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Jeudi
24 septembre 2020

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 September 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 septembre 2020

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. We'll begin this morning with a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers/Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING TENANTS
AND SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020
VISANT À SOUTENIR LES LOCATAIRES
ET LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 23, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 204, An Act to amend various Acts respecting municipal elections, to amend the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 and to provide for a temporary residential rent freeze and specified temporary protections for certain commercial tenants / Projet de loi 204, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait aux élections municipales, modifiant la Loi de 2020 sur la réouverture de l'Ontario (mesures adaptables en réponse à la COVID-19) et prévoyant un gel des loyers d'habitations temporaire et des protections temporaires précisées pour certains locataires commerciaux.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: I rise today to speak to Bill 204, the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act. I would first like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Steve Clark, for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The COVID-19 pandemic, apart from its role as an unprecedented public health crisis, has also had substantial adverse economic effects on many in Ontario and in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt. During the height of the pandemic, my constituency office and I were answering the phones and responding to emails. Seniors, laid-off parents, small business owners, single mothers and landlords all reached out to my office asking for relief, asking for a little room to breathe.

The top issue in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, as well as many ridings in Ontario, was residential and commercial rent. Our constituents, while preoccupied with keeping themselves and their loved ones healthy, began to worry about how they would make next month's rent. Commercial tenants were telling us that day by day they were growing more fearful of seeing a lock on their units.

I brought these concerns to our hard-working ministers, and I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that as always, they were prepared to listen. Simultaneously, Minister Clark was engaging in constituent consultations with both residential and commercial tenants across all Ontario, listening to their concerns and taking notes. Our government was not going to let that fall on deaf ears. It is important to mention that I received calls and heard accounts from tenants and landlords that understood the effect of this public health crisis on families and came to the table to establish mutually beneficial terms.

Through these unprecedented times, in Scarborough–Agincourt, I have seen the community stand shoulder to shoulder to come to each other's aid. Just a week ago, I rose in the House to recognize the organizations, businesses and individuals that have portrayed the Ontario spirit throughout this pandemic and have contributed to serve the community. These are hard times—there is no denying that. This bill, introduced to the House on September 17 by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steve Clark, if passed, will provide Ontarians some relief—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I'm sorry to interrupt the member. Just a reminder to all members, I've let it go a few times, but we must refer to all members by their riding or their title, not their proper times. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Aris Babikian: —so Ontarians can work to get themselves back on track without the immediate fear of eviction. This proposed legislation will help both residential and commercial tenants, and it will also help our municipal partners.

Firstly, it addresses the struggle currently faced by many residential tenants. Tenants across Ontario who have been financially impacted by COVID-19 should not have to worry about rent increases.

Secondly, this bill speaks to the dire situation faced by businesses currently trying to get back on track. These businesses that qualify for the CECRA program, however, whose commercial landlords are not interested in applying, need time to calibrate.

Thirdly, and finally, this bill addresses municipalities' concerns about often inaccurate and burdensome municipal voters lists. This bill will bring more efficiency, organization and transparency to the municipal elections.

We understand the pressure of uncertainty on Ontarians today. We have been taking every call and answering every email, and we want to send a message to them with this legislation: We hear you and we know that you need our support.

As the minister outlined, our proposed legislation will provide relief from rent increases for most of Ontario's 1.7 million residential tenants who all need some sense of certainty in this unprecedented time. This legislation will ensure that the vast majority of families do not see a rent increase next year as we work towards our economic recovery.

Our government is proposing to freeze rent in 2021 for rent-controlled and non-rent-controlled units, to give the vast majority of Ontario tenants relief during these unprecedented times. This includes apartments, townhouses, detached homes, semis, care homes and rented sites in mobile home parks and land-lease communities. This also includes units in community housing where tenants pay market rent, geared-to-income rent, as well as affordable rental housing units created through various federal and/or provincially funded housing programs.

This bill will also provide relief for thousands of small businesses, the backbone of every city and community in Ontario. Whether deemed an essential business or a business that closed due to public health recommendations during the height of the pandemic, many businesses in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt and in Ontario have been affected one way or another by the pandemic.

0910

Madam Speaker, we recognize that businesses have had to make some of the hardest decisions they have ever had to make due to the repercussions of COVID-19. Many have had to scale back operations and let go of employees. Many have also had to make investments in PPE for employees and customers to ensure that they can continue operations safely. These are extraordinary costs for small businesses that have contributed greatly to an overarching air of uncertainty within our business community. Many of these businesses that have reached out to my office to share their struggle are family-operated shops we have all come to love. They are the friendly faces you look forward to seeing on a daily basis. They are the staples of our communities.

I was heartened to hear that some of these businesses have reached out to notify us that their landlords have applied for relief under the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program. To provide urgent relief for small businesses and their landlords across Ontario, we have committed up to \$241 million as our share of this federal-provincial program, making more than \$900 million available. Small businesses should not be alone in taking on the financial cost of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Landlords who apply to the program can receive forgivable loans, equal to 50% of the monthly rent their tenants would normally pay. In turn, their commercial tenants must still pay rent. However, they will only have to pay 25% of their normal monthly rent. The landlords must cover the remaining 25%. I would like to acknowledge those landlords for their initiative, compassion and, to be frank, their perceptiveness. Through this program, landlords can facilitate the viability of their commercial tenants, thus keeping the tenants in the units.

Many small businesses in my riding have called to inform me that although they qualify for the Canada

Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program, their landlords are refusing to participate in this program. I have been reaching out to these commercial landlords throughout the pandemic to outline the mutual benefit of these programs for both the businesses and the landlords. I have also unfortunately had a couple of experiences where I have reached out to commercial landlords on constituents' behalf and the landlords have refused to speak to me.

I would like to take a moment to address what's at stake here, and I can speak to my riding in particular. The local cafés, bakers, shawarma shops, Greek restaurants, local grocers, family-owned stores, local craftsmen and corner stores are under immense pressure. These are the businesses that call us by our names, ask about our health when we come in and know our orders by heart. They are the businesses we recommend with our eyes closed, knowing full well that they will deliver on quality and customer service. These businesses qualify for CECRA, but their landlords are not willing to apply. It is also important to note that these businesses not only make the Scarborough–Agincourt riding such a wonderful community to live in, but their direct and indirect contributions to the economy at large are immense. This is why their viability is so important.

Our government understood the gravity of the situation and acted fast. As the Premier has mentioned many times throughout this pandemic, COVID acts fast and we need to respond even faster. We put in place a temporary ban on many commercial evictions from June 17 to August 31 of this year. It was what needed to be done, because small businesses form the backbone of our communities. The Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act would extend that ban. We recognize that local businesses need more time to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

I have been touring the riding in the last two months to speak to business owners to get a better sense of progress on the ground in Scarborough–Agincourt. Our local businesses are informing me that they slowly are trying to get back on their feet. As customers begin leaving their homes, they are seeing a slow but steady rise in customers. These businesses should not, in this current climate, live in fear of being locked out of their businesses and having their assets seized because their landlord is unwilling to put short-term profit aside for enough time to assess the potential long-run costs of not working with their tenants.

On September 8, the federal government announced its decision to extend the CECRA program for the month of September. With that essential funding in place to support both landlords and tenants, we are proposing to extend the ban on commercial evictions from September 1 until October 30. This would ensure we continue to protect them from being locked out or having their assets seized. Our government continues to balance the needs of landlords with those of tenants. This is why, as before, the ban would continue to apply to businesses that are eligible for federal/provincial rent assistance. By extending the ban to align with the extension of CECRA, we are protecting small businesses and helping them get back on their feet so they can create jobs and help rebuild their economy.

As mentioned by PA McDonell, we are not alone with our approach to small business recovery. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Restaurants Canada, local business improvement areas and Mayor Tory all stand with our government on this decision to extend the temporary moratorium on commercial evictions, giving our businesses more time to get back to normal operations.

If passed, this legislation would amend the Commercial Tenancies Act to protect small businesses from being locked out for nonpayment of rent. This ban is retroactive. That means any landlords that have already served eviction notices after the cessation of the previous ban will allow tenants back in their units. If landlords have seized any asset after the cessation of the previous ban, they must return any unsold goods. For the duration of this ban, landlords would not be able to get an eviction order for rent arrears.

We continue to encourage commercial landlords to apply for the CECRA program and work with their tenants to help them stay in their current places of business and recover from their financial hardship. As of September 7, 2020, roughly 23,100 landlord applications for properties in Ontario had been approved for CECRA for small businesses, representing roughly 52,600 tenants.

As we look to the future of recovery, we naturally must facilitate an environment conducive to economic progress. That is why I firmly stand behind this bill brought to the House by the Honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Currently this legislation is what Ontario's economy needs. These unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures. Giving our businesses some relief while they get back on their feet is integral to increasing their viability, thus allowing the economy as a whole to get back on track. Creating the right environment to stimulate growth and increase employment is one of our government's highest priorities.

0920

This bill is a very important aid to the individual in Scarborough–Agincourt. During COVID-19, the cost of daily life on the family has increased greatly. Many are currently either working from home or have been laid off. Rent in Ontario and in Scarborough–Agincourt, in general, had already reached staggering rates prior to the pandemic. As families use their rainy day money for what are evidently rainy days, they should not also have the worry of awaiting residential rent increases in the coming days. Whether seniors or single mothers, newcomers or young families, residents have been calling my office to inquire about potential rent freezes for the coming year.

Ontarians are planners, Madam Speaker. They want to know that in 2021, after already having depleted their savings, they will not have the added financial burden of increases in rent. As mentioned already, Ontarians are not looking for a handout. They are looking for a period of relief when they can start recovering from this pandemic and work to get back on track.

Adding financial burdens on families during this time is only going to prolong the process of financial recovery for the individual. This will noticeably reflect on the financial recovery of the economy. This legislation will help

create the right environment to move Ontario towards recovery.

I rise today not only to show support for this great bill introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, but also to show how Bill 204 is a testament to our government's dedication to facilitating the recovery of this great province. This bill is one of the many ways in which we are supporting our small businesses.

Madam Speaker, in the beginning of the pandemic, we made up to \$10 billion available in support, through tax and other deferrals, to improve flows and help protect jobs and household budgets. We launched the Ontario Together Fund to provide financial support to innovative businesses to retool their processes and increase their capacity to make personal protective equipment. We made electricity bills more affordable for residential and small business—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for the comments, but, Madam Speaker, I asked a question in this House to the Premier and I sent two letters to the finance minister about a small business, a mini-mart, in Niagara Falls. I was begging the Premier and the finance minister for help for this owner, who is a single mom, and her staff's jobs. The landlord, Alastair Kermack, wouldn't apply for the rent subsidy and locked her and her employees out. She worked there for 22 years. She owned it. A terrible, terrible situation, but she couldn't get any help from the Conservative government.

So my question to you, sir, is: Why isn't it in the bill to give the tenants the 50% of the cost of the rent rather than going and asking landlords to apply—who aren't applying in record numbers, as you know. There are billions of dollars in that fund that haven't been used.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you very much to my colleague from the opposite side. As you know, this program is a joint program between the federal and provincial governments. I sympathize with all the tenants. As I mentioned in my speech, I have faced that in my riding also. Businesses keep calling me and asking for relief, and I have tried to reach my federal counterpart in my riding to speak to the federal government to change the program, but unfortunately, so far, we haven't heard any suggestions from the federal government, which is a partner in this program, to make the modifications so that we can bring relief to all these small businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Jane McKenna: I just want to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt—sitting here listening to all that you had to say today. I know in my riding of Burlington, people struggling to pay rent will welcome this legislation. This move to freeze rents in 2021 is a positive step to protect the 1.7 million Ontarians who rely on rental housing.

Can you please tell the House more about what our government has done to support renters during the COVID-19 outbreak?

Mr. Aris Babikian: As was mentioned earlier, from the first day, we tried to bring relief to tenants, to small businesses. We brought the Ontario hydro rates to off-peak times so that we can help businesses—not only businesses but also residential tenants with relief. We brought so many different programs to help businesses cope with the current crisis that we are facing. It is something that is within our realm, and we tried our best to help the tenants.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to go back on your reply again. I don't need a lecture on what the program is.

I was there, quite frankly, when they locked the doors. I was there when the owner was crying. I was there when the employees were crying.

What I'm saying to you is that we have an opportunity, because it is the responsibility of the provincial government and maybe federal: 25% of that money is coming from the provincial government, 25% is coming from the federal government. That's 50%. So what I'm saying is, if landlords don't want to apply, then why would we not say to the tenants, "You'll get the 50%," rather than have 100% or, quite frankly, 75%, or nothing. And what's happening is they're not getting anything. It doesn't matter whether you are a hair salon, a nail—any small business isn't getting anything if the landlord chooses not to apply.

What I'm saying is, you could put it in the bill where that 50% goes directly to the tenant, and they're not losing their jobs and single moms aren't losing their businesses in the province of Ontario. It's absolutely—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Response?

Mr. Aris Babikian: There are so many ways to bring relief to tenants. I understand the difficulties—that some landlords are not applying for the program, and this whole issue is a process that is always evolving. We are looking at all the different options. How can we help the tenants to survive? How to help the businesses to go on? I can assure you, we are not going to hold anything back from those businesses. We don't want to see small businesses going out of business. We are there for them. We will stand shoulder to shoulder with them to support them and we will not have anything—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Further questions?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for his presentation. From listening to your remarks, it seems like you do care about small businesses. There are many small businesses in Scarborough, as you know. Scarborough is built up of small businesses. There is a company in my riding, the Olde Stone Cottage Pub, that has two different landlords. One landlord was very responsive to the program; the other one was not.

So I'm just wondering, from your point of view, how we improve our supports to these programs so that small businesses are not feeling the brunt of that and so that they

can survive this pandemic? What more are you pushing for within your government to assist small businesses, given that you have the capacity to make those decisions?

0930

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you very much for the questions. As a representative from Scarborough, I know Scarborough is a small business area, especially in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt. We don't have large manufacturing companies; all of them are small businesses—mom-and-pop shops.

The case you mention is a unique case, and we need to look at the various details of your case so that we can evaluate how we can help. But I can assure you that I am very much concerned with small businesses. I have always advocated to help small businesses get over these difficult times, and I will continue to advocate on their behalf.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Through you, Speaker, I'd like to ask the member from Scarborough–Agincourt this question: We know that the COVID-19 outbreak has affected every Ontarian, and it is clear that this is a challenging time for everyone. We also know that housing affordability has never been more important. Families need to know that they have a safe and stable place to call home in this time of uncertainty. Can the member explain exactly what this bill will do and how it will help protect renters?

Mr. Aris Babikian: One way this bill will help: As it is well known to everyone, people are struggling, so even \$25, \$50 a month will make a difference for a family. This bill, if it's passed, will help save those families some money, regardless of how much it is. Today, a rent increase is substantial in Toronto and Ontario, and by saving them that rent increase for one year, it will help them save money so that they can put food on their table. That's why this bill will be important for tenants. I have spoken to so many tenants in my riding and they are appreciative—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Questions?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Earlier this year in downtown St. Catharines, we lost a business—and it's not the only one—SASS Fitness. Support came too late for this business.

Why does this bill not provide rent relief to residential tenants struggling during the pandemic or—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question—I apologize to the member.

A very quick response.

Mr. Aris Babikian: This is relief for tenants. It will help them to overcome the difficulties for the next year.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me today to add the voices of the great constituents in London North Centre to the debate today on Bill 204. Yesterday, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said that Bill

204 was proactive, even though retroactivity to September 1 is written within the bill. I don't think that his comments were meant in an ironic way, but I do feel that history will see that they are.

I would like to start my comments today talking about proactivity during this COVID-19 pandemic. Many people with health complications live in mortal peril about a potential COVID-19 infection. We should be ensuring that these folks are protected and don't have to fear for their lives.

My constituent Kate's daughter Susanna is a four-year-old cystic fibrosis patient in my riding. She has to travel to SickKids four times per year to meet with specialists. She needs hours of breathing treatment. It interferes with her quality of life. She was hospitalized three times last year with pneumonia, and this causes permanent scarring. Orkambi would prevent the progression of this fatal disease, but the overly strict criteria keep it from kids like Susanna.

New Democrats stand for universal pharmacare. Universal pharmacare should be in Bill 204. During this pandemic, access to life-saving drugs would complete the universal medicare dream of Tommy Douglas. Instead, Canadians are subject to relying on private workplace plans, if they have one. Many are now out of work as a result of this pandemic. Bill 204 talks about rent and talks about places to live and talks about businesses, but it doesn't talk about the most vital thing, which is our health.

It's time for Ontario to take the lead. Many countries make drugs like Orkambi widely available. Canada should implement universal pharmacare so kids like Susanna can have their best life. It's time for the Conservative government to be truly proactive and expand OHIP+, rather than talking about making it cost-effective and cutting it to pieces. Families like Kate and Susanna's have been waiting for years. Kids like Susanna can't wait anymore. Get the deal with Vertex done.

For my next comments, I'd like to turn to the tenant issues that are mentioned within this bill. For months, the official opposition has been suggesting that this government provide direct relief to people who are renting. Tenants have had such a difficult time during this pandemic, and I don't feel that this government has appreciated that. Many have suffered a job loss. Many have stayed awake at night wondering how they're going to make ends meet.

In the first six months of 2020, huge corporate landlords reported a net operating profit increase of 17.4%. If we crunch the numbers, this means that they generated \$64,000 per hour every hour of every day in the first six months of 2020. Let's look at that for a moment. Tenants were losing their jobs because of COVID-19, and corporate landlords were raking in huge profits.

In this legislation, Bill 204, we need to see some direct relief coming to tenants. Instead, tenants have had to face a 2.2% increase this year, during a pandemic. We're talking about 2021 within this bill, but what about 2020? We can't pretend as though this government has not dropped the ball and allowed these increases to be enormous.

One constituent in London North Centre told me that the common areas in his apartment building, such as the meeting room, fitness room and other shared areas, still aren't available for his use, and yet his landlord still decided to raise the rent this year. That doesn't make sense. That doesn't give him the full benefit of his rent.

We also can't forget that there are tenants who are on ODSP. They've had a particularly difficult time during this pandemic. The government offered that paltry \$100-a-month increase that recipients had to beg for; they had to ask for it. If this government was truly interested in ensuring that people had the supports they needed, it would have simply been given to them. Instead, they had to try to contact their worker, who was not always reporting to duty because of physical distancing restrictions within the office, and they had to beg.

One ODSP recipient wrote to me about her rent increase, "I'm afraid I'll become homeless." Her rent is increasing, despite the fact that she lives in a building with broken, inconsistent plumbing and peeling paint. If rent is going to be increased, should the building not be improved and her quality of life thus improved?

We need to make sure that this bill actually helps people keep their homes. I met with the London chapter of ACORN earlier this summer. They are passionate tenants, and they delivered a strong message to the Landlord and Tenant Board opposing Bill 184. You see, we have Bill 204, and yet this government, during a pandemic, saw fit to pass Bill 184, making it easier for tenants to be evicted. It's almost as though this government speaks one way out of their mouth and another way out of their mouth all within one season.

Bill 204 extends the commercial evictions ban so that it's going to expire on October 30, and yet we are still within the throes of this pandemic, and many would say we are well within the second wave. How is making this time limited to October 30 logical? It simply isn't.

Back in April, the official opposition brought forward our Save Main Street plan, and it was endorsed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. That was back on April 16. It has been 23 weeks. It has been more than 160 days. It has almost been half a year, and we've seen none of these being implemented.

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Rocco Rossi said it was a terrific suggestion and that fixed costs were ones that companies were unable to reduce, and that this would provide "critical operational flexibility ... valued leeway in adapting to an extreme economic environment and could save the economy greater hardship by ensuring the workforce is maintained..." And yet, despite the fact that it has been almost half a year since these suggestions were brought forward, this government is now tabling the bare minimum, the least they could do, with Bill 204.

Within my riding and during the pandemic, I was able to assist some great folks such as Sue and Brian, who operate Cyclepath on Richmond Street. They had tremendous difficulty because of the essential business list, because they operate a bike retail store. Big box stores like

Walmart were able to stay open because they sold food, and yet they would be the ones selling the bicycles. We see a government that has allowed this to happen. You've allowed multinational, big corporations to thrive off of this pandemic while small business folks have suffered. Luckily, Sue and Brian also repair bicycles, so they were able to be declared as an essential business, despite the fact that they had to call a number of times, getting alternate advice each time they called. Fortunately, we were able to step in and ensure that they were able to operate.

I also think about Teresa, who operates the Beauty Supply Outlet. She is an amazing community advocate. She has donated to My Sisters' Place, the Red Cross, the humane society, the food bank, and she has done so much more. But yet, Teresa only saw a 54% decrease in her revenue, so that meant she was not eligible for CECRA. She also did not receive any rent relief whatsoever. But a 54% reduction in a business's income? They will not be able to survive. My heart breaks for people like Teresa, who are amazing folks, who are not being supported by this government and not being supported by Bill 204.

We see CECRA, and it is an opt-in program—this government has allowed it to be optional. And, furthermore, this government was not willing to do the heavy lifting, because this is still yet another federal program that you simply attached your star to, or are riding on the coattails of.

We also take a look at large corporations that were able to use such things as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. They were able to pay 75% of their employees' wages. Many small businesses were not eligible for this as well, as you know, and yet, tax dollars from the federal government are being spent to prop up multinational corporations, while small businesses are facing the greatest of human tragedy. You see, for many of these folks, their finances within their business are tied to their personal finances, to their houses. Bill 204 does not support businesses in the way that it ought to.

I also think of Jean Coles, within London, who operates three Sport Clips Haircuts salons. Now, she and her husband were fortunate enough to have her rent deferred, but it's just kicking the can down the road. It's like the CEBA that the federal government offered—the province, of course, wouldn't offer anything to small businesses—but that's just kicking the can down the road, allowing a business to take on yet more debt, and if they're lucky enough to be able to pay it back in time, they will receive that relief. But what if they're not lucky enough? What if we have to close again, because of this pandemic? What will happen to them? What will happen to all of these human lives?

So we see that landlords, in some cases, are deferring rent, but eventually, Jean will have to make double rent payments. She's going to have to catch up or face eviction. Further, even though they're open, revenue has dried up. An extension on evictions isn't going to help these businesses if they can't pay their rent. What this bill needs to do is offer a complete commercial eviction ban, which would offer more stability to businesses as well as their employees.

Another thing that New Democrats have suggested within their Save Main Street plan is a utility payment freeze. That would assist small businesses in a true and earnest way. It makes sense to include that within Bill 204, yet we don't see that. Again, we see just the bare minimum. We have scraped the bottom of the barrel to support those great people who operate our small businesses.

Furthermore, should this pandemic end, we will need—the pandemic is going to be going on for quite some time and businesses will need support outside of the one-month extension for this evictions ban. I think of the Old East Village within my riding, a great up-and-coming area. It's a hub of the arts, of restaurants, of so much economic and cultural activity. COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on the businesses there.

In a report to the city of London, the Old East Village BIA reported that, "COVID-19 has drastically reduced employment in many sectors in our ... corridor.... We have a large number of salons, tattoo studios, foodservice businesses and four of London's premier arts and entertainment venues.... All these businesses were significantly impacted and none have returned to business as usual.... These impacts significantly hinder employment and by extension successful economic recovery."

So far, three businesses have closed in Old East Village, Speaker, and another nine businesses are facing temporary closures. The number of workers who have been laid off from those businesses is tremendous. It's something that needs to also be addressed within Bill 204. We need a plan that helps these businesses reopen permanently. The OEV BIA has a number of suggestions, which I would like to share in this chamber today.

They have asked that CECRA be revamped to make tenants eligible to apply and receive direct support. Did you hear that, government? Direct support—none of this opt-in nonsense that you have put forward thus far. This would be the change that is necessary with federal policy. That was the huge gap that was within it. Landlords were not obliged to do it. This government could have more than simply encouraged landlords to do the right thing, standing up in front of the media and pleading with people, but actually providing solid legislation.

Freezing evictions would allow many businesses to keep their head above water, but it won't fix the fundamental problem. The fundamental problem is that this province isn't putting any money in their pockets to stay afloat. We have heard recently that the Premier and this government have billions of dollars earmarked for COVID relief, yet they choose not to spend it. We see that testing sites are overwhelmed in many jurisdictions, yet this government has decided to allow private operators to administer those tests. It's really disappointing to me, Speaker, that small businesses aren't invited to the backrooms of this government, where all of the supports and all of the money flows.

Not all businesses are going to be able to reopen safely at this moment; we know that is a fact. Their concerns are going to have a snowball effect. They're going to become much more pronounced as we move towards what we call

the second wave. We need to be able to help our businesses pivot online.

The OEV BIA recommends “additional grant funding available for digital improvements.” That’s grant funding—not repayable loans, grants. In our Save Main Street plan, we talked about a remote work set-up fund, which could help them pivot online and be able to offer their business and their products.

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I’d also like to make some final remarks as I close my debate time here, Speaker. I think of the comments from the member from Waterloo and the member from Toronto Centre yesterday, who introduced quotes into this chamber which I think bear repeating. They include a constituent who asked, “Why would this government hand over full control of our future to our landlords, such as is found in CECRA?” That rent abatement and rent forgiveness is an investment in our economy. I shudder to think about the number of places that will have to close their doors, the business corridors that will become akin to ghost towns as a result of this government’s choice, and it was an active choice not to act, not to provide direct support.

We will be supporting Bill 204, but it’s a disappointing thing to support. It’s supporting some of the weakest, bottom-of-the-barrel, bare minimum legislation. We’ve seen that throughout this pandemic there has been no shortage of human tragedy, yet in the business community, big-box operations have been allowed to thrive, while small businesses have sat waiting.

We have a government that prides itself on its business acumen, and yet I’m hearing from all of the business folks within my community who waited with bated breath. They felt that, “Oh, eventually this government is going to come through. They’re going to come through with these direct supports. We just know it.” You know, they talk a good game about how they support the little guy and they support businesses, but we see entirely the opposite. We see that big-box stores and big-box operations have thrived. We see massive corporate landlords which have raked in huge enormous profits. And who’s suffering? The little guy you’re supposed to be standing for, the small business owner you claim to stand shoulder to shoulder with.

It’s time for this government to do what it says it’s going to do, to actually live up to its words, to provide those direct supports, to provide that relief, to make sure that these people can keep their heads above water. If you don’t act, if you don’t act now and if you don’t provide supports to these folks who are barely hanging on by their fingernails, then the cascading effect that will hit our economy will be what this government is known for forevermore.

Bill 204 is such a tremendous disappointment. Just as with the return to school, there have been months to prepare. There have been months to listen. We heard at committee all of the folks begging and pleading with you. It’s time for you to do the right thing. It’s time for you to provide direct support, and it’s time for you to make sure that those direct supports get into the pockets of our small

business community. They’re waiting. They’re watching. Do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will remind all members please to put their devices on silent. While I can’t figure out where the dinging is coming from, please silence your notifications here in the chamber. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We can point fingers, but I’d like all the fingers to turn off the devices. Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Our government has been working hard from day one to increase housing supply, and it has been working. We’re seeing record highs for new rental starts, applications and completions. We are doing the right thing.

We have a housing supply problem in Ontario. To the member from London North Centre: In Chatham alone, we have new housing developments going on. We have single-family homes going up—about 350 of those going on. We have senior condo-style apartments going up, for 242 units. We also have geared-to-income units going up. Our plan is working, so why can’t the opposition admit that our plan is in fact working to create more—much more—needed housing in Ontario?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you very much to the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington for his remarks. However, we see in every jurisdiction that the cost of affordable housing has not gone down. We know it is a crisis.

For the last 15 years, the Liberal government had the opportunity, but they built very little social housing, almost none. That is something this government must do—to make sure that there is affordable housing as well as supportive housing.

During my remarks, we talked about business—and I’m surprised to hear the member talk about this government doing the right thing and building housing supply. When are you going to build affordable housing? You’ve removed the tools from municipalities to offer these incentives.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank the member from London North Centre for his passion for small businesses in London. I’ve had a lot of great times in downtown London watching the IceDogs beat the Knights. There are a lot of great businesses in London. It’s a great downtown that a lot of other downtowns have modelled themselves after.

The NDP has been asking for a 75% subsidy. Obviously, that’s very expensive. But what are the costs of not providing a direct subsidy to these downtown areas across the province that have worked so hard to revitalize their downtowns?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from Niagara Centre for his comments. I'm glad you've visited London. It's a beautiful place to be.

We have seen businesses that have struggled within our downtown core as we have revitalized Dundas Street. It has become an amazing go-to destination. Businesses have had a really difficult time as a result, because there was a tremendous amount of construction. It's now in a new phase, in the Old East Village.

You're right; the support that the NDP has been advocating for, the 75% rent subsidy for businesses, would make a huge difference in the lives of these businesses. They had to close their doors, and they weren't able to generate revenue. If this is not implemented, the wave of human tragedy and business disasters that will happen to these folks is unfathomable. Many people will lose their businesses. Many people will lose their lives as well as their livelihoods.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I heard the member opposite talk about the program we're putting through for commercial rent. This program provides 75% of the revenue to the landlord and 75% relief to the tenant—a pretty rich program. We can't force anybody to take these programs, as you see, but we've certainly given that incentive. If you're a landlord, six months of 25% is much better than nothing. It's an all-in-or-all-out, and we're matching the federal program. I know you think we should be doing more. But that's a pretty good program. You can't force people into it.

The comments on social housing: This government has started social housing projects, but it takes a long time to put a building up here. I've been downtown and I've seen buildings under construction for five years. It is money—we put over—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Response?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

When we talk about the CECRA program—and yes, it does amount to a landlord receiving 75% of their money that they would be receiving, but it's, as we've said, an opt-in program. I did manage to talk to one commercial landlord who had decided to opt in to the program, which, I've got to say, was almost like finding a mythological animal. I didn't know that such people existed within this province, because the federal government has made it so difficult for people to opt in to this program—the amount of paperwork that this individual had to go through in order to qualify for it.

What we're calling for, in this instance, is that the province not ride on the coattails of the federal government and actually do something. They could provide that 25% back to landlords so that maybe there was an incentive for landlords to do it, but instead we just have mild encouragement.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the member from London North Centre for bringing a light on small businesses and advocating for small businesses throughout the province of Ontario, not only in his riding but as well as—I will take these words that you have brought forward to St. Catharines.

As I spoke to earlier, we lost a significant business earlier this year in our downtown. The municipal government had put so much money into revitalizing the downtown of St. Catharines so that the community would thrive, our riding would thrive. Without a downtown and small businesses, our communities will not thrive.

I'm going to ask the member: Small businesses have been fighting to keep their heads above water during COVID-19. How do you think that this bill does not address helping small businesses?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from St. Catharines for your remarks. You're absolutely right. An investment into our small businesses will achieve greater results. I just spoke to the member from Niagara Centre about the investment within our downtown corridor. If we spend money, we generate money.

Now we take a look at this government. The measures that they have introduced have been very little by way of investment. We see that this government is sitting on their hands. They're sitting on the sidelines while small businesses suffer. We see that they are withholding billions of dollars that have been earmarked for COVID relief. Why? How can you do this while small businesses suffer, while people risk losing their livelihoods? How can you possibly do this?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I can't help but rise and comment on what I heard this morning from the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who talked about the commercial rent relief program. I certainly have heard repeatedly about this program in my riding. I mentioned the Olde Stone Cottage Pub, which is a landmark facility in Scarborough where two different plots of land have two different landlords and two different responses to the CECRA program.

In terms of the generosity of the program, it could be more generous. You look at what the Quebec government has done, where it has doubled the provincial contribution to the program to provide more relief for businesses, and small businesses in particular, who need that support.

It's important for this debate that we are having this morning to really recognize the difficulties that small businesses are having, and to do all that we can to help save them before they have to close their doors.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for her comments. It is interesting to see other jurisdictions and how they have treated the CECRA program. I know that in Saskatchewan, they are calling on using that money, the billions of

dollars that are still left within that fund, to provide those direct supports to businesses.

In my riding, I think of the Palace Theatre Arts Commons, a great organization that has been in operation for many years. It encompasses the London Fringe theatre and the London Community Players. It has hundreds of volunteers. It offers programming for youth as well as a new stage program for adults. It does phenomenal things, but they've had to lay off all of their workers. The board has taken tremendous cuts. It's really frightening what could potentially happen to an operation that has been in business for a tremendous amount of time. They need emergency funding.

Businesses are waiting. It's time for this government to act, and it's time for this government to stop sitting on its hands.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I am pleased to rise in the House today to debate Bill 204. I believe it is an important piece of legislation that does offer some measures to help Ontarians. Ultimately, the government is offering too little, too late.

If this bill passes, the moratorium on commercial evictions would be extended by just mere days, when certainly businesses that we're hearing from are asking for more time. This is not enough time, and it's not enough support for small businesses.

I spent much of the summer at the committee on finance and economic affairs, listening to businesses and independent operators from across the province, across many sectors. No one expected that this pandemic would last as long as it has, and it's taking such a devastating toll on Ontario's businesses and our economy. There is a fear among small businesses, particularly on main streets across this province, that they won't be able to hang on much longer. Small businesses in Ontario need support, and they need a government that understands that the supports need to arrive before they close their doors. This proposed extension is really just a band-aid. It's not what the vast majority of small businesses need or want.

Just yesterday, I heard about Laser Quest, this very iconic business based in Mississauga that spread into North America. They just simply could not hold on. They could not cope with the effects of the pandemic, so they are shutting down.

We know that Ontarians still have precarious finances. The CERB program is winding down, and many small businesses are closed or will close their doors permanently. I heard about the Wexford diner, an iconic location in Scarborough. They just decided they can't sustain it, and it's closing. So many sectors, such as tourism, travel and hospitality, have not been able to resume operations because of the pandemic and have lost the season in 2020.

We know that youth remain financially precarious, particularly students, who have lost the opportunity for summer employment, yet they still owe full tuition should they wish to continue their studies, as well as rent.

This recession is different, as I said, from others that we have experienced in modern history. A full recovery will require more supports than are being offered here in Bill 204, and really, in terms of the government's measures and responses to this to date.

Bill 204 is a thin attempt to provide economic relief to Ontarians. It doesn't scratch the surface of issues facing women and Black, Indigenous and people of colour, who are facing a devastating effect as a result of this pandemic. These Ontarians are disproportionately affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The last three Statistics Canada labour force surveys have emphasized the consistent trend that job recovery for COVID-19-related employment losses are having. In fact, the recovery is more advanced among men than women despite the fact that women have been hit much harder. Unemployment is persisting at significant high levels amongst Black, Indigenous and Ontarians of colour.

Ontario is at a crossroads. Decades of progress towards gender equality in the workplace are at risk. Reports from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and submissions from the Canadian Women's Chamber of Commerce to the finance committee warn that we are perilously close to reversing the gains made by women in the workplace. This would be a devastating result of the pandemic that we can't allow to occur. We need women to continue to be part of the economic productivity of Ontario. There really cannot be a full recovery that leaves women behind. Without a she-covey, there cannot be long-term economic recovery.

We need more from this government to move forward, including investments in education to make schools and child care safe, and realistic options for families. The government also needs to take a forward-looking approach and make investments in education, re-skilling and entrepreneurship programs for women to be able to adapt to the changing economy and to help drive growth.

Indigenous and Black businesses have also reported facing additional barriers to receiving essential supports and emergency relief funding. Government policy and programs often overlook the needs of Black and Indigenous businesses, for example, excluding home-based businesses from Digital Main Street platforms by making the eligibility criteria tied to having a retail storefront.

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In yesterday's speech from the throne, the federal government announced their commitment to take action to address the "she-session," or the "she-covey." They acknowledged that women, Black, Indigenous and people of colour, and young people have seen the highest levels of job losses. I am calling on the Premier to do the same for Ontarians—to develop an action plan for women, for Black, Indigenous and people of colour, and to consult on a diverse table of efforts to make Ontario's response equitable.

The message from small businesses across the province has been clear: They need tax relief, cash flow support, and they need a government that will implement policies to control COVID-19 so that we don't go into further

shutdown, and that we boost consumer and business confidence. For small businesses that are suffering, they have not seen their revenues return—even though many of them have reopened their doors, the customers just have not come back—and they have not seen meaningful support from this provincial government. These measures that are being put forward today don't go nearly far enough.

As it stands today, small businesses will have to repay their deferred taxes by October 1 or else incur interest and penalties. That does not leave a lot of time for businesses to get their cash flow in order, and some businesses will have no choice but to close their doors, as they will not be able to take on even more debt when their sales and cash flow have not returned to normal.

I've called on this Legislature time and time again—for the government to extend the deferral period for provincial taxes, including payroll taxes, and WSIB, and provide a multi-year repayment plan with options for forgiveness. Ontario's small businesses are still extremely vulnerable. They have not yet had the time that they need to rebuild and to recover. The province needs to do more to provide liquidity and support.

The commercial eviction moratorium is a low-effort response to a problem that has festered as a result of the government's inaction and dragging its feet. The economic impacts of COVID-19 have been more profound than could have been initially anticipated. We get that. The government must adjust course to respond to the immediate and urgent needs of the province. The federal government has stepped up and is funding 97% of Ontario's response to COVID-19, with the Ontario government funding just 3% of Ontario's measures. The province can and should do more.

The FAO has estimated that the province has a further \$6.7 billion in unallocated funds that are available to be directed to new measures, including \$3.5 billion in cash transfers from the federal government that have yet to be allocated by the province to specific measures. Why are you hoarding this cash? The government should be putting this money to good use instead of taking the passive, cheapened approach that we see in Bill 204.

As we have seen in yesterday's public accounts, the PCs inherited a strong economy from the Liberals, with increasing revenues from all sources. They have squandered that opportunity and have not stepped up to make the necessary investments during this pandemic. No meaningful investments for a safe return to school—we know that. We see that every day by the rising numbers of infections in our schools and the closure of classrooms and schools across this province. There's no strengthening of our long-term-care facilities—even though you know that the fall and the flu season is coming—to prepare for a second wave. There's no second wave plan, despite receiving billions of dollars from the federal government in the summer.

Yes, Bill 204 does have certain measures, like the rent freeze, which we have been calling for for quite some time. In fact—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member. It being 10:15, it is time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SMALL TRUCK BUSINESS OPERATORS

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I rise in the House today to speak on behalf of small truck business operators in northern Ontario. Owner-operators, as we call them, are independent, family-owned operations. It is a business that is passed from one generation to the other. But the current insurance regulatory framework is killing these small businesses.

Speaker, Ontario regulations impose a three-year benchmark for truckers, which means that business operators may have to pay a premium that may be five times higher. If they wish to hire young drivers or anyone willing to enter the business, there are extreme situations, like Peter LaRocque in the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane, who cannot hire his own 30-year-old son, even if he has completed the provincially mandated training, received 200 hours of in-class and on-road training and has operated a tractor-trailer for more than two years.

Speaker, business operators like Peter LaRocque, Guy Nolet, Gaëtan Dorval and Don Godard are those heroes who ensured that food was on the shelves and that medicine would arrive to our pharmacies during the early period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I demand the Minister of Finance to once and for all side with the small business owners of this province and put an end to the insurance underwriting rules that are killing small, independent businesses.

ABDUL RASHID ATHAR

Mr. Michael Coteau: As we know, social isolation is becoming a bigger problem for people as COVID continues to spread here in Ontario.

I'd like to take a moment to really thank one of my constituents in Don Valley East who literally stepped up and who is trying to change the behaviour associated with social isolation. Abdul Rashid Athar immigrated from Pakistan. He's a Canadian who lives in my riding of Don Valley East and lives in Flemingdon Park. He's an avid walker and he puts in 14,000 to 15,000 steps a day, something he learned from his father.

Looking at his community during the pandemic and noticing that more and more people were becoming isolated, he started to get out there and talk to people by putting up posters, meeting people and letting people know that they could actually get out and start to walk.

He got a grant from the Balsam Foundation, and more and more people started to join him in this initiative. Collectively, through this initiative, they've put in 23 million steps and covered almost 18,000 kilometres around Toronto.

It's this type of initiative that I think as legislators we need to recognize in this House, as heroes step up and actually motivate people in our community to get out of their homes, and of course to make sure that they're safe, but at the same time, get the physical exercise they need.

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: It is a privilege to rise today to speak to an important and symbolic day of recognition of francophones in our province. September 25 is Franco-Ontarian Day, a celebration dedicated to recognizing the history and strength of Franco-Ontarians.

On this day in 1975, the Franco-Ontarian flag, created by history professor Gaétan Gervais and political science student Michel Dupuis, was first flown at the University of Sudbury.

Je suis également fier de dire que, grâce à mon projet de loi 182, adopté en troisième lecture lundi, ce drapeau attend la sanction royale pour être dès lors un emblème officiel de la province de l'Ontario. Cet accomplissement personnel est celui que je porterai avec moi pour le reste de ma vie.

À l'occasion de la fête franco-ontarienne, nous reconnaissons en tant qu'Ontariens une communauté fondatrice, une communauté qui est présente dans ce pays depuis plus de 400 ans, à compter de 1613 avec l'arrivée de l'explorateur français Samuel de Champlain. À cette occasion, nous reconnaissons les nombreuses contributions culturelles, sociales, économiques et politiques des francophones à notre province. Nous nous engageons, en tant que législateurs, à continuer de travailler pour que les francophones bénéficient de la protection de leurs droits linguistiques.

I am looking forward to the day when the beautiful Franco-Ontarian flag will join the others in this chamber as a reminder to all future MPPs and all future generations that will visit this House of the rightful place of Franco-Ontarians in our province.

Vive la francophonie.

GORDIE HOWE INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE INDIGENOUS ART PROJECT

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, allow me to tell you a current story about our living history.

We all know the First Nations people were here long before we arrived. Some of us accept that we need to consult with the First Nations on major projects we undertake on their ancestral lands. A case in point: the new international border crossing—the Gordie Howe bridge—between Windsor and Detroit.

1020

Native artists and volunteers from the Walpole Island First Nation are involved with the bridge builders in a massive undertaking. They're creating huge panels which

will be erected on the main pillar of the bridge on the Canadian side—painted panels on all four sides of that pillar—and Speaker, they'll eventually rise to something like 800 feet in the air. Just imagine. The panels they're working on now depict four bears: white, red, black and yellow bears, the sacred colours of the First Nations medicine wheel. Below the bears, there will be four arrowheads sticking into the brown ground, representing ancestors who walked these lands long before we came along. Another panel being prepared is of the familiar eagle staff.

Island artist Teresa Altman is creating these panels, 17-year-old Daisy White is working on the Turtle Island creation story, and Caldwell First Nation artist Naomi Peters is also doing a panel with a hoop dancer. These panels will rise with the construction timetable and possibly be repurposed after construction is complete. It's an amazing undertaking and an exciting way to acknowledge our shared history.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr. Deepak Anand: As Canadians, we love sports, and our love turns into a passion when our athletes win medals. When I think of the value of a medal, I truly believe that we can't put a price tag on the medals, because the prestige that comes with it is priceless.

Sports are a big connector. Every time our athletes win a medal, it brings the whole country together, celebrating the success of our athletes as their victory and success.

Supporting athletes from playground to podium is an important part of making Ontario the best place to train and play sports. That is why, through the Quest for Gold program, the government of Ontario is providing \$6.36 million in direct financial assistance to 1,438 high-performance athletes to ensure they can pursue their dreams of excellence at home in Ontario.

I would like to say thank you to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, Lisa MacLeod, for supporting our champions. Quest for Gold funding benefited 83% of Olympic and 95% of Paralympic athletes from Ontario who participated in the 2018 games.

I want to give a special shout-out to the four recipients from Mississauga–Malton: Radane Wright, Navreet Suhan, Mary Adarkwa and Kyle Duke-Simpson. I'm proud of you. Congratulations on being a Quest for Gold athlete.

Due to COVID-19, this year has been challenging. I wish the best of success to all recipients of Quest for Gold this year. I hope this funding allows you to reach the stars and the medals. You want to push yourself to be the best you can. We look forward to your success, as your success is our victory.

HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, do you believe in miracles? I believe in miracles, and miracles have names. A name like Landon, a little boy from Manitoulin Island

who survived his cancer treatment. A name like Elijah—I call him the “Little Bean.” He’s from Elliot Lake. He’s my little heart warrior.

And just last night, I had Drew, who came into my condo and spent the night with me, along with his mom. He’s a two-year-old boy. By the way, he sang me his ABCs last night and he did a little bit of a fashion show for me. But his mom, Malisha Alloway, and Dylan Spooner were also there. His grandma, who is Oma, who normally comes down, unfortunately, is in the Sudbury district hospital getting treatment. I hope you’re doing well, Oma. I’ll see you next time during Drew’s visit. But Opa surprised me with a visit last night. They were up here for his regular visit down to SickKids. Since he was born, he’s had esophagus challenges and multicystic kidney issues. He’s got a variety of issues.

But the reason why I raise this—and I want to go back. Remember when I talked to you about miracles? Those miracles happen, and they happen just down the street from here over at SickKids. There are some amazing things that are happening there, and day in and day out, over the course of the years that I’ve been elected as the member for Algoma–Manitoulin, I’ve seen, I’ve lived and I’ve experienced all these miracles.

I want to thank the doctors, the nurses and all the health care professionals for your care, your love and your attention. To all the great people of this province, thank you, thank you, thank you.

COVID-19 RESPONSE IN SCARBOROUGH CENTRE

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: This is just a quick tribute to the people of Scarborough Centre and Scarborough more generally. We’re going through very difficult times, but the people of Scarborough are truly rallying. I just want to give a few shout-outs to some of our Scarborough super stars:

J’Danse dance studio held an outdoor recital where they rented a huge stage for their kids just so that they could see each other and dance.

Baskits: Robin is running this place amazingly. They are seeing growth. She is hiring people, and I was actually visiting when she announced to four staff that they’re getting raises during this time.

Cas Co Signs is working so hard to get signage that all of our businesses need to the community.

Energy Shack: You’re thriving and you’re supporting your very loyal customer base. I am one of them.

And Nova Ristorante, the winner of the Big Hearts award: Even as you’re struggling, you’re still committed to charity and helping the community.

I want to thank all of the amazing and resilient people of Scarborough Centre. I saw many of you on my ice cream tour, and I was so happy to connect and share in the common experience that we’re currently going through. You truly give me hope, and although we’re going through unprecedented and extremely challenging times, this too shall pass, as all things pass. I know in my heart that the

people of Scarborough and Scarborough Centre will come back stronger than ever.

COVID-19 RESPONSE IN TORONTO–ST. PAUL’S

Ms. Jill Andrew: During COVID-19, my community has mourned the death of loved ones, devastating loss of income, small businesses and, for some, the loss of their home. Many seniors and disabled neighbours have seen their cupboards bare. But we are still here.

Our community is as strong as the Shofar, and to borrow from the teachings of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year in Jewish tradition, we continue to cry out with a full throat in our commitment to each other.

Thank you, Joanne, for dreaming up our first community food table. Thank you, Sheri, Honey, Rob Murphy, Robert, Ingrid, Prophetess, Abdisa, Gini and Megan for joining us in scaling this project. Our message was simple: Take what you need and give what you can. Thank you to our 100-plus volunteers who have helped us grow. And thank you to my staff and to my amazing riding association.

Speaker, we have about seven food banks that serve our community, four hot meals programs, six Out of the Cold program drop-in shelters and several community gardens, but it’s never enough. Many of these supports shuttered during COVID; some still are. And for some, that has meant social isolation and a lack of access to the very basic needs that make us human.

As Sharon, a single mother, told me during the pandemic, “Jill, may you never have to hear the screams of your hungry child.” Her words continue to haunt me.

St. Paul’s, I see you and I will continue to stand with you.

WORLD TOURISM DAY

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I rise today to draw attention to an important date for tourism here in Ontario and across the globe. On September 27, the world commemorates the 40th anniversary of World Tourism Day. This year has been designated as the Year of Tourism and Rural Development to promote the potential of tourism to create jobs and opportunities in rural areas like my riding of Niagara West.

Mr. Speaker, it would be an understatement to say that 2020 has not been the best year for tourism here in Ontario or, frankly, anywhere else in the world. Tourism has always been a key economic driver here in Ontario, supporting more than 400,000 jobs and generating over \$36 billion of economic activity. Tourism supports a spectacular double bottom line: contributing to the economic growth of our province and to our cultural identity and pride of place. But this sector was hit hardest, was hit first and will take the longest to recover.

Throughout this crisis, our top priority has been the health and well-being of the people of Ontario, as it should, and it will remain so. But World Tourism Day

gives us a chance to thank Ontario's tourism and hospitality workers for all that they do and to acknowledge all they've been through in this difficult year.

On World Tourism Day, we recognize the important role tourism plays in smaller rural communities in Ontario, in the north and other places across Ontario. These areas and sectors that are heavily reliant on visitors internationally and from the US have suffered greatly, and I know that the minister is working with them to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on this industry.

I invite all members of the House to celebrate World Tourism Day this coming Sunday, September 27, and to remember that Ontario is yours to discover.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Stan Cho: Today, I rise to recognize the small businesses, non-profits and community organizers who have stepped up during the last six months to provide essential support and PPE to those in need. Through all of our communities, I've seen thousands of Ontarians deliver food, run errands and connect with seniors and vulnerable people during COVID-19 as part of the government's partnership with SPARK Ontario.

1030

In my riding of Willowdale, hundreds of volunteers have been generously giving their time and money to serve our community through the Willowdale Covid Response Network, the Kindness Project, Valleyview day program and other groups. Small businesses such as Luglife and Levelwear have donated PPE to organizations like the Canadian Helen Keller Centre and Willowdale Welcome Centre.

Most recently, I was invited by my constituent, Andy, and his mom, Mrs. Chung, to visit their family-owned small business, Soletta Dry Cleaners, to pick up over 500 cloth masks, masks that will be donated to Eva's Satellite, a youth facility in Willowdale that helps provide shelter, transitional housing and programming for young people. When I arrived at their store, Andy and his mom were hard at work sewing and packaging masks in between serving their regular customers. When asked why they were donating, their reason was simple. They said, "We want to support our community, because our community has always supported us."

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Andy and Mrs. Chung. They truly embody the Ontario spirit. The people of Ontario's compassion, grit and willingness to assist one another is what makes me proud to call Ontario home.

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

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga Centre has informed me that she has a point of order.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Although we do not need unanimous consent to wear our beautiful Franco-Ontarian

pins, I'd like to encourage all members of this assembly to wear theirs proudly. As of this afternoon, this will become an official emblem of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear a Franco-Ontarian pin today. Agreed? Agreed.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. Families are watching across Ontario with growing concern as our province slides backward in our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. People have been desperately waiting for news from the Premier about the plan that the Ford government has apparently been working on since the mid-summer.

Today, CBC News reports that they have a copy of a plan which is entirely incomplete, despite us being in the midst of the second wave, and has virtually no investment—none whatsoever—in containing outbreaks in schools and no investment—virtually nothing—to address the serious risks in long-term care.

Why, with the second wave of this pandemic upon us, is this government still scrambling to chase the crisis?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, we are prepared for a second wave, which is happening in other countries in the world and across Canada as well. We knew this was going to happen. We have been preparing for it.

The plan that appeared in the CBC article was a very early draft of the plan. We've been working on it for several months. What appeared then was a portion of what we're planning to do, and we are unveiling our plan as we speak. We have indicated several aspects of it. But we have a comprehensive Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19 plan that contains six elements and that is based on protecting our most vulnerable citizens in long-term-care homes, retirement homes, other congregate living settings and in education as well.

I would be happy to speak about the plan further in my supplemental response.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ever since cases began to increase weeks and weeks ago, the Premier's unpreparedness and feigned surprise have garnered widespread criticism throughout the medical community.

The backlog of tests is growing. The Premier couldn't even say yesterday how many people had been turned away from testing. Cash-strapped hospitals say the system is "heading for a crash." To quote the medical director of

the Michael Garron Hospital, the plan is “wholly insufficient.”

Why has the Premier waited until the second wave is well under way to even begin to take any action?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, our Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19 plan is integrated. It’s complex. It addresses all of these issues. It hasn’t even been fully rolled out to the public yet. That is what we are in the process of doing. It is so integrated and complex that each individual part of it deserves its own day to be discussed, because there are so many elements to it.

The plan is focused on six different areas: maintaining strong public health measures, including the continued expansion of testing and case and contact management. We are building on what we have already built very quickly in the last few months, but we’re building on that again. And I will remind everyone here that we have now exceeded over 40,000 tests per day in Ontario, and we are building on that. We will be close to 50,000 very shortly.

We’re implementing the largest flu immunization program in Ontario’s history. We’re accelerating efforts to reduce health service backlogs—

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, a plan to deal with the second wave of this pandemic should have been in place before the second wave actually happened. It should have been in place before. Now we have an incomplete plan that is several weeks late and billions of dollars short. Instead of a plan to cap class sizes, to staff long-term-care homes and to end the chaos in testing sites, we see a government that is once again chasing the crisis and a Premier who is angrily blaming everyone but himself for the lack of preparedness in this province.

Why, with the second wave of the pandemic upon us, is this government still scrambling?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say, through you, Speaker, to the leader of the official opposition that we have a comprehensive plan that we are already implementing. We have already taken steps—and have over all of the summer months—to be prepared for a dramatic increase in the number of cases of COVID-19 that we have coming forward with the flu season approaching, with the issues that we have in trying to deal with the backlogs, the procedures and surgeries that we had to postpone during wave 1 and with the increase in patients that we’re receiving because we are doing the infection prevention and control in our long-term-care homes by decanting some of those residents back into hospital where they will continue to be safe and healthy.

We have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into implementing all of these measures and dealing with the situation so that today we can handle those increased volumes in terms of testing, the lab tests that need to be done and making sure that we can keep our vulnerable populations safe. That’s what we are doing now.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier: The government’s leaked plan is especially concerning for residents of long-term-care homes. Yesterday, there were already 31 homes in outbreak, and that compares to only 19 on the weekend. So in a couple of days’ time, it went from 19 to 31.

Long-term-care operators, staff and residents have all been imploring this government to adopt infection control and prevention plans and help them to deal with that, but the incomplete plan falls drastically, drastically short of what’s absolutely needed for our long-term-care system.

So my question is: Why is protecting seniors in long-term care missing from the plan?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: The draft plan that was received by the CBC was just a draft. It was an early draft that went through several different iterations dealing with primary, secondary and post-secondary students; dealing with protecting our most vulnerable citizens: people in long-term-care homes, in retirement homes, in other congregate living settings for people with perhaps intellectual disabilities.

All of that is contained as part of our plan because we need to limit the community spread which is now dealing with people in our community and moving into some of our long-term-care homes, which we are dealing with as well.

My colleague the Minister of Long-Term Care and I are working together to deal with the situation with our long-term-care homes to make sure we can continue with the testing that needs to be done and also to limit the community transmission, which is why we are talking to people on a daily basis about how they need to please continue to follow public health measures: keeping that physical distancing, wearing a mask, frequent hand hygiene and staying home if you feel ill. That is—

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

The supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in a letter to long-term-care operators earlier this month, the government literally walked away from any responsibility for staffing shortages, and I’m going to quote what the ministry said to these homes: “Staffing is ultimately the responsibility of the licensee....

“Homes that are part of a chain are encouraged to look to the chain to assist in addressing staffing issues....

“Going forward, the supply of hospital resources is becoming more scarce ... and they may not be available to assist to the extent that you may require.”

1040

The government is walking away from the help that long-term care needs. In other words, these homes are on their own. After the horrors of last spring, where the Premier promised he wouldn’t spare any expense to protect seniors in long-term care, why is he breaking his promise?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. That is categorically wrong. This is a situation where we have a comprehensive plan that will address the issues in long-term care to stabilize homes, and we have never stopped working on this. It has been continuous, in fact, with even more focus—knowing a second wave is coming—to stabilize the homes, to stabilize the staffing. There is a robust plan. There are dollars behind it. We are continuing to work with IPAC, investing capital for modifications of homes and, as well, increased personnel. This is ongoing, and we are in consultation with our sector, to understand their needs and continue to meet them, particularly with the IPAC situation.

I want to remind you that we have never stopped working on this. It is our government's number one priority—the safety and well-being of residents and staff in long-term care—and we will continue to focus on this.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the quote that I just repeated to the government is the result of the consultation. The result of the consultation the minister's talking about was basically a letter to long-term-care-home providers that they're on their own and that they have to solve their own problems with staffing.

The Premier has yet to show any sort of plan to deal with the staffing challenges in our long-term-care homes. In fact, he's making it clear that the government doesn't have one and has no intention of providing one—that's what that letter says.

Now, we all know that the government hasn't done enough to get ready for the second wave in the first place, but, in long-term care, this is literally a matter of life and death, and the deaths are occurring again in the second wave.

When will the government acknowledge the very real danger the second wave poses for residents of long-term care and make the desperately needed investments that operators, staff, residents and the government's own experts have been calling for?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. I'll repeat: Next week, we will be rolling out a comprehensive plan that addresses a robust number of long-term-care issues: stabilizing homes, helping with IPAC, helping with staff.

Our homes need to be reminded that they need to do as much as they possibly can as well. This is a collaborative effort. Multiple ministries, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontario Health, Public Health Ontario, Ottawa Public Health—where some of the homes are hardest hit with those outbreaks right now, but they are stabilizing. I am receiving information every day. I'm in constant contact with the hospital involved and the medical officer of health in Ottawa to know what is happening on the ground, and the majority of our outbreaks have no resident cases.

Wave 1, we had many learnings from that, and we will continue to focus on long-term care.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Health. The CBC is reporting that the government's now-leaked draft fully comprehensive plan will plow hundreds of millions of dollars into for-profit health care—that part is not a surprise. But for months, hospitals have pleaded with the government for funding and collaboration to deal with the pending crisis of a second wave. The public health care system is fully capable of carrying out surgeries and diagnostics when the government actually invests in public care. But this government, according to the plan, is choosing to ignore them. So now, our hospitals are literally laying off nurses while the plan promotes for-profit clinics.

Why is this government ramming through for-profit health care instead of investing in publicly paid for and publicly delivered health care that Ontarians deserve?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: That is categorically wrong, I would say to the member—absolutely, categorically wrong. Our fall plan—and it was only a draft, I will continue to tell you; it was only a draft of that plan that the CBC received. It—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the official opposition and the independent members to come to order.

Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: It has gone through several other iterations. It has changed significantly from the draft that the CBC obtained.

But I can tell you that what we are doing as part of our fall plan is to work on the several hundred thousand tests and surgeries that were postponed because of the first wave. We don't want to do that anymore, because people have been waiting. I'm sure you all have constituents who have been waiting for months to have knees or hips replaced or to have cardiac or cancer surgery. We don't want to have to do that anymore. Our public resources, our public hospitals are working as hard as they can, but we need to work through this backlog as we face a second wave of COVID-19 and as we face flu vaccinations and flu season coming forward.

I will have more to say in my supplemental.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's bad enough that private health care was even in the draft plan; the hospitals need funding and support, not shifting precious public dollars into for-profit health care.

The Ontario Hospital Association said the plan for dealing with the backlog of health care should be built from the ground up in partnership with hospitals. They said, "It will need to be implemented by doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff, who'll need time and resources to

continue mobilizing.” Yet instead of working with hospitals, doctors, nurses and front-line heroes, the government continues to listen to insiders with deep pockets. They’re even issuing pink slips to nurses.

Why is this government refusing to invest in public health care to clear these backlogs? But more importantly, why is there always money available for for-profit care when we have a public system? Publicly delivered health care is what we need, and that’s what we need to keep. Why are we always fighting you for it?

Hon. Christine Elliott: There is absolutely no fight going on about that. We are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in our public hospitals to allow them to continue to deliver excellent patient-centred care. But we are in the middle of a pandemic—have you noticed?

We have hundreds of thousands of procedures that we have to move forward with. We also have independent health facilities that have always been there. We’re not creating any more; they have always been there, and we need to use every resource that we can right now in order to deal with COVID and to deal with these procedures.

As a matter of fact, the Ontario Medical Association just issued a release yesterday where they are encouraging the government to provide necessary resources to increase capacity and enable more procedures and services, including expanding independent health facilities, and so what we are trying to do is to make sure that we use all of our public facilities. We have given hundreds of millions of dollars to our hospitals, and they are doing excellent work, but the reality—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member will take her seat. The Leader of the Opposition has to come to order.

The next question.

BUILDING CODE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, since day one, you have been a strong advocate of modernizing Ontario’s burdensome building code. You have been focused on taking a complex document that was overlooked by previous governments and using it to stimulate our economy, while maintaining Ontario’s high standards for energy conservation and public safety.

Our government is committed to reducing barriers to Ontario’s manufacturers to keep the cost of construction affordable and, at the same time, make housing more affordable as well. Minister, I understand that on August 27, 2020, you and our Solicitor General signed the reconciliation agreement on construction codes, so, Minister, could you please share more about this exciting initiative with the House?

1050

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington for his advocacy. I also want to thank him for some of the projects that I got to tour in

his riding. He’s a real champion when it comes to the housing file.

Our government is committed to reducing red tape and regulatory burdens that cause unnecessary delays, duplications and barriers. That’s why I was excited to join with the Solicitor General in signing the reconciliation agreement on construction codes under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement last month. By taking this very important step, our government is committed to further harmonizing Ontario’s building code and Ontario’s fire code with the national construction codes. This harmonization will reduce barriers related to trade, product manufacturing, building design and maintenance. We’re also committed to continuing to work with our federal, provincial and territorial counterparts to reduce all unnecessary barriers to interprovincial trade while putting the people of Ontario first.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Minister, for your historic work on this file. I’m also reassured to hear your continued commitment to further harmonize our building code with the national standard, while ensuring that buildings in Ontario remain among the safest and most accessible in North America.

Our government continues to work to cut unnecessary red tape. I’m interested to hear more about what the reconciliation agreement entails and how it will help Ontario. Minister, could you please explain the key elements of this signed agreement?

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks again for that excellent question.

The reconciliation agreement contains several key elements for our government. It will ensure timely and consistent adoption of construction codes across Canada so that the same rules are in place at the same time. It will also transform the national code development system, including a new governance structure that is more responsive to both provinces and territories. And it will ensure there is digital access to free national construction codes right across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to reducing barriers to Ontario’s success across every sector of our economy, and the building code is just one example of that. Thank you for the question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. It has been a week since the Conservative members defeated our motion to cap class sizes at 15 kids. We’re still hearing of more collapsed classes of 25 or 30, with no way to keep our children physically distanced. But yesterday, the Premier told the press that classes were capped at 15 in Ottawa, in Toronto and in Peel. I have to ask, Mr. Speaker: Why, then, are we hearing of collapsed kindergarten classes in the Ottawa area with 27 little ones; or in Toronto, in my own riding, with grade 4 classes of 30; or in Mississauga, where we have more kindergarten classes

collapsed together with 25 or more kids? This is happening all across the province. The government failed our students by holding back when they should have put those children first.

Will the Premier correct that error today and give us a fully funded plan to protect our schools in a second wave?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The Premier is indeed correct: In high schools and the adapted models of Ottawa, Peel, Halton, Toronto, York and many other boards across the province, this government did in fact mandate a maximum of 15 students in a blended model, taking the advice of the public health table.

Mr. Speaker, we have really broken down the silos of government between the Ministries of Education and Health Care, ensuring that we defer and we work with and be informed by the public health table and our doctors at the COVID command table, working with the Minister of Health to ensure that our schools are safe, as noted as recently as this week by local public health officers. Every layer of prevention is in place to ensure that they are safe. We have ensured the funding is in place, the evidence has been informed by the chief medical officer, and obviously we will continue, as we see this risk rise, to do more, invest more and be more prepared to deal with the second wave as well as with the flu campaign.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, schools are not okay. Daycares are not okay. Virtual schools are not okay. Our province is not okay right now. As of today, we have 31 more cases of COVID-19 in our schools. We're up to a total of 210 in 178 schools across this province, and we know that that's going to keep rising, unfortunately.

Families across the province are watching those numbers very closely, wondering if their school is going to be next, worried how they're going to get time off work to wait in a day-long testing line. Speaker, parent to parent, I need the Premier to understand that the only thing worse than dealing with this uncertainty is knowing how hard it's going to be on our kids when they are forced out of schools again because this government failed them.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier look at what's happening on the ground, stop making these excuses and bring forward a second wave plan that's going to keep us at a 15 cap for our schools and for our children?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The Premier has been clear, as well as the Deputy Premier, that the government is increasing testing capacity province-wide, moving from 25,000 to 35,000 to 40,000 and upwards of 50,000. I know that the Deputy Premier will be unveiling further plans to expand beyond that.

Mr. Speaker, we have expanded through pharmacies: an additional 60 pharmacies available as of tomorrow for asymptomatic testing. We are expanding capacity, including in our labs—within our schools. We benefit from the single-largest investment in flu vaccination—700,000 more ordered, \$70 million provided to buy more

vaccinations—that I know our young people will benefit from.

Obviously, in the context of our schools, we're working very closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to ensure those classroom numbers stay low, that the additional layers of prevention are in place, and that we continue to follow the public health advice as we respond to COVID-19.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Premier. Leaked documents obtained by the CBC show that this government presented a last-minute plan that includes sneaking private health care into Ontario, specifically around surgeries being performed by the private sector. Can the Premier tell this House what exactly this means and who actually made this recommendation?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I will repeat once again that the draft that was obtained by the CBC was a draft. It has changed during that time. It addresses many of the issues that you have raised, but the issue with respect to dealing with the several hundred thousand procedures and surgeries that were delayed as a result of wave 1 are now being dealt with.

People have waited long enough. They've already waited months to have orthopaedic surgeries. They have waited for cancer surgeries, for cardiac surgeries. They shouldn't have to wait any longer. Our public hospitals are doing a wonderful job. They are working under very, very stressful circumstances. They are doing their best.

We are taking a regional approach to dealing with some of those surgeries and procedures, but a time like this, during the course of an epidemic—we are in wave 2—at this point, we are seeing our case numbers rise, but we still need to complete those surgeries and procedures. If some of our independent health facilities have that ability to help us, they should be doing that. We aren't creating any more of them. They have always been there. They have always—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Michael Coteau: There is no secret about this government's agenda. It has been known in the past that the Minister of Long-Term Care has advocated for the privatization of the health care system here in Ontario, but to use the pandemic as way to push privatization here in Ontario is a new low even for this government.

Earlier this week, we found out that 100 public sector nurses were laid off in the Minister of Health's own riding. How could the government lay off nurses when we have a crisis in long-term care; we have a crisis in public education, where cases are increasing; we have a crisis in testing, where we're seeing people wait days to get tests and in lines for eight hours? How can they actually push privatization and fire nurses during this pandemic?

We've seen the report, and it's starting to connect the dots. Mr. Speaker, as we enter a second wave in this pandemic, can the Premier confirm to this House that not one single health care worker will be fired during the pandemic?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The government side has to come to order. Start the clock.

Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the member opposite, through you, Mr. Speaker, that that is an absolutely ridiculous assertion. That is absolutely incorrect. We believe in our public health care system. That is what we're trying to transform.

Before the pandemic hit us, we brought forward our plan to transform Ontario health care, the creation of Ontario Health. If we had not created Ontario Health, can you imagine getting 14 LHINs to agree to a plan? We would be in a terrible—

Interjection.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the Minister for Health. The member for Don Valley East has to come to order.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Speaker.

We are in the midst of transforming our public health care system to make it responsive to the needs of patients across the province, and to integrate care to make sure that people are receiving the care they need wherever they are: whether they're in hospital, whether they're in long-term care or whether they're receiving home and community care. We are committed to public health care—nothing private—but there are some private health facilities that have already existed in our system for many, many years through previous governments going—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will ask both sides of the House to come to order.

The next question.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: COVID-19 has impacted the systems and the services that Ontarians rely on day in and day out. Some of these impacts are seen by Ontarians in the way that we work, shop and eat. Others are less obvious and perhaps only noticed when they are not there when we look for them. Our justice system, which is one of the cornerstones of our life here in Ontario, is one that Ontarians may not always encounter, but when they do, they expect it to be there for them.

On Tuesday, Ontario's justice partners marked the annual opening of the courts, and with it was an opportunity to reflect on the justice system, on what they have learned in the past year and the opportunities that can be improved upon in the justice system in the year ahead.

My question to the Attorney General is if he could tell the House and the people across this province what our government is doing to ensure that our justice system remains strong during COVID-19 and beyond.

Hon. Doug Downey: I want to thank the member for Niagara West for this question and for all his potential and ongoing input in so many practical areas.

This is an important issue for Ontarians. It impacts all Ontarians. The people in the province need to know the justice system will be there when they need it the most. They need to be able to access it.

Earlier this week I had the privilege of attending the opening of the courts virtually with three Chief Justices of our province, who are tremendous justice partners. The message I want delivered and the message I want all Ontarians to hear is that we are, in fact, delivering and ensuring that the justice system remains functional during COVID through the rapid implementation of online, remote and in-person matters. And, yes, we will continue to build on this success to drive change that will improve the lives for all those who need to access the justice system.

Over the course of the summer, we introduced several important initiatives to establish new and innovative ways of offering justice services remotely, in-person and online. There are more than 400 new filings online. We have access to data online that wasn't there before. We've modernized estates and wills. I will have more to say in my supplementary.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the Attorney General for his response and for providing Ontarians with the assurance that the justice system in Ontario is here for Ontarians when they need it.

It's encouraging to hear that these modernization efforts were able to be implemented in short order. I know one of the things that I've heard is that the amount of work that has been done in the last six months normally would take six years, and I want to thank the minister for his advocacy on that.

Ontarians need to know that the strides that have been made this summer will not go by the wayside as we continue on our path to recovery here in Ontario. They need to know that they have a government that understands and is listening.

Could the Attorney General please explain what the government is doing to ensure that these modernizations are sustained as we move forward?

Hon. Doug Downey: In fact, we are transforming the system; we're not just automating the system. We are moving the system forward decades in a matter of months. Our government has shown that we have the vision to bring forward practical changes to the justice system. The changes we have introduced will have impacts well beyond the crisis.

Over the summer, we brought in Thomson Reuters CaseLines digital document submission. It's a sharing and e-filing system that will make it better for people in remote

or in-person matters; this has been called for by the profession and by the public for decades. We passed legislation to allow provincial offences courts to operate remotely and reduce in-person court appearances. We fast-tracked legislation to allow online notaries and commissioners. We're building a justice system that is more responsive, more resilient and better prepared to overcome not only this challenge, but future challenges.

Initiatives like these that I've mentioned were previously regarded as too great to overcome, but we had a vision, we focused, we worked with our partners, and we got it done. Mr. Speaker, to the member from Don Valley East: That is how you connect the dots.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is for the Minister of Education. Speaker, every London parent's worst fear came true this week when a student tested positive for COVID-19 at H.B. Beal Secondary School. Parents have been sounding the alarm bell for months, demanding that this government take safety concerns in the classroom seriously. Instead, cases are going up, and parents and students are waiting hours in line to get tested, if at all.

Ontarians can't even gather in groups larger than 10 indoors, unless it's a school. When will this government do the right thing and cap all class sizes at 15 before we see another outbreak in London schools?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Obviously, we have worked on a plan province-wide that has been supported and endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, an additional \$1.3 billion in net investment, providing school boards with the financial latitude that they need to hire more educators, reduce classroom sizes, improve ventilation and, ultimately, ensure that all of the public health advice is implemented.

In London, the public and Catholic school boards are well resourced. They are hiring more educators. They have reduced the classroom sizes below the provincial average, pre-COVID, and obviously we'll continue to be there for them.

We recognize the risk. It continues to evolve, and the province needs to continue to really do everything we can. I think at a more macro level, increasing capacity in testing, increasing vaccination for young people and for families, these are the types of steps that are going to help reduce the risk and improve the safety of our communities and our schools.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Experts such as at SickKids and RNAO don't support your bargain-basement plan. COVID outbreaks in our schools should be a wake-up call for this government.

Parents like Lily in my riding want to send their kids to school, but only if it's safe. Lily's son was supposed to start kindergarten in a class of 16 at Orchard Park Public School. Then she discovered that her son's class collapsed

into a group of 26 students. Lily told me, "Safety wasn't prioritized. Pedagogy wasn't prioritized. For [the] government, saving money means more than [saving] lives or [providing] the best education possible. It's a pandemic—we can no longer live like we did prior to March."

Speaker, why is this minister forcing pre-pandemic class sizes on kindergarteners instead of trying to keep them safe?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, 35 million additional dollars was provided to the Thames Valley District School Board, and an additional \$10.6 million to the London District Catholic School Board. Quite obviously, the Premier and the government are doing everything we can to provide the investments in place to our school boards to reduce classroom sizes, to improve ventilation, to hire more custodians and cleaning staff and, obviously, to make sure buses, playgrounds and our classrooms are safe.

At each and every level in this province and in this country, we lead the nation by any measurement, with more than twice the area of expenditure than the British Columbia New Democrats. We're doing that because we understand the risk. We'll do everything we can in our province, communities and, most especially, our schools to reduce the risk and keep all students safe in Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Back on May 28, the Premier promised that we are now working to prepare our long-term-care homes and that we will spare no expense.

Earlier in question period, the minister said there was a stabilization happening in long-term care. But front-line workers and health care leaders are saying that nothing has changed, and they're on the brink of another disaster. As of yesterday, there were outbreaks in 31 long-term-care homes.

Speaker, we all knew months ago about the staffing shortages in long-term care. So can the minister please tell this House and the people of Ontario how many new PSWs and registered nurses were hired over the summer for our long-term-care homes?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. As I said, next week, you will be hearing our comprehensive plan that addresses stabilization in our long-term care, including staffing, including IPAC, including PPE. All of these efforts have been ongoing.

In terms of our homes, the staffing supports are there. We are not only looking at increasing PSWs from a number of sources, but we are also looking at using—and are using right now—paramedics to support our homes in need.

And to your comment about the outbreaks, I want to remind everyone that an outbreak in long-term care means one resident or one staff member, and in the case of the staff member, that person is isolating at home. So the majority, 604 of our homes, have absolutely no resident cases.

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

1110

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It breaks my heart, actually, that the minister can't tell us how many new PSWs or registered nurses were hired over the summer. We all knew there was a staffing shortage. Heck, there was a report that said there was a staffing shortage. We knew a second wave was coming. We knew that our elders were the most vulnerable in long-term care. And now that we are in a second wave, to say that sometime maybe next week there might be some sort of plan released just isn't good enough.

Speaker, through you, I ask the minister why the government didn't hire additional personal support workers and registered nurses in our long-term-care homes to protect our elders?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question.

The reality is, you just don't snap your fingers and make staff appear. There is a process that we have been working very hard on since the very beginning—and not only PSWs, nurses, aides. We've—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South, come to order. The member for Davenport, come to order. The member for Niagara Centre, come to order. The member for Don Valley East, come to order.

The Minister of Long-Term Care to reply.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: The reality is, the neglect left by the previous government is so severe that we are requiring to use flexible emergency orders, amendments to regulations, to be able to create training capacity in our long-term-care homes, to create a pipeline and recruitment process for PSWs. The neglect of the previous government was so severe. It set the stage for the issues.

We are working extremely hard to make sure we're using all tools, whether it's PSWs, nurses, IPAC, paramedics, aides, and creating that flexibility for our homes. We will continue to do that despite the crises that were left by the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I am about to move to warnings because of the repeated interjections from a small number of members. Come to order.

The next question.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the minister of small business.

Many business owners I have spoken to in my community are facing significant challenges because of COVID-19. One of the biggest issues businesses are facing is outdated regulations. Ontario continues to have the highest number of regulatory requirements of any jurisdiction in Canada, in addition to an overly complex regulatory environment that hinders competitiveness by driving up costs for business.

I would like to thank the minister for coming to my riding of Richmond Hill, sharing at round tables, talking

to businesses and explaining and sharing to them the situation—how to help them.

Can you now tell the House how the government is taking action to make regulations better for people and businesses as they work towards recovery?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you to the member from Richmond Hill, and especially for her leadership in her community during this very tough time.

During this pandemic, we have completed many round tables and heard from many small business owners on the unique challenges that have been created by COVID-19. On April 28, in response to many of these conversations, we launched the COVID-19: Tackling the Barriers Web portal. This gave businesses the opportunity to pitch the government on temporary rule or process changes to help them get through this pandemic.

After receiving over 1,300 submissions and hosting over 90 round tables, we have implemented over 50 temporary changes and are investigating another 400. Some of these changes include enabling trucks to deliver 24/7 to areas across this province to keep our shelves stocked, and allowing municipalities to quickly pass temporary bylaws for the creation and extension of patios.

We will continue to remain committed to supporting businesses throughout.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much, Minister. This is good news for small businesses.

We know that because of the pandemic, small businesses continue to face many hurdles as they try to recover. Ontario still has too many regulations that are ineffective and outdated.

Can you please tell the House how our plan can allow Ontario and its businesses to have a more competitive advantage when it comes to unnecessary regulations so businesses and people can recover?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you for that question. Making Ontario more competitive by having a more efficient regulatory environment is a key priority of this government, something we have been focused on since being elected. We agree that less time on unnecessary regulations will free up Ontario businesses to focus on what is most important: recovering and re-emerging stronger than ever before.

That is why we passed a made-in-Ontario plan for growth, renewal and economic recovery, one that is focused on modernizing rules, digitizing government, and further tackling the barriers that COVID-19 has created.

Underpinning these changes to how Ontario does business is our commitment to seven modernization principles for government to consider before making decisions, one of the most important being digitizing. We're going to continue to work hard to address these—

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

The next question.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Jill Andrew: Speaker, to the Premier: This week is Gender Equality Week across Canada. I cannot think of a better time to remind this Conservative government that their broken COVID-19 policies have a disproportionate impact on the lives of women and their families. It is long overdue that they develop and implement an intersectional gender equity strategy, as I proposed last year.

Rachel is my constituent. She is seven and a half months pregnant and is the mother of two elementary school children. She had to wait five-plus hours to receive testing for her daughter at the Etobicoke General Hospital drive-through. Yes, you heard me correctly, Speaker: Etobicoke. In fact, she had to go twice, as she went beforehand and had to wait hours for her son's testing. Premier, the long wait time for testing—and for results—has mentally exhausted Rachel.

Also notably missing at the testing centres were enough public washrooms. There was one porta-potty for the endless lineup.

Premier, will you commit today to creating public testing centres in Toronto–St. Paul's, with extended hours, adequate staffing and public health resources so pregnant mothers like Rachel, with two kids strapped on her hip, don't have to travel cross-country to get a COVID test and fast results?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: We are already taking steps to expand testing centres and capacity across the system. We have reached, last weekend, over 40,000 tests that we were able to do in one day. We are rapidly getting to the point where we will be able to process over 50,000 tests in one day, and we'll continue from there.

Many of the assessment centres have already expanded their hours of service. We have also created some mobile pop-up centres to take some of the pressure away from some of the assessment centres. We have 148 of them across the province.

We also have other groups that are coming in to do the testing. Yesterday, we made an announcement in Huntsville that, as of Friday, there will be 60 pharmacies that will be available to test asymptomatic residents, and we're going to continue to expand that.

We have been ramping up since the beginning of COVID-19, and we will continue to do that to alleviate the strain on the assessment centres.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: If I suspect that I have COVID-19, I don't think it's smart for me to walk into a pharmacy where I could infect others, but that's just me.

Many in St. Paul's are frustrated with having to travel outside of our community to get tested. I have been told by some of my constituents that they have left the line because they're afraid of losing their jobs.

Speaker, the Premier promised all of us, the entire province, a robust COVID-19 fall preparedness plan. We're still waiting. And while we are waiting, the

COVID-19 numbers are soaring back to stage 1 numbers, and my community members have nowhere to go fast. Their Premier appears to be saying yes to COVID-19 tests for sale, but no to families who expect and deserve access to free public health COVID-19 testing.

Again, my question is to the Premier. Will the Premier commit to creating public testing centres in St. Paul's, including mobile testing assessment centres, so that my constituents can access tests and results fast and nearer to home?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I think it's really important to get back to the facts of the situation. The facts of the situation are that we are increasing capacity across the province, including across Toronto.

1120

Ms. Jill Andrew: Not fast enough. Not fast enough for Rachel.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, I can advise that we have 65% additional assessment centre capacity being added to the Toronto region between September 23 and September 30. Five assessment centres have increased their hours and capacity this week, including Women's College, Sunnybrook, Michael Garron, St. Joseph's and St. Michael's. We are adding increased volumes, and with respect to the testing in pharmacies, it will be asymptomatic patients or residents that are being referred there. This situation is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–St. Paul's will come to order.

I apologize to the Minister of Health. Please wind up your answer.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Speaker.

In fact, there will be a requirement to make an appointment to go to a pharmacy. They will be pre-screened there to make sure that they do not have symptoms. They will also be screened upon their arrival at the pharmacy to ensure the safety of the staff in the pharmacy, as well as the people that are shopping there. We recognize that there will be many seniors there. We want them to be safe, so we have put in all of those safety precautions for pharmacies.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Affaires francophones. Maintenant plus que jamais, dans les circonstances exceptionnelles que nous connaissons, il est essentiel que notre gouvernement soit à l'écoute de différents acteurs communautaires afin de répondre le mieux possible à leurs besoins.

J'aimerais remercier les organismes francophones sans but lucratif, tel que le Centre francophone du Grand Toronto, pour leurs efforts pendant la pandémie pour aider les plus vulnérables parmi nous. Ensemble, nous avons livré des repas aux aînés francophones ou encore fait des dons d'équipement de protection individuel à nos infirmières et à notre personnel de première ligne, qui travaillent très, très fort.

À la veille du jour des Franco-Ontariens, ma question est la suivante : comment la ministre s'assure-t-elle d'être à l'écoute de la communauté franco-ontarienne?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie ma collègue pour sa question très pertinente. Tout d'abord, avant la pandémie, je consultais de façon régulière les membres du Comité consultatif provincial sur les affaires francophones de l'Ontario. J'ai voyagé à travers la province pour rencontrer des francophones dans leurs régions pour parler directement des enjeux auxquels ils font face sur le terrain, et nous avons organisé, bien sûr, des tables rondes économiques.

Dès le début de la pandémie, j'ai rencontré de façon régulière aussi les membres de l'AFO pour entendre encore une fois directement d'eux ce qui se passe, quels sont les effets de la pandémie sur la communauté francophone.

Nous avons mis sur pied un comité consultatif sur la relation économique francophone. Co-présidé par Glenn O'Farrell, l'ancien PDG de TFO, et aussi Guy Matte, directeur général de la Fondation canadienne pour le dialogue des cultures, le comité unissait une grande diversité d'acteurs, dont les représentants de l'AFO, de la SÉO, du Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la capitale nationale et du Club canadien de Toronto, ainsi que des intervenants francophones de tous les sphères et milieux : affaires, tourisme, éducation, OBNL et bien plus encore.

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

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Merci, madame la Ministre, pour votre réponse, et merci encore pour votre soutien en contribuant à faire de mon projet de loi d'initiative parlementaire une réalité.

Cet après-midi, suite à la sanction royale du projet de loi 182, le drapeau franco-ontarien joindra l'améthyste, le huard, le pin blanc, le trillium, le tartan, le drapeau de l'Ontario et les armoiries comme symbole fier de l'Ontario.

Demain est la journée des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, une communauté de valeurs fortes, ancrée profondément dans l'histoire de notre province. Comment vous assurez-vous, madame la Ministre, de reconnaître l'important apport de la communauté francophone en Ontario?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie ma collègue encore une fois. C'est sous son leadership que nous avons enfin adopté le drapeau franco-ontarien comme emblème officiel de l'Ontario et je remercie ma collègue pour tout son travail sur ce dossier très important.

Je travaille également de concert avec les organismes franco-ontariens pour trouver des solutions aux défis rencontrés par les francophones affectés par la COVID-19. Nous avons eu de nombreuses discussions productives et enrichissantes. Nous reconnaissons l'importance de la francophonie et nous travaillons pour renforcer la francophonie ontarienne en mettant en oeuvre une série de recommandations et de mesures concrètes.

En plus de travailler pour améliorer les services en français et l'accès aux services en français, j'ai reconduit le Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne pour soutenir la communauté francophone dans leur

épanouissement culturel et économique. En effet, pour la deuxième année de suite, le PAFO comprend un volet de développement économique, et hier, monsieur le Président—

Le Président (L'hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. The next question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is to the Premier. This week, I heard from a parent in my riding, Angela Gamsby, whose two children attend elementary school in Port Colborne. She's a front-line health care worker and unable to keep her children home from school because she's busy being a hero at work. Her son's class has 29 students; her daughter's has 28. The kindergarten class has 30 kids in one classroom.

Will the Premier listen to the people in Niagara and across Ontario, listen to the evidence, and commit to keeping our children safe by capping class sizes at 15 students?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. In Niagara, the district school board, for example, has been provided with an additional \$71 million more to ensure they could do more hiring. In that board, we've actually seen 20 new public health nurses being hired specifically for schools, doubling the capacity that existed before COVID. We've also seen additional funding in mental health; in technology, to make sure low-income families at risk get access to Chromebooks and the Internet; additional funding for custodians, \$1 million roughly, Speaker; an additional investment in ventilation, over \$1 million there alone to improve air quality.

Speaker, we appreciate, having been to Niagara specifically with the parliamentary assistant and getting to visit public and Catholic schools—I was able to see first-hand the professionalism of our staff, the hard work on the ground and the absolute commitment we have together to reduce the risk in our schools.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: My own 12-year-old son is in a class with 27 kids.

No one knows where this minister is getting his numbers from or his facts from. What people in Ontario do know is that if we're going to keep our kids safe, we have to make decisions based on evidence, not make up evidence based on decisions.

Just this week, a high school in Niagara, Eastdale Secondary School in Welland, declared an outbreak. The Niagara public health pandemic hotline has been overwhelmed with parents concerned about the safety of their children. Parents are understandably worried about sending their children back into crowded classrooms where social distancing is impossible.

This minister and this government had a chance to do the right thing last week and vote with us to cap class sizes at 15; they chose not to. My constituents are telling me that they trusted this government to keep children safe. This government let them down. Why is this minister unwilling and unprepared to solve this crisis in our classrooms?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Well, Speaker, in the context of deferring to science and evidence, let's listen to Dr. Hirji, the Acting Medical Officer of Health, Niagara, where he said, "Given the situation right now, given the very sensible measures the province has recommended be put in place, I certainly think going back for in-person learning is very reasonable for children to be doing at this time." This was said just on the eve of back to school.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health of this province, the foremost authority who has provided advice to cabinet to help us get through the worst of this pandemic, has given his full stamp of approval, knowing full well that we have deferred to the science, ensuring layers of prevention, improving air quality, masking in our schools, improving cleaning in our schools, hiring more educators to ensure we distance these kids, cohorting them, as well as taking action to stagger the start.

We are listening to the science. We'll continue to do so, to do everything we can to make sure that all of our children are safe in this province.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Last week, the minister announced that all three levels of government would be working together to deliver much-needed public transit funding to Durham region. I am even more proud to know that Ontario has invested nearly \$40 million towards 11 new public transit infrastructure projects in Durham. This funding will go towards installing new protective shields on Durham public transit buses that will provide a physical barrier between transit users and transit vehicle operators. The region can now also replace 11 conventional buses with the region's first hybrid electric buses, reducing emissions and fuel costs, while providing transit users with a modern, safe and efficient transit system.

Would the minister tell us what this investment means to transit users in Durham region?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you to the member for asking the question today.

What a fantastic day it was for transit users in Durham. As the member mentioned, our announcement means a lot to Durham region and surrounding communities. Making investment in public transit infrastructure will get people where they need to go, safely and on time.

For example, let me share a story: Jacob's story. Jacob is a second-year animation student at Durham College in Oshawa. He lives in Bowmanville and relies on public transit to get to class. With our nearly \$40-million investment, Jacob can now look forward to a shorter, safer and more reliable commute.

It's stories like Jacob's that highlight the importance of making local priority transit infrastructure investments, and I hope there will be more to come.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Back to the minister: We have all heard the minister and the Premier both say that our government is investing \$144 billion—yes, with a B—in Ontario infrastructure over 10 years for broadband connectivity, transit, highways, schools and hospitals. We know that that is a record level of infrastructure investment.

While I'm glad that Durham region received this transit funding, the need for infrastructure renewal across the province remains. There are potholes so large on some roads that they cause damage to vehicles. And for many people, broadband infrastructure is so out of date that it is difficult to work and learn from home efficiently at a time when the need for reliable broadband has increased. Mr. Speaker, Ontario needs more supports to address its very real infrastructure deficit.

To the minister: When can Durham region and other communities across Ontario expect more investment, like this one last week?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I would like to thank the member for his great question again.

Ontario nominated public transit infrastructure projects to the federal government under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, or ICIP. The projects announced in Durham are part of more than 200 public transit projects we have submitted for review, and we're waiting for federal approval on several more, but we can't do it alone. That's why Premier Doug Ford has called on the federal government to speed up approvals and invest an additional \$10 billion per year over 10 years to get shovels in the ground on infrastructure projects, and that includes broadband, Mr. Speaker. Through strategic investments, we can continue to help improve the quality of life for all Ontarians.

It's time for Ontario to get its fair share of funding and get those shovels in the ground.

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

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

The House recessed from 1132 to 1300.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): 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' public business such that Mr. Hatfield assumes ballot item number 20 and Ms. Lindo assumes ballot item number 27.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACT, 2020

Ms. Sattler moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr28, An Act respecting Huron University College.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

MOVING ONTARIO FAMILY LAW FORWARD ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 FAISANT AVANCER LE DROIT DE LA FAMILLE EN ONTARIO

Mr. Downey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 207, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, the Courts of Justice Act, the Family Law Act and other Acts respecting various family law matters / *Projet de loi 207, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur le droit de la famille et d'autres lois en ce qui concerne diverses questions de droit de la famille.*

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Attorney General care to explain his bill?

Hon. Doug Downey: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We're determined to support families and protect vulnerable children. This bill moves family law forward by making it easier, faster and more affordable for Ontarians to resolve their family law matters. We know that family members encounter the family law system in sometimes the most difficult parts of their lives, and we're proposing these changes to relieve the burdens of an outdated system and make things easier, to move them forward to support children and families when they need it the most.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I have a petition here titled "Demand a Public Inquiry into Ontario's Long-Term-Care Homes." This has been signed by hundreds of my constituents of Parkdale-High Park.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the details from the Canadian Armed Forces report on Ontario's nursing homes are horrifying;

"Whereas the number of deaths in Ontario's long-term-care homes far exceed Walkerton, the SARS epidemic and

the Elizabeth Wettlaufer killings, all of which had public inquiries;

"Whereas Ontario's seniors have shouldered the heaviest burden throughout this pandemic while problems in long-term care started well before this crisis hit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act to: launch an independent, transparent and public inquiry into the COVID-19 crisis in our long-term-care system."

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Jill Andrew: I present this on behalf of our residents of Toronto-St. Paul's. The petition is titled "More Than a Visitor.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's guidelines restricting essential caregivers and support persons has increased social isolation and negatively impacted the mental, emotional, physical health and well-being of residents in congregate care settings;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement a COVID-19 essential caregiver plan which would:

"Recognize that essential caregivers (often family members and support persons) are more than just visitors, and that individuals have the right to access their essential caregivers in their agreed upon, preferred manner;

"Ensure that the provincial government cannot unilaterally develop policies regarding access to essential caregivers, and must consult residents, patients, families, experts and workers when developing new policies;

"Ensure that individuals cannot be prevented from accessing their essential caregiver(s), including during the state of emergency or the pandemic (COVID-19), while giving congregate settings the resources they need to safely implement this;

"Include a strategy that stabilizes staffing in congregate care settings and ensures the role of essential caregivers is to supplement care and support."

I couldn't support this petition more, Mr. Speaker, and I affix my signature.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition from a number of people across Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"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 Celsius;

"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, will sign it and deliver it to the table.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. I have a petition entitled “Fighting for Ontario’s Women.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas years of Liberal inaction on the things that matter, like child care and closing the gender pay gap, has made life harder and more expensive for women and families in Ontario;

“Whereas Conservative cuts to shelters, transitional housing and supports for women fleeing violence, the rollback of the minimum wage and the firing of thousands of teachers and nurses overwhelmingly hurts Ontario women;

“Whereas Ontario women and families deserve better than a government that takes things from bad to worse. They deserve a government that’s fighting for them and is on their side;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the government to reverse their cuts to the services that women and families rely on and start putting women at the centre of every decision they make.”

I fully agree, Speaker, and I’m going to sign it and make sure it gets down to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank Reshel Bantilan for sending in this petition.

“Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

“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 will have it delivered to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I have a petition here, titled “A Safe Plan to Reopen Schools and Child Care,” signed by my constituents of Parkdale–High Park. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” Premier Ford and Minister Lecce “have failed to provide the funding or the plan needed to ensure kids can return to schools and child care centres in a safe and supportive way; and

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“Whereas we need an immediate action plan;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create a plan that includes:

“—paid sick leave and parental leave in any modified return;

“—immediate funding to stabilize the child care sector to prevent fee increases and layoffs;

“—increased funding for teacher hiring, busing, school repairs and cleaning;

“—expanded funding for child-care and schools for more smaller classes;

“—real collaboration with front-line education workers, students, parents and school boards through a COVID-19 recovery school advisory group.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Jill Andrew: This petition is entitled “Raise ODSP/OW Shelter and Basic Needs Allowances Now.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the COVID-19 crisis means that more people than ever are relying on support from the government to help” us “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” two decades, “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,” petition the Legislative Assembly 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 the petition, affix my signature and hand it to the table.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition:

“Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on Ontario’s economy and workers; and

“Whereas a province-wide retrofit program initiated by the government of Ontario to enhance and improve public sector buildings, homes and businesses would stimulate the economy; and

“Whereas such a program would be an opportunity to create jobs for thousands of workers, including those who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19; and

“Whereas such a program would provide extensive job training to build Ontario’s skilled workforce, with a focus on creating more opportunities for women and people of colour in the trades; and

“Whereas such a program would include home and building retrofits that improve energy performance to save on energy bills, reduce climate pollution and address and implement public health measures, such as improving indoor air quality and/or improve accessibility for elders and people with disabilities;

“Therefore, we the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement and fund a province-wide building retrofit program as part of Ontario’s COVID-19 recovery plan.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition, will sign it and deliver it to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition entitled “A Safe Plan to Reopen Schools and Child Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” Premier Ford and Minister Lecce “have failed to provide the funding or the plan needed to ensure kids can return to schools and child care centres in a safe and supportive way; and

“Whereas we need an immediate action plan;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create a plan that includes:

“—paid sick leave and parental leave in any modified return;

“—immediate funding to stabilize the child care sector to prevent fee increases and layoffs;

“—increased funding for teacher hiring, busing, school repairs and cleaning;

“—expanded funding for child care and schools and for more smaller classes;

“—real collaboration with front-line education workers, students, parents and school boards through a COVID-19 recovery school advisory group.”

I agree 100%. I’m going to sign it and make sure it gets down to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jill Andrew: This petition is entitled “A Safe Plan to Reopen Schools and Child Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” the Premier and minister “have failed to provide the funding or the plan needed to ensure kids can return to schools and child care centres in a safe and supportive way; and

“Whereas we need an immediate action plan” now;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create a plan that includes:

“—paid sick leave and parental leave in any modified return;

“—immediate funding to stabilize the child care sector to prevent fee increases and layoffs;

“—increased funding for teacher hiring, busing, school repairs and cleaning;

“—expanded funding for child care and schools for more smaller classes;

“—real collaboration with front-line education workers, students, parents and school boards through a COVID-19 recovery school advisory group.”

I absolutely agree with this petition and affix my signature.

HEALTH CARE

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

“Whereas the ... government has passed omnibus legislation to drastically overhaul our health care system with no commitment to publicly delivered health services ... ; and

“Whereas every night hundreds of Ontario’s patients wait for care in hospital hallways, showers and TV rooms; and

“Whereas Ontario sits near the bottom of developed countries for hospital beds per patient and has the fewest registered nurses per patient in Canada;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Ontario government protect and invest in a robust, publicly funded and publicly delivered health care system and reject any further private delivery of health services.”

Speaker, I certainly agree. I'm going to sign it and give it to the usher to bring down to the table.

POLICE SERVICES

Ms. Jill Andrew: This petition is entitled "End carding now."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Honourable Michael H. Tulloch's recent Independent Street Checks Review report found that carding/random street checks to obtain identifying information has had a disproportionate impact on Black, racialized and Indigenous communities and that the practice has been ineffective in reducing violent crime;

"Whereas random stops based on arbitrary views of suspicious activity is systemically racist, resulting in people of African descent being 17 times more likely to be carded in downtown Toronto and three times more likely in Brampton and Mississauga;

"Whereas carding is not and should not be viewed as a community engagement tool. It must be recognized as an approach rooted in past and present experiences of police aggression ... ;

"Whereas this oppressive practice has no place in Ontario, failing to reflect core values of inclusivity, political justice and social freedom;

"We, the undersigned, petition" the Legislative Assembly "of Ontario to:

"Direct police service boards and police chiefs to immediately end the practice of carding; and

"Direct police service boards and police chiefs to immediately delete all data collected through street checks."

I absolutely agree and affix my signature.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: In accordance with standing order 59, I'd just like to introduce the business for the coming week. We will be dealing with Bill 204, standing in the name of Minister Clark; Bill 180, Somalia heritage, standing in the name of Mr. Hassan; and a new bill, which was just introduced in question period, standing in the name of the Attorney General.

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CHANGE OF NAME AMENDMENT ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CHANGEMENT DE NOM

Miss Mitas moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 206, An Act to amend the Change of Name Act /
Projet de loi 206, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le changement de nom.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: It is my distinct privilege to stand in this House today to present the Change of Name Amendment Act.

This year, the Alberta Legislature passed an amendment to the Vital Statistics Act, receiving royal assent in July. The amendment's purpose was simple: to ban convicted sex offenders from obtaining a legal name change. Brought forward by Minister Nate Glubish, Bill 28 made it harder for sexual abusers to obfuscate their past actions and to hide their true identity. I am proud to rise today as part of the Ontario provincial government to now move this motion. It is my sincere belief that this legislation is something that should be mirrored across all provinces.

As we all know, people change their names for a variety of reasons. Whether it is to recognize a change of name in marriage formally or to use an anglicized version of one's name, name changes are relatively common. In most cases, these are reflective of how an individual wants to be perceived by society. It is, in the majority of cases, a happy transition and a sign of an individual's desire to belong and to appear as who they truly are.

Allowing for legal name changes is, of course, the right thing to do in any civilized society. However, it should be noted that there are risks. There are those who will attempt to use a legal name change to obscure themselves and to hide. Whether as a consequence of frauds and deceptions previously committed or to carry out deceitful acts in the future, some individuals will take advantage of rights and privileges in order to inflict harm on others. This is one of the key reasons why the extant legislation in Ontario is so robust and why the application process is equally as exhaustive.

The right to change one's name mustn't be abused. If passed, the Change of Name Amendment Act will strengthen our government's zero-tolerance approach to sexual assault as well as our commitment to survivors, to families and to the groups that support them. Our government takes sexual assault seriously, and we will do whatever it takes to provide additional supports and protections to Ontarians.

I believe I speak for all members here today when I say that there can be no tolerance for sexual assault, that there are no mitigating circumstances for sexual abusers, and that legislation and sentencing must always be stringent. It is our shared duty as legislators to stand for survivors of sexual assault, just as it is our shared duty to stand up, with strong legislation, to those who would commit such acts.

Sexual assault is a truly heinous crime. It is a crime that is all the more despicable when one is aware of the patterns of predation. Abusers seek out and target our most vulnerable. They target those who cannot fight back, and will intimidate their victims into silence. As a society, we rightfully vilify those who commit such acts, and our Criminal Code reflects our shared abhorrence.

To sexually assault another human being is a violating deed, not only physically, but psychologically and emotionally. Sexual assault can have profound implications beyond the initial attack. The effects of sexual assault can linger for years. Sexual assault survivors routinely report feelings of shame and guilt, an unimaginably unfair and unbearable burden to carry on their part. Worse still, a sense of self-blame often occurs, where survivors engage in a terrible exercise of second-guessing themselves, expressing self-doubt, the tracing and retracing of steps and the re-examining of their decisions.

Many survivors struggle to regain feelings of independence and safety. Some survivors struggle with intimacy. It is also common for survivors to experience difficulty in their relationships, as the emotional and psychological trauma wreaks havoc on their personal lives. Many survivors require ongoing counselling to combat the effects of PTSD. Some may need physical therapy for their injuries. Tragically, some do not survive at all and are often callously left for dead by their attackers in these instances.

This is what happened to Christopher Stephenson, an 11-year-old boy from Brampton. On June 17, 1988, Christopher was kidnapped at knifepoint from a Brampton mall. He was sexually assaulted and he was murdered. During the investigation, police discovered that Christopher's killer was a multiple-times-convicted sex offender. At that time, there was no provincial sex offenders registry, no way of tracking sex offenders' movements and no method of ensuring that they could not hide their past.

Christopher's father, Jim, and his mother, Anna, heartbroken with grief, nevertheless campaigned vigorously for a provincial sex offenders registry. After years of advocacy, Christopher's Law was passed in 2001, creating Ontario's first sexual assault registry. It was a victory for all survivors. What's more, it was also an essential and much overdue piece of legislation. If passed, the Change of Name Amendment Act will provide an additional layer of protection to children and to vulnerable Ontarians. This act will deny convicted sex offenders the legal right to change their name. By making this change, we close off a loophole in our laws that provides sex offenders with a potential avenue of anonymity.

I want to be clear, however, that our current laws are strong. As things stand, those with a criminal record are required to go through a criminal record check when they seek a legal name change, as well as fingerprinting. Additionally, while there are some exceptions, most who change their name must register the details that change with the Ontario Gazette. While these safeguards are welcome and intelligent, we can do better.

The truth is that while changes of name are published in the Ontario Gazette, this is not a publication that the general public reads. As things stand, there remains the opportunity for sex offenders to distance themselves from their heinous crimes, to distance themselves from consequences and to distance themselves from the repercussions for their victims. This is not acceptable. Sex offenders must be held accountable.

It is important to remember that recidivism among sex offenders also remains an ongoing problem. Considering the violating nature of sexual offences, recidivism cannot be ignored. Those most likely to reoffend are abusers of young boys, with a 15-year recidivism rate of 35%. It should also be noted that StatsCan data for Ontario on rates of reported cases of sexual assault show a significant increase in recent years. From the years 2014 through 2018, there's a notable upward trend, amounting to just under a 19% increase in reported cases. Whereas the rate of reported sexual assault was 53.96 per population of 100,000 in 2014, in 2018 it jumped up to 74.25. Do bear in mind that these are just reported numbers. While there is some debate regarding the real number of sexual assaults that occur each year in Ontario, we all know that these numbers are much lower than what the real rates are because many sexual assaults go unreported.

Rates, percentages and numbers aside, the reality is that sexual assaults happen and that some abusers reoffend. Despite our best efforts as legislators and the best efforts of the judicial system and the penal system as protectors and rehabilitators, we still face this problem. Therefore, we must do everything we can to reduce its impact.

We must make sure that we are doing everything we can to stop reoffenders in their tracks before they reoffend. More often than not, we legislate here reactively. As we all know, legislation regularly comes about because something becomes a problem large enough to get our attention, whether it is a problem that arises broadly in society or an event so significant in its impact that it compels us to act. However, in some circumstances we have to think ahead to expect problems, to assess risk and to legislate in an anticipatory way. I firmly believe that the Change of Name Amendment Act does just this.

I will now read a statement from one of our community stakeholders. Janet Handy is the executive director of the Kristen French Child Advocacy Centre Niagara and offers this feedback on this proposed bill: "I believe that any measures that get us closer to proactively supporting the long-term mental health and safety of victims and survivors of childhood sexual assaults is critical. The journey back to oneself from abuse can be a long one, and this legislation is one more tool for communities to protect the vulnerable as they take that journey. It ensures that perpetrators remain accountable for their actions and that victims/survivors see that society takes their recovery seriously enough to provide this protection to them."

Today, we have a chance to act decisively, to close this potential loophole and to give more peace of mind to survivors in Ontario.

I'll be honest, I saw that this legislation had passed in Alberta on Twitter. The moment I read up on this, I was angry. I couldn't believe that this loophole existed in 2020.

When I reached out to Minister Glubish in Alberta, he told me that while he was happy with the progress that had been made there, it simply wasn't enough. It wasn't enough because this was still happening in other parts of Canada. It wasn't enough because evil people were still trying to hide. It wasn't enough because criminals are still

able to leave a province that is closing this loophole and go to another province to change their name there.

This is why it is so incredibly important to ensure that this legislation passes in every province in Canada. We must stand together as Canadians, steadfast in our commitment to closing this loophole and protecting victims, and tell sexual assaulters, “You have no place to hide. You will be held accountable for your crimes, and your victims will always have the right to know your whereabouts.”

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I mention this last piece because as I had conversations with child advocacy centres about this bill, we got to talking about the sexual assault of children. These were difficult conversations, but can you imagine how difficult it would be to live through this kind of abuse?

I was told that many victims want to keep track of where their offenders are because they are scared, and this fear never leaves them. They told me that it is a struggle to even get the funding they need, that they get funding from wherever they can. This surprised me, until they explained that it isn't easy to fundraise for their centres because these aren't places with happy endings.

Children who are sexually assaulted do not move past this. They are broken in a way that guarantees that no matter how well you glue their pieces together and no matter how strong that glue is, they will never be the same as before they were violated. No child deserves this. It is hard for the places that represent them to procure funding and procure the resources they need to do so because people like us struggle with even hearing these stories, with having to concede with the fact that some of our most vulnerable are being preyed on.

These things make my heart hurt. I think of my own children, and I tremble with anger at the thought of any sexual assaulter trying or being able to change their name and hide from their crimes. I sincerely hope that all of you will join me today in supporting this bill.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise in the House and speak on the issues brought forward by the members, and especially so today on such a solemn subject.

The effects of sexual violence cannot be understated. This type of violence crosses all social boundaries, affects people of every age and cultural background, and has a devastating impact on the lives of survivors and their families, as well as the well-being of society. Often, the victims are the most vulnerable members of our society, including children.

The NDP supports laws and policies that keep people safe and provide effective tools to do so. There's good reason to have sex offender registry legislation, including Ontario's own Christopher's Law, so named in memory of a child who was taken from us under incredibly tragic circumstances. Ontarians should be encouraged that we were the first jurisdiction in Canada to enact a sex offender registry, a tool that continues to be used to this day to keep

Ontarians safe. It's important that we make the most of the tools at our disposal to protect Ontario's most vulnerable.

New Democrats support sending this bill to committee for further consideration. This will give the House the opportunity to hear from the experts and better ensure that the steps taken to address this problem are effective and result in the best possible protection.

I thank the member opposite for her contribution to this incredibly important discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I appreciate the opportunity to speak, and I want to thank the member from Scarborough Centre for her leadership in affirming our government's, and I suspect our Parliament's, commitment to combat increasing levels of violence against children.

Speaker, my colleague the member from Scarborough Centre has introduced this bill really with an aim to end the loophole, the outrageous and offensive loophole that permits convicted sex offenders to exploit legally by changing their name.

I think of an example that was noted: David Donald Shumey, who is a 76-year-old man who recently came back to Canada after spending 20 years in a US prison for various sex offences dating back to the mid-1990s. He was arrested in Las Vegas and charged with 88 different counts. When he was freed from jail, Shumey moved home to Regina and legally changed his name to David Donald Stryker.

There are so many examples that are most disturbing. The rates of recidivism in our province are rising. Violence against children, domestic violence within our homes over COVID-19, is not just rising, but also, it is noted that it's under-reported, which further underscores the necessity to act.

I feel, as the minister responsible for children from kindergarten to grade 12, as we see increasing rates of cyberbullying, increasing rates of victimization, increasing rates of trafficking, that any step we can take as a Parliament to further improve the safety of our most vulnerable is needed now, as we face increased levels of isolation and victimization as a consequence of COVID-19.

This practice is unacceptable, and women and children, especially, deserve to be protected by the law from these dangerous predators.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague's proposed legislation is very similar to that passed in Alberta, as noted by the member. Sheldon Kennedy, a survivor of sexual abuse and a co-founder of the Respect Group and someone who I've gotten to know over the years in my time in the federal Parliament as well as now, as minister, said on these steps, “This legislation takes an important step forward for survivors by better recognizing the lifelong impacts they face and making their offenders face the consequences of their actions daily.”

My colleague's bill is reasonable, it is worthwhile, it is in the public interest, and it will help keep our students and

our kids safe, and for that, I support it and I recognize her leadership for it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Lindsey Park: It's really a pleasure to rise to talk about such an important topic. First of all, I want to congratulate the member from Scarborough Centre for her thoughtful leadership in bringing this forward.

We all know that sex offenders and violent criminals take every opportunity they can get to skirt laws and pretend to be something that they're not. They're creative in finding new victims, unfortunately, and so we need to be ever-vigilant as a government and as a chamber, to be a step ahead of them in seeing and recognizing—in learning what loopholes they're finding, and being, as part of that vigilance, responsive to it, to prevent future victimization.

This bill does a number of things. Not only will it help victims heal and know that the community is on high alert to their offender and what happened and what was done, but it will also prevent future victims.

I think it's really appalling—many members in this place probably didn't realize, until this was brought forward, that this kind of loophole existed. So I really do want to commend the member for Scarborough Centre for doing her homework, for listening to her constituents, for sitting down—I know these are hard conversations to have in our constituency offices, to sit down and listen to victims and listen to their stories about some of the terrible things that have happened in our communities, right in our backyards.

This bill, although it may seem insignificant—it's a small change—is something that is actually going to prevent a long list of future victims and will allow many Ontarians to continue on living, just being aware, in a world of anonymous Twitter accounts, in a world where people seem to hide behind digital platforms. Obviously, this legislation is showing you ways in which people, using our laws, hide behind what they've done in the past and change their names and carry on and move to different locations and start up a new life and start all over again, victimizing a new community.

Not only is this great legislation for our province; this is great legislation for the rest of Canada—to make sure that these offenders can't commit violent crimes in Ontario and then leave to different provinces, start a new life under a different guise, and start all over again.

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I want to thank the Minister of Education for speaking to this. I think it's an important issue for us to highlight as a Legislature and I really hope that all parties—I think we all stand, as all parties in this place, in supporting victims and preventing violent criminal acts from happening in our communities. So I hope everyone will vote in favour of this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I'm honoured to rise today to speak to this important bill, brought to the House by my

colleague the member for Scarborough Centre. I was listening intently from my office as the member was introducing this bill. It is clear how passionate she is about this issue. I can imagine that as a mother, there is nothing more important to her than the safety of her own children, and also the safety of all of Ontario's children.

Bill 206, the Change of Name Amendment Act, seeks to ensure that registered sex offenders in our province are unable to change their names through existing legal loopholes. This bill is a gift to all mothers and fathers in Ontario to end the exploitation of the loopholes that these criminals use to avoid the scrutiny of the public as well as law enforcement. The bill, if passed, will amend the existing Change of Name Act so that offenders who are ordered to register with the Ontario sex offender registry, as per Christopher's Law, or other criminals, as per regulation, will be unable to change their names.

Ontario learned the price that our communities could pay, prior to the creation of the sex offender registry, in the tragic and heinous murder of Christopher Stephenson. Christopher's death was a failure of the system of the day, which should have protected him. But thanks to the tireless advocacy of his parents, Jim and Anna Stephenson, to ensure that this sort of tragedy never repeated itself, Christopher's Law was passed by the Ontario government in 2001.

Bill 206 will be critical to ensuring that the hard work and perseverance of the Stephenson family, alongside the dedication of our law enforcement officers who serve to protect our children each and every single day, will not be in vain. By closing the loopholes that allow for convicted sexual offenders with a potential to reoffend to change their names—therefore, obstructing the sex offender registry from working as intended—we add another critical layer of protection for the most vulnerable members of our community.

The amendments offered to the Change of Name Act brought forward in this bill by the member for Scarborough Centre and all future legislative work to keep our children safe are something I will always be a strong advocate for in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? Further debate?

I return to the member for Scarborough Centre, who has two minutes to reply.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Thank you to the members for Timiskaming–Cochrane, King–Vaughan, Durham and Mississauga Centre.

I think of people like Karla Homolka, who lived under the name of Karla Leanne Teale and tried to escape to Quebec to live a normal life anonymously after her almost unspeakable crimes. I say “almost unspeakable” because these monsters don't deserve to escape from what they did. We must speak to these crimes if we hope to shed light on them.

Her sister Tammy Homolka was not only raped by her; she was murdered by her. On April 16, 1992, Kristen

French was walking home from school. She was approached at the entrance of a local church, under the pretense of needing directions, by Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo. While French was assisting Homolka with directions, Bernardo attacked her from behind and forced her into the car at knifepoint. She was held in captivity for three days, during which Bernardo and Homolka videotaped themselves torturing and subjecting this 15-year-old girl to sexual humiliation and degradation, while forcing her to drink large amounts of alcohol. They murdered her on April 19, 1992, and her naked body was found in a ditch.

This story never stops hurting. While I pray and I trust that victims like Tammy and Kristen have found peace with God, and that they don't hurt anymore, criminals like Karla Homolka should not be able to hide and start new lives where they are not held accountable for the vile crimes that they have committed. People like Karla Homolka should not be able to volunteer at their local elementary school as if they are just another loving neighbourhood parent. If a sex offender is on the sex offender registry list, they should not be able to change their name. We must protect victims, full stop.

I'm extremely proud to stand before all of you today and put this bill forward here in Ontario. I know that passing this bill will be the most important thing that I'll likely do as a member of provincial Parliament. I know this because if by doing so I prevent even one more assault or if I help one victim find peace, then I have contributed something that really does help our most vulnerable.

I hope that all of my colleagues will join me in support of this bill, and I hope that all provinces that have not yet done so see this and decide to do this as well. Thank you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): 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' public business such that Ms. Lindo assumes ballot item number 21 and Ms. Armstrong assumes ballot item number 27.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Gates: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should follow the lead of eight other Canadian provinces and ensure PSA testing for preventative prostate cancer diagnosis is eligible for procedures covered under OHIP.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Gates has moved private members' notice of motion number 85. Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise and speak to my motion that calls on the Conservative government to provide OHIP coverage for PSA testing for prostate cancer, a motion which we'll vote on in the Legislature today.

I'd like to start by telling the story of my good friend Larry Gibson. We call him Gibby. Gibby is the owner of the Fort Erie golf course. For all those here, I invite you down to the golf course. You won't find a better community course in the province of Ontario. Everyone knows your name. You're always welcome. It's a great course, so please come down.

My friend Gibby, who was 47 years old at the time, hurt his arm in 2005 and went to the doctor. At the doctor's office they were talking about blood work, suggesting the PSA test, and asked him if he wanted to get it done, although he'd have to pay for it. He decided to have the PSA test and paid for this medical service. Thank God he did; the doctor came back and told Gibby that his PSA was 29. For those following at home, that's high enough that his doctor said that if he didn't get the test, he would have died.

Madam Speaker, what Gibby went through is a decision faced by people across the province every single day, the choice being paying for a life-saving test or possibly foregoing it because of cost. Thankfully, Gibby got the PSA test, received radiation and has beat prostate cancer.

But Gibby didn't stop there. Since 2006, Gibby has been running a golf tournament at the Fort Erie golf course to raise money for PSA testing for men who can't afford it. Madam Speaker, no one in this province should have to raise money to pay for life-saving medical tests. Gibby tells me that since 2006, they have helped pay for hundreds of tests. Because of him, hundreds of men may have avoided dealing with advanced prostate cancer. I thank Larry Gibson for this, but it shouldn't be up to people like him to ensure others in Ontario can get the medication they deserve.

In Canada, we are entitled by law to universal health coverage. That should mean full coverage. That should mean that any person who needs a life-saving PSA test can get one without having to consider if they can afford it. The numbers don't lie; this isn't a waste of resources or money. If detected early, men have a nearly 100% rate of survival when it comes to prostate cancer, and yet—think about this—in 2020, an estimated 9,800 Ontario men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer and 1,550 will die. I want to say that again: If caught early, prostate cancer is nearly 100% curable, yet in 2020, 1,550 Ontario residents will lose their lives because they can't pay for a PSA test. By supporting my motion today and implementing that motion, we can save over a thousand lives immediately and many more in the long term. It's not often we can say or do that. We have the proof before us to implement this, and it will save lives.

1350

Madam Speaker, some may ask, how can the province afford this? My response is simple: How can the province afford not to do this? You could pay for a \$35 test and save \$66,000 in health care costs with every individual. If all men with stage 4 prostate cancer had been tested and diagnosed early, that would be a savings of over \$60 million per year to our health care system. We're talking about covering a \$35 test to save \$66,000 per person and a test that saves lives. Not only is it the right thing to do,

the humane thing to do; it actually saves us money. Think about that.

This is such an important and yet easy decision that eight provinces and three territories already cover the cost of the test. So why is Ontario not providing this life-saving testing when we know it saves money, we see it working elsewhere, and we know it saves lives?

Madam Speaker, never before in my lifetime have I seen a greater need to focus on access to public health care than right now. We have people in our ridings who have lost their jobs, who have lost their income. Some of them have been able to make ends meet but just barely. These are people we need to help right now. These are people who cannot afford the \$35 to get the PSA test. Thirty-five dollars isn't a lot of money—but when you've lost your job, it is. This is money that they're using to feed their kids, keep a roof over their head or pay rent.

Men could have elevated PSA levels that could be found and treated early, but because of their financial situation, they can't afford to get the test. We're going to see more of these situations because of this pandemic. In Niagara, we've got nearly 40,000 jobs that are lost or at risk in tourism because of COVID-19. That's tens of thousands of people who may not be able to afford a PSA test, tens of thousands of people who could easily have prostate cancer detected early and have a much better chance for survival.

Madam Speaker, beyond the fact that this motion will save lives and save money, it also tackles one of the biggest issues facing residents in Ontario today: hallway medicine, as we're going to see with flu season. This is Ontario's greatest shame—that people pay for universal medical care, they're proud of it, yet when they need to access it, they're waiting in a hospital hallway, closet or bathroom, sometimes for days. This has been an ongoing problem through Liberal and Conservative governments, and this Conservative government refuses to deal with it to make it better. In fact, they made it worse by continuing to privatize our health care system. Instead of addressing this properly and providing adequate funding to hospitals like Douglas Memorial in Fort Erie, which is in my riding, so that they can offer more services, they're reducing services and causing overcrowding. It's shameful, and it needs to be stopped.

This motion will help reduce the stress on our hospitals and work towards putting an end to hallway medicine. You see, if people are getting tested and diagnosed early, and are avoiding late-stage prostate cancer, they will require less time in treatment, surgeries and recovery. It means less time in hospital beds and fewer people in our hospitals.

Madam Speaker, when I first put this motion forward, Movember Canada and Prostate Cancer Canada quickly supported it. My motion has also been endorsed by the Canadian Cancer Society. I've worked very closely with Steve Piazza of the Canadian Cancer Society, and I would like to personally recognize him. It was with his input and his shared knowledge that I was able to develop this motion. With his help, we have taken this important step forward in the fight against cancer.

Madam Speaker, there are thousands of people across our riding who are impacted by not having PSA testing fully covered by OHIP.

I want to tell another story about another friend of mine. I'm on his radio show quite regularly, on CKTB. It's the story of Tim Denis. Tim said, "I went to my doctor for a non-prostate issue. "During the discussion my doctor suggested getting the PSA test 'to be on the safe side.' I answered 'sure, why not' and he proceeded to tell me that many men said no to the test because it cost money and they thought of themselves a little young to be worried." And as we've seen in Gibby's case, he was 47. "I wanted to be sure that we covered all our bases," so my good friend Tim gets the test done and got a phone call from his doctor that his test was unusually high.

They followed up with a biopsy and, sure enough, it came back diagnosed as prostate cancer. These are Tim's words: "I've since had the operation. Recent tests have come back negative. Had I said no because of the cost, the cancer may have progressed for a number of years to the point that my outcome would not have been positive."

It may not be a 100% accurate test, but in his case, and like many other men in the province of Ontario, it saved him from a possible serious outcome which probably would have meant he would have died. Again, these are Tim's words: "This should be available to all men without cost. Our health should not boil down to financial considerations."

Madam Speaker, prostate cancer has affected those in my own constituency office. I have four employees total; 50% of my constituent staff's fathers have had prostate cancer. As tough as that was, they had to get the test. Everywhere I go, I find someone whose life has been impacted by this. We can fix this.

Thank you for allowing me to say a few words, and I will talk a little more in my summary as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to this motion put before the House today. I want to begin by thanking the member from Niagara Falls for raising this motion in the House.

The month of September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, so it is an important time for us to have this discussion. Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer amongst Canadian men, resulting in 24% of all cancer diagnoses. One in eight Canadian men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime. Almost one in two Canadians know someone who has been diagnosed with prostate cancer: a family member, a friend or a colleague. One in five have been closely affected by prostate cancer, meaning they have been diagnosed or have a father or a brother who has been diagnosed.

As with any cancer, early diagnosis is important. According to Prostate Cancer Canada, when detected early, the survival rate of prostate cancer is close to 100% after five years. Detected late, it drops to just 28%. The risk of developing prostate cancer increases after age 50 and

peaks around 70 to 74. It decreases slightly after age 75, but remains high.

To assist in early detection, Ontario currently covers the PSA test when prostate cancer is suspected due to a family history or the results of a check-up. In cases where prostate cancer is not suspected, the test is not currently insured by OHIP, but it is available from laboratories for a nominal fee. My constituents of Perth–Wellington have certainly raised questions and concerns about this fee in the past.

The truth is, the issue of proactive screening for prostate cancer has been raised in this House before. It has been the subject of many expert reviews and recommendations in the past. In 2017, Cancer Care Ontario recommended that a widespread screening program for prostate cancer not be implemented by the province. This recommendation was based on the best available scientific evidence at the time and noted, “Due to the potential harms of screening, including over-diagnosis and over-treatment, Cancer Care Ontario does not support an organized, population-based screening program for prostate cancer.”

But we all recognize that the science continues to evolve. New studies published on a regular basis give us better information to inform government decision-making. As we learn more about the benefits and risks of using PSA tests to screen for prostate cancer, it’s important that our government actively revisits long-held positions on these important issues. So today, Madam Speaker, I’ll be supporting this motion and encouraging the government to determine what measures can be done to improve early detection of prostate cancer in the province of Ontario. Thank you again for this opportunity to speak.

1400

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to start off by thanking my colleague the MPP from Niagara Falls for bringing forward this motion. He has made the argument, and he has made it very powerfully, about why this House should support the motion and why we should be changing the way we fund this particular test. I’d like people to think again about this motion from Mr. Gates: “That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should follow the lead of eight other Canadian provinces and ensure PSA testing for preventative prostate cancer diagnoses is an eligible procedure for coverage underneath OHIP.”

If a doctor has made an examination, done an assessment and concluded that the test is required, then that test should be available without charge. I think that’s an entirely reasonable position to take. There is no doubt that early detection of cancer—prostate cancer, breast cancer, colon cancer, a wide variety of cancers—saves lives.

My guess is that everyone in this chamber can speak about the experience of friends and family who have survived or not survived bouts of cancer. I want to talk about a friend of mine who, incredibly fit in his early fifties, was diagnosed with colon cancer. He had chemo, had an operation, did extremely well and was told, “You know, you can wait a few years for a follow-up on this.”

Unfortunately, he took that advice. The cancer recurred, and by the time he actually had the test that was required it had spread quite extensively. Now, his life was saved in that second round, but the treatment had to be so aggressive that it caused numerous other health problems, including brain damage and nerve damage; although he’s alive, the quality of his life has changed in a substantial way.

I have to say that another friend was diagnosed with breast cancer at a very late point. I can’t say where things went wrong, but from the date she was diagnosed to the date she died, it was about four weeks. We all know that if you want to give people a chance of survival, a chance of preserving quality of life, then it is to their advantage—and our advantage as a society—that we invest in and focus on early detection.

Again, the MPP from Niagara Falls has made that argument quite powerfully. We know from the statistics, we know from personal experience that we have to make those investments. He has made that argument, and I will make it again: No one should have to pull out a credit card in order to get the health care that they need.

Medicare was an extraordinary development in this country and in other industrial countries. The United States doesn’t have it; they have Obamacare, which is a system that falls far short of what we have. We preserve millions of lives and we protect millions of people from losing quality of life. It’s a very simple thing to make the argument, and the member has, that coverage for early-detection tests should simply be part of what we do with OHIP, so that people don’t have to depend on their pocketbook to get the early detection and illness prevention that they need.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member for Niagara Falls for raising this matter to the attention of this House with this motion. From the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for raising this here this afternoon. I want to say that I am genuinely supporting this motion this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, we know that there are currently over 500,000 Ontarians living with cancer, and over 90,000 new cases of cancer are expected to be diagnosed each year. Prostate cancer is the fourth-most-common cancer in the province of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I am sincerely supportive of strengthening cancer screening services, but only when it is in the best interest of patients to do so. I want to tell you why, especially to my colleague from Niagara Falls. Cancer Care Ontario is the government’s adviser on cancer and flows more than \$2 billion to hospitals to support direct patient care every year. As of 2017, Cancer Care Ontario recommended against widespread screening for prostate cancer using PSA tests, citing many international and national screening guidelines, which also recommended against population-based or general screening practices.

For the record, Ontario currently covers the PSA test when prostate cancer is suspected due to family history or because of the results of a check-up.

On this side of the House, we recognize that the science on the benefits and risks of using PSA tests to screen for prostate cancer continues to evolve, and new studies that have come out of this since 2017 may very well suggest a different outcome. I firmly believe it is important to take a good look at this issue and ensure our policies are based on the latest evidence. I am in support of this motion today and I support taking it back for further review.

On a personal note, Madam Speaker, my own grandfather-in-law passed away due to prostate cancer, so I know how important it is, especially what members on this side have talked about this afternoon. I remember he was okay and healthy, and then suddenly one day we heard that he had prostate cancer. I think after four months or so, suddenly his health started to deteriorate, and the next thing you know he was literally on his death bed, and he passed away. That's why when I heard about this motion, I thought, "Yes, we have to support this," because I think somehow or other it has touched some of us on a personal level as well, in terms of our families.

I will definitely be supporting this bill this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always an honour to be called upon in Ontario's provincial Parliament to stand and speak on behalf of the good people in the riding of Windsor–Tecumseh.

I wish to compliment the member from Niagara Falls for once again opening the dialogue on OHIP coverage for PSA testing. My father had prostate cancer, which migrated to bone cancer, and he died when he was only 73. I started getting an annual PSA test about 20 years ago. It's really no big deal. I get a simple blood test and do a follow-up with my urologist. He looks at my PSA numbers from my blood test and checks my prostate—easy-peasy.

Too many men die in Ontario every day, every week, every month, every year because they didn't take the time to get screened for high PSA levels.

Cancer kills. Cancer isn't funny, Speaker. But maybe those men who have dealt with prostate cancer themselves can get away with using some light humour to open our eyes to the need to see a urologist once a year.

1410

I recently learned of a man named Alan Oliver in the United Kingdom who wrote a cheeky little poem five years ago about his bout with an aggressive cancer of his prostate. Speaker, apparently it convinced a lot of reluctant men to finally drop their "macho, macho man" personas and agree to the prostate screening and the probe by medical specialists. He called it, not surprisingly, The Prostate Poem:

Guys, listen to me, if you're having a pee
And the flow is just slow coming out
If you're standing there yawning at three in the morning
It's time to remove any doubt

If nocturnal trips produce dribbles and drips
And you feel like a knackered old codger
If the harder you try leaves you wondering why
You're not making a splash with your todger
Well take it from me, you must call your GP
And the sooner the better, don't linger
If your PSA's raised there's no need to be fazed
But your doctor might probe with his finger
Don't pass on the chance to be dropping your pants
'Cos it ain't a big deal, honest guys
Your awkward full moon will be over quite soon
And it won't bring a tear to your eyes
Boys, the message is clear, you have nothing to fear
And I can't spell it out any plainer
With problems "down there" make your doctor aware
Listen up, it's a total no brainer
So don't be a fool, guys it isn't uncool
There's no merit in being a chancer
Go on, make that call—could be nothing at all
But let's get to the bottom of cancer.

Speaker, a cheeky example, I believe, of acceptable British wit and humour. Cancer can be beaten. Many communities in Ontario will be holding the annual Terry Fox Run in the coming days, and I hope we all support such endeavours.

Once again, I thank the member for Niagara Falls for motion 85 and for reopening a much-needed discussion about OHIP coverage for PSA testing in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ça me fait toujours plaisir de me lever pour les commettants de Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

C'est un grand honneur de me lever pour appuyer la motion du député de Niagara Falls. Il y a plusieurs raisons pour lesquelles j'appuie la motion de mon collègue, mais je vais en nommer deux : premièrement, parce que ça fait du sens et c'est la bonne chose à faire pour sauver des vies, et parce que cette motion suit les traces de l'héritage du père de la santé universelle au Canada, le grand Tommy Douglas.

Le test de dépistage du cancer de la prostate—en français on l'appelle le test de l'antigène prostatique spécifique—peut sauver des vies. C'est un test sanguin—assez facile—particulièrement pour les hommes âgés de 50 ans et plus, comme plusieurs des hommes dans cette Assemblée aujourd'hui.

Mais ce qui est encore plus important, et c'est malgré le fait qu'on a un système de santé universel : l'Ontario est l'une des deux seules provinces à ne pas couvrir le test de dépistage PSA. Cela veut dire qu'en Ontario, au lieu d'utiliser notre carte santé, nous devons toujours préserver notre santé avec notre portefeuille. L'Ontario doit joindre les huit autres provinces où on peut avoir le test de dépistage PSA gratuitement. L'accès aux services de santé, c'est un droit, madame la Présidente. Également, s'il y avait des tests de dépistage offerts par notre service de santé gratuitement, le coût moyen du test dans le pays

diminuerait, et les coûts liés à un diagnostic tardif diminueraient aussi. C'est une situation gagnant-gagnant.

À tous ceux qui attaquent notre système de santé universel, à tous ceux qui croient que privatiser et couper des postes en santé publique c'est sauver de l'argent aux contribuables, détrompez-vous. Ça ne fait aucun sens.

Mais, cette motion me touche une corde sensible, car la lutte contre le cancer de la prostate me touche de proche. Mon grand-père est décédé du cancer de la prostate, et mon père et mon oncle ont été opérés à la prostate aussi. J'aurais bien aimé qu'ils aient la chance de passer un test de dépistage PSA, un test gratuit, un test qui sauve des vies comme celle de mon grand-père.

Je vais conclure en remerciant encore le député de Niagara Falls pour avoir déposé cette motion visant à sauver des vies, mais aussi visant à sauvegarder notre système de santé universel.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? Further debate.

I return to the member from Niagara Falls for the remaining time and the two minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Let me summarize: This saves money, tens of millions from the province that can be redirected into public-funded health care. It reduces hall-way medicine, and, above all—above all—it saves lives. It saves the lives of fathers, grandfathers, brothers, sons, the lives of our neighbours, who will get to live full lives with their families because of the action we can take today. On every front, this makes sense.

We can't simply vote yes to my motion; the government must take immediate action. They must make this a reality. Cancer doesn't care about pandemics. Cancer is not going into a lockdown. We can't put this on the back burner. The time is now. We must act. So I'm asking this House, on behalf of Tim and Gibby and the thousands of men listening at home, do the right thing: ensure that OHIP covers PSA testing.

If Tim and Gibby didn't get the test, the PSA test that eight of our provinces are paying for, our three territories are paying for, do you know what the end result would have been, Madam Speaker? The end result: They would have been dead. Somebody's dad would have been dead. Somebody's grandfather would have been dead. We can do the right thing today. We could have the province of Ontario join the other eight provinces and three territories and support this motion. Our health care needs it. The fathers need it. The grandfathers need it.

I want to finish by saying to Percy, it's never easy to stand up and talk about a father or a mother or brother, but I'm glad you did, and I thank you for it, because that's what happens. If you get prostate cancer and it's not detected early enough, there is a good chance you're going to die. But if you catch it early enough, the opposite's going to happen: 100% survivor rate—100%.

I'm talking to the men right here, and the women. Please support this motion; not only support it, but let's get it done in the province of Ontario and join the other provinces that are already covering PSA tests.

MORE THAN A VISITOR ACT
(CAREGIVING IN CONGREGATE
CARE SETTINGS), 2020

LOI DE 2020 DÉCLARANT QUE
LES AIDANTS NATURELS SONT PLUS
QUE DE SIMPLES VISITEURS
(PRESTATION DE SOINS DANS
LES HABITATIONS COLLECTIVES)

Mrs. Gretzky moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 203, An Act respecting the rights of persons receiving care, support or services in congregate care settings and their caregivers / Projet de loi 203, Loi sur les droits des personnes qui reçoivent des soins, un soutien ou des services dans les habitations collectives et de leurs aidants naturels.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to rise today to debate the bill, the More Than a Visitor Act. This bill has been a long time coming.

Before I really get into my remarks, I just want to thank every single family that has reached out to my office. There have been hundreds. I know other members in the chamber, not just on our side of the House but on the government side, have heard from these families and heard of the terrible stories and the suffering that these families are going through and their loved ones who are in these congregate care settings—long-term-care homes, retirement homes, group homes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, in hospitals, in hospices, many different congregate care settings across the province. People have been suffering in isolation without access to their essential caregivers, their family members, for months, and it's still happening, Madam Speaker. I want to thank everyone who reached out to my office and shared their story, because for those people, telling those stories is incredibly difficult for them, and it's incredibly traumatizing, so you're all heroes for speaking up and trying to force change in this province.

1420

As I said, the bill was a long time coming. It was created for and, more importantly, with the families. It was developed with the people in this province who are actually affected by government decisions. I worked alongside them every step of the way, and I'm proud to say, Speaker, that many of those families became friends with each other along the journey and now have each other to lean on.

Families who are struggling during the pandemic were forced apart by COVID-19 restrictions that are still causing isolation, that are taking a mental, physical and emotional toll on residents, people receiving care in congregate care settings and their caregivers. As I pointed out, this is across so many sectors: in long-term-care homes, in group homes for individuals with intellectual

and developmental disabilities, in hospitals, in retirement homes, in hospices, in palliative care settings.

In July, I tabled a motion for an essential caregiver strategy, and nothing really came of that from the government side. They adjusted some guidelines, they used some of the language that I put in my motion, but what they brought forward was just guidance; it's not enforceable. We have congregate care settings across the province who are interpreting that guidance and doing what they will with it—in some cases, because they don't truly understand what it is that's expected of them; in some others, they're just doing it to try to keep visitors out, and I will reference some of those examples later.

Speaker, as I heard from more and more families across the province and we saw the lack of action from the government to make sure that residents in congregate care settings had access to their essential caregiver—it is their right, and they were being denied their right—we kept working on the bill, because it became very clear that we need a legislative solution. My bill, the More Than a Visitor Act, ensures that residents in congregate care have access to their essential caregivers, family members and their support persons, and not only does it do that, but it facilitates that safely. It ensures that those interactions within those congregate care settings are done in a safe manner.

There are three main things in the bill, Speaker: rights and protections for residents in congregate care; their rights to have meaningful, appropriate and consistent access to their caregivers—and by “meaningful,” we can't do a one-size-fits-all approach. We can't say that being able to stand outside and trying to talk to someone through a window is meaningful for someone who has a developmental or intellectual disability. For an elderly person in a long-term-care home who has problems hearing, that is not meaningful or appropriate access for that individual. My bill calls for a strategy that addresses that: that individualized, meaningful, appropriate and consistent access.

It talks about communicating in confidence. Many times, residents in congregate care settings, when they're trying to communicate with their essential caregivers, don't have the privacy to do so; there is someone around keeping an eye on them, watching what is going on—especially during this time of a pandemic, someone over their shoulder making sure that protocols are being followed. That resident has the right to communicate with their essential caregiver in confidence.

In the bill it also talks about determining the scope and involvement of caregivers, which is really important, Mr. Speaker. There are substitute decision-makers who have legal rights to be making decisions for people—we're not arguing that—but there are many caregivers, especially in developmental services, who do not have the money or the resources to go through a legal process. Or the individual, their child—whether that's a young child or an adult child—does not have the cognitive ability to be able to designate, and yet it is clearly obvious that mom and dad, who have taken care of them and supported them for years, are their caregivers. That person, that individual, that

resident has the right to be able to say, “Today I want my brother to be able to come in and to sit with me and be part of a conversation around my care and to be involved in that.” And then tomorrow, if I'm a person in care, I have the right to say that I don't want my brother to come in and be part of that conversation about my care. It is the resident's right to decide who has access to them and what that particular caregiver's involvement is.

Speaker, the second point in my bill talks about resources, staffing and training. This is a crucial part, and this is something that is sorely lacking—and we've seen this happen for the last six months during the pandemic. It puts the responsibility on the government to provide the resources, staffing and training to the homes—the government's responsibility. Caregivers must be able to come into the homes safely to support their loved ones. The residents have the right to have that happen. And it has to be done safely, which means that we need more staff in all sectors, in all congregate care settings. We need to ensure that those workers are paid fairly. They need raises in their wages. We hear it constantly from PSWs. They need to have stable work hours. They need to be sure that they will have full-time jobs. In congregate care settings, throughout all of the sectors, the biggest issue is that these workers are not being given full-time, stable hours. They're forced to work in many different congregate care settings, and that is how we see, in a pandemic, the virus spread. These workers deserve to have full-time, stable hours that come with benefits. They need paid sick days. They need PPE. We shouldn't find something like we did with Participation House, where they're begging the community to give them PPE, where they're begging the hospital to give them PPE. When the mayor is putting a call out to the people in that municipality and saying, “Please help Participation House. The vulnerable people in there with developmental and intellectual disabilities and the workers are getting sick because they don't have the PPE they need,” that is on this government. They need infection prevention and control training. They need the resources and the funding to make it happen.

The third piece of the bill is a caregiver strategy. Going forward, it calls on the government to bring everyone to the table to develop a strategy—to bring residents of congregate care settings to the table; to bring their caregivers to the table; to bring workers, because we need the voice of workers, to the table; and to bring experts to the table. The government cannot create unilateral policies. That is what got us into this in the first place. That is what got these families into six months of isolation and residents not having meaningful, or, in some cases, any, access to their essential caregivers. The framework for the strategy states that there should be an interim strategy implemented within 30 days of the bill passing, and a full strategy developed with all of those partners who were at the table within one year of the bill passing, and that every five years everyone needs to come back to the table to update the strategy.

Speaker, this is not just what I'm asking for; it's what families, workers, caregivers, experts and many people in

the province have told us needs to happen in order to ensure that residents are not isolated from their essential caregivers ever again and that those caregivers are integrated into those congregate care settings safely.

I mentioned families who started to reach out to my office because of my role as the official opposition critic for community and social services. I heard from families over two years, before the pandemic, who raised issues about adults with developmental disabilities like autism, for instance, in hospitals because of the long, long waitlist for supportive housing. It's well over two decades long. Many families are now, because there is such a lack of supportive housing, having to have their loved ones go into psychiatric intensive care units in the hospital. Not only is that more expensive than housing them in supportive housing; it's inhumane and it shouldn't be happening. I'm going to reference Steven and Damien, who each spent over two years in the psychiatric intensive care unit because of the lack of supportive housing in this province.

1430

And for the people who are still in hospital and still in the psychiatric intensive care units, the people with developmental disabilities, those who are still there are still being denied meaningful access to their families and their caregivers. Many of these people are being confined to the rooms with little quality of life, teacher—teacher?—Speaker; I called you “teacher” because you offer a lot of educational input in this chamber. But many of these individuals don't have TV. They can't have music. They can't have any type of stimulation while they're in hospital.

I know I'm going to run out of time, Speaker, but there's so much more to say. We've heard heartbreaking stories about the depression, the lethargy, the irritableness, the behaviours, people dying in long-term-care homes without having access to their family members—not just dying of COVID, but dying of other causes, including loneliness.

Experts like the National Institute on Ageing's Dr. Vivian Stamatopoulos, who has been a rock star, and many other badass women, Speaker—because it's largely women doing the work: the workers, the family members. It's largely women who are doing it. They're carrying the weight of the bad decisions of this government, and that needs to change.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: It's my pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to speak on the member for Windsor West's bill regarding essential visitors in congregate care settings. Let me begin by saying that our government will be supporting this bill, because we have already been acting in the spirit of this bill for many months.

My colleague the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Long-Term Care will be discussing this through the lens of long-term-care facilities. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, I am pleased to be focusing my remarks on other

congregate-care settings, such as group homes for individuals with developmental disabilities.

However, before I begin, I'd like to start on a personal note. As many in this chamber are aware, I have a younger brother with special needs, Dillon, who lives in a wonderful congregate care home in the east end of Ottawa. Shortly after getting elected, I had the opportunity to sit down with a number of current and former parliamentarians, and I asked them for some advice. Each and every one of them, to a T, told me the same thing: You need to make sure, as you get busy in elected life, that you take some time to carve out personal time that is sacrosanct. For me, that sacrosanct personal time has become my Sunday brunches or dinners with my brother, Dillon. It was a moment each week where I could turn off my phone, where I could connect, spend time with family and loved ones, and be reminded about why I chose to seek elected office in the first place. I don't mind telling you, Madam Speaker: It has been incredibly difficult not to have my Sundays with Dillon since March 8 of this year.

At the onset of the pandemic, our government took quick action to protect our vulnerable populations, and although only being able to see my brother, Dillon, via FaceTime for months has been mentally challenging, I knew that this was the right thing to do, because folks like my brother are among those who are most in need of protection. Many individuals with developmental disabilities don't understand the need to wear a mask. They don't know that they aren't supposed to touch their face or touch other people's faces, and they don't know how to follow social distancing. Moreover, for many of those individuals it is immensely difficult, if not impossible, to administer a COVID test. This group and the staff that care for them needed to be protected, and that meant making sure that we were limiting the opportunities for a COVID outbreak in those homes.

As a bit of background: I am aware that the member for Windsor West introduced a similar motion to this on July 20. I can tell you, however, that our government has been working with our partners since the onset of COVID-19 to ensure that guidelines were in place to protect the health, safety and well-being of residents and staff working in our congregate-care facilities. That's why our government moved quickly to implement the COVID-19 Action Plan for Vulnerable People to better protect those living in these high-risk settings. The action plan includes homes serving those with developmental disabilities, like the home my brother lives in; shelters for survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking; and children's residential settings. Agencies in each of these sectors serve individuals with a different set of needs, which is recognized within these guidelines.

Madam Speaker, our government, and I more than most, know the important support that caregivers, often family members, provide to the residents of congregate care settings. For this reason, we continue to ensure that our visitor policy recognizes that, while balancing the safety of residents and the staff who care for them. Our guidance for congregate care settings provides clear

guidelines for essential visitors. That may include, but is not limited to, a parent or guardian, a brother, a social service worker or a health care provider.

In June, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services expanded visitor guidelines to include personal visits in outdoor spaces. And at the end of July, the ministry further expanded the visitation options so residents were able to receive personal visitors in indoor and outdoor settings. Most recently, the guidance was expanded to allow for short-stay absences and temporary overnight absences, allowing residents to participate in the life of their community, including attending appointments, running errands, and going out into the community with close friends and family. Residents and/or their substitute decision-maker may also designate up to two people at a time as unrestricted visitors, who have additional flexibility, such as not being required to schedule an appointment to visit the congregate living setting.

Our government did not take the early decision to keep visits to essential visitors lightly, and we know the real hardship that it has posed for loved ones. I know that personally. As we have gradually expanded our visitor policy, we consulted widely with family members, agencies and our other partners to ensure we could find the right balance between the safety of the residents and the important work that caregivers do.

I can say that personally, since the onset of the pandemic, I have held bi-weekly Zoom calls with representatives of the developmental services sector agencies. On one of those calls, we also had Minister Smith join to speak to some of those agencies operating in the Ottawa area. We have worked through critical issues like employee day-care, PPE access and staff mobility. I would like to thank all of the workers in these congregate care settings across Ontario for the tireless work that they have been doing.

As the outbreak continues to evolve, direction regarding visitation and absences at congregate living settings will be adjusted as necessary, keeping the health, safety and emotional well-being of residents and staff at the forefront.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, last weekend I had the first opportunity in many, many months to visit my brother. I went on the weekend, and I brought my brother his favourite treat, Chicken McNuggets, and we sat outside at a distance; he was on a swing. It wasn't quite perfect, because I couldn't sit next to him, I couldn't give him a high-five, I couldn't give him a beep on the nose like I normally like to do. But it was a step in the right direction.

I know that if each and every one of us continues to do the important work of social distancing, practising good hygiene, making sure that we're wearing our appropriate PPE, we're going to get there soon. I count the days until I can get back to those Sunday brunches and dinners with my brother.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Jill Andrew: I stand with our member from Windsor West and my residents in care, and the families

who have lost residents in care, in full support of Bill 203. One of my constituents, her mother died after being in isolation in her long-term-care home. She said, "I wish Bill 203, more than just a visitor, was law months ago, as my mother may still be alive." She went on to say that this bill would have provided her, her mother's essential caregiver, the opportunity to give her mom the continued care, decency, support, quality of life and in-person advocacy her mother asked her to.

This government cannot legislate families being torn apart and residents dying alone and unattended. I ask this government, on behalf of the congregate-care-setting residents in my riding of Toronto—St. Paul's, please pass Bill 203, the More Than a Visitor Act, today. Restore the dignity of my constituents in care, foreground their rights, and enact an essential caregiver strategy, all of which can be achieved today if you legislate our member for Windsor West's Bill 203.

1440

My constituent continues to say, "My dear mother was my world, we had such a deep mutual bond and connection, I was her daughter, essential caregiver and best friend. I provided" her with "a great deal of love, support." Mentally and physically, she did everything for her. "When COVID-19 hit, the already broken and understaffed long-term-care system fell into a tailspin impacting so many residents, caregivers and families. The province did not recognize ... the importance of having your loving essential caregiver ... in ear and eyeshot.... So many seniors and citizens in our province were unnecessarily neglected."

Speaker, my constituent was not a visitor; she was an essential caregiver. She needed to be there. Her mother wanted her there. She expected her to be there. This government's broken visitor policies failed to protect her mother's right to care.

As the weeks progressed, her mother's condition declined. My constituent still was not classified as an essential visitor, and not permitted to visit her mother, who was alone and heartbroken. My constituent said, "My mother became so weak and breathless, she could no longer converse on the phone, there was no sense of connection." Not one physical person there. She sang on the phone; Mom could barely hear. The nurse called one night and said, "She's not going to make the night." Now they allowed her to see her mom. She said, "It was too late ... she passed away with me by her side, holding her hand shortly after I arrived. No closure, no last goodbyes, no conversations between us. This is criminal."

Speaker, her mother was a Holocaust survivor and didn't serve deserve to experience this type of trauma and horror. She had already experienced enough. I couldn't agree more. My constituent was more than just a visitor.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I want to thank the member from Windsor West for bringing the More Than a Visitor Act to the floor of the Legislature. I was pleased to support one of her previous bills, Dan's Law, which we managed to

work together on in this Legislature to make a reality, and it's now helping families across Ontario. This bill is just like that.

The pandemic has revealed many things, no more so than in our hospitals, long-term-care homes, group homes and other residential settings. Last February and March, governments were scrambling to protect vulnerable people, and one of the consequences was that access to people in residential situations was restricted. The longer these restrictions went on, it became evident that often basic daily needs weren't being met, and also that there was a second pandemic, one of loneliness and isolation, that has serious implications on peoples' health. We all know that. Connections to others are a necessity of life.

The stories—and there are so many—are heart-breaking. I'm going to give you a story that's 50 years old, and I'll try to do it quickly. My grandmother ended up in Saint-Vincent Hospital, a chronic care hospital. She broke two hips. She suffered from depression. The doctor said to my dad, "She has premature dementia. We saw this lesion on her brain. She's going to die in six months."

My dad visited her every day, making sure that she stayed connected. He kept watching and seeing what was going on with her. He was concerned that the medications that she was on were having an effect on her. So he bought the compendium of pharmaceuticals—he couldn't go on the Internet; it was 1970s—a book this big for \$300. He looked at the drugs, went to see a doctor friend and said, "Here's the list of drugs my mom is on. I think this is what's happening to her by what it says in here." The doctor said, "You can't do that. You're not a doctor." My dad kept pushing, and he said, "You might be right."

She had been in Saint-Vincent, a chronic care hospital, for six years—six years. She got the drugs changed. She lived for six years semi-independently, outside of a chronic care hospital. That's what essential caregivers do. I tell you that story to underscore the point.

A lot of work went into this legislation. I know what it takes. I am working on a piece that complements this. It's not as comprehensive as this, but I think will match up well. It's a big effort. I want to thank the member.

I also want to thank everybody who is not here today, who has been advocating for families, who has been working hard out there in the community, who has been relentless and tireless. You brought it to the floor of the Legislature through your member from Windsor West.

There is an opportunity for us here. Like with Dan's Law, we can decide to work together. There's nothing partisan in this bill. This is good for everyone. We all know a story of an essential caregiver in one of our families. There is no reason this bill should not pass second reading.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Let me first thank the member from Windsor West for introducing this bill. I'd also like to acknowledge the remarks of my colleague the member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

I am pleased to rise today to speak about caregivers in long-term care. We know how important caregivers are to

the overall well-being of long-term-care residents. It's so important that caregivers, whether they be family members, friends or others, can visit and help care for people living in long-term-care homes. We know that it's not just about providing care; it's also important to the mental health and well-being of residents that they can see family and caregivers.

The member for Windsor West has said about her bill that "a balance must be struck between public health, and the emotional, mental, and physical health of residents." I agree and believe we must be very careful that we find the right balance.

At the outset of the pandemic, our government made the difficult decision to limit caregivers from long-term-care homes. Today, as the Minister of Long-Term Care has said in the House, homes are 99% COVID-free. We have been able to ease restrictions we had months ago, but we must remain vigilant. We put in limits while understanding how difficult it would be for residents and their loved ones. We must always remember that long-term-care homes are people's homes, and family and caregivers are an important part of what makes them a home.

This decision to restrict access came from the expert medical guidance of the Chief Medical Officer of Health in mid-March. The health, well-being and safety of long-term-care residents is a top priority of our government. The operator of every home in Ontario has to follow outbreak management protocols and direction from the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We have continually updated and adapted the guidance for long-term-care homes based on the best medical advice. We did not take the decision to restrict access to long-term-care homes lightly. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as numbers fluctuated daily, we had to be prepared for the constantly evolving global pandemic.

Since March, essential visitors to long-term-care homes have included individuals performing essential support services or those visiting a very ill or palliative resident. Under this umbrella, caregivers are considered essential visitors and they provide important assistance to residents, such as helping with feeding, mobility, hygiene or stimulation for residents with dementia. They can be family members or friends, privately hired caregivers, paid companions and translators. During this time, home operators were encouraged to allow these caregivers to visit, but this was not carried out consistently in all homes.

On September 2, our government updated the policy to provide clarity that caregivers are allowed to visit homes at any time. We were pleased to make that announcement, as we understood how important it is for residents, their caregivers and loved ones. Under that revised policy, each resident or substitute decision-maker is permitted to designate two essential caregivers. Those caregivers may once again visit their loved ones in long-term care without time limits, because the care and emotional support that caregivers provide is vital to the mental and physical well-being of residents.

I'd like to remind everyone in this chamber that we must continue to be vigilant when visiting our loved ones

in long-term care. If you're feeling unwell, please stay home.

Let me end by thanking families and caregivers for all they do to help people who live in long-term-care homes. I believe the bill from the member for Windsor West makes a very good statement about the need and regard we have for caregivers, and I will be pleased to support it today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to congratulate the member from Windsor West for bringing this very important issue forward.

1450

This summer, I held a round table with family caregivers whose loved ones lived in long-term-care homes in London. They all understood that this was a difficult time, and that keeping their loved one safe is a priority. But they couldn't understand why they weren't part of that very plan to keep them safe.

Of all people, family caregivers are the most invested in making sure their mom, their dad, sibling or child makes it out of this pandemic alive and healthy. They are the ones who would show up every day to help the hard-working front-line care staff to care for their loved one, and yet they were locked out. They were locked out with very little communication, locked out without an end date, and locked out at arm's length. And they've asked. They said, "How would you feel if you weren't able to comb your child's hair or feed your mom or hug your dad when he was having a bad day? Even worse, how would you feel seeing your loved one's health deteriorate because they miss you?"

I've heard from family caregivers bereft that they are required to stand by while their loved one's health declined before them. I had an opportunity to meet with not only Londoners but also the Ontario northern family council network, and a story I wanted to share that was discussed on that call. Keri said that her dad was always a chatterbox. Of course, when the pandemic came, she wasn't able to see him. When she finally could see him, he'd stopped talking. He had lost 25 pounds. He didn't have an appetite anymore, and he'd basically lost interest in everything. She said she wants families and family councils to have a voice in this visitation plan that should be put forward to make sure that families do have access and that residents have rights to who they want to be as part of their caregiver plans.

I've also heard from residents who tell me that they don't see the point in carrying on if they can't see their child or their sibling or their parent. I've heard from staff worried that, try as they might, the love and the care they provide can't replace the love and the care of a family member.

The care plans that don't include family members as essential caregivers are incomplete. Health experts across the board have determined that it is not only possible but necessary to fold family caregivers into care plans, even in the midst of a pandemic. We have an opportunity here to

show millions of caregivers in this province that they matter, that we are listening, and that we care. So I urge all of my colleagues in this House to pass this bill and give our loved ones in care the hope that they need to carry on, the hope that they will be reunited with their families soon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member—

Ms. Jessica Bell: University—Rosedale.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): From University—Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker, it's been a little while.

I rise today in support of Bill 203, the More Than a Visitor Act, a bill that's being put forward by the MPP for Windsor West. Like all of you, COVID-19 has had a very significant impact on the long-term-care homes and congregate setting homes in my riding. I've had many constituents contact me over the last six months, distraught, devastated, scared, anxious because they're worried about the health and safety of their parents, their children, their siblings in long-term-care homes.

They've been very worried because many of them have not been able to access and provide the essential caregiving that they have typically been able to do, and some of them weren't able to be with their parents or their grandparents when they passed away because of COVID-19. That was very difficult for the many members who contacted me who had parents who lived at Mon Sheong family home. Over 35% of the people in Mon Sheong have died because of COVID-19.

But this issue of lack of access and this inconsistent approach to access continued after the first wave subsided, and I've been contacted by many residents about this issue. Those residents include Charlotte, whose 91-year-old mother's health deteriorated during the months her care home was closed to visitors. Her mother became 100% wheelchair-dependent and was unresponsive during e-visits. Her well-being has dramatically improved since outdoor visits have begun again, but she's very concerned about what will happen if we move to a more restricted setting.

I've also heard from Jennifer, who made the extremely difficult decision to put her son, who is now a young man with very complex special needs, into a group home. When she wrote to me, she stressed how difficult that decision was, and as a parent, I can imagine why; it's not hard. She's also worried that she will lose access to her son as we embark on a second wave.

I've had these letters and many other letters from people who have been very concerned about what this could mean. That is why I support the MPP for Windsor West's bill, Bill 203, which will ensure that residents have the right to designate someone as their caregiver and that they have the right to access them safely—so that if you live in Mon Sheong, O'Neill, Cedarvale, Kensington Gardens or Eden Community Homes, you will have the right to access your essential caregivers, and it will be the government's job to ensure that you can access them safely.

Thank you for supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I rise today in support of this bill, and I want to say thank you to the member from Windsor West for bringing it forward.

We have seen the devastating crisis in our congregate care facilities throughout this pandemic. In my own riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, Extencare Guildwood is one of the hardest-hit long-term-care facilities in Ontario.

Family caregivers are often the eyes, the ears and the voice of residents who may not be able to speak for themselves. Indeed, the More Than a Visitor Act recognizes their essential role.

I want to tell you one of the stories of the many that I've heard. Marla di Giacamo, whose mother is a resident of Extencare Guildwood, said, "On May 4, we were finally permitted to visit at our mother's window. We were appalled at her condition. She was not speaking, was unresponsive and was so dehydrated and malnourished that she could barely hold up her head. Before the lockdown, she had been healthy, lively, engaging and happy." For those eight weeks, she was not being fed. Her meals were being dropped in her room—expecting that she would feed herself, but she could not do so. This had been happening since early March.

This is just one of the many stories across Ontario where families are pleading with this government for access to care for their loved ones.

Madam Speaker, I spoke in this House on March 11 about this issue.

In order for this bill to pass, we need the support of the government so that families will have the essential support and the care they so desperately need.

Thank you so much for bringing this forward and for your work on this file.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This bill must pass. For so many, the grief has nowhere to go. Supporting this legislation would bring hope to so many.

If this is the new normal, then we have to normalize the rights of family and caregivers to safely care for their loved ones. It should not be optional; it should not be subjective. We need legislation. Once we, as lawmakers, have this knowledge, we have an ethical and moral responsibility to put partisanship aside and to act.

I'm going to share some stories of families who reached out to me and who, to this day, continue to face obstacles and regret at not being able to care for their family members.

Jeremy Thibodeau shared before-and-after pictures of his grandfather. They brought me to tears. He writes, "My grandfather Bill Mouery who was 95 had been in a long-term-care home in Cambridge for the past couple years. Prior to COVID-19 we had many issues with his quality of care, but this pandemic has shined a light on the failure to protect our most vulnerable seniors.

"The things my family has witnessed over the years relating to his care would be unimaginable to some people, (i.e. not checking his catheter, giving him pills that have fallen on the floor).

"I realize the staff are struggling....

"My mother spent every day at his home making sure he would eat, drink and get a little exercise but as soon as COVID-19 hit there were no more family visits. You will see in my pictures attached, the first being March 13, I stopped to have lunch with him"—because I wasn't going to see him. "The next two are from my visit last night, July 16, as he is now at the end of his life and I had to stop in to say everything I could within an hour in case he doesn't make it today.

"I am beside myself today crying, writing to you because when I saw him last I didn't think it would actually be our last conversation.

"This man has been through so much in his 95 years, from serving his country in the navy, to raising a family of four kids, and having one of the most successful pizza shops in Preston...."

This should never happen again. This legislation would prevent that.

Janet Firth from Kitchener–Conestoga writes, "Today I want to make people aware of the increasing mental health strain that is pushing hard on my daughter Amanda (and many others that are in her situation, who live in a group home for people living with disabilities. The world around us is able to do so much and she is still a prisoner in her own home."

1500

She has been denied access to visitors. She has been denied access to a life outside of this home: "There should have been reasonable care for our loved ones at these homes! Please speak out and help make change for reasonable safety measures and visitors!

"This responsibility that we have is made all the more important if our youth and group homes and ... long-term-care system continue to be underfunded and under-resourced."

We need to act today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Windsor West has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I just want to touch on what the member for Ottawa West–Nepean talked about and how he has a brother with autism who is in a group home and that they were able to connect through video chat. I'm happy for your family that you had that connection, and that was meaningful, appropriate access for your brother during this difficult time. But unfortunately, Speaker, that is not the case for many families in this province.

Pamela, whose son is 14 and has a disability is in a group home: For six months, she had no communication with her son because video chat was not an option for him. He doesn't understand it. They couldn't have phone conversations. They couldn't see him while physically distancing, because he doesn't understand why he can't hug mom and dad; imagine that.

It didn't work for Susan, who for months showed up every day at her mom Barbara's window. Maureen and her mom Elsie are the same story. They showed up every day to try to talk to mom through a window. And instead, what they saw was a cognitive, a physical, an emotional and a mental decline as their mothers rapidly deteriorated because they didn't have that meaningful access.

Speaker, there's guidance, but the guidance is very different from one setting to another. In developmental services, it's very punitive.

As the member from Ottawa West–Nepean pointed out, oftentimes people with developmental disabilities have sensory processing disorder. They can't have face coverings. Yet this government has put out guidance saying if they don't keep those face coverings on during visits, their visits will be cut off and they will no longer be allowed to see their essential caregivers. Their essential caregivers are not allowed to use the bathrooms while visiting or they could lose their visits.

Madam Speaker, we need this legislation. We need this caregiver strategy. We need all those voices at the table. And we need this government to not just vote on it today, but to actually make it happen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

CHANGE OF NAME AMENDMENT ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CHANGEMENT DE NOM

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 11, standing in the name of Miss Mitas. Miss Mitas has moved second reading of Bill 206, An Act to amend the Change of Name Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: I would like to put it in front of the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Agreed.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Gates has moved private member's notice of motion number 85. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

MORE THAN A VISITOR ACT (CAREGIVING IN CONGREGATE CARE SETTINGS), 2020

LOI DE 2020 DÉCLARANT QUE LES AIDANTS NATURELS SONT PLUS QUE DE SIMPLES VISITEURS (PRESTATION DE SOINS DANS LES HABITATIONS COLLECTIVES)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mrs. Gretzky has moved second reading of Bill 203, An Act respecting the rights of persons receiving care, support or services in congregate care settings and their caregivers. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We have a recorded vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 203, An Act respecting the rights of persons receiving care, support or services in congregate care settings and their caregivers.

The bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes.

Prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1506 to 1536.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 47; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Social policy, please, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Yes.

TIBETAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE TIBÉTAIN

Ms. Karpoche moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to proclaim the month of July as Tibetan Heritage Month/ Projet de loi 131, Loi proclamant le mois de juillet Mois du patrimoine tibétain.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to the order of the House passed on September 14, 2020, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Karpoche has moved second reading of Bill 131, An Act to proclaim the month of July as Tibetan Heritage Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to the order of the House passed on September 14, 2020, the bill is now ordered for third reading.

TIBETAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020

SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE TIBÉTAIN

Ms. Karpoche moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to proclaim the month of July as Tibetan Heritage Month / Projet de loi 131, Loi proclamant le mois de juillet Mois du patrimoine tibétain.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you, Speaker. Tashi Delek to you and to all members of this House. Tashi Delek is a Tibetan greeting used to convey well wishes to others.

I rise today on behalf of my constituents of Parkdale–High Park and on behalf of Tibetans across Ontario to speak to this bill, Bill 131, Tibetan Heritage Month Act.

I want to begin with a land acknowledgement. The land we are on is the traditional territory governed by the Dish With One Spoon wampum belt covenant, and it includes the following nations: the Chippewa, the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Huron-Wendat and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River.

It is important that I, as a settler, acknowledge the original caretakers of this land. More specifically, as a Tibetan, as someone whose parents and grandparents escaped the illegal Chinese occupation of Tibet—our homeland—someone who has worked to educate others about the true history of my people, it is my responsibility to learn about the history of the Indigenous peoples of this land, a place I now call home, and do my part in working towards reconciliation and addressing the past and continued colonization of Indigenous peoples. I commit myself to continuing to unlearn and decolonize spaces I occupy and to work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in their struggle.

Speaker, I am proud to have sponsored this bill in this House. It is especially meaningful to me and to the Tibetan community. This bill proclaims July of each year as Tibetan Heritage Month. July is a significant month for Tibetans, as on July 6 Tibetans in Ontario and across the world celebrate the birthday of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, Tenzin Gyatso, who is an honorary Canadian citizen.

I want to share with members of this assembly and with everyone watching at home why recognizing Tibetan Heritage Month is important. But first, I have to tell you a bit about the Tibetan people in Ontario and Canada.

Ontario is home to over 6,000 Tibetans. My riding of Parkdale–High Park has the highest concentration of Tibetans outside of India and Nepal. Because of this, Parkdale is unofficially known as Little Tibet.

The invasion of Tibet by China between 1949 and 1959 led to thousands of Tibetans escaping Tibet. The first Tibetans arrived in Ontario in the 1970s. It was a small group who settled in the Belleville and Lindsay areas. For a long time, the community of Tibetans was only about 300 people in the entire province. I read somewhere that it was the smallest immigrant community in Ontario, but it was the birth of the Tibetan community here, leading to the growth of the Tibetan identity and culture in Canada.

The big wave of Tibetans resettling in Ontario happened in the early 2000s. Like many immigrant, refugee and newcomer communities before us, Tibetans landed in Parkdale. Jameson Avenue in Parkdale was known as the landing strip because so many newcomers first landed there before getting settled and then slowly moving across the GTA and Ontario.

The Tibetan community, however, stayed in Parkdale and planted roots there. The community made Parkdale its home for the last 20 years. If you walk the streets of the neighbourhood, Speaker, you will see Tibetans in their traditional wear, monks in red robes, prayer flags on the balconies of apartments and high-rise buildings fluttering in the wind, the Tibetan flag or a picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama gracing homes and businesses.

Queen Street West is filled with Tibetan small businesses. The Tibetan restaurants have made our favourite food, momos, everyone's favourite food. Momos, for those of you yet to enjoy them, are Tibetan-style dumplings. You may recall we had different kinds of dumplings at the annual Tibet day reception right here at Queen's Park last year.

In the summer, Tibetans are out in the space in front of Parkdale Collegiate on Jameson Avenue every Wednesday to mark Lhakar by participating in gorshey. Lhakar means "white Wednesday," a day to engage in activities where we assert our Tibetan identity. Gorshey is a traditional Tibetan performance, a quick step dance done in a circle to encourage communal feeling and bond.

Then, just down the street, we have several monasteries. These are not just places of worship but also community hubs, with programs for seniors and a Tibetan language school for children. I love attending graduation day, where we spend the day celebrating the achievements of our community's children, whether it's improving their language or learning traditional music and performances. There are also classes on Buddhism, programs like meditation, philosophy debates and so much more.

All of this may seem like little things, but so much of our heritage is about living it, and Tibetans do not take it for granted, because these little things, like having a picture of the Dalai Lama or the Tibetan flag, can lead to imprisonment in Tibet. In Tibet, Tibetan schoolchildren are not taught their mother tongue but instead are forced to learn Mandarin.

Considering Tibetans are a fairly small and newer immigrant group, it is a great achievement that we have a Tibetan community centre. The Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre—its Tibetan name is Gangjong Choedenling—was inaugurated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama when he last

visited Toronto. The Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre's mission is to preserve, foster and share the rich and distinct Tibetan culture in Canada. So many wonderful programs and celebrations happen in that space.

There are numerous other community organizations across Ontario, and I want to take a moment to recognize them: the Tibetan Women's Association of Ontario, Students for a Free Tibet Canada, the Canada Tibet Committee, Chushi Gangdruk, the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, the Ottawa Tibetan Community Association, the Belleville Tibetan community, Pemakoe Welfare Association Canada, the Ngari Foundation, Kongpo Kyiduk, Ex-Mussoorie Kyiduk, the Tibetan Children's Village Alumni Association, Tibetan Children's Project Canada, Domey Kyiduk and Tehor Kyidug. All of them play an important role in the community, and I want to thank them for their efforts.

Having a Tibetan heritage month matters. Heritage is about people. It's the way we identify ourselves. Tibetans are a distinct people. We have our own language, script, history and customs. The Tibetan community in Ontario and the diaspora are now into their fourth generation in exile. I am a third-generation Tibetan in exile, and I'm a first-generation immigrant in Canada.

Three generations of statelessness, of not being able to be in the land of your ancestors, three generations of precarity, instability and not feeling like you belong anywhere—for Tibetans in Ontario and Canada, we finally have a place to call home, a place where we belong, a place where we can live our lives freely. And because we have that privilege, we also have the responsibility to protect and preserve our culture and identity as a people.

For generations, for my entire life, for us as a people, the way His Holiness the Dalai Lama put it when he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 was that there has been "a calculated and systematic strategy aimed at the destruction of" our "national and cultural identities" by the Chinese government. As a people, we have remained steadfast for more than 60 years despite China's repressive social, cultural, racial and economic policies. Recognizing Tibetan Heritage Month is recognizing the human dignity in each of us.

The person who was the towering figure of my childhood, the matriarch of my family, was my maternal grandmother, who passed away last year at age 94, and with her and her generation, a part of our people's story, which unlike many others is not reflected in history books and is gone forever.

She, like many Tibetans, escaped Tibet after the Chinese army invasion and made the difficult decision to take the dangerous journey across the Himalayas by foot, with four young children in tow, leaving everything she knew behind, including her husband, my grandfather, who was imprisoned for over 20 years, going into the unknown for the safety and freedom of her children. For six decades, she hoped she could return, but she died without ever having seen her home again. It remained a wish unfulfilled. Her entire life she worked hard to preserve our heritage and to pass culture and values to us.

1550

Heritage is also about telling stories. Recognizing heritage months is about seeing and celebrating each other's stories, and it is a reminder of our strength as Canadians. It is a way to build community and move towards a path of inclusivity. It's about reasserting the values and principles Ontario and Canada stand for.

Telling our stories also helps us understand and take pride in where we come from and where we want to go, because it's not just the past, but also our shared desire for a future we can determine for ourselves. For Tibetans, we are up against the very well-oiled propaganda machine of the Chinese government, who want to tell our stories. So this heritage month serves as a reminder of accurate telling of stories.

Finally, recognizing Tibetan Heritage Month is also about recognizing the contributions of the Tibetan people, not just to Ontario but to the world. I think that the biggest contribution has been our message of non-violence and compassion, because we practise it. Our entire struggle as a people is built on it.

I want to thank all members of this assembly for supporting this bill. While we may disagree on many issues, this is one we can agree on. I want to thank the government House leader. I am grateful to have had this opportunity to share a part of my identity and my story in this House.

With the passage of this bill, Ontario becomes the first jurisdiction in the world to recognize Tibetan Heritage Month. We should pride ourselves on being a leader on this. It's historic. It's also wonderful timing that this bill becomes law in the year the Tibetan community marks His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 85th birthday.

In honour of his 85th birthday, the Central Tibetan Administration in exile declared the year 2020 as the year of gratitude to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, to not only show our respect, but also to recognize and appreciate all of his achievements. Tibetans in Ontario say thank you to His Holiness by sharing his message of love and compassion through various acts of service and giving back to the community.

During the pandemic, the Tibetan community has been so organized, delivering fresh meals to front-line health care workers, to the homeless in encampments, sewing cloth masks, hats, aprons, gowns for front-line workers in long-term-care homes, in hospitals, in assisted living centres, among others, joining the collective effort across this province to take care of each other during times of crisis.

The Dalai Lama has dedicated his entire life to preserving and promoting Tibetan culture and heritage. It is fitting that, as the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, we join in and mark the year of gratitude to the Dalai Lama by officially proclaiming July of each year as Tibetan Heritage Month in Ontario, so that his work and legacy of peace and compassion endures.

I want to conclude by expressing my heartfelt thanks to the people of Parkdale–High Park. The Tibetan community is thriving because of the love and solidarity from our

neighbours and our larger community. Parkdale–High Park is the place that welcomed me and my family with open arms. I will never forget the kindness and warmth that was shown.

On behalf of the Tibetan people around the world, including those in Tibet, I want to say to the people of Ontario: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: As the proud son of immigrants in this great country, seeing first-hand the immense contributions diaspora communities make to our society, it is an honour for me to stand today in this chamber and speak to Bill 131, An Act to proclaim the month of July as Tibetan Heritage Month.

I'm proud to stand across party lines in support of the member from Parkdale–High Park, and I applaud her, not only for her achievement of being the first person of Tibetan origin to be elected to this chamber, but for putting forth a private member's legislation that is thoughtful, that is timely and worthy of our Legislature's support. I wholeheartedly support this bill and will be voting in favour of it, as I mentioned to the member earlier.

The community of Parkdale in the member's riding is home to a large and growing Tibetan community. I have visited the vibrant, colourful shops and restaurants of Little Tibet on many occasions, Speaker. Its people often remind me of my own story—albeit very different experiences and regions of the world—of my parents who came to this country seeking opportunity. Much like my parents and many immigrants, Tibetan Canadians work hard and make countless sacrifices to give their sons and daughters a better life. I believe that new Canadians share a unique understanding with each other, regardless of their religious or ethnic origin, because they faced similar circumstances when they arrived in Canada.

Over the years, new Canadians have helped to build the diverse and vibrant mosaic that is this country. Tibetan Canadians are proud members of that mosaic. While it's still relatively small in number, the Tibetan Canadian community contributions have been large and noticeable as it has grown, prospered and contributed to our country. The community deserves our official recognition.

The month of July has a special significance for Tibetans elsewhere. As was noted, July 6 is the birthday of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, who is an honorary Canadian citizen. That day symbolizes the unity of the Tibetan Canadian community and their resilience as a people.

I believe everyone in this chamber will agree that His Holiness is a remarkable individual. He has shared many profound thoughts about kindness, compassion, unity, peace and forgiveness throughout his life. The Tibetan people are fortunate to have him as a leader. We are all fortunate to have him as a leader, as free people, just as we're all fortunate to have him guiding us in matters of spirituality.

Every one of us entered public life to make the world a better place in one way or another, and if we are serious

about that goal, I cannot think of a better way to start than by reading and embracing the Dalai Lama's book, *Compassion and the Individual*. I find his message most inspiring and most relevant at this time of challenge and adversity that we face today as Canada and the world respond to COVID-19: "There is a saying in Tibetan, 'Tragedy should be utilized as a source of strength.' No matter what sort of difficulties, how painful experience is, if we lose our hope, that's our real disaster." The Dalai Lama also said in this country, just some years ago, that his "ancient nation, with ancient culture, is in danger of dying."

I want to echo the message delivered by the member about the importance of standing up for our values as a country, standing up to those nations abroad that seek to undermine freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, to nations whose mission is to create geopolitical strife and to suppress the values and the freedoms of those individuals and their human dignity.

Of course, Speaker, it takes moral courage to stand up for the abuses in Burma, to stand up for the human rights of Muslim Uighurs in China, and of course for the Tibetan people, who have systematically faced oppression. It does require moral courage to say it in our country, and we should do so.

Speaker, as you will be aware, Tibetan Heritage Month serves a purpose to reaffirm their belonging, their relevance, their dignity, and a reminder that it is important not just to honour Tibetan Canadians in this nation but to honour the courage, the enduring courage, the global courage of the Tibetan people for generations. It also reminds us that components of Ontario's civil society are diverse, they are international, but everyone deserves to be treated with that sense of fairness and decency, to pursue their dreams in a society that elevates justice over tyranny.

As you are aware, Speaker, I worked in my past life for former Prime Minister Harper. The Dalai Lama met Prime Minister Harper back in 2007 and asked for his help in bringing Tibetan refugees from Arunachal Pradesh, India, to Canada. The Prime Minister could have provided a few polite platitudes and then disregarded the conversation. That's just not what happened that day. The Prime Minister listened to the Dalai Lama, his direct appeal, and he took decisive action.

1600

Speaker, the wheels of government sometimes move much slower than perhaps you and I would like, but the Prime Minister of the day knew what needed to be done, and he made it happen. I still remember the day in December of 2010 when Canada's then-citizenship and immigration minister, now Premier Jason Kenney, announced that Canada would welcome up to 1,000 Tibetan refugees over a period of five years.

I remember the day, three years later, when the first Tibetans arrived—those refugees, 21 in total—at Vancouver International Airport. The refugees were understandably nervous and certainly tired after a 30-hour flight, but they were also elated to live in and to step into a free

nation—where they're not singled out for their differences; they're celebrated for them—and to become a part of a true mosaic that is this country. They were able to start their lives and enrich an already existing Tibetan community all across our country, in Ottawa, Toronto and, of course, in Vancouver. Those refugees are a reminder of what this country can provide: opportunity to the oppressed.

I reflect on Irwin Cotler, a former Liberal member of Parliament, a human rights lawyer and global advocate, who suggested that he was so pleased to see all-party support for “one of the greatest heroes of our time.” We have an opportunity to promote religious freedom, the concept that individuals should not be oppressed by a state simply because of their option to worship God and to be part of institutional faith. There are many nations on the globe, human rights abusers, that systematically discriminate, persecute and, in some cases, as heinous as murder people simply because they choose to practise faith. Religious freedom is a cornerstone of democratic societies and we have to speak very loudly with our voice, one voice in its defence.

By proclaiming the month of July as Tibetan Heritage Month, the province of Ontario officially recognizes those contributions but also recognizes the values that Tibetan Canadians have brought to this country and emanate in every way, here at home and right around the world. It is for them and it is for future generations that we express solidarity for this bill, for its principle, for the member from Parkdale–High Park and for all Tibetan Canadians, who are leading, who are pioneering and who are making a difference in this country.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Marit Stiles: It is an honour to rise today to speak to this important bill on behalf of my constituents. I want to start, of course, by thanking the member for Parkdale–High Park for bringing forward this motion on behalf of the Tibetan Canadian community here in Toronto and across Ontario.

Ontarians are proud of our cultural heritage and identity. For Indigenous people, that heritage and history stretches back thousands of years, and urban Indigenous people continue to help shape our communities. So, too, have successive waves of immigration, where newcomers have contributed so greatly to our shared project of building this country.

Nowhere is that more apparent than here in Toronto, a city that has become the economic engine of the country precisely because of the diversity of the people who have chosen to call it home. While we've grown so used to living and working together as people with very different backgrounds and histories, it's important that we acknowledge the unique contributions of those communities.

This Parliament has seen a number of motions this year, honouring some of those contributions, and I know what it means for a community, a people, to see themselves recognized in this place. June, for example, is Portuguese Heritage Month. In my community of Davenport, that

means a whole month of events, from banquets to concerts and culminating in the annual Portugal Day Parade. The Portuguese community in Davenport has deep roots, and although this year's events were cancelled and scaled back, we had many other commemorations.

I know it's the same for Greek Canadians in Toronto-Danforth or Ukrainians in Bloor West Village or Italians in Corso Italia and Little Italy. And the list goes on.

We are blessed as a province to be able to honour these communities, their histories and futures. That's why it gives me such great pleasure to participate in the debate on Bill 131, An Act to proclaim the month of July as Tibetan Heritage Month.

Ontario's Tibetan community is unique, as one of the first non-European government-sponsored refugee groups to settle here in Canada. In fact, Toronto's Tibetan community, centred in South Parkdale's Little Tibet, as my colleague has spoken about, is the largest Tibetan community outside of Tibet and just outside the southern boundary of my riding of Davenport.

But Tibetan Canadians have made their home throughout Ontario, bringing with them rich and ancient cultural practices of non-violence and compassion. And that philosophy, as others have mentioned, of course, is embodied by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. As the preamble of this bill notes, on July 6, Tibetans around the world and Tibetan Canadians here in Ontario celebrate the birth of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama who is also, by the way, an honorary Canadian citizen.

I want to acknowledge that the struggle of Tibetans for autonomy in their homeland has inspired people around the world, as has their resilience in the face of oppression. I think that that resilience is still demonstrated today. Despite finding refuge here in Canada, many Tibetans still face years-long waits to be reunited with family members still in India or Nepal, as well as barriers to achieving citizenship due to the unique challenges they face in retrieving the documentation and paperwork required.

Today in Toronto, the community has flourished, contributing to all areas of society, from art to music, academics and business. Small business owners in Little Tibet have built thriving restaurants to showcase Tibetan cuisine, including the beloved momos, the focus of the annually anticipated Momo Crawl, that I know many in my community participate in deliciously, which is also, by the way, a fundraiser organized by Students for a Free Tibet. My riding of Davenport is also home to many Tibetan Canadians and a few Tibetan businesses, like the popular Propeller café on Wade Avenue, which we make great use of, co-owned by Losel Tethong.

Tibetans have also been generous about sharing their culture with the rest of the community. The Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre in Etobicoke is a community hub for everything from guest speakers, gala dinners, and language and dance classes. Though relatively new to our Canadian mosaic, Tibetan Canadians have made their mark, and our province is all the better for it. Those of us who are fortunate to live in Davenport and close to Parkdale–High Park know what a thriving community

Little Tibet is, and this motion will give us an opportunity to share that with the entire province.

And what better embodiment of this community's contribution to Ontario than my colleague the member for Parkdale–High Park? We know the member as a fierce advocate for her community, someone who has been outspoken in support of human rights and economic justice, someone who has repeatedly stood up for Ontarians who have been left behind by successive Liberal and Conservative governments.

You will also know her for her tremendous work as our critic for addictions and mental health, where she has fought government cuts and has made sure the worsening opioid crisis remains on the agenda here at Queen's Park; and as a mother who has brought the issue of maternal mental health to the floor of this Legislature, something I know as a mother myself I was very moved by. To have those issues raised here when they have been swept under the carpet for so many years was deeply moving and very important.

But what some may not have known is that in 2018, the MPP for Parkdale–High Park made history as the first person of Tibetan heritage to be elected to a legislative office in North America, garnering an impressive 60% of the vote, by the way. Speaker, I cannot emphasize enough how important that is. For any community that is new to a place, the experience of seeing someone who looks like you, who speaks your language, who has lived your struggles and shared in your celebrations, serving in this role as a lawmaker is transformative.

The member's own background, having been born in Nepal before settling in Toronto, has helped inform her work here. I know that this motion is one that is personally very, very important to her, as it will be to all Tibetan Canadians. By declaring July as Tibetan Heritage Month, we will be officially recognizing the important contributions of this community to the fabric of our province. It will be an opportunity for all Ontarians including, I hope, our students to learn about the Tibetan community, to understand their history and their struggles, to share in their culture and to celebrate their achievements.

In conclusion, I want to again thank the member for Parkdale–High Park for bringing forward this very important legislation. I want to urge all members to join the official opposition in supporting this bill. It's rare that we can agree on anything these days, but one of these rare moments is right here, where we can truly do something that marks a milestone for so many, and once again sends a message around the world that Ontario values our diversity by celebrating Tibetan Heritage Month.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It's an honour to join today's debate in support of proclaiming July as Tibetan Heritage Month. I'm proud to represent a large number of Tibetans who make their home in the riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, as well home to the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre, one of the largest of its kind in Canada.

I want to thank and congratulate my fellow MPP from across the aisle the member from Parkdale–High Park for sponsoring this bill, for her hard work and for her dedication to ensure that we all learn a little bit about her own culture. I want to recognize you as the first person of Tibetan heritage to be elected as an MPP in Ontario, but also across North America. I'm proud to stand here to support this bill, to support you and to support the Tibetan community.

Tibetan Heritage Month is an opportunity for all of us to recognize and reflect on the history of Tibet and its culture and celebrate the significant contribution of Tibetan Canadians in our communities. July is important, as we've heard throughout this debate, because it is the month of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday of July 6.

The Tibetan presence in Canada is an interesting one. Throughout the 1970s, approximately 500 Tibetans sought refuge in Canada, making them the smallest immigrant community in the country. People were attracted to our country and our province for the opportunity to live in a safer, freer and more prosperous country. Later, in 1998, a smaller number of Tibetan refugees from India and Nepal found a home in Canada. As the years went on, more and more Tibetans have been immigrating to Canada and settling in Ontario, mostly in Toronto and Ottawa. Presently, there are over 5,000 Tibetans living in Ontario who are dedicated to preserving and promoting the values of the unique Tibetan cultural heritage, and we in Ontario are certainly better off for it.

On October 17, 2007, the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre, which is located in Etobicoke–Lakeshore, was opened, and it was opened by his Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. His Holiness gave his blessing to the cultural centre and granted the centre with the Tibetan name Gangjong Choedenling, meaning "ocean of wisdom." On that same day that the Dalai Lama gave his blessing, he was bestowed the US Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award.

The Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre allows for Tibetans to come together under a common roof and create awareness and understanding of the unique Tibetan culture and traditions within Canada's multicultural and inclusive society, as well as to promote harmony and friendship in our diverse Canadian society. It's supported by an amazing board of volunteers of dedicated men and women.

Today, the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre offers a variety of programs and services and is open to everyone. It's always amazing to see how well attended these events are at the cultural centre, and when you're there, they open their hearts, their families and their culinary experiences to you. It is truly an amazing experience.

In late February of 2020, just before the pandemic hit, I was asked to make remarks to celebrate the Tibetan New Year, Losar, the Year of the Iron Rat, year 2147. Well, what a year it's been. It was truly an honour to join Tibetans and also the member of Parkdale–High Park to celebrate this joyous occasion. They celebrate with dance, with music and with family.

I've also had the opportunity to visit the centre numerous times, and I was able to do the tipoff when they announced their full-sized basketball court that was the newest addition to their cultural centre in December. Following the game, the president and the board were very kind and generous with their time to show me around the facility and share with me the history of the artifacts in the room.

I want to personally applaud the Tibetan community, led through the leadership of the cultural centre, for their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From delivering countless hot meals to shelters, long-term-care homes and community centres, including LAMP Community Centre right in my riding, to distributing PPE to front-line health care workers, they have demonstrated a willingness to give back time and time again, and we profoundly thank them for their generosity.

I would like to also encourage everybody here to take the opportunity to visit the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre in my riding, and also the culinary experiences of Little Tibet in the member opposite's riding, where you can have momos, thenthuk noodles and what I've now learned of, a sweet tea. It's my new drink when I visit.

Speaker, Bill 131, the Tibetan Heritage Month Act serves an important purpose. It marks the pride of Tibetan Canadians, who are also proud Ontarians, and I'm glad they feel at home right here in our province of Ontario.

This bill also reminds Ontarians of all backgrounds, whether you were born here or were fortunate enough to

immigrate here, of our province's diversity, tolerance, and acceptance.

I am proud to offer my support for declaring July as Tibetan Heritage Month and, if passed, I look forward to celebrations next July.

Tashi delek.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? Further debate?

Ms. Karpoche has moved third reading of Bill 131, An Act to proclaim the month of July as Tibetan Heritage Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I regret to inform the House that, earlier today, the NDP unfortunately broke the agreement signed earlier this week, so I will be outlining additional measures to keep this House and its members safe over the weekend.

With that, no further business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until Monday, September 28, 2020, at 10:15.

The House adjourned at 1616.

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Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
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Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (IND)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Wayne Gates, Randy Hillier
Andrea Khanjin, Jane McKenna
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stephen Blais
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Catherine Fife, Randy Hillier
Mitzie Hunter, Logan Kanapathi
Andrea Khanjin, Laura Mae Lindo
Sol Mamakwa
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Daryl Kramp
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Robin Martin, Norman Miller
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Roman Baber
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Roman Baber, Will Bouma
Lucille Collard, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Jill Andrew
Toby Barrett, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
John Fraser, France Gélinas
Christine Hogarth, Daryl Kramp
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Stephen Blais, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell