Ottawa. I can tell you—

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

The final supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, with all due respect, hospitals are scrambling to take care of procedures and surgeries that were cancelled during the first wave. They are concerned about the flu that's coming forward soon. This minister seems to not realize that hospitals are not going to be there to save the day like they were last time, because they have so much on their plate right now with the broken hospital system that existed before.

But over 1,850 people have lost their lives to COVID-19 in long-term care during this pandemic thus far. This wasn't inevitable by any means. It was the result of a long-broken long-term-care system. The Premier has talked about fixing that system, but spent the summer campaigning instead of preparing and implementing a plan that his own health experts, his own infection control experts had provided him back three months ago.

At what point, then, Speaker, will this Premier actually understand that families desperately need a government that doesn't wait for disaster to hit, but actually starts planning for that disaster before it hits?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you once again for the question. The plan is ongoing. We are continuing to be adaptable and vigilant. There is ongoing surveillance in our long-term-care homes. We are increasing the layers of protection for our homes, whether it's a mandatory management order or a volunteer management agreement; or whether it's getting infection prevention and control or making sure that our staff in long-term care have N95s and access to those; or making sure that the homes have proper communication with family members and getting our caregivers back into the homes.

But I remind you: Only three homes out of 626 long-term-care homes in Ontario have more than three cases, and in two of those three, we are actively engaged. That's 99.7% of long-term-care homes in Ontario that are managing very, very well. For the homes that are not, we are making sure every bit of effort and time that we have is focused on those homes. It is an integrated effort, and we will continue to fight COVID.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Over the weekend, we learned of three more tragic deaths at West End Villa, a long-term-care home in Ottawa operated by Extendicare, a for-profit corporation. Workers at the home are coming forward, telling us that they could not and cannot access proper personal protective equipment.

The Premier has been told over and over that overworked staff in long-term-care homes were not able to access the equipment they needed to protect themselves and their residents. He promised that it would never happen again. Why is it that the staff at this long-term-care home are still coming forward, telling us that they are not able to access the personal protective equipment that they need to stay safe?

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

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you once again for that question. My heart goes out to everyone who has lost a loved one. I can assure this chamber and Ontarians that West End Villa has the PPE that it requires, including N95s, available to the staff to use. We are absolutely—24 hours a day—helping this home and making sure that it has staffing. Public Health Ontario, our medical officer of health and I have been in constant contact over the weekend and for weeks, making sure that this home has the support that it needs.

I'm going to mention again the comment that I made here in this chamber last week, that what is happening in our long-term-care homes, in terms of the spread of COVID and COVID getting into our homes, is a reflection of what's happening in the community. Ottawa is struggling to keep its numbers down. Our medical officer of health is doing everything possible. We will continue to have an integrated approach. Long-term care will stay our focus and we will fight COVID in those homes—

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

The supplementary question.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** When the cameras were on, the Premier talked about the changes that are needed in our long-term-care homes. But once the cameras are off, he seems to listen to the well-connected Conservative lobbyists working for corporations like Extendicare. Meanwhile, staff are left scrambling—overworked, underpaid and without the PPE they need to stay safe.

On Friday, the Premier told us that he wanted long-term-care operators to take responsibility. But what about the Premier taking his responsibility? When will the Premier take any responsibility at all for the fact that (1) workers still cannot access proper protective equipment, and (2) seniors—our loved ones—are still dying of COVID in our long-term-care homes?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you for the question. We need to deal with the facts, and the fact is that our long-term-care homes in Ontario are receiving the PPE they need. They have the PPE they require, including N95s. I have been absolutely clear on this, over the weekend, making sure that that is the case, despite the politicking done by the opposition.

1110

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** You're saying the PSWs are lying?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** No, you are.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** I want to deal with the facts, and the facts are that our long-term-care homes have the PPE that they need—most of them have a week's supply—and we are making sure that that is absolutely accurate. I have been on this. I know what is true. And despite the politicking that is going on in this chamber, I will continue to tell—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the Premier to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Who me? Yes, okay. I withdraw. I don't know what I'm withdrawing, but I'm withdrawing.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The procedure for withdrawal is to stand in your place and withdraw without qualifications.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Speaker, I don't know what I said.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to ask the Premier, again, to withdraw without qualifications.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** I will withdraw.

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. Start the clock.

The next question.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** My question is to the Premier. Premier, my riding of Mississauga–Malton in Peel region has been one of the hot spots during COVID-19. Earlier

this summer, we unfortunately saw one of the reasons why.

While Peel was in stage 2 and had strict requirements on private gathering limits, an individual felt the need to host a 200-person house party. Images captured on social media showed something out of a movie with rows and rows of packed cars and individuals crowded together. This was reckless, dangerous and selfish by this person to the health and the safety and the sacrifice endured for months by my constituents and all individuals who have displayed discipline in stopping the spread. Unfortunately, since that time, we have seen and heard of more stories like this from many young individuals across this province.

Premier, with 425 cases reported today, the highest since June 6, what is our government doing to ensure that the wild house parties like those we have seen are stopped, and those who think they're above the law—

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

The Premier to reply.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Malton for doing such a great job, and I appreciate what he's doing.

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Doug Ford:** I hear an echo, Mr. Speaker. But I guess they get away with it.

As I stated previously, when individuals are reckless— and there's a small group. There's always a small group of bad apples out there that want to ignore the health and safety of the people in Peel and right across this province by recklessly holding these backyard barbecues. I'm not talking about 10 or 12 or 13 people; I'm talking 100, 150 people out there hooting and hollering, having a great old time. That's fine; I'm not against having a great old time. What I'm against is when they're having a great old time, not socially distancing, not masking and not following the guidelines from the chief medical officer.

What we've done is we've introduced amendments to the reopening Ontario act to set a minimum fine at \$10,000 for any organizer that's holding these parties, and for anyone that attends, a \$750 fine. Hopefully that will deter the partygoers.

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** My supplementary question is also to the Premier. Premier, I want to echo your statement as well: We need everyone to be pulling in the same direction—and thank you for your leadership during these tough times.

Any increase or surge in the case numbers means that more resources are required in hospitals, puts our seniors and most vulnerable at risk and hurts our businesses and everyone who has sacrificed so much during this time. This represents real impacts to everyone involved and those we care deeply about.

Since the stricter enforcement measures were put in place, Brampton alone has seen 59 individuals receive summonses for fines up to \$100,000, and the city has

issued over 700 tickets for infractions related to COVID violations. Just this past Saturday, Hamilton and GTA police officers had to take time in a coordinated effort to shut down a 500-person impromptu car show that had been organized.

Speaker, can the Premier please share with the Legislature further information about what these measures will mean for our fight against COVID-19?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Again, I thank the member for Mississauga–Malton. I agree with him. The vast majority of everyone is pushing in the same direction. You have a couple of bad apples that don't want to follow the rules. Some other people want to play politics instead of supporting, but that's neither here nor there, Mr. Speaker.

This targeted action is a direct response to the latest data which we have seen that tells us that increased cases are a result of private and large social gatherings. The new limits don't apply to law-abiding, responsible restaurant owners, banquet halls, or any other organizations or companies that follow the guidelines. I think we've all gone in to support a restaurant, and the guidelines are incredible. They're following the guidelines, following the protocols.

This is what we need the rest of the public to do: Stop the massive social gatherings, as we saw in Ancaster. I'll be addressing that at my press conference.

## EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Sara Singh:** My question is to the Premier. According to the Peel District School Board's website, as of today, there are a total of 30 reported infections at public schools across the region, and those numbers are increasing daily. All of us—parents, educators and students—tried to go into the new school year hoping for the best.

The government knew that kids were going back to class in September, but the reality is that they were unprepared for this return to the classroom. Peel region and the city of Brampton simply do not have the dedicated resources they need from the province to fight this crisis and to prevent the crisis that is unfolding in our classrooms. Every day, Speaker, I receive calls, and I know people across the province are receiving calls, from students and parents who are upset and confused by this government's broken back-to-school plan. In our community, they're waiting hours in line for tests.

Why is the Premier, and this government, so unprepared to manage the crisis in our classrooms?

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

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Over the weekend, I joined Dr. Yaffe, where I facilitated calls with the directors of education, the chairs of education and the local health authority—we spoke with Dr. Loh and Dr. Hau, as well, the associate—the medical officers of health in Peel; likewise, with the directors of the public and Catholic school boards, and chairs. The message was one of unanimity, that we are working together to reduce the risk of transmission in our

community, which, by extension, can and will enter our schools.

What we've heard from the chief medical officers in Peel was a message that the system of outbreak is working. Our outbreak protocol is working.

If I listen to other medical officers across the province: Dr. Charles Gardner, the Simcoe Muskoka Medical Officer of Health, said, "I think the outbreak protocol plan is well-crafted," for example, Speaker; Dr. Kurji of Ottawa says, "The issue of returning our ... schools is something we can all agree is unanimous"—and extended support for our outbreak management protocol.

We put the resources in place, the training in place, and we will continue to do everything we possibly can, including growing our testing capacity, to respond to the risk within our communities.

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

**Ms. Sara Singh:** We all want our kids to be able to go back to school, but this is simply not happening. Parents also thought that they had options, Speaker. If they didn't feel safe enough to send their children to school, they had the option to enroll them online. In Peel, we saw numbers of 10,000-plus students enrolling online, and now what we're hearing is that those students are waiting until late November in order to access virtual learning options.

Because of this government's backlog and lack of resources, people are waiting too long to access education in our communities. The opposition has been asking the Premier and this government for weeks, and yet, there is still no plan in place. Reducing social gatherings but still cramming 30-plus students into our classrooms is not the answer to stop the second wave.

Why won't this Premier cap class sizes so that 15 students are what is limited inside of our schools?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** It was this government that stood very strongly in support of online learning. It was our party that stood alone in the defence of having an online learning option through the negotiations. We continue to believe that that capacity is a strength.

In this province, we have virtual schools being developed. We have allocated \$30 million to hire principals for those schools to create accountability. We've set a very high standard: 75% each and every day of those 300 minutes of instruction must be live, synchronous Zoom-style learning. I hope that all members will agree now, upon reflection, when they opposed us in the spring, that that standard meets the needs of our kids, who deserve nothing but the best. The continuity of learning is important.

In Renfrew, where we saw a school most regrettably close because of outbreak, in that school, within 24 hours, they pivoted immediately to online learning. We are grateful to that board. We expect that right across this province.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. John Fraser:** My question is for the Premier. The government's response to the first wave of COVID-19 in

long-term care can best be described as flat-footed. We're now into the second wave. At Ottawa's West End Villa, they're experiencing the biggest outbreak since the first wave: 52 residents and 26 staff have COVID-19, and 11 residents have died.

**1120**

Families, staff and home operators across this province are all begging for the government's help. Donna Duncan of the Ontario Long Term Care Association has been calling for the government's wave 2 action plan since July and described the situation as "terrifying." Geriatrician Dr. Nathan Stall from Women's College Hospital calls it, "very scary. We said we would never let this happen again."

Speaker, through you, can the Premier explain why Ontario's long-term-care homes are so unprepared for the second wave?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the Minister of Long-Term Care to reply on behalf of the government.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you for the question. Some 99.7% of our long-term-care homes in Ontario are managing very well. There are three homes that have more than three cases in the Ottawa area.

It is public knowledge that Ottawa, Toronto and Peel have larger numbers of COVID-positive cases. Our efforts are on supporting the homes in Ottawa in conjunction with the medical officer of health in Ottawa, Ontario Health, Public Health Ontario, and taking the advice the Chief Medical Officer of Health. This is an evolving science and evolution of understanding of this virus. We continue to consult our experts, our stakeholders and the sector to understand what more we can do.

We have acted all the way through the first wave, and we will continue to take action through this pending second wave. We will continue to act—

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

The supplementary question.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I don't know how we find ourselves here. There is no plan for a second wave in long-term care, no plan to address chronic staff shortages. Those who helped during the first wave in hospitals and in schools are not available. And a month ago, pandemic pay ended, so PSW wages went down, not up. The government is not even listening to their own infectious disease experts calling for better prevention and control methods. Dr. Jeff Powis, medical director of infection prevention and control at Michael Garron Hospital, said, "We should have been doing this work well before now."

The Premier promised an iron ring; that's quite an image. Sadly, that image hasn't appeared, just empty, hollow words. Speaker, through to you the Premier: How is it we find ourselves unprepared, yet again, to protect our most vulnerable from COVID-19?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you for the question. Clearly you've highlighted staffing. Our government, the Ministry of Long-Term Care, has been working on the staffing issue ever since we became a ministry. We have

an expert panel that provided a report which we are acting on. In the process of acting on that, we are working in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and other ministries to make sure that we address the issues, as much as possible, that are recommended in that report.

In terms of IPAC, that has been going on since the middle of April with a really heavy focus on understanding how COVID spreads. Whether it's through surveillance, active screening, enhanced testing, improved IPAC and relationships across the sector with hospitals to provide the expertise, this continues.

We will continue to take every measure possible, and I remind you that 99.7% of our long-term-care homes are managing very well. Our focus right now is on the homes that are in difficulties. We will continue to take every measure and to take additional measures as needed, and I want to make—

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

The next question.

#### HYDRO RATES

**Mr. Stan Cho:** My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. Speaker, the vast majority of Willowdalers and Ontarians have done the right thing to stop the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home and working from home. Of course, Mr. Speaker, that means a lot more time at home cooking meals, lunch from home, leisure time at home with family. That means that they're using more energy—more hydro—at home.

Mr. Speaker, through you: Minister, can you tell us what our government is doing to support those individuals who continue to do the right thing to stop the spread of COVID-19?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** I want to thank the member from Willowdale for his work and his representation in his constituency.

Mr. Speaker, indeed, as a father of two young children at home, for almost 70 days there was a lot more laundry to do, the dishwasher was running more frequently. We knew, Mr. Speaker, that millions of people across the province were at home. They were at home working. Small businesses were facing challenges with their revenue streams, but still had commitments to have their lights on. Similarly, farmers were preparing for a season.

So 70 days later, after the heart and soul of the most profound shutdown, Ontario had provided more than \$175 million worth of relief to families, small businesses and farmers by providing them with the off-peak rate and then moving to the fixed rate to provide certainty as we moved forward, and continue to provide certainty and value for the price of electricity for our homes, families and small—

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

The supplementary question?

**Mr. Stan Cho:** The minister highlights some very important points in his response. The people of Willowdale have told me how difficult this pandemic has been on

not just their work life, but their home life as well. Many people don't have that choice, Mr. Speaker, of shifting their consumption to off-peak hours, like doing their laundry later at night. Mrs. Park at Drewry's Variety can't shut down her store in the middle of the day, when time-of-use rates were mandatory.

Speaker, through you: Minister, can you please tell the House what you're doing for Ontarians who have been negatively impacted by the time-of-use program in the past?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** Indeed, this had been a challenge prior to COVID, so we took swift action to understand that there were indeed families who would struggle paying their bills through COVID. That's why we put \$9 million into a program for them and more than \$8 million in a support program for small businesses.

When it came to time-of-use, obviously, we needed to focus on a rate that was competitive and fair for families who were still going to be home. In fact, there are many as we speak. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that they welcomed the leadership of the Premier for bringing an end to time-of-use electricity pricing for small business owners as of November 1 this year. We'll be rolling out a comprehensive energy plan that the province can actually look forward to, and I look forward to providing industrial A-class and B-class employers, who will put people back to work in this province, as part of our COVID recovery response, with fair, certain prices that provide great value for the people of Ontario.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE IN INDIGENOUS AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

**Mr. Guy Bourgoin:** My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, as of last night, there were 10 active COVID-19 cases in northern First Nations. There are six in Kasabonika Lake, one in Sandy Lake, one in Pikangikum and two on Moose Factory Island. As Ontario enters a second wave, this series of cases in remote First Nations is beyond alarming. With the housing crisis, chronic problems with clean drinking water and enduring illness affecting remote First Nations, this government should have acted proactively. Instead, it remains passive, only reacting to this reality.

Speaker, why has this government continued to drag its feet and failed to pre-empt this situation that risks spreading like wildfire in remote First Nations in Ontario?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I thank the member very much for the question. I know this is a matter of serious concern to you, as it is for us as well. This is something that we have worked on throughout this pandemic with members of First Nations communities, with the federal government, with the provincial government, working in a tripartite manner to try to protect and contain any outbreaks in First Nations communities, because we know that they are particularly vulnerable for a number of reasons.

But I can assure the people of Ontario and the member that this is something that we are working on right now

through Dr. Dirk Huyer with the outbreak management team, to make sure, first of all, that they have the supplies that they need in order to provide people with the equipment they need. We're doing testing. We're doing isolation in situations where that's possible, and moving people around to hospitals and other locations. This is something that we do take very seriously, and we have been working on this throughout, particularly now.

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

**Mr. Guy Bourgoin:** Speaker, back in March, the Minister of Health deemed the James Bay area as low-risk for dealing with COVID-19. This means that the Conservative government had put one of the most vulnerable populations in the province at the bottom of the list, so they had to wait for over three months to receive critical equipment like ventilators to prepare for what is today a reality.

1130

As Mushkegowuk Grand Chief Solomon mentioned this week, the tests coming from James Bay are taken to laboratories in Timmins for processing, 300 kilometres south of Moose Factory Island. Results have taken four days to reach back to James Bay, which has delayed contact tracing.

Speaker, is the minister satisfied with this four-day waiting time, and why has she failed to provide rapid testing to First Nations, as was promised months ago?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I would say through you to the member, Speaker, that we have always considered all of our Indigenous communities to be subject to particular vulnerability with respect to COVID-19. That has always been the situation. We have always worked throughout—including regular engagements with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, as well as with myself—having close contact with members of the communities to make sure that they have the supplies, to make sure that the testing is being done, to make sure that they are protected, because we knew that this was a community that could be susceptible to COVID-19. That has continued throughout, and we have worked with the federal government as well, to make sure that they are doing their part as well.

I would also indicate that we have spent money. We know that we need to provide additional services. We provided \$37 million to these communities in the face of COVID-19, which includes \$16.4 million to help with the distribution of goods; transportation support for urban Indigenous people; self-isolation; prevention awareness; and pandemic planning. We have also spent \$10 million to ensure continuity of services, \$7.4 million to ensure that social service providers have the—

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

The next question.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** My question is for the Minister of Health. Ottawa's chief medical officer has declared that

our city is in a second wave of COVID-19, with case counts that we haven't seen for months and a testing strategy so flawed that people stand in lines for hours before the centres open. There was a line one kilometre long on Moodie Drive last week, 11 new tragic deaths at the West End Villa long-term-care facility and now an elementary school, the first in the province, is going to be closed for two weeks because of extensive COVID-19 exposure.

The government is sitting on billions in federal COVID-19 assistance, and they've promised for months that they have a fall second wave plan. Fall begins tomorrow. The second wave is here. Where is the plan?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I thank the member very much for the question. We have already taken action with respect to some of the long lineups. In Ottawa, as I indicated earlier, we have increased capacity by extending the hours of a number of the assessment centres. There are 41 assessment centres in the entire east region. The total daily average visits are 5,100 people. We've already taken action by having those assessment centres expand their hours of service, and we also have some mobile testing services that are available in pop-up centres in those areas where the greatest lineups are occurring. We are also looking at bringing others on; we are looking at expanding capacity by having other organizations provide service. That is being taken care of.

With respect to the advent of a second wave, we have prepared for a second wave. We have a plan that is about to be released. It's going to be released immediately, but that doesn't mean we're not already implementing parts of the plan. We will be discussing that with the members of the public, but the plan is being implemented as we speak.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** My supplementary is also for the minister. If the government has a plan for a second wave of COVID-19, how does the Premier roll into Ottawa last week and immediately contradict the Chief Medical Officer of Health on who needs a COVID-19 test? They don't have a plan to improve physical distancing in schools; we know this for a fact, because they voted against it last week.

The iron ring around long-term care has crumbled, and despite what we heard earlier from the Minister of Long-Term Care, I want to quote an employee at the West End Villa: “[Workers are] going from room to room, working with these residents, caring for them, and they do not have the proper N95 masks to use....”

The Financial Accountability Officer has confirmed that the government has only contributed three cents on the dollar for COVID-19 supports, yet there remain billions in federal dollars available to the government in their accounts.

We've known that a fall second wave is coming. Where is the plan and why won't they show it to Ontarians?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** As I indicated earlier, there is a plan, it is being implemented and it is going to be

released immediately, but it does address all of the issues that you have referred to.

Our government is putting hundreds of millions of dollars into protecting Ontarians' health and well-being, and we have been in discussions with the federal government with respect to the monies that are available to us for expanding our testing and lab facilities, for contact tracing and for mental health facilities.

All of these options are being developed. They are ready to go. They are in our plan. They are being brought forward. We have already substantially increased our testing capacity, which was at 25,000. We're now easily at 35,000 and close to 40,000. We will be at 50,000 available tests in a very short order.

So we are fulfilling our plan; we are increasing our testing and our lab capacity. We are ready for the fall and everything else that it will bring with it, including the flu, and making sure that we can continue with the surgeries and procedures that were postponed—

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

The next question.

#### ONTARIO DIGITAL SERVICE

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova:** Ma question est pour le président du secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, government and businesses in Ontario have had to adapt by using digital tools and technology. We all had to adapt our work routines; for example, using Zoom or StreamYard to conduct meetings or town halls.

Business owners in my riding are telling me that purchases are increasingly being done online, business meetings are conducted through video chat, and e-signatures have replaced pen and ink. Many of these changes have proven to improve the quality and speed of doing business.

The government and the public service as well have had to change with the times. We have seen, over the past several months, the use of virtual doctors' visits, online court tools and several products rolled out by the Ontario Digital Service.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board: Could the honourable member inform this House about the recent work of the Ontario Digital Service?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** I thank the fine member from Mississauga Centre, including her work as a registered nurse on the front lines through the pandemic.

I'm very proud of the work that the Ontario Digital Service, which is now part of the Treasury Board, has done over the last couple of months. They are digital experts, they are data scientists, and they are working to make things simpler and faster and better to help protect Ontarians and all health and safety for everyone.

Just last week, the Minister of Education, through the Ontario Digital Service's work, created a screening tool to allow parents and students to check on the website to find out whether they should be coming to school or not. If

some of the others had actually done that screening, they might not have gone to school.

Mr. Speaker, we are embracing technology for the lives of Ontarians and the health and safety for Ontarians, and we'll continue to do that on behalf of all Ontarians.

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

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova:** Thank you to the minister for his answer. It's great to hear about the work of the Ontario Digital Service. I understand that the Ontario Digital Service worked with the Canadian Digital Service to develop and launch the free COVID Alert app. The app notifies users who may have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, and by doing so supports early detection, testing and self-isolation.

This made-in-Ontario tool is a growing success, with Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick actively supporting the use of it, with more provinces to come. It's great to see that more than 2.6 million people have downloaded the COVID Alert app.

Can the President of the Treasury Board tell the House more about this new, innovative digital tool?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Thank you again for the question. I just checked, and I got a green thumb on my app. I'm not sure if I'm allowed to do that, but I just did.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** You're not, but you can conclude your answer.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that intervention.

I will say, without using any material, that the app is working. More than 2.6 million people have downloaded the app, and I'm very pleased to say that Saskatchewan and New Brunswick have just joined the family of COVID Alert apps across this country that started in Ontario, a made-in-Ontario app.

In fact, a few weeks ago, CTV reported that earlier this summer, an individual was notified through the app that they were exposed to COVID-19. That individual and their friend both got tested, and both were positive for COVID-19.

**1140**

Let's all do our part. I encourage all Ontarians, all members of this House, to do their part to protect others, protect yourselves and protect Ontario. Download the COVID Alert app today.

#### SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Jamie West:** My question is to the Premier. On Labour Day, one day before the start of school, Sudbury families learned that 25 school bus routes had been cancelled. You can only imagine how angry and upset students and parents in Sudbury were when they found out the day before school started. When reached by the Sudbury Star, the executive director of the Sudbury Student Services had this to say, Speaker, "For some drivers, when they found out that the return would be regular capacity on our school buses with only children from

grades 4 to 12 needing to mask, they decided not to come back.”

Speaker, if the Conservative back-to-school plan is so amazing, why are so many school bus drivers deciding not to come back to the profession that they love?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** In the province of Ontario, for many, many years, we have faced—across this country we’ve faced—a shortage of drivers within our schools. This has been a real challenge that the former government faced and this government faces. What we have done to help counter that trend, given that many of these workers are older—and, of course, I can appreciate their own considerations and their own health in the context of returning to work—is we have provided the extension of the driver retention program, a \$40-million allocation; essential wage enhancements to incentivize these workers to stay. We’ve provided the complete offering of PPE, including face shields and masks. We’ve provided more latitude for cleaning. In fact, we’ve mandated a higher standard of cleaning within our buses.

We’re doing everything we can, working with the Ontario school bus drivers’ association, to ensure that our school bus drivers are there for moms and dads in this province so that, ultimately, kids can get to class safely each and every day.

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

**Mr. Jamie West:** The government, in fact, is providing everything but limiting the amount of kids in schools.

During the first week of school, 25 routes were cancelled in Sudbury. Last week, parents found out that 19 bus routes were cancelled. I checked two days ago, on Saturday, and no routes were cancelled. I checked again this morning. Fifteen school bus routes were cancelled in Sudbury. Imagine the uncertainty for Sudbury families.

The root cause of this is school bus drivers don’t trust the Conservatives’ flawed back-to-school plan. They simply don’t, no matter what the minister says. The majority of our bus drivers are either vulnerable seniors, or parents with preschool-aged children. They want to work, they absolutely want to work, but they can’t risk their health or the health of their families.

Bus drivers and parents want to know why COVID-19 best practices like social distancing are enforced everywhere but on the school buses that transport our children. Will the minister commit today to capping buses at 50% capacity—that can be the everything that you’ve done—to better protect students and drivers while preventing the spread of COVID-19?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** We have provided school boards with an additional \$75 million in support for transportation, recognizing the difficulty this year especially, but a difficulty that has existed in this country for all provinces and, really, for all parents for well over a decade.

What we have done, as I affirmed, is provided route protection funding to the extent possible for school boards that deliver buses and bus transportation to parents, that

they have more funding to help backstop them. We’ve also provided an extension of the driver retention program to help retain these workers within our—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. The member for Davenport, come to order.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** We’ve provided PPE and training for these workers, and we continue to be there for them. It’s why, just a few weeks ago, the Premier and I announced an additional investment for school bus cleaning.

We have ensured all layers of prevention are in place. We’ve also ensured assigned seating within our buses, from a contact management process, so that the integrity of that process is retained, when and if these challenges arise.

In every area, we’ve followed the public health advice. We’ll continue to be there for parents, for school boards and, of course, for the children of our province.

## FOREST INDUSTRY

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. As the province continues to safely and gradually reopen, our government is committed to encouraging economic growth and job creation in the forest sector.

Sustainable Growth: Ontario’s Forest Sector Strategy couldn’t come at a better time. It is our government’s plan to create jobs, supporting the Indigenous, northern and rural communities that depend on this sector, while ensuring the province’s forests are managed sustainably for generations to come. All around the world, people are looking to industries and products that are sustainable.

My question to the minister is: How sustainable are Ontario’s forest management practices?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I’d like to thank the member from Perth–Wellington for that great question. What better time to talk about forestry than during the 100th anniversary of Forest Week here and across Canada?

Stewardship and sustainability is the number one pillar of our new forest sector strategy, which people have been waiting for for years in the province of Ontario, a province where so many people, so many communities, depend on this bedrock industry, one of the ones that established this province.

Here in Ontario, here’s our pitch: If you harvest trees, you replant trees. For every tree that we harvest, three are planted; three take root. We have 71 million hectares of forest in our province of Ontario, of which 28 million hectares are crown-managed. Do you know what we harvest? Less than one half of 1% of that crown-managed forest each and every year. Under our program, in the way that we consider sustainability a bedrock principle, we will have forestry to supply and provide jobs for generations to come.

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

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** I want to thank the minister for that response. It's great to hear how sustainable our forestry practices are, but we are all wondering these days about our job prospects. COVID-19 has been challenging for us all, and we in this government are focused on a recovery that puts our health and safety right on par with job creation.

Ontario's forest industry is critical to the provincial economy and many communities, generating over \$18 billion in revenue and supporting approximately 147,000 direct and indirect jobs in regions with few other industries. Our province is home to an abundance of renewable natural resources, but we know that it can be difficult to get them to market, as many are found in the northernmost parts of the province. What specific actions has our government taken to make it easier for forestry to grow and thrive?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Thanks again to the member for that question. The United Nations has predicted that demand for forestry products will grow by 30% between now and the year 2030. Through this COVID crisis, we've seen how important our forest industry is. Just try to get some lumber these days; it's in short supply.

We're going to make sure that Ontario can sustainably harvest more timber than it used to. It has only been harvesting about half of what it did only 20 years ago, yet we plant 73 million trees a year in Ontario and drop 365 million seeds to ensure regeneration. Our forests are sustainable, with 147,000 direct and indirect jobs in the province of Ontario. There are products now that could replace so many single-use plastics because of modernization in our forestry industry.

There are good times ahead in forestry. Our forest sector strategy supports that. I want the people of Ontario to know that forestry in Ontario is a great business: great today, great for the future.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** My question is to the Premier. Recently, I received an email from a constituent. After exhibiting symptoms, he visited the Carling Heights testing centre in London in the hopes of getting tested. He arrived at 10:45 a.m. He was there until 3 p.m., when he finally got to the preliminary testing, and he was told it would take three hours to get tested. He had to go to work, so he left without getting tested. He couldn't afford to miss work.

A six-hour wait time to get tested is unreasonable. Both testing centres in London have routinely been over-capacity and one is closed on the weekend. Will the government commit to adequately funding and resourcing public health units to decrease the wait times at testing centres?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you to the member for the question. We are certainly aware that there are parts of Ontario where there are long lineups for assessments, but

we are taking steps immediately to reduce those lineups, because we want everybody who feels that they have symptoms, who may have been exposed to somebody with COVID-19, to get a test and have a timely response to it. That applies both to students who are returning to school or colleges and universities now and people who are returning to work.

Right now, there are 36 assessment centres in western Ontario, where the total daily average number of visits is 5,600. But we are increasing the hours for these assessment centres to be open so that they can deal with and test more people without having to wait in a long lineup. We're also opening new centres and pop-up centres to allow for people to be able to have a test in a more timely manner.

#### 1150

Just with some specifics, there is a new location planned for the Norfolk General Hospital as of September 21; Northern Bruce Peninsula, an increase of—

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

Supplementary question.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** With people across the province going back to work and kids going back to school, the increased demand for testing was inevitable. The government had months to fully prepare for the second wave. People feel like this government is throwing away all the hard work Ontarians have done these past six months to keep the spread of COVID low.

With rising case counts and longer-than-ever lineups for testing, the anxiety in London is growing. What is the government doing to protect the people of London?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Well, first, Speaker, let me say to the member, through you, that the health and well-being of all Ontarians is our top priority. It always has been since this pandemic first struck us. We are taking every step that we can to make sure that they are protected. We are increasing our resources to make sure that we can increase our testing and our lab capacity, so that once the tests are taken they can be processed quickly; to be prepared for upcoming flu season; and to make sure that we can have the health human resources that we need in hospitals, long-term-care homes and home and community care.

We are doing all of that. We have a plan. The plan is going to be released immediately. We are spending more money. We have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to increase this capacity. We have increased the number of tests to 40,000 and we are well on our way to 50,000 tests. We are going to make sure that we protect people across the province, including, as the member suggested, in western Ontario, but it will be across the entire province.

#### CURRICULUM

**Miss Christina Maria Mitas:** My question is for the Minister of Education. Speaker, I have heard time and time again from parents in my riding how concerned they are with the decline in math education that they're seeing in their children's schools over the last several years. Kids are struggling with basic math concepts, while their

parents are at their wits' end. They know how important math is for their children, and they know that their children are falling behind their international counterparts when it comes to mathematical scores in ways that are both substantial and very worrisome.

Can the minister please share some details of how we are preparing our children to get the math skills they need to succeed and why it is so very important that we tackle this problem immediately?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** I want to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for her leadership and also for her insight as an educator and as a parent here in Toronto.

Speaker, as we respond to this pandemic, I think we cannot lose sight of what we are here to do in the Ministry of Education: yes, to keep kids safe, but to ensure quality learning continues. That is our obligation. When over half the student population of grade 6 are not meeting the provincial math standard in this province, at a time when we see massive economic disruption to the labour market and more fierce competition for good-paying jobs, we have to do more and step it up when it comes to math performance and really embracing that area of STEM education. It's why this government announced a four-year math strategy: \$200 million focusing on the foundations of math and numeracy skills that are going to give our kids a leg up and a competitive advantage in the labour market.

Our focus is on improving performance. It's about solving every day problems and increasing employability in the labour market. We're going to continue to focus on raising the standard of math in our province.

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

**Miss Christina Maria Mitas:** I'm so pleased to hear that our government is taking math education so seriously. After years of Liberal mismanagement, our government is doing what is right: We are prioritizing math education.

Speaker, part of our math strategy is to ensure that educators have fundamental knowledge of the math and core math skills that are embedded within our provincial curriculum documents. Can the minister tell me why this is so very important to our children and to the parents of Ontario?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Mr. Speaker, obviously it was this government that introduced a new elementary math curriculum for grades 1 to 8. We did that knowing that this September, more than ever, our kids need to have a heightened level of education and a more modern education, given, in 2005, we had two different expectations of English and French, two different curriculums. We had a curriculum that did not focus on coding at all. This curriculum embeds it and codifies it, all the way down to grade 1. In financial literacy, we've strengthened that, giving fundamental math skills, bringing that down to grade 1, learning skills like a household budget. These are vital when it comes to enabling our kids to succeed. Obviously, enhancing problem solving, mental math—this is the back-to-basics commitment we made in the election that we're following through on.

Our commitment is to raise the bar for educators by investing in professional development, and raise the bar for our students by giving them every opportunity to learn math in this province using a modern curriculum.

#### SCHITT'S CREEK

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I understand the member for Toronto—St. Paul's has a point of order.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** It's a very, very happy one. As we know, of course, the arts have been saving our mental souls during this difficult time, and I just wanted to take a chance and say congratulations to Schitt's Creek, our made-in-Canada comedy show that won seven—seven—Emmy Awards in the comedy category, a first in Emmys history. So congratulations to the cast and crew of Schitt's Creek.

#### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Long-Term Care concerning a second wave of COVID-19 in long-term-care homes. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1156 to 1300.*

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** I beg leave to present the fourth interim report, Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Municipalities, Construction and Building of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs is pleased to present this, our fourth interim report, this time touching on the impact of COVID-19 on municipalities, construction and building.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing appeared as the first witness for these hearings. Following the minister's update, the committee received submissions from dozens of organizations, businesses and individuals from across the province representing Ontario's municipalities and construction and building sectors.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to take a moment to thank each and every one of the witnesses who took the time to share their views and opinions with us. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank our Chair,

who couldn't be here today, the members of the committee, the Clerk of the committee and the committee staff for their commitment, hard work, and co-operation over the course of this study.

*Report presented.*

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### FOREST FIREFIGHTING

#### LUTTE CONTRE LES INCENDIES DE FORÊT

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I rise today to recognize the exceptional efforts of staff in my ministry in protecting our province during this year's wildfire season. Our firefighters, pilots, emergency personnel and the support staff responsible for coordinating their efforts have always been a source of pride for us, delivering world-class wildland fire protection here at home, in other provinces and, as our capacity permits, around the globe whenever called upon. They deliver this service year after year, protecting people and property from wildland fire in some of the most hazardous of conditions, and offering support and expertise to other jurisdictions in their hour of need.

This year, our staff have had to contend with a fire season like no other. The COVID-19 outbreak, which has caused so much disruption to our economy and our way of life, made the logistical and technical challenges of combatting fires much more difficult. Nothing is more important than protecting the safety of the people and communities across our province, including our staff. That's why we put measures in place at the start of this year's wildland fire season to strengthen emergency preparedness and to protect our fire rangers.

It gives me immense pride to report that our fire personnel took on the unprecedented challenges of fighting fires during a pandemic with the professionalism, dedication and courage that we've always known them for. Thanks to these admirable qualities and a depth of experience, our province is an internationally recognized leader in wildland fire management.

Ontario's wildland fire program is led by the Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services branch within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. My ministry is the lead organization responsible for protecting people, property, communities and resources from natural hazards, including wildland fire. Their efforts are coordinated through my ministry's emergency operations centre, which is headquartered in Sault Ste. Marie.

The ministry emergency operations centre coordinates the protection of some 90 million hectares of crown land throughout the province.

Protection on this scale is no small undertaking. It's a vast and complex logistical challenge, and the Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services branch has significant resources and personnel at its disposal to combat these

fires. This includes 32 fire management facilities across the province, eight aviation bases and an extensive inventory of fire suppression equipment. Approximately 800 highly trained professional fire rangers fight fires on the ground, with an additional 80 private sector fire crews and another 320 personnel able to be brought in as needed.

My ministry also maintains a fleet of specialized aircraft that are used to detect and suppress wildland fires across Ontario and provide other aviation services. This includes nine CL-415 heavy water bombers, six Twin Otters, five Turbo Beavers and eight helicopters. To pilot and maintain this fleet, my ministry has a crew of 51 fixed-wing pilots, 17 helicopter pilots and almost 50 aircraft maintenance engineers. It also takes over 500 support staff to coordinate fire protection efforts: operations officers, planners, managers, technical analysts and logistics personnel. Their technical expertise and strategic acumen are vital to the process.

Fire protection is truly a team effort, and my ministry doesn't do it alone. In fact, we rely on collaborative relationships with many partners here in Ontario, in other Canadian provinces and, as I said earlier, around the world. We have arrangements with municipalities across the province to extinguish and control wildland fires within their boundaries and to coordinate training, compliance and suppression activities. We also have agreements with northern fire departments, Indigenous communities, Canada's national parks and the Department of National Defence. We work with volunteer departments and Indigenous communities to offer training, community wildfire protection planning and wildland fire hazard risk assessments.

Our province is party to numerous mutual-aid agreements with provinces across Canada and other countries around the world. These agreements allow for the sharing of resources to minimize the burden on any single jurisdiction during an exceptional fire season. Many in the Legislature will recall the 2018 fire season in Ontario. That year was one of the worst fire seasons on record, and it tested my ministry's firefighting capacity to its limits. It also showed us very clearly the value of having strong partnerships in place. To assist us during those extraordinary circumstances we were sent firefighters, support staff and equipment from partners in other provinces, American states and from as far away as Mexico.

Just as we've benefited from support from partners in our time of need, we offer our help when our friends need it. In late 2019 and early 2020, my ministry deployed 35 fire personnel to Australia to help with an unprecedented bushfire season that made headlines around the world. We were also proud to send 120 fire rangers and four support staff to Quebec this June to help combat the massive Lac Saint-Jean wildland fire. And just last week, our province deployed 19 specialized staff to help manage fire operations on the ground in Oregon as the west coast of America deals with a devastating wildland fire situation, battling dozens of catastrophic wildfires across a large swath of land. Our thoughts are with the people of California, Washington and Oregon as they face this unimaginable situation. Partnerships like the ones I've described

provide certainty in dealing with fires, which are by definition unpredictable—certainty that help will come if it's needed.

The year 2020 will be remembered for many things, but surely most of all the COVID-19 pandemic. For many of us, the measures to slow the spread have caused major upheavals in our daily lives, keeping loved ones safe and managing busy households and work schedules under lockdown. But for those on the front lines, their day-to-day jobs had to continue, despite being put at higher risk of infection by the very nature of their work.

**1310**

We've seen countless examples of everyday heroism from front-line workers during this pandemic, from health care workers to grocery store employees, to public transit operators and law enforcement. Our fire rangers and support staff have also been on the front lines while preparing for the 2020 season, and then fighting fires.

Our government took additional steps this year to protect people and property during the fire season. That includes an increase in base funding for emergency forest firefighting by \$30 million this year. This allowed us to strengthen our preparedness for any emergencies and to ensure safety measures were in place to protect our fire rangers from COVID-19.

On April 3, the province also took immediate action to ensure our emergency response system remains strong during the outbreak by implementing a restricted fire zone across Ontario's legislated fire region. This was an important measure to reduce the risk of preventable human-caused fires in the spring. It allowed our emergency responders to focus their efforts where they were needed most, as we fought to stop the spread of the virus. While the restriction was lifted on May 16, we have continued to take steps to keep people safe as the fire season unfolds.

My staff adapted to the evolving threat of COVID-19 with remarkable agility, merging the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health into their practices. They trained using physical distancing and housed fire crews differently, all while carrying out their usual preparations under this new reality. Ministry staff recognized that the pandemic could aggravate any emergency fire situation, adding a new dimension of risk for firefighters and communities threatened by fire. To stave off this compounded risk, they placed an even stronger focus on early detection and combatting detected fires with full force in order to keep them small and more manageable.

Since April 1, there have been a total of around 600 fires on the landscape, which is far below the 10-year average at this time of year of 847. The total area burned so far this year is around 15,500 hectares, which is less than 10% of the 10-year average of more than 162,000 hectares. However, two fires this summer prompted community evacuations, those burning near the town of Red Lake and Eabametoong First Nation.

Conducting these evacuations amid the COVID-19 pandemic amounted to an emergency within an emergency. In addition to the significant logistical challenges of moving people to safety on short notice, these evacuations had to be conducted observing strict public health

protocols and ensuring that there were adequate personal protective equipment and other precautions in place.

Thanks to the heroic work by all involved, both of these fires are now under control and residents have been able to return to their communities. In fact, they are now considered to be out.

There are many people to acknowledge in the successful evacuations of Red Lake and Eabametoong First Nation and in the fight to contain the fire that threatened them. Ministry personnel fighting the fire in Red Lake would not have succeeded without the exceptional co-operation from the municipality of Red Lake, from the Ontario Provincial Police and the local emergency management team. They also received generous support from local business owners who stayed behind to provide critical services and supplies to aid in the firefighting efforts—things like gasoline, groceries, jet fuel and bulldozers. Nearby Manitoba also joined the fight against the Red Lake fire, providing water bombers and air tankers to combat the blaze.

The evacuation of the Eabametoong First Nation succeeded thanks to assistance from members of the community, federal partners, Emergency Management Ontario, and the generosity of the communities that hosted evacuees: Timmins, Kapuskasing and Thunder Bay. On behalf of a grateful province, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of these individuals, organizations and municipalities. Thanks to their tireless efforts under trying circumstances, we have been able to protect Ontario from a fire season like no other.

It is a chapter in our history that proves we are capable of prevailing against any manner of threat through our ingenuity, organization, generosity and collaborative spirit. We will need to draw on these qualities more than ever as we move beyond 2020. I ask all honourable members to join me in recognizing the extraordinary work of our firefighters during this year's extraordinary season.

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

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** C'est un honneur de me lever aujourd'hui au nom du caucus néo-démocrate pour parler des garde-feux—comme nous, on aime les appeler, les sapeurs de feu—et de leur rôle dans la région du Nord.

Tout d'abord, j'aimerais remercier tous et toutes les garde-feux de l'Ontario pour leur travail constant, pour leur passion pour notre forêt.

Vous savez, le métier de garde-feu est incroyable. Il exige du côté physique et mental mais aussi du flanc émotionnel. Souvent les garde-feux passent des semaines loin de leur famille et doivent faire face à des situations à très haut risque, où la ligne entre la vie et la mort est souvent très, très mince. Ça prend vraiment de la détermination, de la force, une concentration incassable et, par-dessus tout, un bien-être des autres pour être un garde-feu.

Le travail de garde-feu et la vie en forêt touchent aussi une corde sensible pour moi. Mon neveu Travis Vernier, par exemple. J'aimerais dire bonjour à Travis. Je sais qu'il ne m'écoute pas comme c'est là; il a son arc en main puis il court probablement après un orignal, mais salut, Travis.

Il était technicien en gestion de feu de forêt à Geraldton. Il m'exprimait des expériences qu'il avait, comment ils se font déposer dans des marécages, que souvent ils sont juste déposés là et ils sont pris pour aller se battre contre les feux. Je peux vous dire que ça prend un physique puis un mental très forts.

Tout ça pour vous dire que les efforts de travail des garde-feux est un élément essentiel dans la gestion de nos forêts chez nous dans le nord de l'Ontario. Vous avez entendu le ministre parler des pilotes, des sapeurs de feu, et comment ils sont habiles, comment ils font la différence quand ça vient au feu. On oublie aussi que quand les forêts passent au feu que la forêt n'est pas perdue. On a une vitrine pour être capable d'aller chercher ce bois-là puis l'amener au moulin à scie pour être capable de ne pas perdre cette grande ressource-là en province.

Puis on parle aussi de l'impact économique de l'industrie forestière. Vous savez, dans ma région, une grande région, où notre industrie forestière est l'industrie la plus importante de notre région, comment c'est dévastateur quand on a des feux, pourquoi c'est tellement important d'avoir ces sapeurs ou ces garde-feux, sans mentionner les communautés, aussi, des Premières Nations. Le ministre en a parlé, qu'ils sont obligés de se faire déplacer, combien d'impact cela a sur leur communauté, sur leur vie.

But there are critical regional, historic and social and even cultural aspects that are part of an integrative forest management plan, and oftentimes neglected.

**1320**

Indigenous leadership, stewardship and knowledge play an increasingly important role in forest management and sustainability, but we are still a long way from a balanced partnership.

Some good news: First Nations have increasingly gained leadership roles in forest management units. A business operated through a partnership of three First Nations will develop the 10-year management plan for Ogoki forest.

Here are some of the issues that call for improvement: Out of some 31 forest management units in Ontario, fewer than five are governed by Indigenous companies. Also, as massive forest fires consume large portions of forests and human and financial resources, and as climate change points to an increase in the severity of frequency of wildfires, Indigenous knowledge can and must be effectively incorporated into forest management practices. And the Ontario government needs to remember that it has a legal duty to consult First Nations on any decisions or actions that impact treaty territory.

Last July, First Nations across northern Ontario expressed their concerns that they were not consulted before Bill 197 was passed—all of this despite the fact treaty rights to consultation.

Speaker, we know how fragile our forest industry is. The balance between growth, sustainability, heritage and Indigenous stewardship is at risk.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** It's an honour to rise and respond to the minister's statement on wildfire management, and

to honour our firefighters. I appreciate the words—both the minister and the NDP response—acknowledging the hard-working men and women who protect us from forest fires: the first responders, municipal leaders, OPP officers, the people on the ground protecting us. They deserve our sincere thanks and gratitude for putting their lives on the line to protect us.

I especially want to acknowledge the communities of Red Lake and the Eabametoong First Nation, who experienced evacuations this year. I was on a Zoom call just a couple of weeks ago speaking with members of the Red Lake community, and one told me the story that she and her daughter were out blueberry-picking that morning, and they could see the smoke building, so they rushed home and then they learned of the evacuation order. It highlights the importance of things like early detection, rapid response, the hard work to control fires. It also highlights the importance of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous leadership in forest management, and how, too often, settler communities have ignored the wisdom of Indigenous leaders who have managed forests and managed fires in sustainable ways as stewards of this land for centuries.

Speaker, I'm going to have to mention something, and I want to do this to honour the firefighters. The minister used words such as "unprecedented", "record-breaking," "catastrophic," "unimaginable" to describe the fire season, and all those words apply. But there's one word the minister didn't use. That word is "climate change."

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** That's two words.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Sorry; two words. I appreciate the member.

You might want to say "climate crisis" or "climate emergency" or "climate catastrophe." But the bottom line is, if we're going to honour the people who are protecting us from wildfires, we have to honour them by acting on the climate crisis. Any mention of honouring these folks without saying that we are going to take concrete steps to address the very emergency that's threatening all of us—my brother lives in Oregon. He called me and talked to me about the fact that his children can't go outside and play because the air is so toxic. I said, "That toxic air—you can see it in Ontario. You can see the haze in Ontario." We felt it in Australia last year. Literally, the world is on fire, and the link between climate change and the increasing severity of forest fires is undeniable. That link isn't just in California, Oregon, Washington or the west coast; that link is in Ontario.

I want to talk about a study that said that, according to scientists, western Canada will see a 50% increase in the number of dry, windy days that let fires start and spread through the ongoing climate crisis, but eastern Canada will actually see a more dramatic increase, a 200% to 300% increase in the kinds of fire weather that is leading to the kinds of forest fires that we're seeing on the west coast right now. Those researchers concluded—and I want to quote them: "Climate change is probably going to have the biggest impact in northwestern Ontario because that's where it's already the driest."

Mr. Speaker, if we're going to honour the forest firefighters, we have to honour them by fighting climate change, which is driving the very forest fires that threaten their lives and our lives.

## PETITIONS

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** I have a petition today entitled:

“Support Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19;”—Speaker, in parts of my riding it's three to four years to get in certain homes—“and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents' Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

I fully agree, I'm going to sign it and pass it along to the table officers.

### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'd like to thank Pierce Family Vision for providing these names. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas optometrists now subsidize the delivery of OHIP-covered eye care by \$173 million a year; and

“Whereas COVID-19 forced optometrists to close their doors, resulting in a 75%-plus drop in revenue; and

“Whereas optometrists will see patient volumes reduced between 40% and 60%, resulting in more than two million comprehensive eye exams being wiped out over the next 12 months; and

“Whereas communities across Ontario are in danger of losing access to optometric care;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately establish a timetable and a process for renewed negotiations concerning optometry fees.”

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature.

1330

## DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J'aimerais remercier Joanne Gervais, la directrice de l'Association des communautés franco-ontariennes, mieux connue sous l'ACFO, pour ces pétitions.

« Accents en français sur les cartes de santé de l'Ontario et les ... permis de conduire en Ontario...

« Alors qu'il est important d'avoir le nom exact des personnes sur les cartes émises par le gouvernement, tels la carte santé ou le permis de conduire;

« Alors que plusieurs personnes francophones ont des accents dans l'épellation de leur nom; » incluant moi.

« Alors que le ministère des Transports et le ministère de la Santé ont confirmé que le système informatique de l'Ontario ne permet pas l'enregistrement des lettres avec des accents; »

Ils demandent à « l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario pour qu'elle s'assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur tous les documents et cartes émis par le gouvernement de l'Ontario » et ça « avant le 31 décembre 2020. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer, et je l'emmène aux greffiers.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“For a Meaningful Climate Action Plan.

“Whereas our planet is undergoing significant warming with adverse consequences for health, for agriculture, for infrastructure and for our children's future;

“Whereas the costs of inaction are severe, such as extreme weather events causing flooding and drought;

“Whereas Canada has signed the Paris accord which commits us to acting to keep temperature rise under 1.5 degrees...;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario to develop GHG reduction targets based on science that will meet our Paris commitment, an action plan to meet those targets and annual reporting on progress on meeting the targets. We call on the government to commit to providing funding through carbon pricing mechanisms for actions that must be taken to meet these targets.”

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

## SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** I stand proudly on behalf of my constituents in St. Paul's, especially Liza Butcher, and others across Ontario who have signed this petition with over 40,000 online signatures.

“Raise ODSP/OW shelter and basic needs allowances now.

“Whereas the COVID-19 crisis means that more people than ever are relying on support from the government to help pay rent and keep food on the table;

“Whereas most people in Ontario who receive social assistance aren’t eligible for the new, \$2,000-a-month Canada Emergency Response Benefit—they’re expected to get by on as little as \$650 a month; and

“Whereas affordable, subsidized, rent-g geared-to-income housing is unavailable at this time and may be unavailable for the next 10 to 20 years due to a huge waiting list and zero vacancies; and

“Whereas clients need to eat, as well as pay rent, and since clients would still have to dip into their basic needs allowances to cover rent because even doubling the shelter allowance still won’t cover all of the rent at today’s prices, needed meds and other things not covered by the MSN forms have to be paid for out of basic needs, and some of these items are very expensive, including medical cannabis;

“Whereas Bill 47 erased many of the legislative gains achieved through Bill 148, the fair labour laws and working conditions that had a particularly positive impact on women and other marginalized people;

“Whereas statistics show that women, particularly women of colour, are most likely to be employed in precarious work, and the Bill 47 amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000, and Labour Relations Act, 1995, create conditions that lead to a growth in precarious employment while also eliminating protections for millions of Ontario workers;

“Whereas Bill 66 further erodes women and marginalized people’s social and economic rights;

“Whereas the Ford government continues to remove, cancel or freeze funding for other support programs and regulations that would increase women’s equality in the workforce and beyond;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Premier of Ontario to double Ontario disability support, ODSP, or Ontario Works rates to bring them in line with the CERB, because if laid-off workers need \$2,000 a month to get by, so do people who receive ODSP and OW.”

I firmly support this petition. Thank you, St. Paul’s. I affix my signature, and hand it to the table.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I want to thank the family council network for their advocacy on this file, and Carolyn and Wally Kitchen of Brantford for signing this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of LTC homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing needs and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard to provide an average of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I fully support this petition, sign it and give it to the table.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Diane Généreux from Val Therese in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Support Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents’ Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** This petition is entitled “Support Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents’ Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

It’s my pleasure to support this petition—because it’s mine—and also affix my signature.

#### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Manon Emond from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Neurological Movement Disorder Clinic in Sudbury.

“Whereas northeastern Ontario has a high rate of neurological movement disorders; and

“Whereas specialized neurological movement disorder clinics provide essential health care services to those living with diseases such as Parkinson’s, Huntington’s, dystonia, Tourette’s and others; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is recognized as a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Immediately set up a neurological movement disorder clinic in the Sudbury area that is staffed by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of movement disorders, a physiotherapist and a social worker, at a minimum.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I want, once again, to thank Mark Darrah of Brockville for sending this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario requires a minimum but no maximum temperature in long-term-care homes;

“Whereas temperatures that are too hot can cause emotional and physical distress that may contribute to a decline in a frail senior’s health;

“Whereas front-line staff in long-term-care homes also suffer when trying to provide care under these conditions with headaches, tiredness, signs of hyperthermia, which directly impacts resident/patient care;

“Whereas Ontario’s bill of rights for residents of Ontario nursing homes states ‘every resident has the right to be properly sheltered ... in a manner consistent with his or her needs’;

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

**1340**

“Direct the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations amending O. Reg. 79/10 in the Long-Term

Care Homes Act to establish a maximum temperature in Ontario’s long-term-care homes.”

I fully support this petition and give it to the usher to deliver to the table.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

“Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

“Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;”

Therefore “we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario’s social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and make rentals more affordable through rent controls and updated legislation.”

I fully agree. I’m going to sign it and send it down to the table officers.

#### PRÉVENTION DU VAPOTAGE CHEZ LES JEUNES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J’aimerais remercier M. Emile Prudhomme, qui demeure à Val Therese dans mon comté, pour la pétition « Protéger les jeunes du vapotage.

« Alors qu’on en sait très peu sur les effets à long terme du vapotage sur les jeunes;

« Alors que la commercialisation agressive des produits de vapotage par l’industrie du tabac, fait en sorte que de plus en plus de jeunes deviennent dépendants de la nicotine par l’utilisation de cigarettes électroniques; et

« Alors que les leçons importantes apprises sur les effets du tabagisme sur la santé ne doivent pas être répétées avec le vapotage et le principe de précaution doit être appliqué pour protéger les jeunes contre le vapotage;

« Alors que plusieurs agences de la santé et les Médecins pour un Canada sans fumée appuient pleinement les propositions concrètes visant à réduire le vapotage chez les jeunes... »—dans mon projet de loi 151;

Ils demandent au gouvernement de M. Ford « d’adopter immédiatement le projet de loi 151, Le vapotage n’est pas pour les » enfants, « afin de protéger la santé des jeunes en Ontario. »

J’appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer et je la donne aux greffiers.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The time for petitions is over.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY****FRANCO-ONTARIAN EMBLEM  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2020****LOI DE 2020 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR L'EMBLÈME FRANCO-ONTARIEN**

Ms. Kusendova moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act to amend the Franco-Ontarian Emblem Act, 2001 / Projet de loi 182, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur l'emblème franco-ontarien.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The member for Mississauga Centre.

**M<sup>me</sup> Natalia Kusendova:** Merci, madame la Présidente. C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de me lever en cette Chambre pour parler de mon projet de loi, soit de reconnaître le drapeau franco-ontarien comme symbole de l'Ontario. Je suis particulièrement fière de pouvoir parler de ce projet de loi en français.

La communauté francophone de l'Ontario occupe une place importante et unique dans le passé, le présent et l'avenir de notre province. Les contributions des francophones ici en Ontario à la culture, à l'économie et au sein de nos communautés à travers notre province sont inestimables.

Les francophones en Ontario ont des valeurs fortes qui sont profondément ancrées dans l'histoire de notre province. Ils ont œuvré pendant des générations pour promouvoir et préserver leur belle culture et leur langue en Ontario et poursuivent leurs efforts aujourd'hui.

Un peu d'histoire sur ce beau drapeau : le drapeau franco-ontarien a été hissé officiellement pour la première fois le 25 septembre 1975 à l'Université Laurentienne à Sudbury. Les deux créateurs du drapeau, les pères de ce drapeau, si vous voulez, étaient Gaétan Gervais, professeur d'histoire à l'Université Laurentienne, et Michel Dupuis, étudiant en science politique de première année à la même université. Ce drapeau a été officiellement adopté par l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, qui est aujourd'hui l'Association des communautés franco-ontariennes, en 1977.

Étant donné que ce drapeau est le symbole qui représente une communauté importante, soit les francophones de l'Ontario et leurs contributions dans le passé, le présent et le futur de notre province, il est tout à fait juste et naturel que cette Assemblée législative reconnaisse par le biais d'un projet de loi ses contributions importantes en déclarant que ce drapeau est un symbole de l'Ontario. S'il est adopté, ce projet de loi ferait en sorte que le drapeau franco-ontarien serait parmi l'améthyste, le huard, le pin blanc, le trillium, le tartan, le drapeau de l'Ontario et les armoiries comme symbole officiel de l'Ontario.

Depuis que nous sommes au gouvernement, nous travaillons fort pour les francophones de l'Ontario afin de reconnaître leurs contributions, mais aussi pour que nous puissions faire fleurir cette ressource importante pour

l'économie de l'Ontario et des communautés à travers notre province. Je voudrais prendre quelques minutes pour vous parler des mesures concrètes de notre gouvernement pour les francophones en Ontario.

Notre gouvernement livre des résultats, remet de l'ordre dans les finances publiques et bâtit un Ontario ouvert aux affaires dans les deux langues. Je suis très fière de nos réalisations. Et pour la première fois, notre gouvernement accorde la priorité au développement économique à titre de levier d'épanouissement de la francophonie ontarienne.

Voici quelques exemples de notre travail pour promouvoir les francophones en Ontario :

L'Université de l'Ontario français : nous comprenons que les francophones en Ontario veulent accéder à une éducation postsecondaire de qualité en français. C'est pourquoi nous avons signé avec le gouvernement fédéral, le 22 janvier 2020, une entente historique afin d'assurer l'établissement de l'Université de l'Ontario français, la première université de langue française gouvernée par et pour les francophones de l'Ontario. Cette université, je vous rappelle, gouvernée par et pour les francophones, verra le jour avec une première cohorte d'étudiants à Toronto en 2021. Un rêve depuis plusieurs décennies est maintenant une réalité tangible.

Cette institution sera un grand levier de développement du capital humain francophone dans la métropole ontarienne. Sur huit ans, les deux gouvernements verseront à part égale 63 millions de dollars pour ce projet original et ambitieux : une université du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle qui aidera à combler les besoins d'un marché du travail désespéré pour des ressources humaines bilingues.

Nous améliorons l'accès à la santé en français. Notre gouvernement a annoncé un investissement pouvant atteindre 75 millions de dollars dans le projet du Carrefour santé d'Orléans, qui regroupe des services bilingues et ouvrira ses portes à l'été 2021. Notre Loi sur les soins de santé pour la population contient des dispositions qui respectent les rôles des francophones dans la planification et la prestation de soins. Les francophones méritent des services de santé en français. Nous travaillons en ce sens à chaque jour.

Nous améliorons l'accès à l'éducation francophone. En faveur de l'idée d'un continuum d'apprentissage en français, nous avons versé au Conseil scolaire Viamonde 10,2 millions de dollars pour l'achat de l'école Greenwood dans l'est de Toronto, qui pourra accueillir 501 élèves francophones de la 7<sup>e</sup> à la 12<sup>e</sup> année—oui, je pratique mes chiffres en français toujours. De même, à Vaughan, nous avons alloué un financement de 22,6 millions de dollars en vue d'une nouvelle école secondaire catholique de langue française.

Au total, notre gouvernement a investi 1,79 million de dollars pour appuyer les programmes d'éducation en français. Ce ne sont que quelques exemples de notre appui pour l'éducation en français à travers l'Ontario.

Nous améliorons l'accès à la justice en français. La loi de 2020 sur une justice plus intelligente et plus forte, récemment adoptée, aura un impact significatif pour les francophones. Plus particulièrement, Aide juridique

Ontario offrira désormais activement des services en français, et les avis de recours collectifs seront publiés et communiqués dans les deux langues officielles.

En mars dernier, notre gouvernement a lancé un projet pilote de justice à Sudbury qui vise à améliorer les services en français pour les cours et les tribunaux. Depuis, des groupes de travail se sont constitués pour identifier les obstacles que rencontrent les francophones lorsqu'ils veulent accéder aux services en français dans divers cas, qu'ils soient criminel, droit de la famille, petites créances ou autres, et pour l'identification et mise en oeuvre des solutions possibles pour remédier aux lacunes. Le travail se poursuit pour s'assurer que tous ceux qui se présentent devant les tribunaux connaissent leurs droits linguistiques.

#### 1350

La création et rétention d'emplois dans le Nord : nous offrons le Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne augmenté d'un volet économique, d'une valeur d'un million de dollars, qui aide les entreprises et les organisations communautaires francophones à mettre en oeuvre des projets qui promeuvent la vitalité économique, communautaire et culturelle.

Notre gouvernement a octroyé au Centre culturel La Ronde un million de dollars par l'entremise de la Société de gestion du Fonds du patrimoine du Nord de l'Ontario pour construire un nouvel édifice moderne de 12 000 pieds carrés à l'emplacement de son ancien édifice dans le centre-ville de Timmins.

Aussi, nous voulons attirer les immigrants francophones. Nous sommes conscients du fait critique que le maintien du poids démographique relatif des Franco-Ontariens dans la province dépend en grande partie de l'immigration francophone, non seulement à Toronto et à Ottawa, mais dans d'autres communautés à forte présence francophone, telles que Cornwall et, j'espère aussi, Mississauga.

L'an dernier, 7,7 % des candidats du Programme ontarien des candidats à l'immigration étaient francophones, en hausse par rapport à 2017, à 4,8 %.

Finalement, notre gouvernement s'est assuré de prioriser les besoins uniques de la communauté francophone à la fois pendant la pandémie et dans la perspective du rétablissement. C'est pourquoi le ministre des Affaires francophones, sous la direction de M<sup>me</sup> la ministre, a créé un nouveau conseil consultatif ministériel sur la reprise économique francophone après la COVID-19, afin que nous puissions évaluer l'impact de la pandémie sur l'économie francophone et identifier leurs besoins spécifiques en résultat de la situation actuelle.

Nous avons également été inébranlables dans notre engagement à moderniser la Loi sur les services en français, particulièrement avec la pandémie actuelle à l'esprit, réitérant la nécessité d'un accès fondamental à toutes les ressources gouvernementales pertinentes en français et en anglais.

Le ministère des Affaires francophones continue de travailler de concert avec les intervenants pertinents pour stimuler l'économie de la province, accroître la disponibilité des services de première ligne en français, et

soutenir la création d'emplois dans les entreprises francophones et bilingues.

Madam Speaker, I rise today proudly to speak about my private member's bill, Bill 182. Bill 182 amends the Franco-Ontarian Emblem Act, 2001, to recognize the Franco-Ontarian flag as an official emblem of the province of Ontario. Through this legislation, the Franco-Ontarian flag will be recognized as both the emblem of the francophone community and as an emblem of the province itself. This act symbolizes the great strides undertaken by our government to strengthen the relationship with our province's francophone community.

By recognizing the symbol of Ontario francophones, we do more than just point to a flag and say that it bears provincial legitimacy. We honour their story—a story that dates back to 1610, with the arrival of Étienne Brûlé. Since then, the Ontario francophone community has enriched our culture and industry through their contributions by notable figures like Lola Lemire Tostevin, a leading Canadian female writer; Jean-Marc Dalpé, a poet and playwright; Michel Bock; and many, many more.

Bill 182 demonstrates in practice to our francophone community that we recognize the challenges of previous government relations. This is more than just about a flag; these symbols are a reflection of our collective identity. They tell the story of who we are and what we believe in. They tell the story of what we stand for and unite us behind a common cause. Symbols matter.

Les symboles reflètent notre identité collective. Ils racontent qui nous sommes et en quoi nous croyons. Ils racontent ce que nous défendons et nous unissent derrière une cause commune. Les symboles comptent.

Symbols were also important and continue to be important for soldiers and veterans fighting during the war. Our Canadian flag soared high during both world wars and the Korean War. Our soldiers paid the ultimate price in the defence of our Canadian maple leaf—that same maple leaf that we so proudly attach to our backpacks as we travel the world. That same maple leaf is known in the world as a peacekeeper, as a defender of human rights and democracy. It symbolizes a country where the rule of law prevails and a country which tries very hard to be equitable and fair to all its citizens. This is why symbols are important. This is why symbols matter.

With this bill, we demonstrate the place of Franco-Ontarians in Ontario's diverse cultural mosaic.

Tout cela étant dit, je veux pivoter pour parler un peu du travail que j'ai pu faire aux côtés de la communauté francophone au cours des derniers mois.

In my time as a member of provincial Parliament for Mississauga Centre, I have enjoyed a strong and robust relationship with the francophone community, yet I feel this relationship has grown even stronger and has become more fulfilling during the pandemic we have all come to find ourselves in.

COVID-19 has undoubtedly presented immense challenges to the people of Ontario. Life as we know it has been turned upside down. It brought forward new challenges and barriers to vulnerable members of our

community. Residents in my riding who are elderly or immunocompromised have had to deal with a new and difficult reality. They had to become exceedingly stringent in their interactions with the outside world. Even as the broader population began to leave their houses more frequently, being able to go out and get needed supplies, these vulnerable citizens simply could not.

But even with challenge and adversity, Ontario's spirit is a light that shines bright and cannot be dimmed. Many community groups in my riding stepped up to ensure that our most vulnerable, our neighbours, were taken care of and had what they needed to get through this difficult time. It was not only the right thing to do; it was the Canadian thing to do.

I have the pleasure of working with many groups, including the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto. Through a diverse array of services, the centre is able to meet the needs of the francophone community in the greater Toronto area, including in my riding of Mississauga Centre, with the intent of contributing to its overall well-being as a result. The vastness of services offered by the centre is truly remarkable. It is civil society groups like these which do the unsung work of ensuring francophone communities across the province are healthy and thriving.

But during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto added another service to this list, ensuring that vulnerable persons of all backgrounds had what they needed to weather the storm. I was able to join my good friend directrice générale of Centre francophone du Grand Toronto Florence Ngenzebuhoro for numerous outreach initiatives in the past few months. Together, Florence and I, with our teams, gave out more than just meals. We strived to give a feeling of community and belonging to people who, no doubt, felt the pain of loneliness and isolation.

Social isolation and the loneliness that accompanies it has been another area of concern for these community groups during the pandemic. Leveraging this incredible ability to reconnect people, they found even more ways of helping our most vulnerable, and I could not thank them enough for what they have done. Truly, it is our unsung community heroes and our can-do Ontario spirit that will get us to the other side of this pandemic.

I had the pleasure of collaborating alongside Florence and the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto with other local francophone groups; for example, Centres d'Accueil Héritage, to ensure local residents had much-needed PPE and essential health supplies. In fact, our work with Centres d'Accueil Héritage was done in conjunction with a colleague of mine across the floor, the member from Spadina-Fort York. As the Premier said, during this pandemic there is no blue team, orange team, green team or red team; there's only one team, Team Ontario and Team Canada.

Returning to what I was speaking to earlier, I was able to collaborate with Florence on other fantastic initiatives, such as a well-attended tele-town hall attended by guests like the Minister of Francophone Affairs, her PA, alongside other prominent members of the francophone

community like Chef Guy Dongué of Kids Cuisine Santé. In this discussion, we were able to highlight all of the resources offered by our government to francophones in the greater Toronto area to help during the pandemic. Discussions like these not only demonstrate the commitment and capability of the francophone community to organize and focus on self-preservation but also the commitment of our government to making francophone issues an important topic of the day.

Madame la Présidente, cette loi symbolise les grandes avancées de notre gouvernement pour promouvoir et bâtir des relations encore meilleures avec la communauté franco-ontarienne. En reconnaissant le symbole des francophones de l'Ontario, nous faisons plus que simplement pointer un drapeau et dire qu'il a une légitimité provinciale. Il illustre notre engagement à reconnaître la longue et riche histoire que vivent les francophones dans notre pays et qui remonte à 400 ans. Il démontre la place des Franco-Ontariens dans la mosaïque culturelle diversifiée de l'Ontario, mais encore plus profondément, en tant qu'une des nations fondatrices du Canada.

#### 1400

En conclusion, notre gouvernement continuera de défendre les intérêts des francophones en Ontario, en avançant de grands projets ayant pour but de dynamiser les communautés francophones à l'aide de plus d'échanges économiques, d'investissements et d'un accès au savoir accru, en particulier dans les domaines d'emplois bilingues hautement qualifiés.

Mon projet de loi et les mesures dont j'ai parlé ne sont qu'un début des mesures que les députés de ce côté de cette Chambre souhaitent mettre en place afin d'aider les francophones en Ontario. Nous travaillons chaque jour afin d'améliorer les services en français en plus de reconnaître les atouts de la francophonie ontarienne pour l'Ontario. J'espère que vous allez vous joindre à moi et appuyer mon projet de loi, une façon pour nous comme députés de reconnaître l'importance des francophones en Ontario, un petit geste de notre part pour dire merci pour ce qu'ils contribuent à cette province et au sein de nos communautés.

Et à tous les Franco-Ontariens qui écoutent maintenant et aujourd'hui, je voudrais dire : nous sommes, nous serons—et le gouvernement de l'Ontario est avec vous aussi.

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

**M. Guy Bourgoin:** Il me fait plaisir de me lever pour le projet de loi 182. Vous savez, madame la Présidente, que notre caucus a beaucoup de députés qui parlent en français et qui voulaient parler, mais on n'a pas assez de temps alloué.

Comme la députée de Mississauga-Centre l'a bel et bien dit, ce projet de loi n'est qu'un geste symbolique. Je suis tout à fait d'accord avec elle. Les gestes symboliques sont tout à fait importants, mais selon le dictionnaire Larousse 2020, un geste symbolique est ce « qui n'est pas réel, qui n'a pas de valeur en soi, mais qui est significatif d'une intention : Un geste symbolique qui ne coûte rien. »

Madame la Présidente, avec des gestes symboliques, on ne peut pas nourrir nos enfants. Nous ne pouvons pas aider nos enfants et nos aînés avec un maigre geste symbolique. Nous ne pouvons pas assurer l'accès aux services de santé, d'éducation et de justice en français avec des gestes symboliques. Il nous faut des actions concrètes, des actions tangibles. Je l'ai déjà dit au mois de mars quand la députée de Mississauga-Centre avait parlé de ce projet de loi. Elle a dit que les gestes symboliques sont importants; moi, je crois que les mesures concrètes sont encore plus importantes.

Nous vivons des temps historiques, madame la Présidente, des temps qui demandent des mesures concrètes, des actions tangibles pour améliorer la vie des Ontariens, et les affaires francophones sont de plus en plus absentes des débats de ce gouvernement. Encore pire, nous constatons un recul constant de nos droits, que ce soit en santé, en éducation, en justice ou nos droits linguistiques.

Il y a presque deux ans—deux ans, madame la Présidente—la députée de Mississauga-Centre avait interpellé la ministre des Affaires francophones par rapport à la Loi sur les services en français, et la ministre des Affaires francophones lui avait répondu qu'elle souhaitait moderniser une loi datant de 1986, une loi qui ne fait même pas mention des ressources numériques—ce n'est pas compliqué; elles n'existaient pas à l'époque. Nous ne pouvons pas moderniser la Loi sur les services en français avec des gestes symboliques et nous ne pouvons pas améliorer l'offre des services en français avec des gestes symboliques.

La communauté franco-ontarienne vous a demandé à maintes reprises des actions, des mesures concrètes, comme garantir l'offre active aux services en français, comme améliorer les services de justice en français dans le Nord, comme garantir l'accès aux services de santé en français, comme consulter—je répète le mot, consulter—les conseils scolaires avant d'imposer des changements au système d'éducation francophone, ou rétablir le Commissariat aux services en français indépendant—le mot magique, « indépendant ».

Laissez-moi vous parler des cas réels des gens partout dans la province. Si on parle de services de santé en français, il y a un mois, la ministre des Affaires francophones a dit à haute voix que des services de santé en français seront offerts dans les régions désignées. C'est bien, mais il y a un gros « mais ». Il y a toujours un gros « mais ». Mais les équipes de Santé Ontario ne sont toujours pas assujetties à la Loi sur les services en français. Il n'y a aucune section dans la loi qui exige aux équipes de Santé Ontario d'offrir des services en français. Autrement dit, c'est une promesse de la ministre, un geste symbolique, comme la définition que je vous ai dit dans le Petit Larousse 2020, qui n'a pas de valeur.

Dans le Nord, M. Marc Guindon, enseignant à Smooth Rock Falls, a appelé le 911 à cause d'un élève qui s'était évanoui. L'agent téléphonique lui a demandé de répéter le message en anglais. Du temps précieux perdu : l'enfant aurait pu mourir, dans le pire des conditions. M. Guindon a par la suite porté plainte avec l'ombudsman adjoint. Le

centre d'expédition a seulement reçu un mémo avec des meilleures pratiques.

En justice : on a des attentes de 18 mois, comparé à six mois pour les anglophones, pour avoir une audience avec des tribunaux décisionnels. Des résidents de Kapuskasing qui ont besoin d'aide pour nourrir leurs enfants—une famille a porté plainte avec le commissaire. Ils n'ont pas reçu une réponse positive, et finalement ils ont décidé de se présenter en anglais avec un traducteur. Mais le traducteur parlait à peine français et il n'utilisait pas les bons termes. Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé? La famille a décidé de ne pas continuer le processus parce que personne ne pouvait parler leur langue.

Dans les cours de Thunder Bay, il n'y a pas de personnel bilingue, pas de juge de la couronne bilingue, des agents correctionnels unilingues, pas de greffier bilingue, un manque de traducteurs, des transcriptions avec plein de fautes d'orthographe. Il y a des gens qui doivent rester en détention plus longtemps, car il n'y a pas de juge francophone. Pensez à ça deux minutes. Tu poireautes en prison plus longtemps à cause que tu n'es pas capable de parler en anglais ou tu parles seulement français. Où est la justice là-dedans? Comme un avocat m'a dit, « Guy, la justice en français, c'est une joke. C'est une farce. »

Je peux continuer. En éducation, on a un manque systématique de personnel qualifié francophone. Les choses ont empiré alors que les libéraux ont doublé le temps pour compléter le programme en éducation. On a des écoles qui doivent engager des voisins pour enseigner, des écoles qui débordent d'élèves, comme à Toronto ou Ottawa, mais qui ont de la misère à retenir le personnel. On voit un manque d'écoles, comme à Toronto—Danforth, où les parents attendent et revendiquent une école secondaire équivalente depuis 2011.

Un gouvernement qui ne consulte pas avec des conseils scolaires quand on parle de changements : l'annexe 15 du projet de loi 197 élargit le mandat de TFO en éducation en ligne. Les conseils scolaires comblaient ce mandat depuis 2009 avec le Consortium d'apprentissage virtuel de la langue française de l'Ontario. Les 12 conseils scolaires sont membres fondateurs du Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques, qui offre des ressources pédagogiques de qualité depuis 1974. L'annexe pourrait être inconstitutionnelle, car l'article 23 de la Charte accorde l'autonomie éducative à la minorité franco-ontarienne. Tout ça, sans consultation avec les 12 conseils scolaires.

#### 1410

En immigration dans les régions du Nord, on a un déclin démographique qui est plus évident parmi les francophones. Depuis 2012, l'Ontario a accepté de combler un quota de 5 % d'immigration francophone. Mais on n'a jamais atteint ces chiffres. Jamais. De plus, les experts disent que pour seulement soutenir le nombre présent, on devrait grandement dépasser ce fameux 5 %.

Notre fameux Commissariat aux services en français : en 2018—je peux vous dire, on va s'en souvenir longtemps de cette fameuse date— ce gouvernement a

aboli le seul bureau capable de défendre et de proposer des améliorations aux droits des Franco-Ontariens. Pourtant, le nombre de plaintes au commissaire diminue. Les gens nous disent que ce bureau manque de mordant. Les experts disent qu'un bureau sans la capacité de gérer son budget, son personnel ou même de prendre des décisions de façon autonome ne sert à rien. De plus, tous les projets de loi proposés pour moderniser la Loi sur les services en français, y compris le libellé de l'AFO et l'AJEFO, ont un point en commun : un bureau du commissaire aux services en français indépendant—je peux le répéter : indépendant, le mot magique, comme j'ai dit—sans la surveillance de l'ombudsman. Mais je remercie encore la députée de Mississauga-Centre pour son geste symbolique, et je l'encourage à soutenir les mesures concrètes qui ont été déposées ici à l'Assemblée législative comme, par exemple, mon projet de loi pour le rétablissement du commissaire indépendant.

Encore, la définition du geste symbolique : ce « qui n'est pas réel, qui n'a pas de valeur en soi, mais qui est significatif d'une intention : Un geste symbolique qui ne coûte rien »—qui ne coûte rien. Pourtant, nous sommes tous témoins du recul des services en français en éducation, en santé et en justice, que ce soit dans le Nord, à Ottawa, à Toronto ou dans le Sud-Ouest. En passant, si on parle de gestes symboliques, le projet de loi de la députée de Mississauga-Centre ne fait qu'effacer une ligne et en inclure une nouvelle dans la loi de 2001.

Mais si on parle de gestes symboliques, si on veut rendre hommage à la francophonie ontarienne, on devrait changer le préambule de la loi et inclure le nom des créateurs du drapeau franco-ontarien, Gaétan Gervais et Michel Dupuis, ou accorder l'espace à des événements comme le règlement 17 ou la crise de Sturgeon Falls.

Mais les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes ne veulent pas des gestes symboliques. On ne peut pas éduquer nos enfants, accéder à des soins de santé ou de longue durée, trouver un emploi, épanouir les arts et les cultures francophones avec un geste symbolique, un geste qui n'a pas de valeur en soi. On est fatigué d'être pris pour acquis. On est tanné de se contenter des miettes. Nous, les Franco-Ontariens, voulons des changements concrets, des actions à la hauteur de nos besoins et de nos droits.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate? The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just came back from the dentist so I'm having a bit of trouble speaking, but I'll do my best. Bear with me. I'll be splitting my time with the member for Orléans, if that's okay.

Madame la Présidente, c'est un plaisir pour moi de me lever en Chambre aujourd'hui pour parler de notre cher drapeau franco-ontarien et la proposition d'en faire un emblème officiel de notre belle province.

On parle du projet de loi 182, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur l'emblème franco-ontarien. Oui, 2001 : c'est en 2001 que mon prédécesseur, l'ancien député provincial de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Jean-Marc Lalonde, fit adopter une reconnaissance officielle de l'emblème de la

communauté franco-ontarienne. Merci, mon cher Jean-Marc, d'avoir été un pionnier et un allié important de la francophonie, en plus d'avoir servi si longtemps pour les gens de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Notre cher drapeau, on le voit partout, chez nous dans nos communautés francophones, mais aussi ailleurs : sur les plaques d'immatriculation; sur nos propriétés, hissé haut et fier; dans nos écoles; sur notre dos, comme des capes de superhéros lors d'événements, de rassemblements et, bien sûr, de manifestations. J'ai même des amis qui ont ce cher drapeau tatoué sur le corps. Oui, on est intense. Et si nous enlève de nos droits et services, oui, tu vas en entendre parler pour 20 ans.

Notre drapeau, on l'affiche. On a un sentiment de fierté. C'est un symbole qui rend hommage à tous ceux et celles qui ont lutté avant nous. Du règlement 17, à Montfort, à la crise linguistique de 2018, on lutte pour nos droits, pour notre éducation, pour le respect, depuis toujours. Ça fait maintenant partie de notre ADN. On ne baisse jamais les bras, parce qu'on ne peut tout simplement pas. Mais les deux dernières années ont été particulièrement mouvementées, en fait, depuis l'entrée en fonction du gouvernement actuel.

Ça n'a pas été facile. Mais une chose est certaine : ce beau drapeau vert et blanc a été plus visible que jamais lorsque nous sommes sortis dans les rues le 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2018 pour manifester. Des milliers de personnes ont manifesté partout à travers la province et le Canada, ont manifesté contre les coupes injustifiables du gouvernement actuel, affichant fièrement ce drapeau, symbole de solidarité et de résistance.

Ce drapeau est maintenant connu par plus que les Franco-Ontariens et les Canadiens français, et ce, grâce à ces moments difficiles.

Madame la Présidente, le projet de loi dont nous sommes saisis est de la poudre aux yeux—ça, c'est clair—mais je vais bien évidemment l'appuyer. C'est symbolique de rendre le drapeau officiel, mais c'est un symbole que j'accueille, après l'enfer qu'on nous a fait vivre ces deux dernières années.

Mais si le but du projet de loi est de réparer les pots cassés, je vous souhaite bonne chance. Après toutes les attaques sur notre minorité, ce n'est certainement pas l'adoption d'un symbole qui va nous faire oublier tout ce que nous avons perdu. Mais pour une fois, c'est un geste qui ne nous arrache rien, donc on va le prendre, c'est certain. Triste qu'on est rendu à ce standard-là, mais c'est la situation actuelle.

Madame la Présidente, il y a des dossiers importants, prioritaires et décisifs pour la communauté franco-ontarienne en ce moment. On ne demande rien d'extraordinaire. On veut ravoire ce qu'on s'est fait enlever : les institutions importantes dont l'élimination a eu des conséquences néfastes sérieuses pour nos droits. Nous avons demandé la réintégration du commissaire indépendant. Nous avons demandé l'accès aux services en français de qualité égale. Nous avons demandé le respect. Et encore aujourd'hui : zéro.

Au lieu, on se retrouve avec les bonbons de fond de sacoches à matante, comme d'habitude. Tu sais, ceux que

le papier reste collé dessus tellement ça fait longtemps qu'ils sont dans le fond de la sacoche? Oui, ceux-là, ceux qu'on ne veut pas vraiment, mais qu'on ne dira pas non à avoir : un peu de sucré en attendant quelque chose de meilleur. Une communauté peut bien espérer.

**1420**

Mais comme mon cher ami Félix Saint-Denis, l'éternel optimiste et toujours positif, le dit : « Le gouvernement actuel ... nous a rendu le grand service de nous mobiliser! » Et oui, de nous mobiliser, de nous rassembler, de nous organiser et de nous montrer que rien n'est garanti, que tout peut nous être enlevé à tout moment. Nous sommes maintenant plus prêts et unis que jamais—unis, forts et solidaires avec notre beau drapeau. Et maintenant, ce drapeau, notre drapeau, symbole de solidarité et de résistance, sera, si adopté, dorénavant reconnu officiellement.

Madame la Présidente, nous sommes, nous serons et nous continuerons de lutter pour ce qui est juste, avec notre beau drapeau officiel.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The member for Orléans.

**M. Stephen Blais:** En tant que francophile dont la famille a perdu son patrimoine francophone il y a seulement deux générations, je connais bien la facilité avec laquelle l'assimilation peut se faire. C'est la raison pour laquelle ma femme et moi avons choisi d'inscrire notre fils dans le système scolaire catholique francophone : pour nous assurer que nous pouvons retrouver ce qui a été perdu.

Pendant son séjour à l'école, non seulement notre fils a-t-il appris à parler, lire et écrire la langue de Molière, mais il a aussi appris l'importance des symboles franco-ontariens, comme notre drapeau. Il a appris que l'emblème de la communauté franco-ontarienne se compose de deux bandes verticales aux couleurs différentes : la première, verte, comporte en son centre un lys blanc, évocateur de la Francophonie dans le monde entier; la seconde, blanche, comporte en son centre l'esquisse verte d'un trille, le symbole floral de l'Ontario. Le vert représente l'été et le blanc l'hiver soit, ensemble, la diversité du climat ontarien.

Il apprendra comment la communauté franco-ontarienne a lutté pour le respect de ses droits ici dans notre province, comme la bataille des épingles à chapeaux, lorsque Béatrice et Diane Desloges, refusant de céder au règlement 17, ont fini par obtenir le droit à l'enseignement en français pour nos enfants, et des luttes plus récentes, comme SOS Montfort en 1997 et le groupe de responsables communautaires, dirigés par Gisèle Lalonde, qui sont passés à l'action afin de sauver notre hôpital, cet hôpital où mon fils est né et où j'ai été secouru.

La communauté francophone de l'Ontario est la plus importante en dehors du Québec, et les deux dernières années ont été mouvementées pour notre communauté franco-ontarienne. Cela fait presque deux ans que j'ai joint 5 000 de mes voisins à l'hôtel de ville d'Ottawa pour protester contre les compressions du gouvernement conservateur dans les services en français. Deux ans plus

tard, en l'absence d'un commissaire aux services en français, il est à craindre que le gouvernement ne reconnaisse toujours pas leurs erreurs. Il n'est toujours pas exigé que l'ombudsman, chargé de traiter les questions relatives aux services en langue française, parle même le français. Les Ontariens continuent d'avoir des difficultés à accéder des services gouvernementaux en français, une situation qui ne peut plus durer.

Je comprends l'importance de tous les symboles, et ils sont très importants, mais de pouvoir également faire nos actions quotidiennes en français l'est tout autant. Nous devons nous engager à faire en sorte que les francophones puissent avoir accès aux services gouvernementaux où qu'ils se trouvent en Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 101(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' private business such that Ms. Armstrong assumes ballot item number 21 and Ms. Bell assumes ballot item number 31.

Further debate?

**L'hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Je vais partager mon temps avec le député de Niagara-Ouest.

C'est un plaisir pour moi de pouvoir prendre la parole en faveur de ce projet de loi, et je tiens à remercier la députée de Mississauga-Centre d'avoir présenté ce projet de loi. Sa défense et ses interventions en faveur de la promotion de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario sont admirables.

En tant que ministre des Affaires francophones, je suis honorée de me voir confier l'important mandat de veiller à ce que la communauté francophone de l'Ontario puisse continuer à contribuer pleinement à la prospérité de notre province.

Notre gouvernement s'est engagé à améliorer la qualité et l'accès aux services gouvernementaux en français ainsi qu'à soutenir la pleine participation des francophones à la vie sociale, culturelle et économique de notre province.

Le député de Mushkegowuk–Baie James parle de l'importance de gestes concrets pour la communauté francophone, et je suis d'accord.

Je suis très fière de l'engagement de notre gouvernement à soutenir la population francophone de l'Ontario ainsi que des nombreuses mesures prises jusqu'ici pour concrétiser cette mission :

En éducation, un geste concret, avec la signature historique de l'entente avec le gouvernement fédéral pour financer l'Université de l'Ontario français, première université de langue française dirigée par et pour les francophones de l'Ontario, qui ouvrira ses portes à sa première cohorte d'étudiants en septembre 2021.

Ou encore aux niveaux primaire et secondaire, un geste concret : nous avons conclu avec succès une entente avec le gouvernement fédéral sur l'enseignement dans la langue de la minorité et l'enseignement de la langue seconde. Cette entente profite maintenant aux plus de 622 000 Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes de la province et aux 110 000 élèves inscrits dans les écoles de langue française.

En santé et en arts, des mesures concrètes avec le financement du Carrefour santé d'Orléans et de la Place des Arts de Sudbury.

En justice, une mesure concrète avec le succès du projet pilote au palais de justice à Sudbury, dans le nord de l'Ontario, comme le demande le député de Mushkegowuk—Baie James.

En développement communautaire et économique, une mesure concrète avec le Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne.

Toutes ces mesures représentent des pas vers l'avant pour la communauté francophone. Je pourrais continuer ainsi.

Ces mesures concrètes font partie de notre plan pour améliorer les services de première ligne tout en continuant de promouvoir la langue et la culture françaises et de maximiser la contribution des francophones au développement économique de la province.

Madame la Présidente, il est difficile de surestimer l'importance de la population francophone de l'Ontario dans la composition de notre province, et ce projet de loi vise à le reconnaître à titre officiel.

Depuis sa création en 1975 à Sudbury, le drapeau franco-ontarien en est venu à représenter la communauté francophone de l'Ontario, et le fait officiellement depuis 2001. Mais l'heure est venue pour en faire plus.

Reconnaître le drapeau franco-ontarien à la fois comme un emblème de la communauté francophone et comme un emblème officiel de l'Ontario serait un geste symbolique—mais un geste symbolique puissant—de la part de la province toute entière.

C'est une façon d'honorer la contribution des francophones dans nos communautés à travers toute la province, ainsi qu'à notre économie et à notre culture commune.

C'est une façon de reconnaître la riche histoire des francophones de l'Ontario, qui remonte à des centaines d'années. Et c'est une façon de réaffirmer notre engagement à les soutenir à l'avenir.

Les symboles sont importants. Ils incarnent nos valeurs. L'emblème franco-ontarien en est un parfait exemple : le lys, représentant la communauté francophone mondiale, et le trille de l'Ontario, réunis sur un même drapeau en harmonie.

Par un geste symbolique, nous pouvons démontrer notre respect et notre admiration pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario et en faire un symbole, non seulement de la population francophone, mais de la population de l'Ontario toute entière.

Je ne peux pas penser à un emblème aussi digne d'être un symbole officiel de l'Ontario.

En tant que ministre des Affaires francophones, j'appuie sans équivoque ce projet de loi, et j'encourage tout le monde à le faire également.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The member for Niagara West.

**M. Sam Oosterhoff:** C'est un véritable plaisir d'être ici pour parler en faveur du projet de loi de la députée de Mississauga-Centre pour que le drapeau franco-ontarien

soit reconnu officiellement comme un emblème de l'Ontario.

Comme toujours, j'aimerais souligner les contributions remarquables des communautés francophones de l'Ontario depuis plus de 400 ans. Avec plus de 600 000 francophones en Ontario, nous avons la chance de former la plus grande communauté francophone au Canada hors Québec.

**1430**

Au ministère de l'Éducation, nous sommes très heureux de voir l'intérêt croissant envers le français dans notre province ainsi que la force de nos écoles de langue française.

Pendant cette période tellement difficile de la pandémie, nous sommes très reconnaissants de tout le travail des conseils scolaires francophones et aussi de tous les éducateurs dans les écoles. Nous avons travaillé ensemble très étroitement dans tous les domaines pour la santé, la sécurité et l'éducation des élèves francophones de l'Ontario. Nous aimerions remercier les parents, le personnel administratif, les directeurs et directrices, les enseignantes et enseignants, les chauffeurs d'autobus et tout le monde qui travaille ensemble pour réaliser le miracle de l'éducation dans les écoles de langue française pendant une pandémie. C'est incroyable.

Pendant ces deux années, en tant qu'adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation, j'ai vu avec mes propres yeux le dévouement des parents et des enseignants et enseignantes pour promouvoir et soutenir l'éducation en français et la joie des étudiants et des étudiantes dans les couloirs et salles de classe. C'est un plaisir chaque fois que je vois leur fierté de la culture francophone.

L'Ontario est un chef de file avec un système d'éducation complet en langue française en milieu minoritaire, de la petite enfance au postsecondaire. Des programmes de petite enfance et des services de garde agréés, jusqu'aux écoles primaires et secondaires publiques et catholiques et enfin jusqu'aux études postsecondaires, l'Ontario s'illustre par son système éducatif public et complet en milieu minoritaire francophone. L'éducation en langue française en Ontario est une expérience unique, d'excellente qualité, qui favorise le sentiment d'appartenance à la francophonie en Ontario et au Canada.

L'éducation française est vraiment importante à notre gouvernement, et nous sommes très contents de pouvoir souligner cette appréciation avec le projet de loi de la députée de Mississauga-Centre. J'ai hâte de célébrer la journée des Franco-Ontariennes et des Franco-Ontariennes encore une fois cette année.

Je suis particulièrement content d'avoir eu l'opportunité de visiter et célébrer la présence et les contributions des communautés francophones dans toute la région de Niagara, comme ma visite à l'École élémentaire LaMarsh à Niagara Falls. Plus de 15 000 francophones vivent dans la région de Niagara. Leur contribution dans notre région est complètement incroyable et « valable ».

Avec une population de plus de 10 % de francophones, la ville de Welland est aussi un centre de la francophonie

des Amériques et fait partie du Réseau des villes francophones et francophiles d'Amérique. La célébration de la Journée des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes ainsi que la levée du drapeau sont organisées annuellement à Welland, St. Catharines et Niagara Falls—je sais que ces villes ne sont pas dans ma circonscription—mais elles sont très importantes chaque année aussi pour les « constituants » dans Niagara-Ouest. En soirée à Welland, le pont 13 de la rue East Main est illuminé en vert et blanc, les couleurs du drapeau franco-ontarien, le beau drapeau.

L'enseignement, la vie scolaire et les activités parascolaires se déroulent en français dans un environnement francophone dans les 13 écoles de langue française du Niagara. Le bilinguisme a progressé aussi dans la région du Niagara jusqu'à presque 9 % de la population. Dans les programmes d'immersion française offerts dans les deux conseils scolaires au Niagara, les élèves sont encouragés à explorer la culture et les traditions françaises et à participer à de nombreuses activités sportives, musicales et artistiques.

Les communautés franco-ontariennes sont dynamiques et appréciées dans ma région et dans toutes les régions et chaque coin de la province. Elles sont une partie essentielle, une richesse de Niagara et de l'Ontario. C'est pourquoi j'appuie pleinement le projet de loi de la députée de Mississauga-Centre de faire du drapeau franco-ontarien officiellement un emblème de l'Ontario.

C'est le beau drapeau, et je suis très fier de ma chère collègue qui promeut cet emblème. Je suis fier aussi des mesures concrètes prises par le gouvernement progressiste-conservateur et le premier ministre Doug Ford. Dans chaque coin de la province, nous avons confiance dans l'avenir de la communauté franco-ontarienne.

L'emblème franco-ontarien est un très fort symbole de la vraie francophonie, ici et dans toute la province.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Merci beaucoup, madame la Présidente. Ça me fait toujours plaisir de vous voir dans la belle grande chaise.

J'aimerais ajouter quelques mots au projet de loi 182, la loi qui modifie la Loi de 2001 sur l'emblème franco-ontarien. C'est un petit geste. On a juste que c'est un emblème de l'Ontario. Je vais vous dire merci, et je peux vous assurer que vous allez avoir l'appui des néo-démocrates pour ce projet de loi. C'est un petit geste qui est bienvenu, mais c'est un petit geste.

C'est sûr que lorsqu'on parle du drapeau franco-ontarien, je ne peux pas m'empêcher d'être très fière. Moi, je représente le comté de Nickel Belt. Tout le monde devrait savoir maintenant que le drapeau a été conçu à Sudbury. C'est M. Gaétan Gervais qui avait été—c'était un projet qui mijotait depuis longtemps. Il voulait un symbole rassembleur identitaire pour les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. Il a travaillé avec un groupe d'étudiants. Il était professeur à l'Université Laurentienne. Il travaillait avec Michel Dupuis, Donald

Obonsawin, puis Yves Tassé. L'histoire nous dira que les deux cocréateurs seraient Gaétan Gervais et Michel Dupuis, mais on sait qu'il y avait d'autre monde dans ce projet-là.

Le premier drapeau que tout le monde a bien—vert avec symbole blanc, blanc avec le symbole vert etc. Tout le monde le connaît, notre beau drapeau. J'en porte un, d'ailleurs, aujourd'hui. Il a été cousu à la main par Jacqueline England. Moi, j'ai eu l'honneur de le voir, le premier drapeau qui a été cousu à la main par Jacqueline. Gaétan l'avait avec lui toutes les années lorsqu'on faisait la levée du drapeau. Je te dirais que par le milieu des années 1990, on ne l'utilisait plus, le drapeau original, parce qu'on essayait de le conserver. On a commencé à utiliser d'autres drapeaux identiques. Mais c'est quand même quelque chose.

Là, c'est quelque chose qui est né—je te dirais qu'à Sudbury, au début des années 1970, il y avait une révolution culturelle dans le monde francophone. C'est dans ce temps-là que les Éditions Prise de parole ont débuté, le Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario a débuté, la Galerie du Nouvel-Ontario et, bien entendu, la Nuit sur l'étang. La Nuit sur l'étang aurait, elle aussi, célébré son 45<sup>e</sup> anniversaire, je crois, mais cette année, avec la COVID, la journée juste avant que la Nuit sur l'étang était pour commencer, c'était la journée où le gouvernement a annoncé que tout ferait. Donc, pour la première fois, on n'a pas eu de Nuit sur l'étang.

Mais ça vous donne une idée. C'était une révolution culturelle qui se passait. Les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes prenaient leur place et ils étaient fiers de qui ils étaient, parce que pendant longtemps, on a eu de la difficulté à s'affirmer. Puis là on s'affirmait, et Gaétan et Michel avaient mis ce drapeau en place.

Il faut dire que souvent on parle du drapeau vert et blanc, avec le lys et la fleur de trille—le vert c'est pour l'été, le blanc c'est pour l'hiver, la neige et tout ça. Mais quand tu parlais avec Gaétan, Gaétan nous disait que c'est aussi parce qu'il voulait éviter les couleurs des partis politiques, parce qu'il ne voulait pas que l'emblème devienne un symbole politique. Il voulait vraiment que ça soit un symbole rassembleur pour tout le monde. Et quand ils l'ont sorti, le drapeau, ils ont fait vraiment attention pour que personne ne sache que c'était eux qui l'avaient créé, que personne ne sache que le drapeau venait de Sudbury, parce qu'ils voulaient que ça devienne un emblème à la grandeur de la province. Je vous dirais que ça a très bien marché. Je vais vous donner plusieurs exemples de ça.

**1440**

Je vais vous dire que Gaétan Gervais, malheureusement, nous a quitté le 20 octobre 2018, mais pas avant que j'aie eu l'honneur en avril 2017 de lui décerner le grade d'officier de l'Ordre de la Pléiade. C'est le seul officier de l'Ordre de la Pléiade dans le nord de l'Ontario. On a plusieurs chevaliers/chevalières de l'Ordre de la Pléiade. On connaît Lyse Lamothe, on connaît Carmen Portelance, on connaît Germaine Paquette; il y a plusieurs personnes qui ont reçu le grade. Je regarde mon

collègue; il en a plusieurs, lui aussi, qui ont reçu le grade de chevalier ou chevalière de l'Ordre de la Pléiade. Mais Gaétan, lui, a été décoré le grade d'officier de l'Ordre de la Pléiade pour tout ce qu'il a fait pour la francophonie ontarienne et, également, pour souligner qu'il est le père du drapeau franco-ontarien dont on parle aujourd'hui.

Ça a été, je vous dirais, une cérémonie très pleine d'émotions. Gaétan, dans les dernières années, sa santé se détériorait assez rapidement. Lorsqu'on a fait la célébration ici à Queen's Park, c'est sa soeur, Joanne Gervais—qui est également la directrice de l'ACFO, l'Association des communautés franco-ontariennes, pour Sudbury—qui était venue. Mais après ça, j'ai eu l'occasion d'aller le voir chez lui—il vivait au Manoir des pionniers—pour le lui remettre. C'était un moment dont je vais me souvenir très longtemps. Gaétan était un homme extraordinaire et, je vous dirais, jusqu'à la fin.

Donc, c'est ça : le 25 septembre 1975, Gaétan et Michel lèvent le drapeau franco-ontarien cousu à la main au mât devant l'Université de Sudbury. L'Université Laurentienne est une université fédérée qui a plusieurs—c'était en face du building de l'Université de Sudbury. Il y a une photo que tout le monde peut voir. En 1975, vous allez vous souvenir, les pantalons avaient des pattes d'éléphant, les hommes portaient les cheveux longs. En tout cas, c'est très, très de saison. Et c'est comme ça que ça s'est fait.

Depuis ce temps-là, bien entendu, ç'a changé. Tout de suite, en 1979, l'ACFO reconnaît le drapeau comme emblème des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes et le reconnaît à la grandeur de la province. En 1979, on va l'utiliser pour la première fois dans la crise que Penetang a vécue. Penetang essayait très fort d'avoir une école de langue française. Au niveau du gouvernement, c'était un mur de silence, et on a commencé à utiliser le drapeau dans les revendications à Penetang.

Bien entendu, tout le monde va se souvenir de SOS Montfort. SOS Montfort, c'était la dernière fois qu'on a eu un gouvernement conservateur en Ontario—Mike Harris. Vous allez vous en souvenir. Ils avaient décidé de mettre la commission de restructuration des hôpitaux. Ça, c'était un grand titre pour dire : « On va fermer un paquet d'hôpitaux », ce qu'ils ont réussi à faire à la grandeur de l'Ontario. Mais, lorsqu'ils sont arrivés à fermer l'Hôpital Montfort, le seul hôpital francophone dans toute la province, ça vraiment mal été, leur affaire, parce que les francophones ont décidé qu'il n'en était pas question, qu'on était pour garder notre seul et unique hôpital francophone, et qu'il n'en était pas question que la commission de M. Mike Harris ne ferme ça.

Je vous dirais que la vente de drapeaux franco-ontariens et tous les emblèmes franco-ontariens pendant la crise de SOS Montfort a été phénoménale. Peu importe où tu allais, tu voyais le drapeau franco-ontarien. Le drapeau franco-ontarien a vraiment été le symbole de la résistance. Si tu portais le drapeau franco-ontarien, c'est parce que tu envoyais un message clair au gouvernement de Mike Harris que tu ne voulais pas qu'il ferme l'Hôpital Montfort, puis ça, on le portait autant à Sudbury qu'à

Windsor qu'à Hamilton. Ça a rallié tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes dans une cause—de sauver l'Hôpital Montfort. Le visage de ça, c'est sûr, c'était Gisèle Lalonde, qui a porté ce dossier-là de façon phénoménale, et ç'a été un succès. En ce moment, si vous allez à l'Hôpital Montfort, vous allez voir tout ce qui se passe dans cet hôpital, les expansions qu'il a prises. L'importance de l'Hôpital Montfort pour les services de santé en français et pour la formation de personnel francophone, etc., est encore très vivante. Ç'a été une bataille—il n'y a pas d'autre façon de le décrire—que les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes ont gagnée. En grosse partie, ç'a été parce qu'on avait ce symbole rassembleur-là qui est notre drapeau franco-ontarien.

C'est sûr qu'il y en a eu bien d'autres. Les collèges francophones : le Collège Boréal à Sudbury; le Collège des Grands Lacs, qui n'est plus là; le collège francophone à Ottawa. On a eu bien d'autres occasions, mais plus récemment, tout le monde va se souvenir du mois d'octobre 2018, lorsque M. Vic Fedeli, qui était notre ministre des Finances dans le temps, avait annoncé que le bureau du commissaire aux services en français ferait et que notre rêve d'une université francophone pour et par les francophones à la grandeur de la province venait d'être jeté à la poubelle. Les sentiments de revendication dans la province ont été instantanés; ç'a éclaté à la grandeur de la province. Peu importe où tu étais, les drapeaux franco-ontariens sont sortis partout encore. C'était le temps de défendre nos petits acquis.

Les démonstrations du 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2018 sont des démonstrations—j'avais les statistiques, puis là je les ai oubliées et Guy n'est pas là pour me les ramener. Mais je vous dirais que plus de 50—53, je pense—communautés ont fait des rassemblements. C'était des dizaines de milliers de personnes qui ont fait ce grand rassemblement à la grandeur de la province pour dire au gouvernement : « On ne le prend pas. »

Ç'a donné fruit, mais les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes ne sont toujours pas satisfaits. Le bureau des services en français n'existe plus. Ils ont gardé le titre, mais l'ont mis sous la tutelle de l'ombudsman. Je n'ai rien contre le Bureau de l'ombudsman—ils font du bon travail—mais ce n'est pas ce dont nous avons besoin comme Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. De nous dire que c'est un bureau de dernier ressort, que tu dois avoir passé au travers de toutes les étapes, de t'être fait dire non à toutes les étapes pour venir à bout de faire une plainte au bureau des services en français de l'ombudsman, ça ne marche pas.

Dans le processus—pour te faire dire non à chaque étape, les chances que tu sois capable de faire ça en français, c'est zéro. Je vous garantis qu'il va y avoir une des étapes à un moment donné où il n'y aura pas un chat là qui va parler français, qu'ils ne seront pas intéressés à offrir des services en français, puis là tu ne seras pas capable de montrer à l'ombudsman qu'on t'a dit non parce qu'il n'y a personne qui va te répondre. Ça ne marche pas, cette affaire-là.

Je n'ai rien contre Kelly Burke; elle fait une bonne job pour l'ombudsman, mais ce n'est pas de ça dont on a

besoin. Ce dont on a besoin, c'est d'un commissaire aux services en français, d'un commissaire qui, quand il se passe quelque chose, tu prends le téléphone, tu appelles le bureau du commissaire—puis tu n'as pas besoin de t'être fait dire non par 12 étapes—et tu fais juste leur dire : « Écoute, j'ai appelé le 911 parce que mon enfant ne filait vraiment pas, et je n'ai pas eu mes services en français. » Il n'attend pas 12 étapes : le commissaire aux services en français—c'était François Boileau dans le temps—s'en mêle immédiatement pour s'assurer que tu aies tes services.

Même chose, je me souviens du rapport qu'il a fait pour les enfants avec la CAS, la société de l'aide à l'enfance. Des enfants francophones de deux ans, trois ans et quatre ans étaient placés dans des familles anglophones. Penses-tu vraiment qu'un enfant de trois ans va prendre le téléphone pour appeler l'ombudsman pour lui dire : « Écoute, moi j'ai trois ans et j'aimerais ça continuer de parler français » ? Bien voyons donc : non. Il n'y a personne qui pense que ça va se passer comme ça. C'est pour ça qu'on avait un commissaire. Quand le commissaire a vu que ça, ça arrivait, il a pris les devants et s'est assuré que les services d'aide à l'enfance doivent respecter la langue des enfants même s'ils ont juste deux, ou trois, ou quatre ans, et qu'ils commencent à peine à parler. Ça, on a tout perdu ça quand ils ont fermé le bureau du commissaire et ont nous donné un nom de commissaire aux services en français dans le Bureau de l'ombudsman. Ce n'est plus la même chose.

#### 1450

Là je vois que je vais manquer de temps, donc je vais passer tout de suite à l'université. L'université : premièrement, quand la ministre aux services en français nous dit : « la première université pour et par les francophones », bien, je ne veux pas m'astiner, là, mais on a l'Université de Hearst. L'Université de Hearst c'est une université pour et par les francophones, qui existe déjà pour la région de Hearst.

Ce qu'on voulait avec l'Université de l'Ontario français c'était une université pour et par tous les francophones de l'Ontario. Ce qu'on voulait, ce n'était pas juste à Toronto; c'était pour que, partout en Ontario, si tu es francophone dans le Nord-Est, dans le Nord-Ouest, à Windsor, à Ottawa—ça ne dérange pas où est-ce que tu étais—si tu voulais aller à l'université en Français, tu aurais eu l'opportunité de le faire dans une université pour et par les francophones.

Ce n'est pas ça qu'on a eu, mais là où ça devient encore plus intéressant, madame la Présidente, c'est qu'il faut dire merci au gouvernement. Merci de quoi? Merci d'avoir accepté, après des mois de discussion, l'argent du fédéral à 100 % pour les trois prochaines années. Tout le monde a bien compris ça, là ? On doit dire merci au gouvernement de M. Ford pour avoir accepté l'argent du fédéral pour financer à 100 % l'Université de l'Ontario français pour les prochaines trois années. Donc, quand ils nous disent : « Le gouvernement de M. Ford a mis en place »—non, non, non, il a fallu convaincre le gouvernement de M. Ford de laisser le gouvernement fédéral investir dans l'Ontario, dans l'Université de l'Ontario français. C'est tout ce qu'on a eu.

On leur dit merci d'avoir accepté l'argent après des mois de délais. C'est le merci qu'on leur donne, parce qu'ils n'ont pas financé l'Université de l'Ontario français. Il n'y a pas un sou du gouvernement provincial qui est allé à l'Université de l'Ontario français ou qui y ira dans les prochaines années. C'est tout de l'argent du fédéral.

Tu sais, là, il y a comme des nuances là-dedans qui démontrent que tu peux parler, comme le projet de loi est en train de le faire—le projet de loi est en train de montrer un petit geste pour dire merci aux francophones, mais il faut faire la part des choses. Tu parles par ton langage, mais tu parles par tes gestes également. Des gestes concrets du gouvernement provincial, en ce moment, envers les francophones, qui sont positifs, il y en a eu très peu.

Je reviens à mon drapeau franco-ontarien. Le drapeau franco-ontarien, on a décidé, la communauté francophone, poussée par l'Association des communautés franco-ontariennes, de faire des monuments à la francophonie. Moi, j'en ai deux. C'est vraiment dans le comté de Sudbury, mais suffisamment proche de mon comté que je les aime beaucoup.

Il y en a un au collège du Sacré-Coeur. Qu'est-ce que c'est, un monument à la francophonie? C'est un immense de gros drapeau. C'est un drapeau franco-ontarien, exactement comme celui-là, qui a trois mètres de hauteur par neuf mètres de long. En pieds, je ne sais pas comment long que c'est, mais c'est immense, madame la Présidente.

Je me souviendrais toujours, lorsque j'étais au collège du Sacré-Coeur à Sudbury, lorsqu'on a levé pour la première fois le monument de la francophonie, cet immense de gros drapeau. C'était une journée d'été où il faisait chaud à mourir et on était au gros soleil à côté du mât de drapeau. Ils ont monté le drapeau et juste comme le drapeau arrivait au sommet du mât, un petit vent, une petite brise d'été est arrivée et le drapeau s'est déployé dans toute sa grandeur. C'était phénoménal. C'était vraiment, vraiment quelque chose, parce que quand ils l'ont monté, le drapeau, il était pas mal déprimé parce qu'il faisait chaud, il n'y avait pas de vent, il n'y avait rien. Il était comme collé au poteau. Et lorsqu'il était arrivé mât, le petit vent est arrivé. Tout le monde, on a cette photo gigantesque de ce gigantesque drapeau qui flottait dans le vent au collège du Sacré-Coeur. C'était de tout beauté.

*Une voix.*

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Oui, il a pris sa place. C'est bien dit. C'est bien dit.

On en a un deuxième qui est sur le terrain du Collège Boréal—même chose, super beau.

Donc, je vois qu'il ne me reste pas longtemps. Je veux remercier la députée de Mississauga-Centre. C'est un petit geste important. Tous les gestes qui nous permettent de parler français à l'Assemblée législative, c'est quelque chose que, du côté des néo-démocrates, on apprécie. On apprécie les petits gestes qui sont faits, mais on continue d'espérer des gestes beaucoup plus significatifs, comme le retour de notre commissaire aux services en français, comme une Université de l'Ontario français qui serait pour et par tous les francophones de l'Ontario, comme un

service 911 qui pourrait nous offrir des services en français lorsque tu es dans une région désignée, mais je vous dirais que j'aimerais encore plus que tout l'Ontario soit une région désignée au travers d'une mise à jour de la Loi sur les services en français.

Il y a des dossiers importants qui ont besoin d'être travaillés, qui sont de la responsabilité du gouvernement de l'Ontario, qui ont besoin d'être faits. Mais dans l'entretemps, on va dire merci pour tous les petits gestes.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Merci, madame la Présidente. J'avoue que j'apprécie beaucoup la récapitulation historique que suscite ce projet de loi. Je vais partager mon temps avec le député d'Ottawa-Sud.

Alors, il me fait plaisir de me lever en chambre aujourd'hui pour appuyer le projet de loi 182, Loi de 2020 modifiant la Loi sur l'emblème franco-ontarien, qui consacre le drapeau franco-ontarien comme l'emblème officiel de la communauté franco-ontarienne. Ça me fait d'autant plus plaisir de pouvoir m'adresser à la Chambre en français aujourd'hui.

Les Franco-Ontariens ont à la fois une histoire profonde et une population dynamique et en croissance en Ontario. Ce drapeau représente beaucoup de choses. Il représente une longue histoire et l'importance des Franco-Ontariens, la forte identité culturelle des Franco-Ontariens, et c'est un symbole accueillant pour les francophones du monde entier qui voient qu'il y a une place pour eux en Ontario.

Notre drapeau, qui a été adopté officieusement le 25 septembre 1975 et officiellement le 29 juin 2001 par cette assemblée, passe maintenant un autre jalon—celui d'appartenir non seulement au patrimoine des Franco-Ontariens, mais de la province en entier.

Aujourd'hui, les Franco-Ontariens viennent de partout dans le monde et plusieurs choisissent de s'installer à Ottawa–Vanier, où les populations francophones d'Afrique et des Caraïbes, entre autres, ont choisi de s'installer dans la communauté francophone dynamique et croissante d'Ottawa–Vanier, la circonscription où se trouve le fameux Hôpital Montfort, un hôpital qui est tellement apprécié, et où sont nés mes quatre enfants.

Je suis fière de mes racines francophones et de pouvoir vivre en français avec ma famille au sein de ma communauté. Cependant, il faut aussi reconnaître que ce drapeau est aussi un symbole qu'il reste encore beaucoup de travail à faire pour réaliser pleinement l'égalité des services gouvernementaux pour les Franco-Ontariens.

Les Franco-Ontariens font face à des difficultés partout dans la province pour accéder à l'éducation, aux soins de santé, à la justice et à d'autres services gouvernementaux en français. Il ne devrait y avoir aucune différence dans la qualité de ces services fournis dans l'une ou l'autre des langues officielles. La fourniture de tels services ne peut dépendre de sa commodité pour notre gouvernement. Depuis la Constitution de 1867, protéger les communautés linguistiques minoritaires et permettre aux francophones de tout le pays d'avoir accès aux services nécessaires pour

bâtir des communautés francophones dynamiques fait partie intégrante du tissu du Canada et de l'Ontario.

Nous ne respectons pas ces obligations lorsque les parents francophones n'ont pas accès à des écoles bien financées et de qualité pour leurs enfants, lorsque les francophones ne peuvent pas accéder aux services d'aide juridique en français et quand, même dans cette Chambre, nous ne publions pas de règlements en français.

Ce drapeau représente à la fois l'histoire et le dynamisme des communautés francophones de la province, et représente également tout le travail qu'il nous reste à faire pour nous assurer que nous tenons la promesse d'un Ontario où les francophones obtiennent un accès complet et égal aux les services gouvernementaux dans la langue officielle de leur choix. Nous avons besoin d'une modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français.

**1500**

This flag represents both the history and vibrancy of francophone communities across the province and also represents how much work we still need to do to ensure that we are living up to the promise of an Ontario where francophones achieve full and equal access to government services in the official language of their choice.

Nous sommes, nous serons.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The member for Ottawa South.

**M. John Fraser:** Je suis fier de parler aujourd'hui à propos de ce projet de loi, et je veux remercier la députée de Mississauga-Centre d'avoir présenté ce projet de loi.

Le drapeau et l'emblème sont des symboles de la lutte et de la persévérance de la communauté franco-ontarienne. Ils sont très importants, et il est si important de reconnaître tous ceux et celles qui contribuent à faire de l'Ontario un endroit si extraordinaire.

Il y a 612 000 francophones qui habitent en Ontario—maintenant la plus grande communauté francophone du Canada à l'extérieur du Québec. Nous devons en être fiers.

Notre parti travaille fort pour la communauté franco-ontarienne, pour avancer et établir les droits linguistiques dans le cas des services gouvernementaux, des soins de santé, de l'éducation et tous les secteurs publics en Ontario. Nous avons sauvé l'Hôpital Montfort et doublé sa taille.

En 2010, mon ancienne collègue Madeleine Meilleur a joué un rôle décisif dans la proclamation officielle du 25 septembre comme la journée franco-ontarienne. Ce geste a été fait en souvenir de la première levée du drapeau franco-ontarien dans notre province, en 1975.

Notre parti a créé le commissaire indépendant aux services en français, et j'encourage le gouvernement à rétablir ce commissariat indépendant.

Reconnaissant que le drapeau est important—plus important encore est qu'il y a encore du travail à faire pour améliorer des services en français : les soins de santé, l'éducation—les services dont nous dépendons tous. Le gouvernement commence par aller dans la mauvaise direction. Vous avez beaucoup de travail à faire.

Pour aujourd'hui, avec ce projet de loi, nous reconnaissons les contributions importantes de la

communauté franco-ontarienne à l'économie et la société de l'Ontario. Aujourd'hui, nous sommes tous d'accord sur la reconnaissance de l'emblème et du drapeau franco-ontarien comme symbole officiel en Ontario.

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

**M. John Vanthof:** Je vais essayer de parler un peu de français pour commencer, mais tous mes amis disent que quand je parle en français, même les Anglais peuvent comprendre. Mais j'ai le privilège d'avoir grandi près d'un village qui était 100 % francophone. C'est à cause de ça que je pense souvent comme un francophone.

Après ça, je vais continuer en anglais, parce que je n'ai pas de la capacité de dire les détails que je dois dire.

We moved from southern Ontario in 1971 from a Dutch community—and I'm very proud of my Dutch heritage—to a francophone area, and I'm very privileged to have been raised close to francophones. When I go back to see my family, I know my outlook is different. I'm quicker to fight, quicker to anger, quicker to laugh, and I'm more fiery. Francophones, they say sometimes they have fire in their blood; they do. And why they have that, and why I'm so proud that sometimes I feel it too, is because they have had to fight every step of the way for their rightful place in this province and in this country.

If I remember, I was asking Premier Ford a question, and he said, "Even though there is only 3% francophone"—même si—5%, they're a founding people. You really don't truly understand that, as an anglophone, unless you live close to a francophone community. I am incredibly privileged.

My mentor and the only real reason that I am standing here today is Albert Gauthier. One of the proudest moments in my life is when I helped nominate him for l'Ordre de la Pléiade. He taught me how to fight.

Something that's been mentioned here, and I will close with that, is that in a part of my riding, in Sturgeon Falls, in 1971, they had to fight for a French high school—la crise de Sturgeon Falls. That fight is still there, and that fight was reignited by this government when they cancelled the French university and the French-language commissioner. That fight is still there.

I will be proud to vote in favour of this. It's a symbol. The francophone flag is a worthy symbol, but the francophone community knows that they need more than symbols from our government. They will continue to fight, and I will continue to support them. I have never been so proud to say, nous sommes, nous serons.

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

**M. Michael Mantha:** C'est avec grand plaisir que je prends ma position de la part des gens que je représente de la région d'Algoma-Manitoulin, surtout la communauté francophone.

Je veux dire bonjour à tout le monde au lac Cinder aujourd'hui. Je sais que vous êtes en train de vous amuser au parc. J'ai tout le temps le plaisir de prendre ma petite marche vous rencontrer sur le camp, sur le bord de la plage, dans nos kayaks, où on partage beaucoup de

sourires, des histoires francophones, parce que le parc Cinder, à Elliot Lake, c'est un club, un parc qui a été établi—une des conditions pour entrer là c'est que soit toi ou ton partenaire soit capable de parler en français. Ça encourage la culture, on continue à parler la langue, et puis, pendant l'été, quand on est là, on a tout le temps des soirées-thème. Cet été c'était un petit peu différent, mais on a eu de belles soirées, on a eu notre parade de Noël, on a eu notre parade du Jour du Canada. Encore, c'est tout le temps un plaisir.

Je veux dire un bon salut à Ghislaine Desjardins. Ghislaine tu es un ange, tu es une personne que j'admire, surtout quand on vient à défendre la langue francophone. Tu es toujours là pour les gens de la communauté et puis, franchement, pour les jeunes du Nord. C'est tout le temps un plaisir de m'asseoir avec toi et puis d'avoir des discussions, en effet, des objectifs et puis comment on veut avancer l'agenda pour les gens qui parlent français dans le nord de l'Ontario.

On est en train de parler d'un projet de loi qui est franchement symbolique, et puis je suis un petit peu frustré. Je vais essayer de garder mes commentaires un peu sur le bord positif, mais ceci c'est vraiment un petit geste qu'on offre à la communauté francophone quand vraiment on pourrait parler de beaucoup plus. On pourrait parler de comment on retourne les services au commissaire en français, comment on peut vraiment—pourquoi a-t-il fallu qu'on attende une entente à la dernière minute avec le gouvernement fédéral qui sont venus à la table où on a vraiment poussé la responsabilité de la province à établir une université francophone. Il y a tellement d'autres choses dont on pourrait parler, mais non, on va parler aujourd'hui d'un symbole qui est aussi important mais qui est vraiment symbolique.

**1510**

Je veux dire un petit peu de la frustration que j'ai « expérimentée » avant que je devienne un politicien. J'ai travaillé comme un coordinateur d'un centre d'action. Mon rôle était de retourner des gens dans des emplois. Comme coordinateur du centre, moi aussi, une des raisons pour lesquelles je suis politicien aujourd'hui c'est à cause de ce qui est arrivé à travers notre économie et puis l'impact qu'on a eu sur les décisions politiques qui ont été faites ou pas faites qui ont eu un impact négatif sur l'industrie forestière. Je me suis trouvé dans une mise à pied moi-même. J'avais deux enfants, et puis je n'avais plus de job.

Mon rôle c'était de trouver des emplois. Dans ce rôle-là, c'est là où j'ai vraiment pogné le goût d'aider les gens. Dans mon rôle comme coordinateur, non pas que je cherchais aussi pour trouver des emplois pour les mères et puis les pères de la communauté, mais des services. Les services non pas pour maman puis papa, parce que quand tu te trouves dans une mise à pied, tu as besoin des soins de santé, tu as besoin des soins mentaux, tu as besoin des soins pour les gens qui font les décisions vers l'alcool et puis la drogue. Ça fait que tu as besoin de ces services-là.

Savez-vous ce que j'ai découvert, madame la Présidente? Ces services-là, il n'y en a pas dans le Nord.

Il n'y en a pas. Puis ceux qu'on a de disponibles pour qu'on aille dans d'autres provinces ou dans d'autres régions, les coûts pour emporter ces services-là à la région sont super dispendieux. L'argent est alloué à certaines agences dans la région, mais tu ne peux pas—ils sont alloués comme un 0,5 ou un 0,25, ce qui veut dire que l'hôpital de la région peut engager quelqu'un pour quatre heures, mais il faut qu'il voyage de Sault Ste. Marie pour aller à une communauté comme Dubreuilville pour rendre les services à cette communauté-là. Qui va s'embaucher pour une période de quatre heures par semaine pour rendre les services de même?

Ça, ce sont les problèmes qu'on avait dans le Nord. Pour emporter un service pour des enfants, pour des soins pour se faire servir dans leur langue, en anglais la communauté attendait entre trois et six mois. Pour donner les mêmes services à un enfant qui était exclusivement francophone, qui n'était pas capable de recevoir ces services en anglais, c'était de 18 à 36 mois. C'est ça, la différence.

Ça fait que je me lève aujourd'hui, puis j'ai beaucoup plus d'exemples que ça. C'est de la frustration que beaucoup de gens francophones « expérimentent » dans toute leur vie. Puis on ne demande pas plus, mais c'est certain qu'on ne va pas accepter rien de moins qu'on « déserte » comme aucun Ontarien reçoit dans cette province.

Je veux encore finir sur une note positive. On va la prendre, notre place. Puis, depuis que je suis devenu politicien, je n'ai jamais été aussi fier d'être un francophone. Quand les gens viennent me voir et puis qu'on peut se parler dans notre langue, c'est une des grosses raisons pour lesquelles je me trouve dans mon siège comme représentant des communautés d'Algoma-Manitoulin. C'est parce que je peux communiquer avec ma communauté en français. C'est un privilège, et c'est de quoi que j'ai tout le temps tenu à cœur.

C'est un petit geste symbolique qu'on est en train de faire aujourd'hui. N'oubliez pas que le gros objectif c'est de rendre les services à tous les gens dans cette province, peu importe la langue que tu parles.

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

**M. Jamie West:** Aujourd'hui je partage mon temps avec le député de Windsor-Tecumseh.

Je m'excuse pour les autres députés qui parlent français, qui sont bilingues, parce qu'aujourd'hui je vais faire un peu de mon discours en français.

**M. Gilles Bisson:** Tu parles très bien.

**M. Jamie West:** Merci.

Avant l'élection dernière, j'ai fait une blague avec les autres quand j'ai dit : « Je comprends un peu et je parle even less ». Maintenant, je comprends un peu et je parle comme un bébé. Mais c'est correct parce qu'aujourd'hui je cherche pour les mots, je fais des erreurs grammaticales et les autres choses, mais dans ma ville, il y a d'autres qui parlent français seulement. Il y a d'autres qui cherchent pour les mots parce qu'ils parlent français et aujourd'hui, c'est moi qui fait des erreurs.

Aujourd'hui, je fais un discours sur un emblème—je ne sais pas le mot « based »—sur le drapeau franco-ontarien. Ça, c'est un point de fierté de ma ville, et moi aussi, parce que ce drapeau franco-ontarien a été créé dans ma ville, créé par Gaétan Gervais et Michel Dupuis. C'est très important, ce drapeau. Symbolically, it's a step in the right direction, but who knew it wasn't a symbol?

Aujourd'hui, je porte un drapeau franco-ontarien sur ma veste, ici. Il y a un drapeau franco-ontarien dans mon bureau et dans les bureaux de tous mes collègues, je pense. Il y a Notre Place à côté de cet immeuble ici à Toronto, avec le drapeau franco-ontarien, avec les symboles franco-ontariens.

It's good, I guess, that we're doing it today. A symbolic step is better than what we have done in the past, because symbols are important. It's better than the symbol that the Conservatives made when not one word of the throne speech was in French—not a “bonjour” at the start, not a “merci” at the end; not one word. Ils ne disent pas un mot en français dans le discours du trône. That's a symbol.

It's better than when the Conservative government cancelled the French-language university. Today they want to pick and choose and say, “We brought it back.” You are literally riding on the coattails of the federal government that is footing the entire bill. You don't get credit for that.

It's better than when the Conservative government cancelled the French Language Services Commissioner—because that's symbolic.

It's better than the current funding model the provincial government has for French organizations like the ACFO.

I had a meeting with Joanne Gervais, who is the sister of Gaétan, who made this flag. I talked to her about funding. She said we need a better funding model for the province. In the current funding model, most of the funding that we can count on comes from the federal government—again, the province riding on the coattails. All the provincial funding they get is grant-based or project-based. Those funding models don't include money for administration or rent or supplies, and they end when the project ends. That creates uncertainty. They always have to reapply.

Symbols are important. Like everybody, I went to Wikipedia to see if I had missed anything. There is a quote on Wikipedia that says, “Following the controversial cutbacks to French-language services announced by”—the Premier; we're not allowed to use names—“in 2018, governments in Quebec began to fly the Franco-Ontarian flag as a” symbol “of solidarity.” That's a symbol as well, Speaker.

J'ai appris le français. Le français est plus que la langue. C'est aussi la culture. C'est aussi les organisations. C'est aussi les centres communautaires. C'est aussi les écoles.

L'année passé, je suis allé à Jonquière au Québec pour apprendre le français. Dans mes cours, j'ai fait des conversations avec ma professeure pour pratiquer parler en français. Toujours, j'oubliais la phrase « Je me souviens ».

I kept forgetting the phrase “Je me souviens,” which is interesting, because translated, it means “I remember.”

What's even more interesting is in Quebec, every licence plate on the back has "Je me souviens," and I kept forgetting to say this. I keep having to ask, « J'oublie les mots. C'est quoi le mot pour "I remember" »

Je me souviens. Ils se souviennent aussi. They remember. Ils se souviennent, c'est un bon geste symbolique mais c'est une carotte en plastique. Ça ne coûte rien. It costs nothing.

Ils se souviennent aussi des autres gestes symboliques : The underfunding and precarious funding of French organizations like ACFO.

1520

Ils se souviennent aussi des coupes des conservateurs : when you cancelled the new French-language university, and when you cancelled the French-language commissioner.

Et je me souviens aussi. Nous sommes; nous serons.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** I recognize the member for Timmins on a point of order.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I was talking to the government House leader just a few minutes ago. I have a meeting I have to go to, and I would appreciate if we can have unanimous consent to stand down my lead which I started on motion number 89 when that debate next gets called.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The member for Timmins is seeking unanimous consent to stand down his lead on motion 89. Is it the pleasure of the House? Okay. Carried.

The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Merci, madame la Présidente. Our flags are symbolic of our pride, and I'm honoured to stand here today and say how proud I am to represent a part of Ontario that takes great pride in our francophone history, and I thank the member for Mississauga Centre for giving me this opportunity.

The French were the first of the colonizing powers to recognize the importance of the Detroit River, not only for settlement purposes but also for its strategic military possibilities. Yes, Étienne Brûlé was the first European who journeyed beyond the St. Lawrence River, and then, three years later, he became a guide for Samuel de Champlain, who was exploring Ontario more than 400 years ago, in 1613.

Early French explorers came up through the St. Lawrence River system to get to the Great Lakes on the way to the Mississippi River. French priests were spreading the word and scouting for converts by canoe as far back as 1669. In 1679, La Salle sailed his ship, the Griffon, past our shores. In 1701, Cadillac established Fort Pontchartrain across the river in what is now Detroit.

Just down river, between today's LaSalle and Amherstburg, the French established a colony at Petite Côte in 1749, recognized as the oldest continuous European settlement in all of Ontario. I know my friend from Timmins says that it was Moose Factory, but most historians say the continuous settlement was in Petite Côte.

This was before there was a Canada and before there was a United States of America. The early French settlers mixed and mingled with the First Nations people—the Wyandot, the Huron, the Odawa and the Potawatomi.

The Detroit River became an international boundary in 1783. A French trading house, known now as the Duff-Baby House, was built in 1792. It still stands today as a cultural museum and is considered to be the oldest surviving structure in all of Ontario. Of course, it's in the middle of your riding, Speaker. Its walls could tell tales of visitors and guests such as General Brock, Chief Tecumseh, and American General William Henry Harrison, during the war of 1812, who later served as America's ninth president.

Canada's second Prime Minister, a stonemason from Sarnia, Alexander Mackenzie, stayed at the Duff-Baby House, as did Henry Bibb, a fugitive slave who started Canada's first Afro-Canadian newspaper. There's irony here, as the Baby family were also slave owners.

It's ironic as well that Sandwich and the Windsor area became a destination and an established Black settlement for thousands of freed and fugitive slaves seeking refuge from the slavery in the United States. Sandwich First Baptist Church—again in your riding—opened its doors in 1851 and still serves our Black communities to this day.

The French in those early days laid out their settlement maps in long, thin ribbons of land stretching inland from the Detroit River. These roads and boundaries still stand today—street names such as Ouellette, Pelissier, Lauzon, Pillette and many, many more.

We in my part of the province are very proud of our French history and heritage. We still have thousands of families who speak French in their kitchens or front rooms and, of course, their bedrooms.

CBC/Radio-Canada has a radio station and a TV presence in Windsor, serving the great southwest. I know the member for Ottawa West–Nepean knows that well. His cousin Charles Lévesque is one of the radio hosts there. Our friend Lisette Leboeuf has been there even longer than Charles. I think Charles has been there for at least 20 years. We celebrate with hundreds of French students with a flag-raising at city hall every year, and the last time we did that, Charles was the emcee for that event.

Many of our newcomers to our very diverse region come from countries where French is a common language. Our French history is rich and runs deep within our cultural mosaic. By 1797, according to historians, the British purchased the lands that now form part of Windsor from the Huron for about 300 pounds' worth of supplies. Old Sandwich Town in west Windsor was established in 1797 and remains one of the oldest, most historically significant settlements in the province.

The francophone community has made huge contributions to Ontario, but not everyone within that community feels that those contributions are appreciated as much as they should have been. I mentioned the Duff-Baby House, which is a crown jewel in Old Sandwich. The museum's digitized collections include more than 15,000 artifacts and documents that shed light on the region's francophone

past. These include documents showing the creation of Assumption, Ontario's first Catholic parish, in 1767, and the riot of 1917 sparked by regulation 17, which banned French-language education in Ontario beyond grade 2. Regulation 17 was introduced by Conservative Premier James P. Whitney in 1917 and repealed after fierce, continuous opposition by a Howard Ferguson Conservative government in 1927.

In closing, Speaker, this motion is symbolic but important, and I congratulate the member from Mississauga Centre for placing it in front of us this afternoon. To borrow a phrase, when it comes to the francophone presence in Ontario, we've come a long way, but we have a long, long way to go.

Merci, madame la Présidente.

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

Ms. Kusendova has moved third reading of Bill 182, An Act to amend the Franco-Ontarian Emblem Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It's carried.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

#### NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 17, 2020, on the motion regarding certain provisions of the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, which have not yet come into force, pursuant to clause 10.1(2)(b) of the Legislation Act, 2006.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Further debate? The member for Nickel Belt.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Thank you, Speaker. I understand that my House leader, the member for Timmins, will be finishing up his lead, but you have me in between. So here we go.

I am quite pleased to talk today about the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. I have a number of not-for-profit associations in my riding. While we were all in confinement in our homes and our offices, when there was nobody else there, I took that opportunity to phone them up. The first round of phone calls that I made were to my Legions. I knew that many Legions had a number of elderly people as their members. They had been ordered closed through the pandemic. Many of them own their buildings, so I was a little bit worried as to how they were coping.

1530

The first one that I called was the Falconbridge Legion, Branch 336. I talked to Stuart, their president. The first one, things were pretty good. The Legion in Falconbridge has a huge hall. The hall can really welcome up to 270 people. Of course, usually they would have been booked solid with everything from weddings to parties of all kinds, birthday parties etc. Well, all of this had gone, but Glencore, which a lot of people would know as the old Falconbridge mine, was kind to them, and they kept renting their hall, although they could not put 270 people in because of COVID-19.

Glencore is a mining corporation, and mining was allowed to continue during the pandemic. They would set up tables so they were able to sit 32 to 36 people, maintaining the two-metre distancing and all of this, and so Glencore used their hall. I'm not sure if they really needed to rent a hall, but I'm quite happy that they did because it allowed this not-for-profit Legion to have a little bit of money coming in.

The Legion in Falconbridge is very active. Every Friday night they would pack the hall—as I said, 270 people, often twice that amount for two sittings of their renowned fish fry. If you're ever in my area on a Friday night, Falconbridge Legion is the place to go to get a good fish fry and to talk to a lot of people. Most of their revenue comes from that activity. Well, that had now gone down to zero. But, as I said, because mining was allowed to continue, because Glencore rented from them, they were not too bad. But they still knew that a lot of people needed the socialization and all of this that was not happening.

The second one that I called was the Lockerby Legion. I talked to Mary, who was the president at the time—they just had the switch. At the Lockerby Legion, they had zero revenue coming in, but they were looking at debts of \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month for heat and insurance and hydro and the basics that you had to pay. Again, the Lockerby Legion is very close to Sudbury. They are a very busy Legion. They have a bar. They have a nice hall that has been renovated and that is used extensively by the community. All of a sudden, their revenue went down to zero. Their hall capacity is about 120 people, or 90 people if you sit for a meal, and it went to zero.

They were looking for any programs that were coming from the provincial government to help them keep the lights on. We were able to find very little, but they did get a little bit of money to provide meals on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The demand for meals from the legionnaires and from the elderly people who support the legion went through the roof—way more than they had money to do, which means that they had to limit, and they felt pretty bad about this.

While I'm talking about the Lockerby Legion, I want to say a huge thank you for the beautiful service they did on Saturday for Vic Larsen. Victor was a World War II veteran, a man I knew very well, and he was a member of the Lockerby Legion. Unfortunately, he passed at 95 years of age. With COVID-19 restrictions and all, the Lockerby Legion organized to have a proper military service done for Mr. Larsen on Saturday with the honour guard and the piper and everybody two metres apart and all the tables two metres apart. It was very limited as to the number of people who were allowed in. I thank you for letting me into this very limited amount of people.

The number of World War II veterans left in Nickel Belt is going down and down. I would say that when I started as an MPP, I had maybe between 15 and 20—15 who I knew, but there were a few more I didn't know. Now, with Vic Larsen gone, I think I'm down to about six World War II veterans still living in my riding, all of them getting up in age. Sorry for the little parenthesis.

The next one I called was the Chelmsford Legion—Sharleen is the branch commander—and the same thing: They get their money from the lottery fund. They get their money from the activities that they run with the members who come. Everything they run is run by volunteers, so they did not qualify for any program for staff because they have no staff. Between utilities and insurance, it's about \$1,500 a month. They had insurance for business interruption, but their insurance company did not cover them. They still have a mortgage on the building that they own, and again, the only support that they could get from the provincial government was money to help them learn how to do fundraising. I won't repeat what they told me about what they could do with that money. This is not what they need. The Legion knows full well how to do fundraising. They have been doing fundraising. This is how they stay afloat and how they offer all of their services. They were certainly looking for more than that from the provincial government, but not much came.

I then called Michelle at the Capreol Legion. Capreol is another Legion that has a very busy fish fry. Everybody in Capreol goes out to the Legion and goes to their fish fries on Friday night.

They had to use some of the money that—they had been collecting money for a wheelchair fund. Their Legion is on two floors, so when you come in, you either have to go up a few stairs to go to the main hall or go down a set of stairs to go into the bar area, but either way, you have to use stairs. They have been trying really hard to become wheelchair accessible, and now it looks like, in order to stay open, they will have to use the \$14,000 that they had been able to save to make their building accessible just to stay afloat. Their running expenses are usually close to \$3,000 a month, and with no money coming in, it's another not-for-profit that I am worried about.

I cannot explain to you the importance of a Legion in the little communities that I represent. They are the gathering place for the entire community. It doesn't matter if you are a member of the Legion or not; we can all go there. I go there for lunch on Friday. People go there to go out on Friday night. It is at the heart of the community in Capreol, and it would be a huge loss, Speaker, if they had to close because they could not pay hydro, they could not pay insurance, they could not pay the heating bill. They are still hoping that government programs will come to their rescue.

I also talked to the Legion in Onaping Falls—they cover Onaping and Levack—and the situations are the same.

They are all Legions that have stayed open, that have continued to have a building, that have continued to be very involved in their community, mainly through people renting their halls for everything from stag and does to birthday parties, to weddings, to anything else, and people coming in to gather together for meals. With COVID-19, all of the revenue goes down to zero, and they are not too happy with this.

**1540**

Then, another group of not-for-profits that I thought I would connect with were the seniors' clubs—I have very

thriving seniors' clubs in my riding. The first one that I called was Nickel Centre. Nickel Centre serves mainly Falconbridge and a bit of Garson in the Falconbridge area of my riding. They had a little bit of GST money in the bank—that's money that they have to pay to the government—but they ended up not paying it to the government because they needed the money to—same thing; it's always the same—to pay the insurance, the hydro and the heating bills.

While they all want to keep at least one phone line so that they have phone, some of them also have a security system in place that they have to pay for. They were having a tough time. They were used to having birthday parties for all of their members. They used to be a very busy club. They have quilting going on, knitting, and a lot of different activities, and none of them could go on. So they were quite sorry about this, and they do not have a whole bunch of money in the bank, so they are very much looking towards the government to see if they could get a little bit of help.

The next club that I called s'appelle Club 50. C'est un club francophone à Chelmsford dans mon comté. Le président est M. Oliva Roy. Le Club 50, lui aussi, est un super gros club. Je ne me souviens plus combien de centaines de personnes sont membres du Club 50, mais j'y vais assez régulièrement pour des dîners, et ce n'est pas rare qu'au dîner on soit au-dessus de 120 ou 150 personnes pour un dîner, je te dirais, bien ordinaire. Ce n'est pas une fête spéciale; c'est juste le dîner du mois ou le dîner de la semaine.

C'est un club qui est très, très occupé. C'est la même chose : ils sont passés d'un club très, très occupé à un club fermé, mais quand même avec des dépenses qu'ils doivent continuer de faire. Le Club 50 est dans une meilleure position financière, mais ils aimeraient quand même demander au gouvernement des petits changements du genre—ils font un tirage 50-50, et si tu fais plus que 50 000 \$ sur ton tirage 50-50, tu dois payer des taxes. Ils demandent, pour les agences sans but lucratif, pourquoi on ne monterait pas ça à 200 000 \$ par année. L'argent qu'ils font avec leurs tirages, c'est pour le club. C'est pour s'assurer que le club soit capable de changer la fournaise, changer leur toit, soit accessible aux fauteuils roulants. De temps en temps, il faut que tu changes le plancher, etc. Ce sont des dépenses. Ils sont prêts à continuer à démontrer toutes les dépenses qu'ils font—l'argent qui entre et l'argent qui sort—mais je trouvais vraiment que c'était une bonne idée.

So, Club 50, which is a francophone seniors' club, was in a better financial position, but they were wondering why there's a limit of \$50,000 that the club can keep. If they make more than \$50,000 over the full course of a year on their draws and the 50/50, they have to start to pay taxes, and they would like the government to look for a not-for-profit agency to raise this limit maybe to \$200,000 a year. When you run a big club that has hundreds of members, that has a huge building to be able to welcome all of those members, then it doesn't take long for just the heating bill, the phone, security system and insurance to run thousands of dollars, whether you are open or not.

Il y avait le Club Amical à Hanmer qui eux aussi sont un club francophone, but I will go to the club in Azilda, and same thing: the bills will continue to come in. Il y avait les coûts de l'assurance, l'hydroélectricité, les taxes. Eux aussi sont propriétaires de leur propre building. C'est super beau. D'un côté, c'est une grande salle pour accueillir les gens avec une cuisine; de l'autre côté, c'est plus de la récréation : il y a des tables de pool, il y a des places pour jouer aux cartes etc. C'est un club, encore là, très occupé.

The Azilda club in my riding is also a very busy club. It's a francophone elderly persons' centre, and it's the same with them: They had a little bit of money put aside that would allow them to survive for a few months, but it would certainly not allow them to continue. The Azilda club has made a decision to not reopen, because they are not able to do this in a safe way. All of their members are elderly, so the expenses are continuing. There is no revenue coming in, and they are looking for help from the government so that they stay open. Again, there are hundreds of members of this club.

There are many others. I will go through the club in Skead, called the Skead Seniors Centre. Again, it's an elderly persons' centre located in Skead; the name says it all. It's usually a very active club. They do a lot of cool programming that I only see in this club, just because of who belongs and where they are. Skead is one of those there on the side of Lake Wanapitei—and I have lots of communities that are at a dead end. If you leave Falconbridge or leave the airport and you go toward Skead—well, there's only one road in and out of Skead. There's only one road in and out of Falconbridge. There's only one road in and out of Capreol. A lot of the communities I represent are communities around Sudbury where you go in and you come out on the same road. Anyway, they are the same, experiencing a decrease in revenue of about \$570 a month. They would be looking for support from the government to stay open through COVID-19.

I just thought I would put on the record what the not-for-profit organizations do in my riding and, I'm sure, throughout Ontario. They are part of the community I serve. They were forced closed due to no fault of their own, and because of the people they serve, because of the limitations of their building, some of them are really limited as to how they can reopen and how they can generate revenue again. They are turning toward the provincial government for funding that is not to teach them how to do fundraising; most of them answer to me straight out, "We already know how to do fundraising. What we need is support from the government to pay insurance, to pay hydro, to pay our telephone bill so that we make it to the other side of COVID-19."

I sure hope that the government comes out with a little bit of help for them, because it would change many of the communities that I serve for the worse, not for the better, if we were to lose all of those important not-for-profit agencies.

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

**Mr. Jamie West:** We're here to talk about the motion for the prevention of the not-for-profit act repeal. Basically, what it's going to do is to adjust certain provisions that prevent a sunset clause that is going to happen on New Year's Eve this year. When we tabled this last week—our House leader had mentioned this last week, when I was on House duty—it was tabled at 4:30 the night before, and we debated it Thursday morning, the next morning, with very little information on it. And so I reached out to non-profits in my area and I asked them what they would like to see: "We're going to be debating information about non-profits. What should the government know? What would you like to see?" I reached out to them, and these are a few of them.

**1550**

We spoke with the YMCA. We've been speaking regularly to the YMCA. Helen Francis and the rest of her team are doing an amazing job.

My colleague from Nickel Belt talked about non-profits that were shut down through no fault of their own. Whenever I say that, it feels like a jab at the government, and it's not. We were in a pandemic and many businesses and non-profits had to shut down to flatten that curve. It was a bold decision.

But the YMCA wasn't one of them. The YMCA in Sudbury is a giant building; it's a beautiful building. It has a huge pool. It has a seniors' centre attached to it. It has a gym, like most YMCAs do across the province. As you can imagine, this huge space with all this room has bills that pile up—rental bills and heating bills. The Y stayed open because the Y was a centre for the most vulnerable in our community. As more and more things go online, sometimes people with Internet forget that there are a lot of people who don't have Internet, especially the most fortunate. The YMCA became the place where people could access telephones and Internet and use the bathrooms, especially our homeless people in downtown Sudbury. It became a really important hub.

As their essential workers were going to work and looking for daycare spaces, it was the YMCA that stayed open to provide daycare to probably the highest-risk people, who were dealing with people with COVID-19 in health care. They were essential.

They did all of this boldly. I'm proud of them, and I'm proud of the work that has come out of my city of Sudbury. I'm proud of Helen's team and all the work they did. But they need help.

This is an organization that has been profitable and successful and helpful in our community for decades. And this year, because of COVID-19, they're basically taking a knee and they're bleeding cash. They've lost a ton of revenue. As you can imagine, memberships to the Y are not very high. As places to work out and go swimming are opening, the uptake is pretty small. People buying new memberships is probably limited because access to money is pretty low, with many people being laid off or trying to make ends meet on CERB. They're trying to keep going.

What they've asked for is a sector resilience grant program. The description of it is here: "A sector resilience

grant program would complement and allow us to partially offset the collapse of revenue streams due to COVID-19, while also supporting new costs related to personal protective equipment, information technology and innovative ways of delivering services while physically distanced,” with “rent and utilities.”

So imagine this giant complex that has been successful all these years paying for rent, heat and hydro and all the other stuff, making the extra effort to help the most vulnerable in our community, losing money through a lack of membership, not being able to fundraise in any substantial way because of COVID-19—the same crisis that a lot of people are facing—and making the ask, basically, for help, and knowing there are going to be these new costs. As we all reopen our offices, as members of the Legislature, we see these new costs of putting in PPE, protective screens—all these costs that are coming forward.

What I love about this is, when we had the deputations last month, Helen Francis was there and she was speaking. In the midst of this, she wasn't saying “for the Y”; she said “for all non-profits.” It goes to the character of that organization that they advocate not just themselves but for all non-profits.

I also reached out to SWEAC. People outside of Sudbury might not know the acronym. It's the Sudbury Workers Education and Advocacy Centre. I talked to Scott Florence at SWEAC, and he said, “What would be helpful is an emergency order providing good Samaritan COVID-19-related liability protection to non-profits”—so if non-profits follow all the public health guidelines, they're granted a bit of a good Samaritan act for liability. If they are doing the best they can with the information they have, then we consider them as good Samaritans, the same way we consider people providing first aid as good Samaritans.

The precedent exists. We can take, for example, the Donation of Food Act. When we donate food to the food bank—and the Greater Sudbury Food Bank has been doing an amazing job. When we donate food to them and they bring food to different organizations, including hospices, there is a Samaritan act that protects them from liability if something is wrong with the food. They do the best they can to sort, and we haven't had any issues, knock on wood, but there is a Samaritan act to protect them from liability.

I reached out as well, Speaker, to Joanne Gervais from ACFO. Joanne is the directrice générale for ACFO and she asked—I said this earlier in the other debate—for a new funding model. She said the current model is primarily federal, and even the federal model doesn't quite fit their organization very well. They apply, and they apply for different funding, but it's not specific to the importance of Franco-Ontarian language and culture. And when she applies for provincial funding, it's grant-based, it's project-based.

When you apply in those sorts of categories, those funding envelopes, you can't include the cost of administration or supplies or your rent. You can't say, “I also need this to pay for the rent.” So a big cornerstone of their

funding to make ends meet is, sort of, personal funding that they did.

As I said earlier, and as we can all imagine, imagine trying to fundraise during COVID. Imagine trying to have your regular concerts, have your regular gatherings. It's very difficult to have, and so they need funding. They need an immediate injection of funding in the short term, but they also need a change in the way we provide funding.

We just debated the Franco-Ontarian symbol. Symbolically, if we want to send a message to the Franco-Ontarian people, then let's find a new way to fund them so that it's not so precarious, so that they can count on the funding year after year. Because the work that ACFO does all across Ontario is amazing and important, not just for the Franco community, but also for our entire province. It's a cornerstone. It's something we should all be proud of.

I reached out, as well, to the Sudbury Women's Centre. We had a larger conversation with many non-profits at the Sudbury Women's Centre.

As an aside, Speaker, I'm very proud that my mom was one of the first members of the women's centre, growing up. After my dad and my mom were divorced, my mom took a lot of pride in being at the women's centre. I remember as a kid being brought there, often, for meetings, and playing in the front entranceway.

The Sudbury Women's Centre does a lot of amazing things for women, but unfortunately, one of the key things they do is help women with domestic abuse. They really need increased support for domestic violence victims. It's continuing to happen. It's difficult for them to have the role.

I worked with a woman once, Speaker, who told me her story of escaping domestic abuse. She told me about meeting a woman in Edmonton at their women's centre during grocery shopping. She was locked in her house but allowed to go out for grocery shopping for 20 minutes. She was timed exactly, and she would meet a woman there. It took months for her to set aside a little bit of money each time to escape. She talked about being on a plane at midnight with her twin boys and a garbage bag for a suitcase.

That's the reality for many women, unfortunately. We don't condone it, but that is the reality, and as legislators we need to acknowledge this. We need to acknowledge that during COVID-19, when we say that you need to self-isolate for 14 days in your home and you live with an abuser, that's terrifying. When we say that people have to stay home, it's terrifying. When we talk about the high cost of rent, it's not just affordability; it's the fact that many women who live with their abuser can't escape because they can't afford rent and they can't leave. We need those resources.

Unfortunately, Speaker, the rates have been increasing. Domestic abuse or frustration, the inability to get along for these partners, when you're trapped together in a room and you're isolated and you're worried about finances—just like any relationship, things become more stressful, and when the outcome is physical abuse, it's dangerous.

To summarize, though, it comes down to four points. The first one, and the member from Nickel Belt

summarized it really well, is that the bills continue. No matter what we do, the bills continue to pile up—rent or heat or hydro. Their expenses continue to come in, but the revenue isn't coming in the same way it did. That is no different for non-profits or small businesses or large businesses. Anyone who was forced to shut down or slow down is really having a difficult time, but especially non-profits, because they're not trying to make a profit. They're trying to make ends meet. They're trying to pay for the services. Normally that involves some public fundraising, which really is hampered due to COVID-19.

The second one is, across the board—and I talked about the Sudbury Food Bank—there's a very high demand for food and financial services. We know from the report that was released last year—and I'm talking about the fiscal year before COVID-19—that more people than ever who work full-time are accessing food banks, and that was before CERB, that was before a lot of people lost their jobs or their jobs were put on pause as we tried to figure out how to kick-start the economy again. So we need food.

**1600**

We also need financial support, not just for businesses, but for families. Many of them are feeling increasingly stressed out as conversations at the federal level start talking about the end of CERB and the transition to EI. As we've said many times here as New Democrats, the idea that somebody who is working and lost their job absolutely needs a minimum of \$2,000, but people who are on OW or ODSF are okay with \$1,000 or less—it's terrifying to think that in my riding I'm not sure where you can find rent for less than \$800. So how do you go for a month on \$200 worth of food, when you count the other bills you'd have to pay just to heat the place, especially in the winter in Sudbury? It becomes very expensive, and we can't pretend that \$2,000 is good for everyone but the people who are less fortunate than us. We have to have a serious conversation about a livable wage or fixing OW and ODSF to truly reflect the costs of the communities where you live.

The last two I've tucked away over here. Non-profit organizations do amazing and necessary work for the most vulnerable people in our communities. Many of us have stood up during members' statements to talk about the importance of non-profits and the amazing work they do—and every one of those is sincere—but they really need more funding to recuperate the losses incurred during COVID-19. Many of these organizations continue through COVID-19 to support the most vulnerable, and if they fold, I don't know what we'll do to replace them. The work they do is essential. So if they fold—and I don't mean take a knee—and can't get back up again, I'm not sure how we recover as a community to fill those gaps that they've been filling in for us.

Finally, Speaker, most funding offered by our provincial government—like I mentioned, with ACFO—were limited grants or project-based funding. The non-profits really need help covering base funding. I talked about rent and hydro, but I also want to underscore the importance that we're going to have purchasing PPE or, with social

distancing, even with signage, which seems maybe insignificant to many of us—you just hit “print.” Signage becomes costly, and markers on the ground, Plexiglas and masks.

I'm glad we're talking about non-profits, and I'm glad we're going to adjust this act, but I urge the government—just like during the consultations, we all listened intently to what the deputations were saying, I'm just scratching the tip of the iceberg with ACFO, SWEAC and the YMCA.

The member who spoke ahead of me talked about many of our Legions. They're really struggling, and they're really important.

These are communities and organizations that we all believe in as legislators. I'm urging the government again to listen with intent, listen with open ears and do the right thing, the way they did the right thing back in March by asking these organizations to slow down or stop—or for people to stop gathering in large places—and help them with an infusion of cash in the short term and a plan to fund them in the long term.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the people I represent in London West to participate in this debate on the motion dealing with the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. I want to start out by saying that I think that it is a great thing that we are actually debating legislation that's related to not-for-profit corporations in this province. Unfortunately, what we have seen during this pandemic is that not-for-profit corporations are treated as an add-on to other programs that are specifically targeted—many to small businesses and other kinds of organizations. And certainly non-profits do share many of the same challenges that small businesses face in terms of PPE, in terms of paying the rent, in terms of the need to defer some of those monthly payments and fees that are payable to the government. The fact that not-for-profit corporations have been included in some of those measures is certainly welcome.

However, what we have yet to see from this government are measures that are specifically targeted at the not-for-profit sector, that recognize the unique role that not-for-profits play and the kind of structures that they operate within.

I want to start my remarks by giving a shout-out to an organization that was built in London and has really become a model across not just the province, but across the country, as a networking hub for not-for-profit organizations to support the vital work that those organizations do. That organization in my community is called Pillar. Pillar currently has more than 600 members, either individuals or not-for-profit organizations. The significance of its name recognizes the importance of bringing the three pillars together in order for communities to thrive, and those three pillars are business, the government and not-for-profit organizations—because it is a three-legged stool, Speaker. You can't only focus on business. You can't expect government to deliver the kinds of on-the-

ground services that people need. You can expect government to fund those services, absolutely. But not-for-profit corporations play a critical, critical role as agencies and services that are closest to the people that they serve.

Michelle Baldwin, who has been the executive director of Pillar, who really was the visionary for the creation of Pillar in London and has provided incredible leadership for the sector over many years, will shortly be leaving the organization, but she has established something very special. She has gone on to be the chair of the board of the Ontario Nonprofit Network. As such, she has drawn on her experience and her knowledge of the challenges that the non-profit sector plays, particularly during this time of COVID-19, to advocate for the sector and to push for the necessary supports that this sector needs in order to remain functioning as we move through the COVID-19 phase and, hopefully, into post-COVID-19 recovery.

Speaker, when you think about the importance of ensuring the long-term stability of this sector, I think that we all have to reflect on what our communities would look like without those vital non-profit organizations that are providing such important services. My colleagues have talked about some of those organizations, from programs for children and youth—in fact, half of Ontario's non-profits are focused specifically on children and youth. The kinds of programs that they provide range from summer camps to arts and cultural activities, sports and recreation leagues. These are all so important to young people's social and emotional development and well-being, and the well-being of our communities.

The sector also includes mental health agencies. We know the kind of toll that COVID-19 has taken on the mental health and well-being, particularly, of young people. The stress that families have experienced and are continuing to experience—now, with the return to school, all of us are being flooded with emails from parents who worry about what's going to happen to their child, what kind of risk they are exposing their child to when they are in a classroom with potentially as many as 30 students.

**1610**

We've been talking in this Legislature last week and into this week about the lineups at assessment centres and if a child has a runny nose. I spoke to a parent the other day. Their child had a runny nose, had to leave immediately from the child care centre and has to get a clean COVID-19 test or some kind of note from the doctor before they are able to go back to child care. That's what's happening in schools across this province as well. That creates additional stress on families who don't have access to paid sick days and worry about how they're going to stay home with their child while they have the runny nose and they're not able to go to child care or school.

Those kinds of community-based mental health services are really important, and they are in large part delivered by not-for-profit organizations.

My colleague the member for Sudbury talked about women's shelters. Certainly, in my community—again, London has been a leader in the violence-against-women

sector, starting the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse and championing many of the measures that have been so important to keep women safe and to support them as they flee violence in the home.

I do want to give a shout-out to the violence-against-women sector in my community, and in particular the agency Anova, which is a merger of both the domestic violence shelter and the sexual assault centre, that just in May released the results of a national survey that was conducted in partnership with the Ending Violence Association of Canada. This survey was undertaken between May and July. It really looked into the experiences of domestic violence and gender-based violence during the pandemic. What it found was quite shocking, although perhaps not unexpected. I think we can all envision the kinds of stresses and pressures that families are under and how this can lead to increased incidence of gender-based violence. Certainly, this survey confirmed that gender-based violence during the height of the COVID-19 lockdown in Canada was more severe and more frequent than it was prior to the pandemic being declared. So that again reinforces the importance of ensuring that domestic violence shelters, sexual assault services and rape crisis centres have the supports that they need to carry on now, during the pandemic, but into the future, because we know that the impact of the pandemic is not just—we're not just going to feel it for a couple of months, Speaker. It is going to have lasting, long-term consequences for our communities, and we have to make sure that the supports that people need to deal with those consequences are going to be in place.

We have a sector, the not-for-profit sector, that is really dealing with what some are calling the triple threat, the triple whammy, of this pandemic. They have faced an immediate and abrupt loss of revenue. There were multiple fundraising events cancelled immediately. Sometimes there was hope that they might be able to reschedule these events, these ticketed events, but in very, very few cases has that been able to happen. So there's that abrupt loss of revenue from the cancellation of events. Also, many organizations have seen their donations dry up.

There has been the closure of offices—like small businesses, schools and child care centres, like many other places in this province, they had to close their offices when the pandemic was declared and immediately cancel programs and services. We know that many of them had taken fees; for example, summer camps. The pandemic was declared the week before March break, and I have spoken to many children's recreational services in London West that had plans to provide March break camps and recreational activities, and parents had paid for those services, so this put non-profit recreational services in a very difficult position because parents wanted those fees back. And yet, the revenues are in free fall for these organizations.

The third of the triple whammy, of course, is the loss of paid staff and volunteers. As these agencies closed down and as there was no certainty about their ability to start operating again, many organizations had to lay off staff immediately. In fact, it's important to keep in mind that about 50% of the non-profit sector in Ontario doesn't

employ any paid staff. These services are delivered entirely by volunteers. That has meant that the federal support programs that offer wage subsidies for paid staff don't have any kind of relevance to these agencies because they simply don't employ paid staff.

The non-profit sector has brought forward a number of important recommendations that they believe—and we agree—are absolutely essential to stabilize the sector and rebuild the province following COVID-19. Unfortunately, we don't see those recommendations reflected in the motion that is before us today, but I just wanted to remind the government what some of those recommendations are.

There has been a call for a stabilization fund of \$680 million to support the non-profit sector and ensure that non-profits and charities can help rebuild the economy and communities. There is no question that this funding is there. There are unallocated funds that this government has budgeted for COVID-19. There are the safe restart funds from the federal government that have not yet been spent. A stroke of the pen, really, would be required by the finance minister, the President of the Treasury Board to get that money to this sector as quickly as possible.

The Ontario Nonprofit Network has also called for the creation of a non-profit advisory table to inform the cabinet committee on economic recovery.

Again, as I started out by saying, one of the realities that we have seen in this province throughout COVID-19 is that the non-profit sector is really an afterthought. It has been an add-on to other kinds of programs that have been developed and delivered by this government. But there hasn't been the kind of specific focus—

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** The government House leader on a point of order.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** We've been going on for a while on this, and I would really ask the member—this is a motion with respect to a bill or an act that needs to be extended further. It is not about the not-for-profit sector as a whole; it's specific to a bill, so I would hope that the member—we've listened to three speeches now that have little or—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Thank you for your point of order. I have been listening to the member and I believe she is on the bill, but I will caution her to ensure that she stays on the bill.

1620

Back to the member for London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you very much, Speaker. The motion is regarding the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, and it is about keeping those regulatory measures that have not been implemented on the books as a way of keeping the sector viable. What I am offering to the government are some other suggestions that would in fact be much more helpful in ensuring the long-term viability of this sector.

I was saying that the creation of a non-profit advisory table would be very valuable for this government. Certainly, through the hearings of the finance committee, a

number of non-profit corporations and organizations presented to the government and talked about the challenges they were encountering in accessing the commercial rent relief program—or, in the large majority of cases, not being able to access that program. They talked about the fact that they fell through the cracks in terms of the financial criteria that they needed to meet in order to access some of these programs. The creation of an advisory table would be quite useful to the government to better understand what kinds of specific measures would be needed to support the sector.

Other actions that the Ontario non-profit network has urged, to provide that longer-term stability for this sector, include providing paid sick leave. The majority of employees in the non-profit sector are women. The majority of employees have caregiving responsibilities that they can't meet if they don't have access to paid sick leave. In many cases, these are lower-wage jobs where people work in the sector, understanding that the compensation is not going to be as high as in the private sector, but absolutely passionate and committed to the work that they do. Paid sick leave would enable non-profit organizations to be decent employers and support their staff so that they can stay home if they have a sick child, stay home if they are sick, so that they can fully recover and don't put their own co-workers and the people they serve at risk.

Another issue that has been raised is access to adequate PPE, personal protective equipment for front-line workers in community settings. We know of a lot of neighbourhood groups and neighbourhood food banks, for example, where people are coming in to access essential items and the volunteers don't have access to the PPE they really need in order to keep themselves safe.

Speaker, I can't believe how quickly my time has gone, but I do hope that the government takes these suggestions into account and moves forward, not just with this motion, but with some of these other very meaningful measures that would make a real difference.

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

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** First of all, I appreciate that the government House leader allowed me to stand down my lead, as I was dealing with something else. I'm not going to go on very long; I've got 37 minutes, but I'm going to take four or five minutes.

Last time I got up to speak about this, my only objection at the time was that the government had introduced this motion on a Wednesday afternoon around 4:30, and we were debating it the next day. My complaint at the time was that it's not a lot of time for the public, the media, the opposition and even his own government members to read the bill, to do the research that needs to be done and reach out to the not-for-profit sector that's affected. At that time, I said that we would hold the bill up that day so we could do our due diligence and get a hold of those people in the not-for-profit sector. I think part of what you heard today from some of our members is that that work was done. We actually reached out to the people like the YMCA and others out there in regard to this particular initiative.

Essentially, all this is—it's a motion in order to extend the sunset clauses in Bill 65, which was passed about 10 years ago. The motion is not very big, it's not complicated, but it refers to a whole bunch of different parts of the act, and we had to make sure that in fact this thing is what it is and that the not-for-profit sector was at least somewhat consulted in the short time that we had.

So we've had a chance to do that, we will be supporting this motion, and I would imagine the government will move that motion as I sit down and speak. Let's vote on it.

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

Ms. Thompson has moved government notice of motion number 89 relating to not-for-profit corporations. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? That is carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** Orders of the day. Government House leader.

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky):** There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1626.*







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Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
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