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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 October 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1^{er} octobre 2020

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning.
Prayers / Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SOMALI HERITAGE WEEK ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA SEMAINE
DU PATRIMOINE SOMALIEN

Mr. Hassan moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 180, An Act to proclaim Somali Heritage Week /
Projet de loi 180, Loi proclamant la Semaine du
patrimoine somalien.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order
of the House passed on September 14, 2020, I am now
required to put the question.

Mr. Hassan has moved second reading of Bill 180, An
Act to proclaim Somali Heritage Week. Is it the pleasure
of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

SOMALI HERITAGE WEEK ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA SEMAINE
DU PATRIMOINE SOMALIEN

Mr. Hassan moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 180, An Act to proclaim Somali Heritage Week /
Projet de loi 180, Loi proclamant la Semaine du
patrimoine somalien.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the
member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I am honoured to rise today, this
morning, as the member of provincial Parliament for the
great riding of York South–Weston, the decent and hard-
working people of York South–Weston, and the official
opposition critic for youth engagement, to speak in support
of my first private member's bill, Somali Heritage Week
Act, Bill 180. I'm excited to address the members of this
House this morning.

Whether Ontario has been your family's home for
generations, or if you are the first Ontarian in your family,
the Somali Ontarian community has much to take pride in
and to celebrate. Declaring June 25 to July 1 Somali
Heritage Week in Ontario sets out to do just that.

I would like to thank the many people who have
devoted a great deal of time and energy to advocating for
this bill, including collecting petition signatures and shar-
ing their personal stories. I would like to give a special

thanks to many community leaders who have supported
this bill. I would also like to thank my colleagues who have
been so supportive of Bill 180.

Finally, I would like to thank several individuals and
organizations for their endorsement of this bill: Somali
Workers Network; Abdi Yusuf, treasurer of Canadian
Union of Postal Workers, Toronto Local; Shukri Abdullahi,
journalist and community leader; Abdullahi Barre, com-
munity organizer; Farah Issa, lawyer; Maryama Ahmed,
student leader; Dr. Ahmed Ilmi, academic; Mahad Yusuf,
executive director of Midaynta Community Services; Omar
Warsame, Guidance of Canadian Somali Youth; Abdirisq
Ali, Toronto Development Association of Youth, TODAY;
Abdifatah Ismail; and Leila Aideed of the Hilac Natural
Beauty Inc.

The spirit of Canada's greatness has always been the
diversity of its people. Canada has gained immeasurably
from the strength of its First Nations to the more recent
immigrants and refugees who have come to its shores.
These people have brought their culture, their traditions
and their values. The Somali community in Ontario is part
of this legacy. By proclaiming the last week of June as
Somali Heritage Week, if passed, it would officially
recognize June 25 to July 1 as Somali Heritage Week in
Ontario. With Somali Heritage Week, the province of On-
tario recognizes the economic, political, social and cultural
achievements and contributions of Somali Canadians in all
aspects of Ontario society. Like many refugees and
immigrants who have made Ontario their home, Somali
Canadians are proud to be part of diverse communities
across the province.

The week-long observance also covers a time so sig-
nificant in the history of the Somali community. Somalis
from Somali regions in the greater Horn of Africa cele-
brate their independence during this week: June 26, June
27 and July 1. Today, several celebrations also take place
across Ontario in this last week of June 25 through July 1
that highlight the rich culture and heritage of the Somalis.
Many of these celebrations reflect the traditions of the
Somalis, which celebrate independence, liberty and free-
dom.

Somali Heritage Week is an opportunity to recognize
and reflect on the history of the Somali regions in the Horn
of Africa—its culture and the significant contributions that
Somali Canadians continue to make across Ontario. It also
provides a wonderful opportunity to reflect on their con-
tributions to Ontario. Whether Ontario has been your
family's home for generations or you are the first Ontarian
in your family, the Somali Ontarian community has so
much to take pride in. That is why I am asking the

provincial government to proclaim June 25 to July 1 of each year as Somali Heritage Week. Doing so would create an exciting opportunity to celebrate the beautiful culture, language and history, and to recognize the many contributions of Somali Canadians in Ontario.

I think it's important for me to take some time now to mention some notable Somali Canadians. This is by no means a complete list, but an attempt to provide a glimpse of the wide-ranging contributions made by Somali Canadians in Ontario and throughout Canada. Author Hassan Ghedi Santur is a Toronto-based author. He published his debut novel, *Something Remains*, followed by *Maps of Exile*, an exploration of the plight of African migrants in Europe. He is currently working on his third novel, *Other Worlds, Other Lives*. Mr. Hassan's third novel is set to be released in a few months.

Somali poet Ahmed Aden has made his mark in the literary world as well.

Somali cuisine is very popular and known for its diversity of influences. Hamdi Restaurant, established in 1996, is one of the earliest Somali restaurants in Toronto. Owners Mohamed Omar and Mohamud Farah oversee a fine restaurant with an exquisite menu. Hamdi was previously known as Tariq in 1994.

One of our community's best-known chefs is chef Bashir Munye. Chef Bashir has a very good reputation as an inspirational chef and teacher, as well as being a strong advocate for local and accessible food. Chef Bashir has said that, "Food is a vessel for understanding each other and coming together for social change."

Another wonderful Somali eating and socializing experience comes with a visit to Istar, owned by Somali entrepreneur Mahamed Elmi. Mahamed's mother Istarlin Ali Mohamed first opened Istar Restaurant in 1999, determined to create a business that belongs to her community. In 2012, Elmi took over the business as his mother moved to other ventures. Istar continues to be an unofficial civic centre, where at the restaurant's adjoining venue space, wedding rehearsals, dinners, youth job fairs and festivities for Somali Independence Day take place.

0910

The international modelling world has many Somali Canadians. Ubah Hassan is a Somali Canadian model. She worked with a number of top designers and is also involved in philanthropic work.

Nicole Jedrzejko, daughter to a Somali mother and a Polish father, had a brief but successful international modelling career. Nicole stopped her career to pursue higher education—medicine, to be specific. She graduated from McMaster University and is now a medical doctor in general surgery at the University of British Columbia with a focus on global health, diversity and evidence-based practice.

Idil Salah and Abba Ahmed Osman come to mind, as well as supermodel Yasmin Warsame, who has been featured in *Vogue* magazine and has been a runway model for some top brand campaigns.

We have much to be proud of in Somali Canadians' involvement in the artistic community. Faarrow is a

Canadian pop and R&B musical duo consisting of Somali Canadian sisters Siham and Iman Hashi, from my riding of York South–Weston. They have been making waves ever since the release of their track *Rule the World*, a jazz-infused pop anthem, in 2013. The sisters are the first female artists of Somali Canadian descent to sign to a major record deal with a major US label. In addition to their musical career, the sisters are involved in charitable work, through their non-profit foundation.

Amaal Nuux is a Somali Canadian singer from Toronto who crafts soulful R&B tunes, uncovering the depths of her fine-tuned voice. She is very much a self-made artist, following an independent career path and utilizing social media as a marketing tool to propel her music in global stratospheres. About her musical release *Black Dove*, she had this to say: "We are not going to allow society or culture to restrict us on what we can and can't do. And I'm not in that place anymore. That's what *Black Dove* is. *Black Dove* is stepping out of that space that I put myself in and that society put me in, so I'm free now."

Poet and rapper K'naan has stayed connected in my riding of York South–Weston and has had great success. In 2010, the optimistic track, *Wavin' Flag*, already a hit in Canada, was remade as a celebrity-studded single to benefit victims of the earthquake in Haiti. Another version of the song, a remix by K'naan, became the official anthem of the Coca-Cola 2010 World Cup campaign.

Other renowned Somali Canadian artists include Ladan Hussein, Sulekha Ali and Dominic Salole, also known as Mocky, a singer, music producer, songwriter and composer.

In the sports world, Somali Canadian Mohammed Ahmed from St. Catharines is a Canadian long-distance runner. Ahmed won the bronze medal in the 5,000 metre of the 2019 World Athletics Championships in Doha, the first Canadian medal in the event, and is a two-time silver medalist at the Commonwealth Games in the 5,000- and 10,000-metre events. Ahmed competed at the 2012 and 2016 Summer Olympics. He also ran the eleventh-fastest indoor 5,000 metre in history in Boston in 2017, setting the Canadian national record in the process. Ahmed gave all Canadian runners, regardless of age or ability, a reason to believe that we, too, in this country can go the distance. He proved that Canadian athletes are now in the mix over the long haul at these world championships. Mohammed Ahmed showed that Canadians are players in distance running.

Giving back to the community while helping others is something Somali Canadians contribute in a big way. One such community activist is Hamiltonian Sarah Jama. Sarah is the co-founder of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario and works at the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion as a program coordinator. Sarah Jama is also known widely for her work on anti-racism, disability rights and social justice.

The work for social justice and strengthening our communities is done by many Somali community organizations that have been established in Ontario that offer individuals and families such programs as youth drop-in centres, legal advocacy and elder programs. Job assistance

and aid in navigating the often difficult world of filling out government forms is just some of the assistance these Somali Canadian community organizations offer. They are truly a necessary community hub.

I am proud to have the support of many individuals and organizations, and I would like to take a few minutes to share with you why these organizations are supporting my effort. I have spoken to countless leaders about this bill, Somali Heritage Week.

Abdi Yusuf, treasurer of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Toronto Local, recording secretary of the Toronto-York labour council and member of the Somali Workers Network, sent me a statement in support of this bill, which reads:

“Somali Heritage Week would mean a lot to me and the Ontarians who are originally come from Somalia and their children. It is a continuation of celebration of the contribution that the Somali Canadians made to the province. It will also give a sense of belonging and will boost the morale of future generations.”

Likewise, Dr. Ahmed Ilmi is an academic and recipient of the first University of Toronto Provost’s Postdoctoral Fellowship to be awarded at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. His fellowship is in the department of social justice education, where he has been teaching graduate courses since 2015. Dr. Ilmi is a leading scholar in the Somali Canadian diaspora and the author of *The ‘Say Walahi’ Generation: Identity, Profiling, and Survival in Canada, A Somali Canadian Perspective*, and sent me a statement in support of this bill, which states:

“Somali Heritage Week in Ontario firmly recognizes the important contributions of Canadians of Somali descent in Canadian society, and celebrates a unique heritage with roots in Somali but that is distinctly Canadian. Somali Heritage Week not only tells a story of arrival, but it also tells a larger story about community hopes and dreams.”

Maryama Ahmed, student leader, endorsing this bill, states:

“As a Somali” Canadian, “I would benefit from a Somali Heritage Week because it would instill a sense of pride in myself, and it would foster more connection within the Somali community. As an Ontarian, Somali Heritage Week would add more values, traditions, and aspirations to Ontario’s diverse provincial identity.”

Farah Issa, lawyer, sent me a statement in support of this bill, which reads in part, “I support the bill because it aides in the recognition of the significant contributions that the Somali community has made in all spheres of Canadian society. The Somali community has a strong presence in Ontario, particularly in the GTA and Ottawa region. As a large ethnic minority group, the Ontario government should recognize the culture and the role that this entrepreneurial community plays in our society. I believe that this bill will help in this regard.”

Shukri Abdullahi, journalist and community leader endorsing this bill, states:

“Ontario’s opposition party, the NDP, recognize and are tabling to have Somali Heritage Week ending on July

1, Canada Day, which is also Somali’s Independence Day. We invite you to come and see what makes up our rich culture. Which helps explain the process of finding and incorporating cultural identity into our lives.

“As Ontarians, since diversity is our strength, by implementing productive policies supporting one’s heritage and identity, we can all have a more inclusive and prosperous Ontario.”

Abdullahi Barre, a community organizer, sent a statement in support of this bill, which reads in part, “The Somali Heritage Week ... bill is very important for our community. Once the bill is passed, we would be able to show Canadians our way of living from generation to generation, including our customs, practices, places, arts, as well as our overall values.”

Sarah Jama is a community activist and co-founder of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario and works at the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion. Sarah had sent a statement in support of Somali Heritage Week and states:

“Somalis in Canada have struggled with the double-edge sword of anti-Black racism and xenophobia in this country, while also carrying the intergenerational scars of civil war and imperialist-fuelled displacement from our homeland. Through all this, we have found ways to continue to give back to this country, contribute to the economy, and impact culture in ways that will forever be defined through our dialect and poetry. Somali heritage is a testament to this and more.”

0920

Hawa Mire is a critical writer, columnist and commentator who has been featured in *Maclean’s*, *Briarpatch Magazine*, *Metro Morning* and *Rabble*, among others. In 2017, she completed her master’s degree in environmental studies from York University, where her research examined community storytelling as a place of transformation. She sent me a statement in support of this bill, which reads:

“The richness of Somali cultural heritage, storytelling, food and other traditions have found their way into all aspects of Toronto, especially in my riding of York South–Weston. The addition of Somali Heritage Week will only serve to celebrate the oft-forgotten achievements and successes of this vibrant community embedding us deep into the fabric of Ontario. A bill like this is momentous—and offers a moment we can all be proud to look back on as a key moment in history. I’m proud to be Somali, today and all days, and celebrate Somali Heritage Week.”

Our heritage provides clues to our past and how society has evolved. It helps us examine our history and traditions, and enables us to develop an awareness about ourselves. It helps us explain why we are who we are. Somali Heritage Week will give us the opportunity to highlight and celebrate the achievements of Somalis in all fields and talents. During this week, we should acknowledge the accomplishments of the Somali community, who have risen outstandingly in spite of their challenges and obstacles, and spread the knowledge that comes from every individual’s success story. Somali Heritage Week will allow us to raise awareness about the determined

Somali Canadian trailblazers who have accomplished so much in this province.

Somali Heritage Week would add more values, traditions and aspirations to Ontario's diverse provincial identity. As Canada's Somali community continues to grow, we must come together to rejoice in the rich heritage of Somali Canadians. I urge your support of my bill establishing Somali Heritage Week in Ontario.

The word "heritage" brings to mind different ideas for different people, and it should. Heritage is a person's unique values, traditions, cultures and artifacts handed down by previous generations. We absorb a sense of our heritage throughout our lives, as we observe and experience the things that make our family unique. Our heritage is our inheritance: what the past has conceded to us, what we value in the present and what we choose to present for future generations. Heritage is the full range of our inherited traditions, monuments, objects and culture. More important, it is the range of contemporary activities, meanings and behaviours that we draw from them.

Madam Speaker, I welcome members' comments and views, and I urge your support for my bill establishing Somali Heritage Week in Ontario. I welcome your comments. Thank you kindly.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: I rise today on behalf of my government colleagues to recognize our support for Somali Heritage Week.

First of all, I would like to thank the member of provincial Parliament for York South–Weston, Faisal Hassan, for bringing this important bill to the floor of our Legislative Assembly. By proclaiming the week of June 25 through July 1 as Somali Heritage Week, our government recognizes the contributions that Somali Canadians and Ontarians have made to our province's cultural wealth and economic success.

Ontario truly offers the world in one province. Our cultural fabric is made up of people from many different ethnicities and backgrounds that deliver invaluable contributions to Ontario, including our province's \$75-billion suite of heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries.

As we have heard from other members of this assembly who have spoken to this bill, Somali Heritage Week incorporates significant dates in the history and livelihood of the Somali community, including right here in Ontario.

During this significant week, Ontarian Somalis will celebrate, honour and recognize their independence, to mark important milestones and anniversaries relating to their proud independence. In fact, multiple celebrations are happening in the province of Ontario during this week that highlight the rich culture and heritage of the Somali people. Many of these celebrations reflect the traditions of the Somali people and celebrate their own independence, liberty and freedom.

Madam Speaker, this week is an important recognition for the Somali community, which represents approximately 60,000 Somali Canadians from coast to coast to coast in Canada.

The contributions of Somali Ontarians are forever felt here in the province. I'd like to take a moment to highlight some of the many contributions that have been made by the Somali Ontarian community.

For example: K'naan, a world-renowned recording artist from Rexdale, in the GTA, who sang and performed the iconic Wavin' Flag song, which was chosen as Coca-Cola's promotional anthem during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. His performance was featured in the top 10 hits in over 10 different countries throughout the world, including Mexico, Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

We also have individuals like Mohammed Ahmed, a Canadian long-distance runner from St. Catharines, who won a bronze medal in the 5,000 metre at the 2019 World Athletics Championships in Doha. He was also the first Canadian who ever medalled in this event. I will also note that Mohammed competed at the 2012 and 2016 Summer Olympics, in addition to being a two-time silver medallist at the Commonwealth Games.

Madam Speaker, these are only a few examples of the many contributions Somali Ontarians have made to Ontario's prosperity and cultural mosaic.

I am proud to stand with my government colleagues to recognize Somali Heritage Week.

Ontario's cultural industries contribute over \$25 billion to Ontario's economy and represent almost 270,000 jobs. Through support for this bill, our government is proud to highlight the incredible contributions that have allowed this province to showcase all Ontario has to offer—the world in one province.

Madam Speaker, I would like once again to thank the member of provincial Parliament for York South–Weston, Faisal Hassan, for bringing this important bill to the floor of our Legislative Assembly.

I look forward to further discussion, and I'm happy to thank the members of our Legislative Assembly for taking the time to listen to the importance of this bill and why it will make a significant impact for our province and its heritage, sport, tourism and cultural industries.

My colleague from Mississauga—Erin Mills would also like to rise and show his support.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I rise today in support of Bill 180, the Somali Heritage Week Act. I applaud the member for York South–Weston for introducing this legislation to recognize Somalia's rich history and culture, as well as the many wonderful contributions made by Somalis here in Ontario, and in Canada.

There are many Somali families in my lifelong home riding of Humber River–Black Creek, and I know that they are so proud that this is happening today.

0930

One of the great things that has always made our country and our province great is our diversity, from the Indigenous peoples who first inhabited this land all the way to the more recent immigrant groups who have come here, bringing their cultures, traditions and values. Speaker, I look forward to the day that we can all officially

celebrate our different heritages here in this beautiful mosaic.

Samiya Abdi, a senior public health specialist and a proud Somali Canadian and Ontarian, spoke to me about the importance of Somali Heritage Week. She said:

“I am grateful to the many MPPs working hard to ensure Somali Heritage Week is recognized and celebrated across Ontario. Somali Canadians started settling in Ontario in the early 1960s, many arriving as university students, some choosing to remain to make Ontario home while others went back to Somalia. Over the past 40 years, Ontario has become home to one of the largest Somali diaspora communities.

“As a community that exists in the intersection of Blackness and Islam, 2020 had given us our fair share of experiences of anti-Black racism and Islamophobia that has only been exacerbated by the current pandemic. As such, it is key that we take the time to account for our contributions, celebrate both our past and present, but most importantly, dream up a better future for ourselves and our children.

“A future that takes into account all our identities and affirms who we are as Muslims, Somalis and Canadians.”

The Somali community has left a lasting mark here in Ontario. Many Somalis came to Canada in the 1980s and 1990s as refugees, fleeing conflict back home and seeking to build a better life for them and their families. Many Somali refugees settled in Toronto in neighbourhoods like Little Mogadishu near Kipling and Dixon—not far from my riding—which to this day is home to one of Canada’s largest Somali communities. Many also settled in my riding and in neighbourhoods like Weston and Regent Park.

Safiya Hirsi, a first-generation Somali Canadian, writes:

“Heritage often evokes the feelings of belonging and pride. Our heritage is the summary and reflection of many parts of our character and our lives. When communities celebrate their heritage, these celebrations are a showcase of the best parts of what makes each culture special and unique.

“What Somali Heritage Week means for Somali Canadians is a remembrance and a celebration of our roots. Of our rich culture, language, traditions, religious beliefs and community structures—and our good food too. Connection to our native culture is also very dear to the Somali community, since the bulk of us first arrived in Canada fleeing civil war as refugees. As a Somali Canadian born in Canada, I’ve never seen the country which my parents’ generation speaks of with so much love and nostalgia. But I value every story that’s shared of the world they grew up in, and I value every opportunity I have to learn more about my roots and where I come from and to share that with everyone here in my home city of Toronto.

“Celebrating my heritage to me is an expression of that feeling of love we all have of home, and a time when our community can come together and share between ourselves and with others that sense of belonging and pride of what it means to be Somali, and what it particularly means to be Somali Canadian.

“So, I would like to say thank you to the member for York South–Weston for putting forward this private member’s bill to celebrate the heritage of Somali Canadians and for being a bright representation of our community.”

The bright representation of the Somali community can also be seen in the achievements of many notable Somali Canadians, such as poet, rapper, singer, songwriter and instrumentalist K’naan, whose song Wavin’ Flag was used as the promotional anthem of the FIFA 2010 World Cup; or Shadya Yasin, who is an artist, educator, activist, advocate and organizer and has led several youth-focused initiatives and art projects aimed at children and adolescents at the Art Gallery of Ontario—and these are just to name a couple. Of course, I could always mention my great esteemed colleague from York South–Weston, who so far is batting 100 for PMBs as an opposition member—no small feat.

There are many more Somali Canadians who have left a major impact here for Ontario. Somali Canadians have not only enriched the arts and culture of our province and our country, they have also helped in making our city better for other newcomers. In 1991, a group of Somali women in Toronto set in motion a lawsuit against the housing authority, where they challenged the discrimination of refugee claimants. As a result, the law was changed and permitted all refugee claimants to access subsidized housing.

As I said before, officially recognizing Somali Heritage Week is long overdue, and I’ve spoken to a number of Somali Canadians, and they’ve shared with me their stories of what this recognition means to them.

I’d like to read to you the words of Abdul Nur, a first-generation Somali Canadian who grew up in my riding near Jane and Finch. He writes:

“Having Somali Heritage Week is a huge milestone for myself as well as countless other Somalis who may have immigrated to Canada in hopes of a better life for themselves and their families and who constantly fight to better themselves and their communities.

“The idea of a Somali Heritage Week is amazing in and of itself, and I am thankful to the MPPs and others who may have contributed to this concept as it serves a great purpose. To be Somali Canadian is to be synonymous with struggle. It’s to bear the brunt of a nation which constantly undergoes turmoil and is painted in the media as a failed nation. It is being caught at the intersection of pride and privilege, as there are Somalis and Somali Canadians who are doing amazing things; however, if you pay close attention to the media, these accolades of the many are often overshadowed by the misdeeds of the few.

“It is important to honour Somali and Somali Canadian culture and heritage as it is a rich culture and there are seldom any opportunities to display our heritage in a better light. There isn’t much representation for those of Somali background in politics so this is a good direction to head in, in regard to highlighting the plethora of successes that has been achieved by my community. Being a first-generation Canadian, born to a family of eight brothers

and sisters, this is a great opportunity for our community and families to celebrate and come together, despite the misconceptions of what it means to be Somali in Canada.

“To be Somali Canadian is to have deep roots in community and to have the utmost respect for your community members and elders, whether you’ve known them for one day or 10 years. It is to look out for your fellow brothers and sisters and understand that we are one people just as our flag illustrates one star. And although some of us may find ourselves drowning in a sea of trouble, our community is always there to mobilize and come together in order to uplift us and understand us rather than judge us.

“Growing up I’ve always been taught to treat my fellow Somalis as brothers and sisters, no matter where they may have come from, and to understand that unity prevails above all. It is with that that I express my sincere gratitude for this opportunity to celebrate our culture and heritage, as we have not been given that opportunity before. Thank you.”

Suban Abdullahi, a local community activist in Humber River–Black Creek, also spoke of the role that Somali Heritage Week will play in recognizing the contributions made by Somali Canadians. She said:

“I feel glad that those MPPs working towards recognizing Somali Heritage Week acknowledge the growing presence and influence of the Somali Canadian community in Ontario and are playing a role in changing the narrative Somali Canadian youth are subjected to.

“An initiative like Somali Heritage Week will embrace our rich history while showcasing the triumphs and aspirations of Somali Canadians in the present and future.

“Having Somali Heritage Week means love for our culture and sharing the beauty of Somalia to Canadians all around.

“It’s an amazing way of showing where we come from to those who probably don’t know anything about Somalia and its people. Somali Heritage Week is a great way for Somali Canadians to be proud of where they come from, sharing folklore and old tales, showcasing our love for spoken word and poetry, and learning from other Somalis in our community all while sharing our amazing culture with everyone!

“As a Somali Canadian, I feel a strong pride and connection to both countries. I’m connected to and educated on the many societal norms and practices of both communities. It allows me the virtue of multiple perspectives through life experiences while also identifying with the common values of family, hard work and perseverance.

“As with all cultures, it is imperative to reflect on and celebrate the many cultural commonalities and differences. It allows exposure of various cultural practices to many both within and outside the community.

“Lastly, it provides a spotlight to a different and equal set of cultural and religious pillars within our community.

“I love the many customs that link us as well as the common goal towards reparation and contributing to the homeland.”

Muna Egal, a Somali Canadian, told me Somali Heritage Week brings her a great sense of pride to have the contributions of her community officially recognized. She said:

“Having Somali Heritage Week means a lot, it gives me a sense of pride and I want my children to be proud of their Somali culture and their roots. I’m so proud of my Somali culture: the dance, poetry, clothes, and arts. This week will give us a sense of belonging and it will ensure our children can be proud of our culture.

“Having Somali Heritage Week from June 25 until July 1, which is Canada Day and Somalia Day, it will be really nice to celebrate these two together. I hope this bill will be recognized so during Somalia Heritage Week we can celebrate and network in our Somali Canadian community.”

Indeed, Somalis have much to celebrate and be proud of. I once again applaud my colleague the member for York South–Weston for introducing this important bill to officially recognize Somali Heritage Week here in Ontario. You have made your community so proud. I will be supporting this bill, and I encourage all of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to support it as well. This recognition of the Somali community here in Ontario is long overdue. Let’s get it passed.

0940

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

Mr. John Fraser: It’s a pleasure to speak to Bill 180, Somali Heritage Week Act. I want to thank the member from York South–Weston for bringing it forward.

It means a lot to the Somali Canadian community in Ontario, especially my community of Ottawa South. I was fortunate to be able to put forward a heritage month for Lebanese Heritage Month here, and we passed that bill. That was satisfying for me and for my community. But you’re part of that community and, I’m sure, it’s extra special to be able to put forward this bill, your first private member’s bill, and have success. I want to congratulate you on that, and I want to thank you for doing that.

My community, Ottawa South, if you look at it demographically, people identify themselves from being from 125 different countries, with over 90 languages. That is pretty incredible, when you think about a community that diverse. Where would you find that in the world? In Ontario, I’m sure that many ridings are like that or close to that, or maybe some are more than that.

In my community, the Somali community is a large community. That’s because in the 1990s, fleeing strife, famine and civil war, people looking for a better life for their children came here. They came to Ottawa South, they came to Britannia in Ottawa and many other places in Ontario. It wasn’t always easy; it was tough. For every new community that comes, it’s hard to be integrated and connected to the community you’re in, because you’re new and people don’t understand you, don’t understand your culture. You want to stick close together.

The beautiful thing is that, over time, the community has grown. Now half of the community is under 30, which

is incredible. There are so many great young Somali leaders in my community in business, in education, in the public service.

I'll talk a little bit about some of the work that's being done not just in Ottawa South but actually in the community of Ottawa. What came out of the 1990s was an organization called the Somali Centre for Family Services. They started out with the help of Jewish Family Services of Ottawa to serve Somali families who really needed help, because there were issues around language. It's a largely oral culture, from what I understand, so it was difficult to be able to do things you needed to do when you're here. They eventually evolved. They weren't a transfer payment agency, but they've eventually expanded and grown to be what they call a transfer payment agency. They're apart from Jewish Family Services. They don't need a parent or a flow-through agency.

I was very proud when, a few years ago, we were able to assist them with supporting Somali youth workers. It's particularly challenging in our community of Ottawa South with a lot of young Somali men and women who needed support in education, to be able to keep them busy and active and having positive lifestyles.

Another organization that plays a big role in Ottawa is Canadian Friends of Somalia. They are largely an organization that is focused around youth justice and supporting youth. They do great work. I work with Farah Aw-Osman there, at Canadian Friends of Somalia, and it's great to have some partnerships with them as well. Actually, the partnership that existed at the Somali Centre for Family Services was connected to that too.

Every community has challenges when they're new, coming here—challenges with the youth, especially when there's a lot of young people. There is a hard time integrating and connecting into society, and the opportunities aren't always there. In Ottawa South, we had the Somali mothers organization, who worked very hard to ensure that those young people who had gone astray and had encountered the justice system were treated fairly and had opportunities after they got out to lead productive and healthy lives. They've done a lot of great work in Ottawa South.

This brings me to another group in Ottawa. It's Justice for Abdirahman. This is an unfortunate thing to be talking about in heritage month, but I think it's important how the community rose up when Abdirahman, who was a 37-year-old brother, son, friend, died as a result of a very violent arrest. The community came together, a lot of young Somali leaders, to find justice for Abdirahman—not just justice in the sense of what needed to happen in the justice system for fairness but also to drive home the message of the importance of fairness and ending systemic racism. Even more importantly, they were there to support the family of Abdirahman and are still there to this day. They're still doing that work. The community has grown beyond its borders.

In Ottawa South, there's another organization. It's called the Somali Hope Foundation, and the Somali Hope Academy. That was the creation or the inspiration of

Mahamud Elmi, who is a police officer in Ottawa who, through 10 years of hard work with the help of Ottawa Police Service and many, many other community partners, has been able to build a school in Somalia that has educated over 688 young people. So they've grown beyond their borders, and I want to congratulate them for that.

The member for York South–Weston has a seatmate—or maybe not a seatmate but a riding partner—my friend, who, like the member from York South–Weston, has become a parliamentarian. More than anything else in the community, I think the presence of Somali Canadians in Legislative Assemblies and the House of Commons is a very clear indicator of the fact that they are indeed part of the mosaic that makes Canada and Ontario and that they're here to give to Canada. I was proud of my friend Ahmed Hussen, who I worked with in Dalton McGuinty's office and knew for a long time. He worked really hard, as I know the member from York South–Weston did, to get to be elected. It's not easy; we all know that in here.

I want to finish by saying I look forward to the passage of this bill. In Ottawa, we have Somali fest, which happens every June. I don't think it's at the end of June, but maybe it will be at the end of June now. That was something brought forward by Mayor Watson, which is a celebration of Somali culture and the Somali community that exists inside Ottawa.

I want to thank the member again, and congratulate him on bringing this forward for his community and for my community and all members' communities across this Legislature.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm really honoured to stand to speak in favour of this bill for many reasons, actually. As a PA for the Minister of Heritage, Sports, Tourism and Culture Industries, I can't be happier than this to see more cultural bills coming in. Also, as a Canadian of African origin, I really congratulate Mr. Faisal Hassan, the MPP from York South–Weston, for introducing that bill. And also, as the introducer of Bill 106, Egyptian Heritage Month Act, I understand and really support the Canadian fabric, culture—different bills, which actually are very important because they recognize the contributions of different elements of our Canadian cultural fabric, the contributions of the different communities in Ontario and in Canada. They also encourage those communities to be part of the dynamic cultural fabric of Canada.

0950

It's important to recognize each community we can, because this will bring the community together, to showcase their culture and their heritage to the rest of Canada. That helps us, as a whole Canadian community, to understand the different communities among us and to be inclusive.

Part of our job is to be inclusive, bringing those communities together. Those communities are the building blocks of our culture. By introducing bills like this, we are creating that connection between the different communities, recognizing them and encouraging them to come

forward and showcase their culture for us. Those communities are small circles within the big picture. Bringing in these types of bills is helping to connect those circles together to create the big circle of our culture, enriching the culture.

Also, another part of introducing these bills is to help our second generation to be proud Canadians while also being proud of their root culture. By recognizing them through those types of bills, it makes them feel included, influential, so they are proud to speak about their heritage and their culture to the rest of the Canadian community cultures. In many communities, the second generation can feel disconnected and excluded. This type of bill helps them to be proud Canadians, and at the same time, they own a part, an extra piece, which is their own original culture.

So I'm very happy to support this bill. I'm very happy to speak about it, to support it, and I thank the MPP from York South–Weston for bringing it in.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll be deliberately very brief—only to again congratulate the honourable gentleman across the floor. He mentioned a lot of people from the community who are important, but of course he was too modest to mention himself. The fact that he has been able to bring a bill forward that, hopefully, he's going to get passed shortly is a reflection of his hard work as an MPP. In a very short period of time, he has been able to develop a lot of relationships across the floor, and I think that's reflected today in his ability to get this bill done.

It is always a challenge to be the first or the only one in a Legislative Assembly or in a Parliament, and the member probably understands this more than anybody else, as does the member for Parkdale–High Park, who passed a bill last week. We have a couple on our own side: the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park and the member for Markham–Thornhill, the first Tamil Canadians to be elected to this Legislature.

The member for York South–Weston truly stands up for his entire community—and not just in his own riding, but across the entire province. I know how difficult it can be when you are the only person your community can look to. So I really commend him for all of that hard work.

If you would have asked me in the 1970s, when I was a little kid, if I would be a former parliamentary secretary to a Prime Minister and a cabinet minister in the Ontario government, with an Italian Canadian Minister of Education, with an Italian Canadian Minister of Economic Development, with an Italian Canadian Minister of Colleges and Universities, with a Sikh as a cabinet minister, surrounded by a diverse caucus on both sides, I would have told you that you were crazy.

As you walk through these hallways and you look at the pictures on the wall—there's not a lot of diversity in those pictures. There aren't a lot of women in those pictures, let alone diversity.

So this bill really is a reflection of your hard work and how far this Legislature has come. I can't think of a better

year in which we can pass some of these bills to recognize all of the people who help make this province great.

Congratulations to the honourable member. You have become one of those important Somali Canadians people will talk about for many years to come.

Applause.

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

Mr. Hassan has moved third reading of Bill 180, An Act to proclaim Somali Heritage Week.

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. Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 10:15.

The House recessed from 0957 to 1015.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SENIORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to wish everybody an happy International Day of Older Persons. I would like to thank all of the older persons in my life for their wisdom and their support.

Speaker, did you know that right now, one in six persons is a senior? By 2030, it will be one in four. The number of people over the age of 65 will double during that time period, and the number over 85 will quadruple. We knew this when the baby boomers were born, but how come we haven't rethought our health care system to focus on geriatrics?

Right now, Ontario has very few geriatricians—barely over 100—for such a large population. You look at the training of the occupational therapists, physiotherapists, pharmacists, and very little of it focuses on geriatric care.

Don't get me wrong, Speaker: Aging is not a disease; it is a part of life. Some 90% of seniors will never go into a long-term-care home or retirement home. How do we keep elderly people healthy as they age? Well, certainly, stopping smoking, a healthy weight, healthy food, exercise, limiting alcohol—all of this continues to be a big one. But the pandemic has proven to us what many of us already knew: Personal relationships are key determinants of health for older people.

As for the older persons who live in our long-term-care system, we already know that workers' conditions are directly linked to the quality of care they receive. Make PSW jobs careers, make them full-time with a decent pay, a few sick days, benefits, a pension plan and a workload

that a human being can handle, and the recruitment and retention problems in our long-term care are solved.

Happy International Day of Older Persons, Speaker.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Long-Term Care, I am proud that our government is doing everything necessary to protect residents of long-term care, staff, family and essential visitors.

As Ontario enters the second wave of COVID, we've just announced that we're investing \$540 million to protect long-term care. This includes funds for prevention and containment, for repairs and renovations, staff and training to improve infection prevention and control.

We're investing \$52.5 million to recruit and retain 3,700 front-line health care workers. This includes \$8 million for 800 nurses, \$10.3 million for 2,000 PSWs, a guaranteed eight weeks of supply of PPE for homes and a better use of our paramedics to help seniors remain in their homes.

As this pandemic has gone on, we have learned more and more about how to keep people safe, but we didn't wait to know everything before we acted. In March, we budgeted \$243 million specifically for long-term care, part of the \$3.3 billion more for health care. We improved infection control, restricted staff to working in one home and took the difficult step of banning family and visitors. Family and caregiver visits have now resumed, but we must remain vigilant. We will do whatever we need to do to keep our seniors in long-term care safe.

ISLAMIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Faisal Hassan: It is my honour and pleasure to join my Muslim brothers and sisters today to commemorate the beginning of Islamic Heritage Month in Ontario.

As a Muslim member of the provincial Parliament and the first Somali Canadian elected to provincial Parliament in Ontario, I am proud to stand here today to recognize the important contributions the Muslim community has made and continues to make here in Ontario, Canada and throughout the world.

Islamic Heritage Month calls Ontarians to celebrate, to educate and to reflect on Islam's rich and varied history, its long-standing traditions and the cultural diversity of the Muslim community. Through their outstanding efforts and contributions, Muslim Ontarians continue to enrich the social, economic, cultural and political fabric of our province.

This month, as we all celebrate Islamic Heritage Month and pay a tribute to Muslim Ontarians, let us also recommit to standing together against Islamophobia and to addressing systemic racism so that everyone can build a good life here in Ontario.

I want to wish you all a joyful and inspiring Islamic Heritage Month.

1020

MID-AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Not only is today the International Day of Older Persons, it is also the Moon Festival, the actual day of the Moon Festival, and I know that the Chinese residents in Richmond Hill will be celebrating.

Originally named the Mid-Autumn Festival, the Moon Festival is one of the most important festivals celebrated by Chinese around the world: "When the moon is full, mankind is one." Friends and family will be gathering at scenic spots or parks for moon appreciation parties. Festive food, including mooncake, traditional Chinese tea, and festive fruits will be served, while kids will be running around with lanterns.

There is a Chinese saying that during this festive time one really misses their hometown and families. This is particularly true for Chinese immigrants with families and close relatives back in their hometown. The city of Richmond Hill understands their need. The Moon Festival celebration has been held for the past 12 years. This event is so successful that the cities of Markham and Vaughan joined in nine years ago.

This year, with the challenge of COVID-19, the celebration is moved from on-site to on-air through Fairchild TV. The celebration is now extended to across Ontario and even to the other provinces in Canada where Fairchild TV is broadcasted. May I invite you all to enjoy the full moon tonight.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: For decades, successive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, neglected the seniors in our long-term-care system. This proved to be deadly when the pandemic hit.

In the last five months, almost 2,000 residents and staff have died as a result of COVID-19 in Ontario's long-term-care homes. Many died alone, Speaker—alone, without proper care, without a final hug, without being able to say goodbye to people who loved them.

It was so bad that the Canadian Armed Forces had to be sent to the homes with the worst outbreaks. It was so bad that nurses had to go to court just so they could access proper PPE. And it's distressing that the government is still not prepared, that seniors might be even less protected in the second wave, with fewer staff than ever before and outbreaks and deaths in long-term-care homes on the rise again.

The people of Ontario don't expect the Ford government to always come up with the best ideas and action plans. What they do expect, however, and what they deserve, is for this government to admit to mistakes when you make them and immediately take corrective action, not double down on what we've seen is not working. And so far, this government is doubling down on things that are not working.

We cannot make the same mistakes again. We must not make the same mistakes. Seniors deserve to live their final

years in peace and comfort. They deserve to be treated with dignity.

EDUCATION ON INTOLERANCE

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Mr. Speaker, the 90 seconds I have for this statement are not nearly enough time to say all I want to say about this, but I need to share what I can here in this place.

Recent reports of a racist violent attack in my community of Russell are truly disturbing. A 10-year-old Black child had his arm broken in two different places by two other kids repeating racist slurs.

We know racism exists in our communities. Overt racism, systemic racism—this cannot be tolerated. We need an intervention. We can condemn, we can denounce, but what really matters are our actions. We, as leaders, must act. Our government must act.

My colleagues and I have identified and shared concrete measures that we are calling on the government to take to combat the very real racism in our communities and province, and we are ready to work with the government to make this happen. Our Ontario, our Canada, needs to be a place where everyone feels safe and secure.

Mr. Speaker, we clearly have work to do, and you can be sure that together we will continue to fight for what's right for our communities, our children, our today, our tomorrow.

CYPRUS INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Aris Babikian: Good morning. I rise today to mark the 60th anniversary of Cyprus National Day. On October 1, 1960, Cyprus gained their independence from British rule. Since then, Cyprus has become a beacon for democracy, freedom and the rule of law.

Regrettably, the independence march was interrupted by the 1974 illegal invasion and occupation of one third of the island by the Turkish forces. Since then, the Cypriot leadership has struggled for the unification of Cyprus by peaceful means. On the other hand, the Turkish authorities have been intransigent and made the situation more complicated.

On this day, we pay tribute to Ontarians of Cypriot descent whose traditions have become an indelible part of our cultural fabric, and whose contribution to the growth, prosperity and vibrancy of our province is duly appreciated. I look forward to further strengthening the bilateral relations between Ontario and Cyprus.

Furthermore, Cyprus Independence Day is a time to remember all those who lost their lives throughout the wars in Cyprus, especially the tremendous contribution of the Canadian Armed Forces serving under the UN peacekeeping force, and the 28 Canadian peacekeepers who lost their lives serving in Operation SNOWGOOSE.

I extend our province's gratitude to all who share this great heritage and whose accomplishments, struggles and sacrifices continue to solidify Ontario's position as a

region renowned for its commitment to tolerance, diversity and multiculturalism. Therefore, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the Cypriot government and the people.

AUTUMN PELTIER

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's again an honour to speak on behalf and raise the awareness of Autumn Peltier, a young Anishinaabekwe grade 11 student from Wiikwemkoong First Nation Unceded Territory on Manitoulin Island.

Autumn has been walking in her grandmother Josephine's footsteps and has been advocating for the protection of water and of our planet since the age of eight. Autumn has gained national and international recognition, and uses that platform to emphasize the connection of the Anishinaabek to the land and water, their role to protect the lifeline of Mother Earth, and bring to the forefront the need for clean water in First Nations across Canada. Autumn was appointed as the Anishinaabek Nation chief water commissioner, representing the Anishinaabek Nation on all matters related to water.

Early this September, she became the first-ever international recipient of the Jasmina Anema Youth Award. The award is given to an extraordinary young person who goes above and beyond to improve society's quality of life and community. Raheim Singleton, president and founder of the Black Cotton Foundation, responsible for the award, said, "Autumn's bravery, selflessness, leadership and beautiful spirit are the qualities we look for ... and she exceeds all of our checkmarks!"

What's also amazing: She's just 16. She just celebrated her sweet 16 birthday. What she wants most? She wants to become Prime Minister, and I'm going to be her campaign manager when that comes up.

HOUSING IN CHATHAM-KENT-LEAMINGTON

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Today, I'd like to bring attention to an amazing milestone in my riding, as well as an exciting project in the works, both of which address the housing shortage prevalent in Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

As a result, I reached out to Rob Piroli of the Piroli Group Developments, who in turn contacted Chatham-Kent Mayor Darrin Canniff to kick things off. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Steve Clark, and I attended a groundbreaking ceremony soon after: the construction of two 120 condo-style apartment complexes that are the first to be built in 28 years in the area. We already have residents calling to inquire more about these particular apartments.

The second project I would like to highlight is the work being done to bring the Indwell model to my riding in hopes of alleviating the homeless situation. This model has proven successful in other southwestern Ontario communities, as it provides assisted living in an apartment setting with various supports in place, such as mental illness and addiction, to help people facing homelessness. As we

know, individuals facing these issues are a significant part of the homeless population. Programs like this are high in demand, and even more so now as COVID-19 adds an extra layer of complication to finding long-term solutions for these individuals.

Finally, Clairvue Housing Co-operative, a geared-to-income housing complex, recently added eight new units to their existing footprint. Speaker, our government is putting those in need first.

1030

SANDRA WOOLEY

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: It is my honour to rise today to wish a happy retirement to Sandy Wooley, executive director of the Nepean, Rideau and Osgoode Community Resource Centre. The centre is described as a much-needed, well-used community service organization that helps vulnerable individuals and families lead better lives. As a non-profit charitable organization, their services and programs are provided to our community.

During her time as executive director, Sandra launched the Shine a Light on Our Community event, which raises money for their youth services. In light of COVID-19, this event is taking place online this year. I'm told the event will offer some new and exciting online components and will include a silent auction that's running until October 12, 2020. Details are available on their website.

The community resource centre, under Sandra's leadership, has offered a wide variety of services and initiatives to our community, such as the Tools 4 School program, where 485 children in the Ottawa-Nepean area received backpacks and a gift card from Staples on Merivale Road.

In many ways, Sandy has touched the lives of countless people in our community. In their recent newsletter, board president Darryl Bilodeau stated, "From the launch of" the centre's "Shine a Light fundraiser now in its ninth year, to the Syrian refugee crisis, and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic, Sandy's leadership has been steady and unwavering."

As the member for Ottawa West-Nepean, please let me provide a very warm thank you to Sandra for all that she has done. Your community thanks you, and we wish you a very happy retirement.

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has informed me that he has a point of order, and I recognize him.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding ASL services during statements by the ministry and responses.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that sign language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber today to interpret statements by the ministry and responses.

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

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. A second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was pretty much inevitable, yet the Ford government left Ontario unprepared, leaving families unable to access testing; students unable to socially distance; seniors facing outbreaks in long-term care; and health experts, hospitals and front-line workers pleading with the government to take action. Why has the Premier been so incapable of admitting that Ontario has fallen short and needs to do much better?

Hon. Doug Ford: Just to respond to the Leader of the Opposition, when people ask me about the fall preparedness plan, my answer is: "We're ready." And we're ready because we've put \$1 billion into testing and tracing. That's going to help us out tremendously. We're ready because we've spent a half a billion dollars into long-term care. And we're ready because we have the largest flu immunization program ever in the history of this country. We're prepared at every single stage.

I want to thank the people of Ontario, the 14.5 million people, that have helped us get ready; the great companies that have switched over to supply the PPE. I went to a warehouse yesterday. What an incredible group of people at DSV.

They're ready, we're ready; the people are ready. The only people who may not be ready is the Leader of the Opposition.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think the Premier needs to get out and have a look at what's really going on in Ontario, because the province has not been ready for COVID-19's second wave. If it was, we wouldn't have the lines that are unbelievable when it comes to testing. If it was, we wouldn't have parents worried about putting their kids in classrooms that have 30 kids in them. If we were ready, we wouldn't have health care workers and experts telling me that there is fear in the eyes of front-line workers across all of the health care system with the second wave here upon us.

The Premier keeps insisting that he has done everything he could to protect seniors in long-term care, yet 1,869 seniors have now lost their lives with COVID-19. New outbreaks are once again spreading through our long-term-care homes and the Premier has not ensured that they are safe and properly staffed.

Will the Premier admit that Ontario has failed to protect seniors in long-term care and needs to do much, much better?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. We're looking at the numbers today, which we follow very, very closely, and taking action with our command table, the IMS table, making sure that we consult with the

medical officers of health in various regions and Public Health Ontario. We are in direct contact with the homes that are in outbreak every single day to know what their situation is with staffing, with PPE, with IPAC and with any additional measures that they may need.

These actions are being taken on an hourly basis. We know what's happening in those homes. Only 12 out of 626 of our long-term-care homes have resident cases right now. That is heartwarming because we know what we went through in wave 1. We have so much more information now. Additional layers are being put in every day as we speak.

I'm very hopeful about the rapid testing coming from Health Canada. It's a critical piece for long-term care and that can't come soon enough. We appreciate all the work.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I daresay that the families who have lost loved ones in long-term care since August do not feel heart-warmed. I would dare to say they do not.

It didn't need to be this way. For months the Premier ignored pleas from teachers in schools, from lab techs in hospitals, from doctors in emergency rooms and from residents and their family members in long-term care. He said Ontario would be ready for a second wave and then he spent the summer on a victory tour.

Health experts are pleading with the government for action and they want it now. Will the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Will the Premier finally admit that we are not where we need to be, that we cannot keep waiting until it's too late, and that we need—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. To reply on behalf of the government, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you once again for the question. It is heartwarming to see how many people are working to protect our seniors, to protect our students, to protect all our vulnerable populations across Ontario. I commend everyone who is working tirelessly to do that.

I want to tell you, our government is not just about talking about what we're doing. We're taking action and putting dollars behind that:

- \$405 million to help our long-term-care homes with operating pressures related to COVID, including staffing, PPE and additional supplies;

- \$61.4 million for minor capital repairs and renovations to make sure that our homes have the appropriate infection prevention and control;

- \$30 million to allow care homes to hire more infection prevention and control staffing;

- \$20 million of that for additional personnel and staff and hiring more infection prevention specialists;

- paramedic programs; and

- PPE for six to eight weeks.

We will continue every single day to provide the support to our long-term-care homes that they need, and we will—

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

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. For small businesses and the many people who work for them, a second wave of the pandemic is absolutely an economic devastation on the way. They're pleading with the Ford government for help, and thus far the Ford government has not listened.

The Premier's commercial rent relief program has been a disaster that has left thousands of businesses unable to access relief, and that was before the impending restrictions that are on their way with COVID's second wave.

This time, will the Premier actually step up to protect small businesses and jobs?

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Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: The great program that we did to help businesses, in conjunction with the federal government, was a great success, and 54,000 businesses took us up on that offer. We're actually going to increase that, as well, over the next few days. We put \$2.3 billion in overall savings for small businesses. In 2020, \$5.4 billion for businesses overall, and the NDP and Liberals voted against it. It's a shame.

We cut small business corporate taxes to 3.2% from 3.5%, effective January 1, 2020, delivering up to \$1,500 in annual savings for 275,000 small businesses. That's \$250 million of relief for businesses across the province. The government passed the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, which is making it easier for Ontario employers to hire, and will ensure workers have easier access to jobs and career growth by cutting red tape by 25%, saving businesses over \$400 million. Again, Mr. Speaker—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the Premier is fond of saying that he loves small businesses, but then he leaves them out to dry in the midst of the worst economic crisis that has come our way since the Depression. That's not a plan; it's actually a recipe for disaster. The NDP has laid out a plan, and it's called Save Main Street. That includes direct rent subsidy for these small businesses who are struggling, and all the Premier needs to do is walk down any main street in our province to see the number of businesses that have closed.

Without direct financial support, thousands upon thousands of small businesses will struggle to keep their doors open. Some have already lost the battle. Will the Premier stop turning his back on these businesses and the people who rely on those businesses for jobs and start saying yes to emergency rent subsidies for the people who run businesses in our province?

Hon. Doug Ford: I just find it so rich. Everything we've ever done for small businesses, they voted against it. They're anti-business. They believe in high taxes to

businesses. Well, we're providing \$10 billion in provincial tax deferrals.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition: Are you in favour or are you not in favour of the \$10-billion tax deferrals, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premiums deferrals and other business supports as part of the COVID-19 action plan, providing more than \$900 million in urgent relief? Again, I ask the Leader of the Opposition: Is she in support of small businesses? Support us on the bills rather than voting against everything we're doing for small businesses. We launched the Workplace PPE Supplier Directory to support business owners. We're also going to provide \$1,000 for small businesses to buy PPE. Again, I want to know if the Leader of the Opposition will vote for that.

We have put hundreds of millions of dollars out for support for small businesses, and every time, the NDP is anti-business. They want to raise taxes. We take a different approach. We're about supporting.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the tax deferrals aren't helpful when there's no revenue and you can't pay the rent. That's the bottom line. So while the Premier talks about support for small businesses, businesses like the Tria café, where the Premier toured during the last election campaign, had their doors actually closed on them by their landlord.

Supporting small businesses and protecting jobs is essential as our province makes its way through this pandemic. New Democrats have actually listened to small businesses and called for meaningful, direct support—meaningful direct support—and a ban on evictions—a complete ban on evictions and lockouts until this pandemic passes. That has not been done in the province of Ontario, no matter what kind of laundry list the Premier brings forward. There are still evictions happening and they have been all through the pandemic, and many people are losing to the landlords.

Why hasn't the Premier listened to small businesses who are struggling, and do what they need to do to keep those businesses afloat?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance to reply.

Mr. Stan Cho: Recognizing that running a business is hard at the best of times, this government has responded with \$11 billion in direct support, because it's tough for businesses in many aspects, not just rent. That's why we've provided \$175 million to keep hydro rates low, \$355 million in employer health tax cuts, \$8 million in additional supports for businesses struggling to pay their hydro bill.

I grew up in a small business world myself, and growing up in my parents' little convenience store in Rexdale, they always taught me: You've got to save when times are good. Thank goodness this government exercised fiscal prudence in its first two years, and that's why we're able to spend today. The reins are here, and the message to small businesses is clear: We have your back.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Hamilton Spectator reported that the number of children waiting for surgery at McMaster Children's Hospital has skyrocketed, and the backlog will take more than a year to clear. These are children waiting far beyond a clinically acceptable amount of time for the surgeries they need in order to go on with their lives. We cannot let these children be left behind.

Hospitals across the province have been warning the government for months that a second wave was coming and they would need the resources to be prepared. Premier, why has your government allowed the situation to get this bad?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. In fact, we have considered it, we have planned for it and we have put the money into it. If you review our Keeping Ontarians Safe plan, one of the principle pillars, of six pillars, is to reduce the surgeries and backlogs that happened because we had to postpone them during the first wave. We know that during the second wave we have to deal with that.

Pediatric cases are particularly heartbreaking. I've spoken to the groups that are involved with that at CHEO, at SickKids hospital—kids in crisis. I understand how difficult it is for parents, for families, for children. That is why we're putting over \$280 million into helping all hospitals to work down these backlogs of surgeries.

We know that people have been waiting. We know that they need cardiac surgeries, cancer surgeries. Children need specialized pediatric surgeries. We've allowed for that and we're dealing with it. We've put the money into it to allow it to happen.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Not only are children at McMaster Children's Hospital waiting an unreasonably long time for surgeries, the wait times for important assessments in occupational therapy, speech-language pathology and physiotherapy have grown to over a year, and we're seeing a large increase in children seeking mental health supports. These assessments and mental health supports are critical for the healthy development of a child, yet these services are increasingly out of reach. When will the Premier prioritize our children's developmental, physical and mental health?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We are certainly aware of these concerns and we are prioritizing them. We understand that it's not just surgeries, and that there are many procedures that children need to stay well, to stay flexible, and that there are lots of issues that have been postponed because of the first wave. But they're not going to be, during the second wave. We understand that these services are essential. We want to make sure that these children receive these services. That's why we're putting \$283 million into allowing for the surgeries—for what's going on at some of the children's hospitals—to continue, because that is absolutely vital for their development.

With respect to mental health, we are continuing with Roadmap to Wellness, our comprehensive mental health and addictions plan that was brought out just before COVID struck. We're continuing with it because we know that mental health issues are continuing, both with adults as well as with children. We can't wait until after COVID is over to deal with them. We are dealing with them now.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is to the Premier. Premier, as you indicated, the trends we're seeing are deeply concerning, with cases doubling over the past two weeks. By mid-October, Ontario could see 1,000 new cases a day. We're starting to see a rise in case numbers across all age groups, not just among young people. If these numbers keep rising, we'll see 200 or 300 patients in ICU a day. Premier, you and the Minister of Health said it best: We have to work together and turn the tide in this fight.

When it comes to this pandemic, our government is committed to providing transparency and openness when it comes to providing information as soon as we get it. Speaker, can the Premier please share with this Legislature our fall preparedness plan?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the great member from Haldimand-Norfolk. I know the people love him up there.

This is a plan informed by the best medical minds in the entire country, informed by the chief medical officer and the health table. As I was saying earlier, we're investing over \$2.8 billion in our COVID-19 fall preparedness plan.

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Mr. Speaker, we are actually including these hours. These hours are staggering. We're adding 484,000 hours of nursing and therapy visits—these are staggering numbers—and 1.4 million hours for personal support workers. And by the way, speaking of the PSWs, they're going to get some great news today: the only government that's actually going to appreciate what they've done, recognize what they've done.

Mr. Speaker, we are ready, we're all over this, and again, we're hiring 3,700 more health care workers for the fall preparedness plan.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: My supplemental question is to the Premier. I want to reiterate that our top doctors indicated just yesterday how bad the second wave is, and that how far it spreads is up to all of us. The actions are simple, as we know, to control the spread: physical distancing, wear a mask, stay home if you're sick, get a flu shot, and look after our elderly and our vulnerable.

Premier, I know that the supply of PPE has been a topic very close to your heart and an area that you've taken personal leadership ensuring, and overseeing, really, that people in Ontario have enough supply. So in preparation for this potential second wave, Speaker, I would ask the

Premier: Please update this House on the current levels of PPE that are stockpiled across the province.

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you very much to the member. I had an opportunity to go to DSV. That was out in Milton. These folks out there are absolutely incredible. I spoke to one person who's a picker on the floor, and he worked 92 hours. The manager worked 98 hours. They were so proud of the job they were doing, the contribution they were doing. It was a 1.1-million-square-foot building. And this building was just for the schools, the 72 school boards that we're supplying, and they were shipping around the clock. They're working seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

I've got to give a shout-out again to all the manufacturers out there. I saw first-hand millions and millions of N95 masks, surgical masks, gloves. They're doing an incredible job. As a matter of fact, in that location alone, there were 39 million pieces of PPE.

We have more PPE to support not only Ontario but the rest of the country. As I said a few months ago, when 26,000 people went on our portal and said, "We're willing to help out." that's what I call the—

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

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. We've had our kids in Premier Ford's classrooms for three weeks now, and the evidence of this government's failure is clear in Niagara. We have nine schools with outbreaks, five full classrooms of children sent home. Staff and children have tested positive. This back-to-school plan is not working.

The Conservative government was warned about having larger class sizes and too many kids on buses, but they choose not to listen. We simply can't have classrooms with 30 kids in them and buses with 70 kids.

My question to the Premier, quite frankly, is simple: How many more schools must have outbreaks before he caps class sizes at 15 students and implements measures to keep our children and our educators safe?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I thank the member opposite for the question. I was pleased to convene a call with the chief medical officer of Windsor-Essex just yesterday, as well as with the directors and chairs of those boards. What we have heard clearly from the front lines is that the protocols are working, that the layers of prevention put in place by the province, endorsed fully by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, informed by the medical community, are actually helping to mitigate transmission risk within our schools.

The fact that we have hired net new educators in Windsor and Essex across the region is a proof positive that our investments are reaching the front line. The fact that we have more than doubled the public health nurse capacity on the ground to respond when these issues arise

is another example. We will do whatever it takes to keep the families, students and communities in Windsor-Essex and across this province safe.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: No disrespect, sir; my question was about Niagara.

Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: We hear the Premier's team say that things are getting better, and the minister just did that. Yet when you look at the results of the Premier's plan, this simply isn't accurate.

We now have 342 COVID cases in 282 schools. No one can act surprised. Teachers, parents, grandparents and students were practically shouting at the Premier in August that their plan would lead to this. There are too many kids too close together and not enough PPE or funding for ventilation systems to avoid this.

Again, Premier: We now have 282 schools affected by this. How many outbreaks in schools must we have before the Premier caps class sizes at 15? That's the issue in the province of Ontario—class sizes at 15.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: In Niagara region we have 73 more educators hired. We have 20 more custodians. We have class sizes well below the provincial average. In kindergarten to grade 3, they are averaging at 20, well below 29, where they could have been last year. In grades 1 to 3, it's 17, well below the cap of 20 previous to COVID. In grade 4 to 8, it's at 23, below the provincial average of 24.5.

The investments are reaching the front lines. We are doing everything we can, leading this nation in investment and protocol that is comprehensive and evidence-informed. We will do whatever it takes as this risk continues to rise, working with the Minister of Health to mitigate risk and to keep our kids safe.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Premier, we appreciate yesterday's invitation from your government to work with members of the opposition, to work together as Team Ontario just like we did last spring. Premier, we want you to know that we're here, and we've always been here, ready and willing to help.

Ontarians are very concerned about our preparedness for the second wave. Ontario's doctors have been raising alarms, saying that our testing and contact tracing capacity is not where it needs to be in order to effectively manage the spread of COVID-19. For weeks, there have been long lines to get a test, more than 50,000 tests backlogged a day, and these delays and insufficient contact tracing are a cause for grave concern. Dr. Mertz, an infectious disease specialist at McMaster, says that hot spots like my hometown of Ottawa are in need of more contact tracers.

Speaker, through you to the Premier, what is your plan to get Ontario where it needs to be in contact tracing, and when are you going to get there?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member opposite for the question.

First, I would like to say that I was at the meeting yesterday as well with the leaders of the opposition parties. I would say we had a very productive discussion, and that I understand we're going to continue having those discussions on a more regular basis. I think it's a great opportunity for us to have a greater in-depth conversation about the work that we're doing, and to answer any of your questions in a venue other than strictly in question period. So we are looking forward to that.

But with respect to what we're doing with the plan, we have brought forward our plan protecting Ontarians, our fall preparedness plan, that is putting \$1 billion into testing, tracing, isolating and making sure that we have contact managers to follow up with people who have been diagnosed positive and follow up to see if anybody else has been affected by someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. I will elaborate further in my supplemental.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I appreciate the Deputy Premier answering the question—although you didn't fully answer about the timing of what I had asked for. I would like to say it would be a good thing if those meetings that we had that ended in June could have continued right through, and they didn't. I think they would have been helpful. But we are where we're at right now.

One of the concerns that families have is your plan in terms of PSWs and your readiness in Ontario's long-term-care homes; 2,000 PSWs, it's not going to be enough.

There was a plan in the ministry for foreign-trained nurses to become PSWs that ended at the beginning of this pandemic. Back in April, we asked the government to do this. There are 10,000 foreign-trained health care professionals out there in Ontario who could help. BC and Quebec aggressively pursued PSWs, trained them and hired them over the summer. So why is the government not taking advantage of the 10,000 foreign-trained health care workers in this province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: One of the pillars of our fall preparedness plan is health human resources. You are absolutely right: We need more people to work in the system. That is why we have a plan. We have been working with the Personal Support Workers Association, listening to their concerns, because they have concerns beyond just pay issues. That is something that we are having those discussions with them on right now.

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We have a plan to bring more people in. We know that we are graduating many personal support workers in Ontario, but they're not staying for a whole variety of reasons, including pay. That is something that we are working on and that we are developing. We anticipate that we will be able to bring back more personal support workers internally from our system in Ontario, which will make sure that we have the personal support workers both

in our hospitals and in long-term care, as well as in home and community care.

COVID ALERT APP

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. COVID-19 has disrupted the lives of families, businesses and communities in Ontario and around the world—definitely for my riding in Richmond Hill. One way that governments, businesses and individuals are successfully adapting to this new normal is by providing more digital devices and embracing modern technology.

We have already seen this as countries rolled out emergency notification apps, just like the COVID Alert app we developed here in Ontario. The COVID Alert app assists in contact tracing and early detection, and ultimately helps curb the spread of this virus. I'm proud that our government sees the potential that technology has to keep Ontarians safe and healthy.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. Could the honourable member please tell the members of the House more about the COVID Alert app?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'd like to thank the terrific member for Richmond Hill for that excellent question. As Ontarians, as Canadians, we have a responsibility to one another to protect each other, and downloading the COVID Alert app is an important way to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, just this week, we reached a major milestone. There are now over three million downloads of the COVID Alert app. We've seen stories about people who have been alerted testing positive and isolating themselves, thus protecting their loved ones and communities from COVID-19. COVID Alert is an easy-to-use application. It never tracks your location, data or personal information. It warns you if you've been exposed to COVID-19. Anyone can find it on the Apple or Android app store.

Mr. Speaker, the power to stop COVID-19 can literally be in your hands. Download COVID Alert today.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, Minister. It's great to hear how effective the COVID Alert app is at stopping the spread of COVID-19. Examples like this show how important the app is when it comes to protecting individuals, our families and our communities. It is no surprise why chief medical officers at all levels of government support the use of the COVID Alert app to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, this made-in-Ontario tool is a growing success. I'm happy to say that we are joined by Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and, very happily, I was just informed that Manitoba has just joined us too. And our friends in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Alberta, Quebec and British Columbia have signalled their willingness to adopt the app as well.

Through you, Mr. Speaker—

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I thank the member again for her question. The member from Richmond Hill is absolutely right. Provinces across the federation are joining us by adopting the COVID Alert app. Why? Because it is working.

So far more than 600 individuals in Ontario have tested positive for COVID-19 and have used the app to alert others. These are people in our communities. Think about that for a second. Because of the COVID Alert app, those individuals were able to self-isolate, get tested and protect thousands of others from being exposed to COVID-19. Their actions protected our families, our friends and our communities.

I encourage everyone, all Ontarians, all members of this House, to do their part and protect others, protect yourselves, protect Ontario by downloading the COVID Alert app today.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Faisal Hassan: My question is to the Premier. Parents of students in York South–Weston are very frustrated with their experiences with this government's online virtual learning—parents like Filomena, whose grade 8 son has been waiting since August to be assigned a teacher. She writes, "I just want a simple answer of when my son can be properly educated. This is creating an unnecessary distraction during an already very stressful time."

It is now October, Mr. Speaker. What does the Premier have to say to Filomena about this failed online learning plan?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: An online learning plan that was fully and fundamentally opposed by every member opposite, for the record, Speaker. It is not lost on parents, who know who has stood with them through this process, from the negotiations to the spring, when we sent educators and students home, to the present. We have said we will stand up to creating a new model of education delivery, the highest standard in this country, the only province in this country to provide a credible option to parents.

We appreciate fully, obviously, to Filomena and to any of the small minority of parents captured in the sentiment of that question, that school boards, including in Toronto, are working very hard to attract educators to teach and to provide that educational learning that those children deserve. But we have created an online learning program that has lifted hundreds of thousands of kids into online virtual learning with the highest set of standards of 75% of live learning. That is a high standard. I think it is a positive development in education. We'll continue to work with our school boards, providing them with the funds and the means to deliver—

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: My question, again, is to the Premier. Parents are fed up with all the delays and lack of planning. Leticia Urias tells me her grade 6 son's login credentials from the spring no longer work, and her calls and emails since July have not been answered. She writes, "I don't know when, or if, my son will start virtual school," and "It is no fault of his that the system is unprepared." Six full months after schools closed due to COVID, what exactly does the Premier have to say to Leticia and parents like her?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: That choice is a strength. We uniquely provided parents in this province with an online option in addition to a safe in-class form of learning. It's a choice that we believe is fundamental to ensuring parents are respected, that their choice and their circumstance are respected, which is why we've done that in this province, whereas in Quebec it's compulsory to send your child to school.

We recognize that there are some challenges with our school boards in operationalizing these plans, but we need to give gratitude, I think, to those on the ground, our educators and administrators working very hard around the clock to provide a high standard of learning. As opposed to denigrating their work, I think we should celebrate the fact that the overwhelming majority of students in this province are in a class with a teacher, learning at the highest standards.

In the context of technology, 121,000 more devices have been provided and Internet options for more than 10,000 families. We are looking at this through the lens of equity to ensure every family that needs it gets the supports they need. We want to make sure that kids continue to learn in a safe manner.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health. The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the need for a new hospital to replace the aging Collingwood General and Marine facility, which has served the residents in the north end of my riding for more than 60 years.

COVID-19 forced the hospital to set up temporary beds at the local Legion. Even before the pandemic, dialysis patients were being treated in closets. The ambulatory care unit became the emergency department. Offices and meetings were moved to trailers. Conferences with patients are held in crowded hallways full of equipment. And there aren't even change rooms for the staff.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents continually ask me, when will the government move forward with the long-awaited development of a new Collingwood General and Marine Hospital?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. You have been a great advocate for your community on this issue, and I do applaud you for that.

However, as you know, we are going through a pandemic. We are devoting many resources, financial resources, to dealing with that, with the billions of dollars

that we're putting into protecting Ontarians. The hospital capital supply is limited, and we are moving forward with the projects that are most in need.

1110

I recognize that there are significant issues with the Collingwood hospital, but it is something that I hope we can have further discussions on, a further understanding of exactly where the needs are, whether this is a new build that you need, whether it's a complete renovation. These are issues that I understand are still ongoing with our staff and with you and with the hospital. We hope that we can move forward with it quickly, but I cannot say exactly when right now. That is up to a whole determination—

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: The government would know that during my 30 years in this House, governments have funded hospitals all around my riding. Owen Sound got a new hospital. Barrie has had two new hospitals; they're working on the third. Orangeville—Mike Harris and I opened that hospital in 1998. There has been about \$2 billion put into Newmarket.

But the 60-year-old-plus hospitals in Alliston and Collingwood have had nothing done to them during that period of time, and they're long overdue. Now we hear that—and I'm happy that Markdale is getting a new building. I'm happy for that. It helps take the pressure off the Collingwood hospital, along Highway 10 and along Highway 9.

But the minister will know that John Di Poce has generously offered to donate the land for a new hospital, that years ago we built a realignment, a \$38-million realignment, of Highway 26 to go to the new hospital. I would just encourage her to go back to the staff and ask them to seriously consider building a new build rather than expanding the current hospital.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for your comments and your submission. I understand those discussions are still happening between the hospital, your office and my office. Unfortunately, as many of you would know here, many hospitals across the province of Ontario are not in wonderful condition. They are older. They have situations where they aren't able to reach the modern levels of infection prevention and control that we absolutely need right now. So we are doing our best within the ministry, with the capital that's available to us on an annual basis, to deal with the hospitals that are most in need, because that's what the ultimate question is: What is going to impact the health and safety of Ontarians?

But I recognize your submission with respect to the hospital in your riding, and we will continue our discussions with a view to moving that forward as quickly as we can.

FAMILY LAW

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question is for the Attorney General. When Ontarians seek resolutions to family law matters through the justice system, they are

confronted with complex obstacles and a labyrinthian system that is difficult to navigate. I'm sure all members of this House know someone who, at a challenging time in their life, also experienced added anxiety and stress as they sought to resolve family legal matters.

Last week, the Attorney General introduced legislation designed to make the family law system in Ontario more accessible for children and families. Can the Attorney General please explain how this legislation will benefit families who need to know the justice system will be there for them?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you to the member from Oakville North–Burlington, my friend and an excellent member of the House, Mr. Speaker. As the member has noted, last week we introduced Bill 207, Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act. This legislation will help Ontarians access the family law system faster and more easily. Bill 207 introduced common-sense changes that will simplify Ontario's family law system, allowing parents to spend less time on paperwork, more time with their children—and more quality time with their children, at that.

Simple changes—like making the family law appeal routes process clearer and easier to navigate and allowing parents and caregivers to request certified copies of child support notices online—will make a great difference to improve the system and make things easier for parents and families who find themselves in some of life's most difficult times.

As I said during the second reading debate of the bill yesterday, our government is committed to supporting families and children in the moments when they need it the most. This is what our government stands for, and this is exactly what this legislation will do.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My supplementary question is also to the Attorney General. I applaud the Attorney General because, if passed, the changes that he introduced will be instrumental in removing unnecessary barriers for families and children across the province as they work through Ontario's justice system to resolve family law matters. These are tangible solutions to processes that have posed unnecessary challenges for families for years.

As the Attorney General said yesterday during second reading debate of this legislation, there are processes within the family law system that also limit the ability of the legal professionals working in Ontario courts from being able to administer justice and family law matters. Speaker, can the Attorney General please tell the Legislature what the government is doing to remove unnecessary obstacles and improve access to justice?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you again to the member from Oakville North–Burlington for the question. We have proposed the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act to make it easier, faster and more affordable for Ontarians to resolve family legal matters. In addition to the examples I just spoke about in my previous answer, the legislation will also harmonize Ontario family laws with

the federal legislation. It will make it easier for Ontarians to navigate the system and to understand their rights.

I also want to share one example that we're moving forward with in addition to the changes in Bill 207: We're expanding the dispute resolution officer program to Kitchener and Welland. The dispute resolution officers have the expertise to guide families with neutral advice and bring them closer to settlement agreements before they find themselves in front of a judge. This expansion will increase access to legal advice for families and remove pressure on Ontario's judiciary, who often need to do the explanatory work that a DRO could be doing before the process begins. With the expansion in Kitchener and Welland, we have 11 locations across the province operating with dispute resolution programs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of these changes.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, both my colleague the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane and myself have raised with you personally, raised with your ministry and raised through the Premier's office the case of children who are not able to get their formula paid for that is necessary for them to survive. I've got Finn who lives in my riding; it's \$75 every two days. He has Jeremy in his riding, who has \$900 a month. Those drugs used to be paid for—if you're in a hospital, they're covered, but if you go home, they're not covered—and they used to be paid for by the previous health plan until you made the changes to the prescription drug plan.

So my question, my plea to you right now is: Will you intervene with the ministry in order to make sure that these children and others across Ontario get the formula that they need in order to be able to survive?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind all the member to make their presentations through the Chair.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member for the question. This is a serious issue. Of course, no one wants to see a child not having the food they need in order to survive. I would be happy to speak with you personally about that offline and see what we can do to resolve this. I need more particulars of each case, and I'd be happy to work with you on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'll remind the members to make their presentations through the Chair.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, to the minister: We have raised this with you. We've given you correspondence, not once; I think two or three times. I will gladly do it again.

But the issue, Mr. Speaker, is there has not been any action taken in order to resolve this issue. These children are in a situation where they need these formulas to survive. These families are trying to survive through a pandemic which is causing all kinds of other issues within

their families. Adding this on top of it just puts everybody in an impossible situation.

So I'll gladly yet again give you the documentation, Mr. Speaker, but we need to have this resolved. Will you commit to making sure that these children have their formulas covered by the drug plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm feeling a little like Chris Wallace this morning.

The Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I will commit to going back to the ministry, finding out where this issue is right now and working to resolve it with you. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, some of the processes have been slowed down dealing with other issues than strictly pandemic-related issues. That's no excuse, but I certainly will be happy to go back and follow up on this with you and to provide you with a complete response.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, through you, my question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. Ontario's sector, including music, television, film production, craft and design contributes over \$25 billion. That is over 50% of the culture industry GDP in Canada. During COVID-19, Ontario's culture industries, which support over 270,000 jobs, were among the first and the hardest hit and will take the longest to recover.

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Minister, these industries are etched into the cultural fabric of the province, and right now they need our support. Through you, Mr. Speaker: What is the government doing to support these amazing creators, not just to survive through the pandemic but to grow and contribute to society?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: To the member from Mississauga-Malton, I want to congratulate him for all of his efforts in supporting the cultural industries as well as our recreation and sports communities throughout the pandemic. As we all know, these industries were hard hit. Many artists have been struggling throughout the pandemic and have received some assistance from the federal government as well as through our ministry and through Ontario Creates.

I think that our cultural sectors are going to be instrumental in our economic recovery, but at the same time they're going to be very important for our social recovery as well, which is why, this past week, we invested \$1.3 million into exporting Canadian content around the world. And what a week it has been. First, we saw Schitt's Creek sweep at the Emmys. Second, we saw Roberta Battaglia from Mississauga come fourth in America's Got Talent. And of course, the Canadian Country Music Awards happened last week and we saw folks like the James Barker Band succeed. They've all received support through the ministry in some way, shape or form, and we're going to continue to guide them through this recovery.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the minister for your advocacy and tireless work for the cultural industries.

Our government has been a strong partner in sharing stories from Canadian creators and helping them expand, a strong indicator of how committed our province is to ensure the industry not just survives but flourishes and contributes to the economy.

Minister, thank you for mentioning Schitt's Creek. As we all know, they broke records and won multiple Emmy Awards just a few weeks ago.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Minister, what is our government doing for this important industry to ensure that we see more homegrown successes like Schitt's Creek?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Well, obviously, last week, as I mentioned, a \$1.3-million investment—that was a film and television export fund, with 67 recipients receiving a total of \$600,000. The Industry Development Program invested over \$436,000 to support up to 20 recipients to ensure that they were able to get their content out around the world. Our Interactive Digital Media Fund is \$117,000 to three different recipients.

This is all in addition to the \$350,000 we invested into something called MusicTogether with the music industry, where we were able to support 310 artists, from the safety of their own homes, to receive \$1,000 per person. We also invested \$7 million in the Music Investment Fund.

The people that we support in these sectors top podiums, they top charts and they top ratings.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Premier. Sarah Forstmanis is a Kitchener Centre parent who completed her COVID-19 screening test after experiencing symptoms. She was told to stay home from work and make sure that both she and her four-year-old son got tested.

This is what happened next: "I tried calling St. Mary's testing centre to obtain an appointment but was unable to speak to someone. I tried submitting a request online but did not hear back. I drove to the Glasgow testing centre and arrived when it opened, only to be turned away. I went to the St. Mary's testing centre, where I waited in line for six hours with my four-year-old son, only to find out that I would not get tested that day. I saw countless parents with young children waiting in line, frustrated and missing work."

My question to the Premier is simple: How can this government listen to Sarah's story and then continue to tell Ontario residents that their plan is working?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say that Sarah's situation was very unfortunate, but that is not the experience that most people have in Ontario.

However, we are putting \$1 billion—we announced that several days ago; it is part of our plan for keeping Ontarians safe—\$1 billion to test, trace and isolate new cases. We have over 150 assessment centres now. We have opened up more assessment centres in pharmacies for people who are asymptomatic. We want to increase our testing capability. We're well over 40,000 cases per day

now. We want to get it to 50,000 and then proceed from there. We also are expanding our lab capacity in order to be able to test the specimens, and we're increasing our contact management teams by adding more than 1,000 people.

We did anticipate the increase in lineups. We have put \$1 billion into it and we are expanding each and every day.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: It's difficult to believe that that response is okay, given that I'm from Kitchener Centre, where a testing site had to close at 7:30 in the morning because they had already reached capacity and the police had to be called because of the winding lines.

No matter how many times this government says that their plan is working, stories like Sarah's prove otherwise. She is frustrated that this government had months to prepare for an increase in demand for testing and did next to nothing, so she wrote: "Working parents have been completely disregarded by this government, and this government's lack of insight into the realities of middle- and working-class families is appalling. For a government to be so out of touch with the realities that working parents face, especially the lack of testing and child care options, is a disgrace."

Through you, Mr. Speaker, and back to the Premier: Will he commit to fixing the mess that he made by investing in public health units so that they have the resources they need to increase their testing capacity?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, the actual fact is that we have anticipated an increase, of a wave 2 of COVID-19. We've been preparing for that all summer. We've been consulting with experts. We had over 45 consultations with over 300 experts in public health and other aspects of our health care system. We've been working with Dr. Williams and our public measures command table. We have looked at each and every scenario that might arise. That is why we have the comprehensive Keeping Ontarians Safe plan that has come forward. It is dealing with increasing our testing volumes.

We know that we need to test more to keep Ontarians safe. We are doing that. We have opened over 150 assessment centres. We have over 60 pharmacies now participating, with more to come online. We're expanding our lab capacity. We're increasing our case management staff.

We are doing everything we can to protect the health and safety of all Ontarians, and we're putting the money behind it, and we're implementing it now.

REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Mr. Speaker, on March 4, 2020, the Trust in Real Estate Services Act, known as TRESA, received royal assent, marking an exciting day for Ontario's real estate sector.

On September 29, the first set of regulation changes under the act came into effect, removing significant hurdles and concerns for realtors and consumers.

Can the Minister of Government and Consumer Services please explain what actions this government is taking to help the real estate sector?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to thank the member for his question and congratulate him, because next Tuesday will be his ninth anniversary of representing the amazing riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

The real estate industry in Ontario has changed dramatically since the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act first became law back in 2002. Many of us in this House today will recall, over the years, the effective advocacy of realtors from across the province when they came to tell us about the ways in which the act had become out of sync with their needs.

And now it's our government that has modernized the legislation that governs real estate professionals in Ontario, through TRESA.

I'm pleased to share with the House that the first phase of the regulations under TRESA comes into effect today. These changes will allow real estate professionals to incorporate, once and for all, and be paid through a corporation, and to use more recognized—

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Minister, for your response. Just a reminder: In less than a week, it will also be your ninth anniversary of serving the great people of Huron-Bruce.

Speaker, the real estate sector is such an important part of life right here in Ontario for individuals, for families and for the overall economy.

Since the previous act came into effect in 2002, the sharp increase in home sale prices alone has led to a more competitive marketplace, with purchase and sale tactics that were never considered by the act.

Can the minister please tell this House and the people of Ontario the steps this government has taken to ensure that TRESA will deliver welcoming changes to all?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Our government is actively engaged in supporting trustworthiness and the highest ethical standards in the real estate sector. This is essential to maintaining a healthy, open and competitive marketplace for consumers as well as businesses.

With the first phase of regulations under the act in effect, I encourage professionals in the industry to determine if incorporation complements their business strategy. Changes to the second phase of regulatory development will include updating the code of ethics, implementing disclosure requirements to protect consumers, and will also update the authority of RECO.

Speaker, we'll continue to work with stakeholders and partners to ensure that Ontario's real estate sector is the strongest in the country.

YMCA OF NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO

Mr. Jamie West: The question is for the Premier. For 85 years, the Sudbury YMCA has been part of our community. The Y in Sudbury is more than socializing, more

than senior support, more than youth development, swimming and athletics. Every year, our Y provides 1,573 child care spots. Last year, they helped 600 individuals with employment training and they assisted 800 newcomers and immigrants to settle in to Sudbury.

Not-for-profits and small businesses in Ontario have been waiting months for the government to step up and provide the much-needed supports required so they can survive, asking the government to finally open their wallet and prioritize non-profits like the Northeastern Ontario YMCA. Speaker, will the government help the YMCA so we can keep these jobs and services in the north?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much. This is a very important question and it's one that my cabinet colleagues and I have been working with. That's why earlier this summer your Ontario government, through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, announced that we would be opening up an \$83-million resiliency fund to support organizations such as the YMCA, our Legions, our food banks and other not-for-profit organizations that are the lifeblood of our community. The first intake ended on September 1, but if the member is willing to work with my office, we can work with them to look at an intake for December 2.

Again, that is an \$83-million resiliency fund designed for exactly what the member opposite is actually talking about.

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

Mr. Jamie West: During the pandemic, the YMCA was here for the province. When the rest of the province was shut down, the Y provided washrooms, computers and telephone access to our most vulnerable populations. The Y was our temporary emergency shelter. They're our warming and cooling centres for our homeless. They provided digital inclusion for seniors. They're a place that our health care heroes turned to for safe, licensed child care during that first wave of the pandemic.

Like many not-for-profits, the Y was devastated by the pandemic. They're currently facing a loss of over \$3 million. The government should be embarrassed they're not supporting Ontario's non-profits. The Y was there when the province needed them, and now they need the province to be there for them today, too.

The Y has been here for us in Sudbury for 85 years. They were the first to offer to support the province when the COVID lockdown occurred. Instead of the government returning the favour, they're fundraising on their own.

Speaker, will the government provide not-for-profits like the YMCA with the funding they need to survive this pandemic?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'm a bit mystified by the supplemental. I actually just offered to work with the member opposite to access that \$83-million fund that we have set up for the very purpose that we've expressed. We understand that many of those centres in our communities that are so important to the social fabric and the cultural fabric of where we're from and why we call ourselves Ontarians

have been suffering. That's why we're absolutely committed, with this resiliency fund through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. So I'm again offering to work with the member opposite.

Again, I think it's an important moment for us all to consider, what does the Ontario that we love and support so much look like in the next 18 months? I know we're in the middle of a pandemic, but we are dealing with a health crisis, an economic crisis and a social crisis, as the member opposite has just pointed out. It is really important that we continue to look around our communities to see what assets we really need to protect. We're there and we're committed to doing that. We're very proud of that; there's nothing to be embarrassed about.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1134 to 1300.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will recall that earlier today the House gave unanimous consent to allow sign-language interpretation to be present on the floor of the House for ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SENIORS

LES AÎNÉS

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'm honoured to rise today to mark National Seniors Day and the 30th anniversary of the United Nations International Day of Older Persons. Since 1990, countries around the world have paused on October 1 to reflect on the contributions of older generations.

Ontario was built through the hard work and sacrifice of our seniors. They have spent their hard-earned money raising families, and they have contributed to their communities through volunteering. They have worked hard for many years, adding to our high standard of living.

Not only am I the Ontario Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, I am a very proud Canadian senior myself.

Their health and well-being are fundamentally important to our government.

Older Ontarians are a significant and growing part of our population. They are expected to make up one third of the population of Ontario by 2043.

We know that most seniors want to stay in their own communities as they get older. They want the freedom to work if they wish, to volunteer and to contribute to the vibrant and diverse culture of Ontario.

That is why our government is supporting seniors through a variety of initiatives.

Our government supports the Seniors Community Grant Program, which funds local programs to help seniors stay connected, engaged and active. We launched these grants during the month of June, which we recognize

as Seniors' Month. I had the pleasure of connecting with many seniors across our province through online events organized by Ontario's network of seniors' active living centres.

I want to thank the many seniors' active living centres across Ontario that moved their programs online during the COVID-19 outbreak. Roughly 175 programs for seniors went online through the Seniors' Centre Without Walls initiative. They helped to fight social isolation by keeping seniors engaged and connected with their community. This is the Ontario spirit in action.

Our government invested \$11 million to implement the Ontario Community Support Program. This investment funds the delivery of essentials such as groceries, meals and medication to vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities. I was proud to announce last week that we have extended this program until the end of March 2021.

We also worked to partner with Spark Ontario to match volunteers with the organizations that needed them in communities across the province. Through this program, we were able to match over 5,000 volunteers with opportunities to give back. Think of all the good that has been done in our communities. To each of them, I say thank you. This volunteer work has included efforts to reduce social isolation and conduct wellness check-ins for seniors. Mr. Speaker, the response to this partnership was marvellous. It shows that the people of Ontario truly care for one another during challenging times.

COVID-19 has created unprecedented challenges for not only our province, but for people around the world. We entrust the health of our seniors in retirement homes to our front-line workers. They have worked tirelessly during the pandemic to keep our seniors safe. We have invested over \$118 million in temporary premium pandemic pay for our front-line workers in retirement homes. We have also provided an additional \$20 million to our retirement homes to help them with PPE and staffing, to meet the evolving demands of battling COVID-19. To each and every one of our front-line workers, I want you to know that we salute you and we appreciate you.

Last year, I was proud to join Premier Ford and Minister Elliott in announcing the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program. This \$90-million annual investment provides dental services to low-income seniors across the province. To help reach the almost 100,000 seniors whom this program will serve, last month we announced a \$25-million investment in critical capital projects to expand capacity. This was a promise made in the last election, and this government keeps its promises.

The health and well-being of our seniors continues to be a priority for our government. I'm proud to stand with this Premier and this government in bringing in the supports our seniors need and deserve.

Once again, I'd like to recognize the importance of National Seniors Day and the International Day of Older Persons. I invite my MPP colleagues from all parties to support us in making life better for all of Ontario's seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses.

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Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm honoured to speak on National Seniors Day and the International Day of Older Persons, on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe.

In the last six months, Ontarians of all ages have learned a very important lesson: We need to hold our loved ones dear. In order to protect each other, Ontarians rose to the call of making unimaginable sacrifices. Time and again, folks across the province put each other's health and safety above their own personal enjoyment. We stood six feet apart, denied each other's touch and found new, online ways to connect, all in the hope that one day we'd be reunited with our elderly loved ones. And we did it gladly, because it meant we got to spend another day with our most vulnerable.

However, COVID-19 made it abundantly clear just how forgotten seniors have been in the province. Over the last few decades, successive governments have opted to save money rather than invest in a system that would ensure seniors could live with dignity.

There's no question: The systems in place to care for Ontario's seniors are broken. Every day, my colleagues hear from folks across the province who are bumping up against a system that does not care about them. We've heard from seniors left hungry and soiled after home care appointments get cancelled without notice or replacement. We've heard from family caregivers forced to give up their jobs so they can care for their aging loved ones because of chronic PSW shortages. We've heard from grieving children who have parents in long-term-care homes. They've seen their parents' health decline due to prolonged isolation; or worse, their parents died and they didn't find out until it was too late. We've heard from spouses who have been forced to live separately because we have a long-term-care system that doesn't prioritize couples staying together.

Seniors in the province deserve better. They deserve to know that they can age with dignity. They deserve to have their contributions honoured. And they deserve to enter their twilight years knowing that our health care system will be there for them.

I believe a better seniors' care system is not only possible but necessary. So I'm fighting for a retirement home system that acknowledges that seniors on a fixed income cannot afford ad hoc fee increases and threatened reno-victions, and a home care system that allows Ontarians to stay home as long as possible because they get the care they require and appointments aren't cancelled at the last minute with no notice—a system that doesn't require workers and family members to put their own health at risk to provide care.

PSWs need better work environments—by closing wage gaps, turning jobs into careers—and systems that allow workers to take time to care for residents, our loved ones.

We are a diverse province, and we need to take that into account and have a system that reflects many tastes, cultures and languages in Ontario. I'm fighting for a

system that doesn't see seniors as needing to be warehoused and managed until death, but as people with lives and futures that should be filled with joy and love and dignity.

So on this day, we remember what my colleagues and I continue to fight for: We're fighting for an Ontario that respects the lives and the contributions of the three million seniors in this province.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Our seniors have shaped the great country we all enjoy. We owe them a debt of gratitude and a promise to take care of them as they age. We very well know by now that seniors have been affected by COVID-19 in a unique way. So this National Seniors Day has a special meaning this year.

I have had the pleasure of participating in a number of virtual get-togethers with seniors in Ottawa–Vanier, and I have to tell you, they're pretty awesome, and they have a lot to share.

Il ne faut pas oublier que les aînés de l'Ontario vivent des réalités différentes. Certains vivent dans une maison de soins de longue durée ou une maison de retraite, certains vivent seuls, par choix ou par obligation, et certains, peut-être plus chanceux, vivent avec des membres de leur famille.

However, no matter where they reside, they all need care, support and services that are accessible and adapted to their situation.

At a time when physical distancing is necessary to protect their physical health, seniors who used to enjoy life through social activities are finding themselves disoriented, anxious and isolated.

Plus tôt ce matin, j'ai participé au lancement d'une nouvelle entreprise sociale à Ottawa–Vanier du Centre Pauline-Charron. Le Centre Pauline-Charron est un carrefour de vie active qui a pour mission d'aider les aînés et les jeunes retraités à améliorer leur bien-être, ainsi que leur santé mentale et physique, sans égard à leur race, leurs croyances et leurs moyens financiers. Cette nouvelle initiative contribuera à briser l'isolement des aînés en leur offrant des repas traditionnels qu'ils sauront apprécier et à des coûts abordables. Je félicite le Centre Pauline-Charron, qui a trouvé une façon de plus de remplir sa mission d'appui auprès des aînés.

Aujourd'hui, je suis spécialement reconnaissante d'avoir la chance d'avoir ma mère qui vit avec nous, et je pense aux aînés de notre province qui ont besoin de plus de soutien de notre part.

Connection to others is a necessity of life. I encourage everyone to take time today and every day to show appreciation for the seniors in your life.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's my pleasure and honour to rise and speak on National Seniors Day in response to the minister's statement.

Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about our seniors, especially during this pandemic, and the need to improve the way in which we honour and care for elders. The tragedy we experienced this spring, especially in our long-term-care homes, is a reminder of the commitment that

everyone in this Legislature and, I would argue, everyone in this province needs to make to care for our seniors.

The reality is, the issues that our elders face predated COVID-19. So we need to make a commitment on this day to improve the care not only in long-term care, but also in home care and mental health services and to address the growing isolation that many seniors feel in our society.

Speaker, I worry that our society is showing less respect for elders than it used to, than in other societies that show more respect for elders—societies and cultures where multi-generational housing is common, where elders are listened to and respected for their wisdom instead of derided on social media.

There are some things that I'm hoping we can take away from what we've learned during COVID-19 to honour and respect and provide the dignity elders deserve. Why don't we make it permanent that we allow elders to go in and grocery shop at special times? Why don't we continue checking in on elderly neighbours to make sure they're safe? Why don't we continue to do some shopping for them? Why don't we have a broad conversation in our society about how we can show elders the dignity and respect they deserve, not just in long-term care, but in all aspects of our society, in how we live, how we work and how we play?

To all elders out there, I want to wish you a happy seniors' day. I see you, I hear you, and I care about you.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the following changes be made to membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, Mr. Fraser replaces Mr. Blais; and

On the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mr. Blais replaces Mr. Fraser.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that the following changes be made to membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, Mr. Fraser replaces Mr. Blais; and

On the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mr. Blais replaces Mr. Fraser.

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

Motion agreed to.

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COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, in addition to their regularly scheduled meeting times, the following committees be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair for the remainder of the fall meeting period and any extension

thereof: the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Standing Committee on General Government, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, and the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that, in addition to their regularly scheduled—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

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

Is there any debate? I recognize the member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that New Democrats always welcome committees having additional time to be able to meet. One of the things we have seen with this government is that they have managed to pass time allocation motions where bills that should be sent to committee are not sent to committee and are bypassed over committee and sent directly to third reading. That has now been done a number of times during this pandemic, which I think is rather sad.

The government is moving this particular motion forward, supposedly in order to try to send a message that they're going to allow more participation at committee for the public and for the media to understand what's going on through the reportings, but we need to understand that the government is also doing this for their own advantage.

We'll support this motion, with some trepidation.

I want to say a couple of things. One, it's interesting that the government says that they're going to have committees meet at the call of the Chair when it comes to government policy committees, but when it comes to oversight committees such as estimates, public accounts and public appointments, which are chaired by the opposition, the government is not allowing those Chairs to be able to have a mechanism to call committees together to do business outside of their regular meeting times.

On the surface, one has to wonder, why this discrepancy? I think it's pretty simple to understand. The government, when it comes to oversight, has a standard that's different than when it comes to what it is they need, as far as the policy committees, to do their work. That's the first thing that needs to be said. This is somewhat self-serving, and if the government was truly, truly trying to find a way for committees to do their work, they would have done the same for the oversight committees.

In fact, our oversight committees didn't meet all summer. Finance committee met for a period of time during the summer—quite a bit, actually—in order to deal with some of the recommendations we needed on the pandemic. But all of the oversight committees, which do everything from reviewing the provincial estimates of every ministry to the work being done at public accounts and when it comes to public appointments—all of those committees did not meet over the summer. There's a backlog of work to be done. The government is saying, "Oh, we have a backlog of work to be done at the policy committees"—but when it comes to the oversight committees, "No, we don't need any extra time." It's pretty clear that the government is trying to have their cake and eat it too, at the same time type of thing.

The other thing is—and this is just an inside baseball part of it—the government currently, if they wanted a committee to sit, would file a time allocation motion and they would say that the committee will meet from this time to that time by order of the time allocation motion. I'm not suggesting that we have more time allocation, but the government could have dealt with this on an as-needed basis by way of their time allocation motions. The government has decided, "No, we're not going to do that. We're just going to give ourselves the ability to do that." That means that if a bill ends up being time-allocated, the government doesn't need to put that in the time allocation motion because it will already exist in this general motion.

The second thing is, if you notice, this thing has no best-before date on it. The government is not saying "for the period of the pandemic" or "up to a certain date." This is very clever, because they know that in a routine motion, I, as the opposition House leader, can't move an amendment. I would hope that the government would be willing to amend its own motion in order to make sure that this, in some way, has a best-before date or a sunshine date when it comes to how long this is going to last, because what this means is that the government is going to be able to call those committees for the entirety of this Parliament, at any time, to deal with anything.

So what's going to happen is this: The government is going to introduce a bill on, let's say, a Monday. Because of the new standing orders, starting on Monday, the government will be able to call that bill on the Tuesday. By Tuesday and Wednesday, they'll be at enough time to get to the point of either calling the question or being able to time-allocate. We're going to be in a situation where the government is going to order the bill—it's going to allow the bill to, by their majority, pass at second reading, go into committee and say, "Well, the committee can meet at the call of the Chair," and the Chair says, "We're going to meet 24 hours a day. How dare you, the opposition, oppose that?" It's a bit of a strategy on the part of the government to fast-track their bills while looking as if they're really trying to consult with the public.

Well, if I'm a member of the public—and let's say there's a bill having to do with agriculture. The government introduces the bill on the Monday and they order this thing into committee. Technically, it could be done by Thursday—there are different days, depending on which days we're sitting. But my point is this: The government could be in a position where you have a longer sitting time for the committee to be able to hear deputants on the agricultural bill, in this case, as I propose, and the agricultural committee will get very little time to even be notified that this is going on.

You know as well as I do, Mr. Speaker, that in all of our ridings, people don't find out about things the minute that we do them in this Legislature; they find out by information they get from their stakeholder organizations; they find out through what they read, hear or see in the media, what they saw on Facebook. It trickles in. It normally takes a while before people even realize something is coming, as far as legislation.

We should not be fooled into thinking that this particular motion is going to be one that's going to revolutionize and provide a great opportunity for the public and for organizations to first, depute at committee, and for the media to have more information to be able to report on what's going on with bills in the House and what's happening in committee.

This is a very organized way that the government is setting up so that they're able to fast-track bills without having to use time allocation. Just in a normal way, it's fast-tracking bills through the House by way of allowing the majority of the committee, at the call of the Chair, to say, "Well, the committee is going to meet for this extra-long time, whenever it might be," in order to be able to truncate the committee hearing process, which in some cases will greatly assist the government, especially if it's a controversial bill.

Mr. Speaker, we have a budget coming. We know the date; it has been announced by the Minister of Finance. That bill, I would hope, will go to committee; normally, they do. Let's say it goes to committee. The government could be in a position to fast-track this through committee without time allocation.

So let's understand what the government is doing.

Do we support having extra time at committee? Absolutely. For New Democrats, any extra time that we can have in the House for the public to be better informed, and in committee for the public to be better informed, and more importantly, to participate, and for the media to be able to report, the better it is for the end product of the legislation, the better it is for this institution, the better it is for the public to have confidence in our political institutions. In the end, it's just the right thing to do. But we should not get fooled about what the government is up to here.

So we will allow this to pass. We'll do it on division, just to make sure that we put a placeholder out there pointing out that this particular motion is somewhat self-serving.

Nobody should be fooled into thinking—I shouldn't say "fooled"; that's unparliamentary. I withdraw that. Nobody should think, for one second, that the government is doing this just out of the kindness of their hearts—I think that would be a safer way of saying it, Mr. Speaker—because the government is really trying to achieve a couple of things here. They desperately want to be seen as—because they've been fairly restrictive through the process of how they allowed participation from the opposition and even government members.

Oh, yes, they say the right things, and, "We're doing everything we can in order to participate, but it's a bad, old opposition and Gilles Bisson, the NDP House leader, doesn't want to do anything." We'll hear the speech in a couple of minutes from the member across, the government House leader. But I want people to clearly understand that what we as New Democrats want, and what our caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, want is a fair process where the public has its say, the media gets the chance to write about it, and the people can be better informed about what this House is doing.

Does the government have a majority and the right to pass their legislation? Absolutely. But there need to be checks and balances in the system, and the longer I see this government operate in this mode, the more it is clear to me the checks and balances are diminishing each and every day.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Are there any other members who want to provide some comments?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you to the member opposite for rising and speaking to the motion that is before the chamber.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for also recognizing the importance of this particular opportunity that we have been given now, during routine proceedings, to discuss this motion.

I've had the privilege of serving here in this House for almost four years already. I do recall in the fall of 2016, when I was running for office to be able to represent the people of my constituency here in this House, one of the pieces that I was most excited for was committees. The reality is that committee work is vital work to this House, to the members of this House, and, of course, to the function of a strong and healthy democracy.

I had the opportunity, prior to being elected to this place by the good people of Niagara West—or Niagara West—Glanbrook as it was known then, prior to losing the Hamilton portion—to work as a staffer in Ottawa for a federal Conservative member of Parliament, Tom Kmiec, a wonderful man and someone I learned a great deal from, and who is currently the caucus chair of the federal Conservative caucus. I also worked with him when he, at that time, was on the standing committee for the scrutiny of government regulations, as it was known. It was not exactly a glamorous committee, it's fair to say. I can see a couple of people who know what that committee does smirking in this chamber. The reality is that that is perhaps a very in-depth committee, one that studies the regulations that governments are bringing forward and also reviews regulations. I recall at that time working on the committee material that would come before the committee, helping prepare questions for the committee and helping to analyze the particular regulations. I remember we were looking at things that had been in the works for almost 10 years, in some cases.

Remembering how in-depth some of these particular regulations—if I remember correctly, the one regulation that we were looking at was how quickly a cigarette is allowed to burn. I didn't even know that was a thing, but, apparently, depending on how densely packed the tobacco is in a cigarette—so this was very in-depth work. It was very nitty-gritty. It was not exactly work that I think most people think of when they think of the life of a politician—or, in my case, a junior staffer, and had the great privilege of doing the background research for the member I was working with. So to be able to come into this chamber—to call deputations before the committee at that time in the federal House was my first taste of what a parliamentary committee does, and I was fascinated.

So when I was running for office just a few months later, in the fall of 2016, I was so ready to serve on committees in this House, because I had seen and understood in a way that—frankly, before being involved in the political arena, I was not aware of how much due diligence goes into so many of the issues that come before chambers such as this House, of course built off of the Westminster parliamentary tradition.

I think all of us can recognize the key role that committees play in properly analyzing and properly digging into the specifics, the nitty-gritty, the real meat and potatoes of the bills that come before the chamber.

I've had the opportunity now, both in opposition and in government, to serve on a number of different committees. One of the committees I currently serve on is the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. That has met a couple of times already. It's a very important accountability measure for us as a government, wherein members from both sides of the House and in all parties are able to come and ask questions of the Premier and his designates.

In this case, we've had the Solicitor General appear before that committee twice, actually, and, I have to say—I think it was the member for Eglinton—Lawrence who commented that it seemed like question period but with only MPP Jones taking all the questions. The questions are tough. They are coming from a real desire to ensure that the people of Ontario have a good understanding of the reasons behind the particular emergency orders that are in place. This is an example of a legislative committee that is working, I would argue, very well. It's fulfilling the purpose of a legislative committee.

Also, I had the opportunity to serve, and currently still do serve, on the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly. Of course, as the Legislative Assembly committee, we've had the chance to examine things such as the standing orders. In one of the very first committee meetings, we looked at the oversight of the Legislature, and so we went for a bit of a tour into the attic and saw what's going on in different corners of the Legislature—a fascinating look at the behind-the-scenes of what makes this place run. There are so many people who are involved in ensuring that we're able to come into this place.

I served on the general government committee when I was in opposition, as well.

I've had the opportunity to fill in for members on a number of different committees, including the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, public accounts—public accounts in government is a little bit different than it is in opposition. In opposition, the role that I was filling in that particular setting was very important. All members who are on public accounts fulfill that role very well, in perusing and examining the details of the government expenditures, one of the most important pieces of our work as legislators.

The reason I say all of this is because, as we look at the motion before the House today and as we see that the following committees are going to be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair for the remainder of the fall meeting

period and any extension thereof—we see these committees that are before us: the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Standing Committee on General Government, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and the Standing Committee on Social Policy. We see these committees as vital organs of this place. One of the reasons is that there are 124 of us—of course, not physically in the chamber; not that I would reference anyone who is not here, Speaker, but just because of social distancing, of course, it's not possible for all 124 to be here, but even then, all 124 are here—and it's not always possible for everyone to get all the time on to speak to a particular issue that they're passionate about or to speak to a piece of legislation that would impact their community, that would be of benefit to their community, or detrimental. In opposition, I saw a number of different pieces of legislation come before the committees I was a part of that were harmful, unfortunately, to the fabric of Ontario in profound ways. That's some of the work that we've had to undo now, since coming to government.

Speaker, when we see this motion here before the House, we have to recognize that the roles of committees are vital. The reason they're vital is because they allow each and every one of us to break down the particular issues that come before that committee in a very in-depth way, to make sure that we're able to do so from a place of analysis.

So I want to speak in favour of this. I want to thank everyone for supporting this. I want to thank the opposition for supporting it. This is important, because it means committees can meet more. As I have described today, we have seen the value of committees, and I know we will see them serve very, very well into the years ahead, as well as this fall.

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

Mr. Calandra has moved that, in addition to their regularly scheduled meeting times, the following committees be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair for the remainder of the fall meeting period and any extension thereof: the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Standing Committee on General Government, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, and the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On division.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

HOME CARE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I have a petition entitled “Protect Seniors: Stop Bill 175.

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 175 further enables the privatization of home care and removes the existing provisions of public control and accountability;

“Whereas the legislation has no provisions to improve access to care, staffing shortages, equity or home care assessments;

“Whereas the bill introduces measures that expand privatization, not only of home care but also potentially of hospitals and long-term care;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the Ontario Health Coalition's call to reverse Bill 175 and consult with Ontarians to develop a public, non-profit home care system that would integrate care and ensure it is provided in the public interest, and to build a public system that will provide quality care for our seniors and loved ones.”

I fully support this petition, especially on a day like today, National Seniors Day.

EDUCATION

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas parents must be respected as an important partner when it comes to their children's education; and

“Whereas school boards and schools must fully involve parents in important decisions regarding their children and their academic progress; and

“Whereas parents want assurance that their children are safe at school; and

“Whereas parents expect their children to be in class, free from disruption to their learning;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to:

“—recognize the importance of parents' roles and rights as their children's primary educators;

“—encourage and support parental engagement and participation in our education system;

“—work to ensure Ontario's education system communicates with parents and guardians; and

“—provide ample opportunity for active engagement, knowledge and decision-making in their children's education.”

I fully support this petition and will pass it down to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I have a petition entitled “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, will affix my name to it and give it to the Clerk.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: “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 recommend 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 completely agree with this petition, will affix my signature and get it to the Clerk.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It's so important to read a petition like this today, on National Seniors Day.

"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 recommend 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 certainly support this, will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to the Clerk.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is entitled "Children and Youth Deserve Timely Mental Health and Addiction Care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas" Premier Ford cut "\$335-million per year funding" from "mental health care and services;

"Whereas an estimated 12,000 children are waiting up to 18 months for mental health care, and there are 63% more children in the ER for mental health issues than there were in 2006;

"Whereas a cut to already threadbare mental health funding will mean longer waits for care and fewer services—which can result in mental health conditions being exacerbated, and more people living with mental illness spiralling into crisis;

"Whereas front-line care workers and first responders are doing the best they can, but coping with a shortage of resources;

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

"To reverse" the cuts "to Ontario's mental health services, and pass MPP Karpoche's proposed bill, the Right to Timely Mental Health and Addiction Care for Children and Youth Act, 2019."

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: How appropriate that I have the opportunity to read this petition today, on National Seniors Day.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired; and

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion" later this year; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

"Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

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

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

I fully agree, Speaker. I'll sign it and make sure it gets down to the table officers.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is entitled "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
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"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 recommend 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 and will affix my signature to it.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas when children living with developmental disabilities turn 18, support from the Ontario government drastically changes;

“Whereas families in Windsor-Essex and across Ontario are met with continuous waiting lists and other challenges when trying to access support under the Passport Program;

“Whereas waiting lists place enormous stress on caregivers, parents, children and entire families;

“Whereas it is difficult to access safe and affordable housing, adequate supports and respite services without immediate access to Passport funding;

“Whereas all Ontarians living with developmental disabilities are entitled to a seamless transition of services from childhood to adulthood;

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

“To take immediate action to eliminate the current waiting lists for Passport funding so that people living with developmental disabilities and their families can access the support they deserve.”

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is a petition that is very important today, as has been pointed out.

“Time to Care ...

“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 recommend 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard to provide an average of

four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is entitled “For a Meaningful Climate Action Plan.” It reads:

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

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

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

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

I support this petition and will table it.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “Save Our Public Health Care.

“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;...

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

“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.”

I obviously agree. I’ll sign it and see that it gets down to the table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

SCOTTISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE ÉCOSSAIS

Mr. McDonnell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 208, An Act to proclaim Scottish Heritage Day /
Projet de loi 208, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine
écossais.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: Ontario is blessed with a colourful
mixture of peoples from all over the geography of the great
globe of humanity. The tartan stands for the people of
Scottish culture who carried the values of the Scottish
Enlightenment to many distant lands and gave birth and
meaning to modernity as we know it today.

A mere 300 years ago, Scotland was known as one of
the poorest nations in all of Europe, shrouded in the mists
beyond Hadrian's Wall and beyond the northern reach of
the ancient Roman Empire. In the union of the two
Parliaments in 1707, Scotland truly put the "great" in
Great Britain, for she became in short order the most
educated and literate population of the time, casting her
sunny shadow and her moral values wherever her Scots
travelled.

Scottish inventor and mechanical engineer James Watt
created the Watt steam engine in 1776. It was fundamental
in bringing about the industrial revolution in both his
native Great Britain and the rest of the world.

The Scottish clan system had had several rebellions
against British rule, and actions were taken to dismantle
the clans. Improvements in agriculture made the existing
Scottish tenant farmers expendable, so Scottish families
were forcibly removed from their homes, which were then
destroyed so they could not return. The Highland Clear-
ances started in the mid-1700s and continued for approxi-
mately 100 years. With no work and no means to support
the families, over 100,000 Scottish citizens were forced to
emigrate, many of them looking to North America to
create a new life.

They tended towards eastern Canada and the New
England states. But history was not kind to the new
pioneers, and after fighting for king and country during the
War of Independence, they were again forced to leave
their homes, moving north to Upper Canada. They planted
themselves with a mark of honour as far west as Niagara,
and were joined with their fellow countrymen, as high-
landers continued to be pushed out of Scotland, looking
for a new life. They sustained their noble cause through
the War of 1812, until the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo.

Once they had established their homes and livelihood,
they immediately set about building schools to educate
their children and helping to establish the institutions
necessary to build a strong and secure country. Pride in
their culture gave the Scots a strong sense of identity and
self-worth, and they contributed to their success and left
Upper Canada firmly rooted in Scottish traditions.

I'll direct the next few minutes to my riding of
Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, where many United
Empire Loyalists were granted land on the southern shores
of the St. Lawrence River. The Scottish UELs, the
majority of whom were MacDonalDs and MacDonells,
were directed to the two most easterly townships of Upper

Canada. They were joined by more Scottish immigrants
directly from Scotland, many of them MacDonells from
Glengarry, Scotland.

In 1794, the young parish priest Father Alexander
MacDonell organized the displaced and unemployed
highlanders, the majority of whom were from Glengarry,
Scotland, his hometown. They formed the first Roman
Catholic regiment since the Reformation, the Glengarry
Fencibles. They fought for king and country during the
Irish Rebellion of 1798, and he served as the regiment's
chaplain. At that time in England, it was illegal to be a
Roman Catholic, but as a reward for their loyalty, the
young priest was able to negotiate a land grant near St.
Raphael's, and it is known today as Glengarry county, next
to the modern-day Quebec.

Father MacDonell organized and built a church, a
school and established a prosperous community. With
Britain tied up in the Napoleonic wars and fearing that the
United States would take advantage of the situation to
invade Canada, MacDonell sought permission from the
crown to form a militia.

1400

A few years later in 1812, Canada was attacked by the
US. So on November 11, 1813, the militias from Stormont,
Dundas, Glengarry and Grenville counties joined the
British regular forces at Crysler's Farm to defeat a much
superior American army, despite being outnumbered more
than three to one. The Americans were forced to retreat
and abandon their campaign to capture Montreal, which if
they had been successful may have ended the war in their
favour.

Today's SD&G Highlanders Regiment traces its
origins to the Fencibles from Glengarry, Scotland, signi-
fied by their battle cry, "Up the Glens." On the 200th an-
niversary of that battle, the Stormont, Dundas and
Glengarry Highlanders were awarded the battle colours to
the victory at Crysler's Farm by Prime Minister Stephen
Harper.

Rev. Alexander MacDonell was named the first bishop
of Upper Canada. By his energy and perseverance, he
induced considerable immigration to the province and left,
at his death, 48 churches plus a seminary and a college. In
1831, the Big Bishop, as he was called, was called to the
Legislative Council of Upper Canada, and thereafter was
accorded the title "Honourable."

The peopling of Ontario, from Guelph up to Huron and
Bruce counties, owes much to the immigration programs
set in place by John Galt, who was convinced to come here
by then-Bishop MacDonell. At Kingston, during the
internment of this great man, Sir John A. Macdonald stated
that Scotland "gave no more useful man to Canada" than
this missionary priest.

Now back to the province as a whole: Scottish settlers
had to learn to survive these harsh conditions in Canada,
including very cold, snowy winters, when temperatures
could drop to minus 50 degrees Celsius. They had to deal
with wild animals they had never seen before, such as
bears, cougars, wolverines, lynxes, wolves and coyotes, as

well as moose, buffalo, elk and beaver. And they had to learn to live and trade with the Indigenous people.

In the founding commerce of our province, the wintering partners of the North West Company joined with the intrepid voyagers from Quebec in making peace and prosperity in the early fur trade with the Indigenous tribes to as far west as Canada's Pacific coast, drawing a threaded needle to knit our nation together from sea to sea.

All in all, the story of the Scots in Ontario is one of harmony and respect for other cultures and religions, held together in the peaceful pursuit of abundance, in which cause they were truly blessed. Those who gather each year at the Glengarry Highland Games's North American Pipe Band Championships have experienced the shivers from the mighty massed bands that on the very earth trembles with the swirls of pipes, kilts and marching drummers.

The Scots in Glengarry became fur traders and settlers, explorers, adventurers and writers. They became successful politicians and newspaper publishers, and led rebellions and incited uprisings. Scots built businesses and communities, and were instrumental in the founding of Canadian Confederation.

Famous Scots include:

John McDonell, from Glengarry county: a soldier, judge and a political figure in Upper Canada following the American Revolution. He was elected the first Speaker for the first Legislature in Upper Canada.

John Macdonell number two, from Green Valley, Glengarry: lawyer, militia officer, member of the Upper Canada Legislature appointed by General Sir Isaac Brock. As his aide-de-camp, at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the militia, he led the Canadian Forces in the Battle of Queenston Heights during the War of 1812 after General Brock was killed at the beginning of the battle.

The Hon. Sir John Sandfield Macdonald from St. Raphael's, Glengarry: A lawyer and the first Premier of Ontario, he set the stage of our Confederation under his countryman, Sir John A. Macdonald.

Sir John A. Macdonald was born in Glasgow in 1850. His family fled financial ruin in Scotland in the 1820s and remained poor in Canada. Macdonald left school to work at 15 years old but later managed to scrape together enough money to pay for law school. In 1867, John Alexander Macdonald became the first Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada, and it was John A. Macdonald who founded the Canadian Mounted Police, the Mounties.

Alexander Mackenzie, Canada's second Prime Minister, was a plain-spoken, modest man who had worked as a stonemason in the 1840s. Macdonald and Mackenzie showed that you didn't have to come from a great family to make a real difference in Canada.

Tommy Douglas was born in Falkirk, Scotland. His family immigrated to Winnipeg in Canada. He went on to be the Saskatchewan CCF leader and became the seventh Premier of Saskatchewan, and helped found the federal NDP.

Sir George Simpson, the Scot known as "the Emperor of the Plains," became a hugely successful businessman. Simpson supervised the integration of the North West

Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 and became governor of Rupert's Land.

John Galt was the first superintendent of the Canada Company, which had been formed to populate what is now southern Ontario in the first half of the 19th century. It was later referred to as the most important single attempt to settle in Canadian history.

Sir Sandford Fleming was a civil engineer and scientist who emigrated from Scotland and was the foremost railway engineer for Canada in the 19th century. He was instrumental in the development of the system of time zones that the world utilizes today.

And, of course, Alexander Graham Bell was a Scottish-born inventor, scientist and teacher of the deaf, whose foremost accomplishments were the invention of the telephone and refinement of the phonograph.

Simon Fraser was a fur trader and explorer who mapped much of western Canada and is best known for his daring exploration of the Fraser River.

Many people of Scottish heritage have left their mark on this country we know as Canada today. Many of Canada's universities, including Queen's University in Kingston, banks and hospitals were established by the Scots. Canada's first bank, the Bank of Montreal, was established in 1817 by a group of wealthy Scots. In 1932, the Bank of Nova Scotia, managed and dominated by Scottish immigrants, opened its doors for the first time.

To celebrate their accomplishments, let the day of St. Andrew, patron saint of Scotland, on November 30 of each year be hereby proclaimed as the day of Scottish heritage in the province of Ontario, now and forever.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I am most definitely not Scottish, although I have been the only Berns at many a Robbie Burns Day celebration. To be clear, my Berns came about because my grandfather—whose father had become Bernstein after changing his birth name upon fleeing anti-Semitism in the Russian Empire in the mid-1800s—became Berns in the hope of escaping anti-Semitic violence in South Africa in the early 1900s.

My husband, David, is Scots-Irish, hence all the Robbie Burns dinners. His mother was born in Galashiels in the Scottish Lowlands in 1923, and her family emigrated from such poverty when she was a child that she never, ever wanted to see the place again.

But my husband's Scottish background is the reason that we found ourselves at the St. Andrew's ball when Doug Gibson, the book publisher and a friend, was president of the St. Andrew's Society a few years ago. It was quite the spectacle, with all the kilts, the snuff mull, the stabbing of the haggis, the reverential recitation of Burns's poetry, the bagpipes, the waving of napkins and the dancing, both professional and not. It was a very diasporic spectacle, and when I taught my classes in diaspora studies at the University of Toronto, I would delight in describing it to them. Most of my students were gen-1.5 or second-generation kids, mostly South Asian,

who were trying to bridge the gap between their own back-homes and this home, and wrestling with their identities.

And this is the critical point that I want to bring to this debate: The Scots, in their kilts, whether their brogues were fresh off the boat or buried five generations deep, are no different from the Black and brown kids in my classes whose parents were nagging them not to forget their cultures and their languages. If you are not Indigenous, First Nations, Métis or Inuit, you are diasporic—period. This matters because there is no difference between what former Prime Minister Harper used to call “old-stock Canadians” and my gen-1.5 students.

All of us who came to Canada from somewhere else, many generations ago or more recently, are diasporic, whether we think about ourselves that way or not. And it matters, because the idea that white folks from Western Europe, Scotland included, are somehow more Canadian than people of colour—that poisonous idea lies at the very heart of the white supremacy of people like Gavin McInnes, born in Ottawa and founder of the Proud Boys that got the President Trump white supremacy shout-out on Monday night. It lies at the heart of the idea that it’s okay to pronounce bromides about reconciliation and wear an orange shirt while doing exactly nothing about undrinkable water on First Nations or the extreme poverty and homelessness that urban Indigenous people are pushed into by systems that continue to inflict colonial violence upon them. It lies at the heart of anodyne statements that deplore anti-Black racism, while creating policies that continue to ensure that Black people will experience poorer outcomes in education, in workplaces and in the criminal justice system.

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So, yes, let’s celebrate all of our ethnic back-home customs, but let’s be sure that none of it gets in the way of understanding that it is our obligation as Ontarians and as lawmakers to create laws and policies that ensure Ontario works equitably for every one of us who lives here, whether we are diasporic or not and no matter where we come from or how long we’ve been here.

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I’m very pleased to join the debate today, and to all of those here today, I say halò. I rise before the House today in my Bruce county tartan to support this private member’s bill that has been brought forth with so much pride by the great member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Congratulations on your ninth anniversary next Tuesday, October 6.

Speaker, the member and I have been colleagues and friends for many years, and I truly know how proud of a Scot he is. Whether it’s at ROMA conferences, AMO conferences or in the back lobby, we always know that his Scottish pride will shine through in all that he does. MPP McDonnell’s Scottish Canadian pride truly adds richness to the fabric of his life as an Ontarian, and the same could be said for many of my constituents in Huron–Bruce. I want to thank the member for recognizing that in your opening comments. That meant a lot. Thank you for that.

From as far back as the 1700s, challenges in Scotland displaced citizens, who looked to Canada to start a new life. Arriving in Ontario they were full of hope, and they set down roots and contributed eagerly to the institutions of our province. Today, there are roughly two million Scottish Canadians living in Ontario. Like MPP McDonnell, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and proud Scottish families in my riding of Huron–Bruce, so many look forward to celebrating St. Andrew’s Day on November 30.

Next to the MPP from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the next proudest Scot I know is a gentleman by the name of Duncan Hawthorne. He is the former CEO of Bruce Power, and no one walked prouder on the streets of Kincardine or throughout Bruce county as Duncan. I just saw Duncan and Lesley via Zoom this past Friday evening at a fundraiser for the Huron Shores Hospice, and I have to say that even though he’s back home, he continues to take pride in his adoptive county of Bruce.

There is so much significance that we could talk about, but with regard specifically to St. Andrew’s Day, I’m thrilled that this particular Scottish Heritage Day Act will make it a celebration for our entire province. There’s much to celebrate, and I know this will be welcome news not only for our Scottish descendants and for the families in Huron–Bruce who wear their Scottish badge with pride, but I know that this will be a day celebrated for years and decades to come. I look forward to celebrating with my neighbours Wayne and Wendy McKague as well.

Speaking of celebrating, there are annual festivities that happen every year, and I give a shout-out to them, but, just to close, I want to share a special comment that came from the member from Oakville North–Burlington earlier today. She said, “It’s only right that we celebrate Scottish heritage,” and then went on to say, “Scots and Greeks have a lot in common. One thing they share is they know how to celebrate.” Speaker, just imagine a Scottish kitchen party with lots of ouzo. I think that’s something we can all get behind.

Congratulations on your bill. Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I come from English and Irish stock, but I’m honoured to stand here this afternoon on behalf of my constituents in Windsor–Tecumseh and speak about Scottish heritage.

First, let me tell you a bit about the Essex and Kent Scottish regiment based in Windsor. To do that, though, I have to give you a short history lesson.

You can trace the lineage of the regiment back to 1749, when men from Essex and Kent counties became Canada’s first militiamen to engage in combat outside of what would later become Canada, while fighting across the river in Detroit. By 1885, they were recognized officially as among Ontario’s first military organizations, then known as the 21st Essex Battalion of Infantry, commanded by Major John Richardson Wilkinson from Leamington. Members were assigned to other units and battalions, and

they saw action in the Louis Riel rebellion and the Boer War.

During the First World War, men from Essex and Kent counties fought in such places as Ypres, the Somme, Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele and Flanders. After a number of name changes, our local fighting men became officially known as the Essex Scottish Regiment on the 15th of July in 1927.

The Essex Scottish paid their dues on the pebble-covered beaches at Dieppe, losing 121 men on the 19th of August in 1942, but they recovered and fought on and, by July 1944, they moved into northwestern Europe, landed at Normandy and fought like hell through France, Holland and Germany. At war's end, the Essex Scottish Regiment had the unfortunate honour of having the highest number of casualties of any unit in the Canadian army during the Second World War: more than 2,500 wounded and 550 men who never returned. They were disbanded in mid-December 1945, but resurrected in 1954 as the Essex and Kent Scottish.

Speaker, years ago, as a young TV reporter, I once had the great opportunity to meet and interview retired Major Frederick Tilston of the Essex Scottish. On the first of March in 1945, he led "C" Company in a 500-yard attack across muddy terrain, soaked by recent rain and snow, in Germany's Hochwald forest. He had to slice his way through the barbed wire and enemy machine-gun fire. He suffered a head injury, then destroyed a machine-gun position with a hand grenade. He was wounded in the hip and a leg, then he and his men fought with their rifle butts, bayonets and knives in close hand-to-hand combat. He was hit a third time in the leg and eventually, because of the injuries he suffered that day, lost both legs and an eye. For his gallantry and steadfast determination in the face of battle, Frederick Tilston was awarded the Victoria Cross at Buckingham Palace on the 22nd of June, 1945.

Major Tilston, who had a degree from the University of Toronto and the Ontario College of Pharmacy, returned home and became the president and CEO of Sterling Drug in Windsor, and later moved the company to Aurora. Royal Canadian Legion Branch 385 in Aurora is named after him, and our new armoury for the Essex and Kent Scottish regiment in Windsor is named the Major F.A. Tilston Armoury and Police Training Centre.

Speaker, we've had a Scottish society clubhouse on Tecumseh Road in Windsor since the early 1960s. Before COVID, every Thursday you could hear the pipes and drums, because that was practice night for members of the Scottish society's pipe and drum band, which is featured in most of our parades and festivals. Each June, we celebrate all things Scottish during the Carrousel of the Nations. In January, that's where we gather for haggis and poetry to celebrate the birthday of Robbie Burns.

Burns is perhaps Scotland's most celebrated poet, known for his many songs and quotes as well. I know I should have listened to him more before going to the racetrack and placing my bets; it was Robbie Burns who said, "There is no such uncertainty as a sure thing." We

have a statue of Robbie Burns in the Queen Elizabeth II Gardens at Jackson Park.

Canada's second Prime Minister, Alexander Mackenzie, was born in Scotland, left school at 13 and moved to Sarnia, Ontario, when he was 19. He prospered as a stonemason. He built Windsor's historic Mackenzie Hall, which was once our county seat. In fact, in 1975, while covering a county council meeting when I was the news director at CHYR radio in Leamington, I interviewed a young woman named Gale Simko, who at the time was the manager of the Essex County Housing Authority. One thing led to another, and a few months later, we were married on Thanksgiving weekend. This year, we'll celebrate our 45th anniversary—which leads me back to Robbie Burns. What better time to dust off one of his most celebrated poems, "A Red, Red Rose"?

O my Luve is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve is like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune.

So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

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Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve!
And fare thee weel, awhile!
And I will come again, my Luve,
Though it were ten thousand mile.

Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry for putting this motion on the floor today. Now when we go to the Thanksgiving weekend, I'll be able to hold up a copy of the Hansard and say, "Happy anniversary, honey. Here's your present."

Scotland has many great poets. One of my favourites is Jackie Kay. She was named Scotland's poet laureate in 2016. Here's her poem Grandpa's Soup:

No one makes soup like my Grandpa's,
with its diced carrots the perfect size
and its diced potatoes the perfect size
and its wee soft bits—
what are their names?
and its big bit of hough,
which rhymes with loch, floating
like a rich island in the middle of the soup sea.

I say, Grandpa, Grandpa your soup is the best soup in the whole world.

And Grandpa says, Och,
which rhymes with hough and loch,
Och, Don't be daft,
because he's shy about his soup, my Grandpa.
He knows I will grow up and pine for it.
I will fall ill and desperately need it.
I will long for it my whole life after he is gone.
Every soup will become sad and wrong after he is gone.
He knows when I'm older I will avoid soup altogether.
Oh Grandpa, Grandpa, why is your soup so glorious? I say
tucking into my fourth bowl in a day.

Barley! That's the name of the wee soft bits. Barley.

Jackie Kay is a professor of creative writing at Newcastle University.

Some of my favourite words from Scotland that have found their way here to Ontario include Glenlivet, Glenfiddich, Glenmorangie, Dalwhinnie and the Balvenie—words you can actually taste; words that swirl around your tongue and linger; words to enjoy by yourself or with friends, perhaps with ice or just a dash of water. I enjoy those words, and I thank those distillers in the Scottish Highlands. I thank them for creating such magnificent single malt whiskey. Slàinte mhath!

Speaker, I know with your Scottish roots and your roots in Dundas, and you've been to Scotland—I've been to Scotland, and my son has been to Scotland. His name is Andrew but he's no saint, and this is going to look after St. Andrew's Day, I know that.

But I just want to say to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, thank you so much for putting this on the table today. It has given us an opportunity to celebrate all things Scottish. I'm not a big haggis fan myself; I know you may be. But this has been a good day to celebrate all things Scottish. So I congratulate you once again for giving us this opportunity this afternoon. Speaker, it's too bad you're in the chair today, because I know you would have loved to speak to this motion.

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

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise in the House today and speak to my good friend's private member's bill, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, on Scottish Heritage Day. As I borrowed my friend the minister of sport, tourism and heritage's—very long name—Nova Scotian tartan, I stand proudly of Scottish heritage, as is the Speaker in the chamber today.

Though we face a worldwide pandemic, I know that I can speak for many by saying I am grateful to have the privilege to still be able to participate in our province's political process and represent the people of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. My riding is also home to many Scottish descendants, and we have our very own rich history in that riding.

Among the earliest settlers in Victoria county were a group of immigrants from the Western Isles of Scotland, and many of these early residents were former soldiers of the British army. The opportunities of settling in Upper Canada attracted these veterans and their families to the colonies and to what we now know as Ontario. Upper Canada offered hope of a better life, with a promise to prosper for generations to come. Those same hopes and desires for more opportunities for success, wealth and good health still attract immigrants from around the world to our country and province today.

In preparing my comments for this debate, I, of course, referred to my brother Guy Scott, who is the historian in the family, and to give you a little bit of digging into the Scottish history in my riding. My hometown of Kinmount is named after the lands of Kinmount, with which a noble family built a castle that is now used as a historic vacation rental and outdoor sports facility. The name Kinmount is mentioned in a famous poem by Sir Walter Scott: The Ballad of Kinmont Willie. The name is also found in a brand of beer, Kinmont Willie pale ale. And Kinmount, Ontario, has its very own registered tartan. By no coincidence, the village of Kinmount is on the edge of the Haliburton Highlands, another homage to our Scottish ancestors.

The earliest settlers also embedded Scottish names and traditions into our community. They left a love for education, a desire for democratic government and a strong work ethic. We can thank our Scottish ancestors for giving us unique foods like haggis, spirits like a wee dram of a single malt Scotch, musical instruments like the bagpipes, a new-found sport that we know as golf today and, most importantly, how could I not mention remarkable fashion that gave us the kilt, as the member for South Glengarry is wearing.

And here's a fun fact about me: Although my last name is Scott, I'm not entirely of Scottish descent. My family has Scottish ancestry on my mother's side through the Chalmers, but it's not through that surname of Scott. Like many of you, my family has a unique and mixed culture that incorporates many origins. This is the trait of being Canadian and we all hold it dearly.

It's important that we celebrate our rich and diverse history and culture, and I look forward to seeing November 30 recognized as Scottish Heritage Day this year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: It's always great to be here on Thursday and see you in the chair. It's also a big honour for me to support my colleague, my parliamentary assistant for municipal affairs, and my friend and next-door neighbour, right in the riding next door, Jim McDonnell, as we debate his motion for the Scottish Heritage Day Act, 2020.

Like many in this House, Scottish roots run deep in my riding of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau

Lakes. Settlers from Scotland worked hard to make a new life, clearing the land and helping to build communities that I'm so privileged to represent.

Like the Minister of Infrastructure, I count myself among the descendants who are of Scottish descent, but I actually had to go and talk to my mother because she's the keeper of our family tree. She taught me a little about my own family's history. I knew about my great-great-grandfather Hugh McKay, but I didn't know that his name was originally Hugh Mcaughie. He was born in Dryfesdale, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, on May 9, 1837, and it was when he moved to Canada and settled in a village in Lansdowne, which is a village in my riding, that he changed his name to McKay. So Hugh McKay married my great-great-grandmother Agnes Landon in the village on December 10, 1865. So I do, like many of the members in the House, have a connection to Scotland.

I also think it's very fitting that we debate this bill just a few days after Ontario celebrated its 10th British Home Child Day. I mention this because Fairknowe Home in Brockville was the receiving home where many of the 7,000 children, some of whom were from Scotland, came to our country between 1871 and 1938. Many of them first stayed at Fairknowe Home in Brockville.

I also can't miss an opportunity to mention and give a shout-out to my hometown Brockville Pipes and Drums. They were formed in 1931. They're one of Canada's oldest pipe bands, and one of the founding members—he was actually their first pipe major with what then was called the Brockville CNRA Highland Pipe Band—was a fellow named Tommy Marshall. He obviously missed the skirl of the pipes and the beat of the drums, as he helped form the band just one year after arriving from Scotland. Tommy went on to volunteer for the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders in the Second World War. He became the pipe major of that battalion's band.

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I know that that connection to Tommy Marshall, the connection to Fairknowe Home, my own connection, I think—the one thing that you won't hear though is this member talk about how proud he is of being of Scottish heritage himself. I know he can be somewhat soft-spoken, but I know when it comes to talking about this day, he shows the passion that we all know. He even knew that I had to qualify my great-great-grandfather, because he said that he would even allow some people who were connected to England to speak to this bill.

So I feel very fortunate that he asked me to speak to the bill today. I know, like the very eloquent member from Windsor–Tecumseh, you're dying to speak to this bill. I know that there are many other members who wanted to join in the chorus of voices to thank this member and this initiative.

I again, as I always do when I speak at private members' business, hope all members will support him today.

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

I return to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to thank everybody who spoke today, including the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Ministers of Government and Consumer Services and Infrastructure—we thought we'd have another one—and, of course, the member from Windsor—I just forget the other riding.

It's a good-news bill. And I wear this tartan; it's the McDonell Glengarry's tartan, and Glengarry got its name from the Scots that came from Glengarry, Scotland. The regiment, the SD&G Highlanders, use that and wear that tartan today. They arrive with the great pride that they've never given up ground in their 200-plus years of service and have never had anybody surrender in all of the battles they've been in, in Europe and of course over here in the War of 1812. There's a lot of pride there and a lot of pride in the county.

We talked about the harmony of the Scots, and I think there's no better example—if I can just do this quickly. We had an event a number of years ago and we invited the Métis chief in to give some words to the opening of the museum. He started out and he asked the people in the crowd if they knew where the second-largest Métis settlement was in Canada. Of course, everybody looked around and nobody knew. And he said, "Well, it's right here in Williamstown," which shocked people. He said, "It's different; everybody thinks of the French and the natives that intermarried, but in this case here it was the Scots." They were with the North West fur trading company. When it disbanded, they all moved back to Williamstown and they all had native brides and they integrated into the society after generations. He said, "For the most part, nobody knows where they are and who they are."

But it certainly did start people checking their ancestry, because it was not something—actually, my understanding is that the first Indigenous MP in the country was from Glengarry county. It was just that they got along. Of course, in times like that I think you had to, because it was tough living. I mean, you went and you were dropped off on your land and you had to start cutting trees down for a home. So it was not easy.

Anyway, thanks very much, and I look forward to the vote on the bill.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should continue to improve environmental sustainability, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote economic growth and good jobs by removing regulatory barriers to the expansion of hydrogen technologies in the province of Ontario, and by encouraging the federal government to support this emerging industry as a way to help Canada meet its carbon emissions reduction targets.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's always a privilege and an honour to be able to rise in this chamber in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to speak on behalf of the people of Niagara West about the issues that impact my constituency and indeed the entire province.

Many times I have risen in this place to speak to government business before the House. In recent times, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken up a great deal of the time and legislative agenda of this House, and for good reason. In many regards, the COVID-19 pandemic has been the greatest challenge we have faced in our lifetime, and the decisions we make as legislators in this place with regard to this pandemic will be judged and discussed for generations to come. We have a duty—a fiduciary obligation, if you will—to the people of our province to focus on the health and safety of our constituents and of our province.

But one of my favourite occasions in the Legislature is the opportunity to discuss and pass private members' bills and motions. These important legislative opportunities serve as the means for members to raise the profile of local issues in their communities that may otherwise be overlooked or not given the time they deserve.

The people of Niagara West sent me to Queen's Park to fight for their interests and concerns, and that's exactly what I have worked to do since November 2016, when I was first sworn in. The first motion I brought before this House was a motion to ensure local municipalities had decision-making authority on the installation of industrial wind turbines, a key issue in the south of my riding, where the Liberals forced expensive and unnecessary industrial wind turbines down the throats of municipalities like West Lincoln and Wainfleet. I also brought forward Bill 3, the Compassionate Care Act, a piece of legislation that works to bring forward a palliative care framework in the province of Ontario, a key initiative that is being supported by Minister of Health Christine Elliott, Premier Doug Ford and all of my colleagues in this House.

The motion I brought before the House today is one that keenly addresses multiple issues that people in my riding have told me matter to them. The first is gainful employment. Jobs matter, careers matter, because they allow people to put food on their tables, provide opportunities for their families to put their children through secondary education and to generously support their neighbours and community.

This motion encourages looking at emerging industries, such as the hydrogen technology space, as an opportunity for good jobs in manufacturing, research and construction for the people of my riding and all of Ontario. We should be looking at the innovations that the hydrogen space provides and see its value as an economic contributor to our nation and our province. Ontario can truly be a world leader when it comes to driving innovation in this space, and I am confident that with our highly educated, entrepreneurial and driven workforce we can see this sector metaphorically explode.

The second is environmental protection and greenhouse gas reductions. Fighting climate change, Speaker, is a

common cause that unites Ontarians of all generations and walks of life: protecting our air, our water, our lakes and rivers, all of the beautiful creation that we take for granted each and every day as the inheritors of one of the most beautiful parts of the world. As a Christian, I see the creativity of God in nature, a beautiful design that calls us to act as meaningful stewards of this good gift.

But we can fight climate change—we can take substantial and reasonable action to reduce our man-made emission—without a harmful, regressive and punitive carbon tax. The federal Liberals, and indeed the Kathleen Wynne Liberals, believe that the only way to fight the harmful effects of climate change is through lazy tax-and-spend policies.

A carbon tax, or a cap-and-trade scheme, penalizes seniors on a fixed income for heating their homes. It penalizes a single mother for purchasing food, as the cost of transportation and fuel rises, impacting the price of groceries. A carbon tax hurts farmers, looking to responsibly manage their land, who need heavy equipment that costs a lot to fuel up. It hurts commuters, many of whom have to drive a significant distance from their place of employment simply to find a home that they can afford. And it hurts job creators looking to provide gainful employment in their communities across the province. We don't need a regressive, damaging carbon tax to fight emissions and climate change. Rather, we can utilize our innovation and ingenuity.

That's what this motion calls for. It calls on us to avoid the lazy way, to avoid the urge to simply try to tax and spend our way out of the challenge ahead of us. Rather, this motion is a call to do better. It is an appeal to our ability as Ontarians to rise to the challenge before us, to remove the barriers holding back our scientists and inventors—those working to take hold of the opportunities that hydrogen technology provides us—and to work together to reduce emissions while protecting our beautiful ecological landscape.

The International Energy Agency, in 2019, took a deep dive into hydrogen technology, and here are a few of the opportunities they saw:

They said, "Hydrogen use today is dominated by industry, namely: oil refining, ammonia production, methanol production and steel production. Virtually all of this hydrogen is supplied using fossil fuels, so there is significant potential for emission reductions from clean hydrogen.

"In transport, the competitiveness of hydrogen fuel cell cars depends on fuel cell costs and refuelling stations while for trucks the priority to reduce the delivered price of hydrogen. Shipping and aviation have limited low-carbon fuel options available and represent an opportunity for hydrogen-based fuels.

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"In buildings, hydrogen could be blended into existing natural gas networks, with the highest potential in multi-family and commercial buildings, particularly in dense cities while longer-term prospects could include the direct use of hydrogen in hydrogen boilers or fuel cells.

“In power generation, hydrogen is one of the leading options for storing renewable energy, and hydrogen and ammonia can be used in gas turbines to increase power system flexibility. Ammonia could also be used in coal-fired power plants to reduce emissions.”

As you can see, Speaker, there are many different methods and approaches to utilizing this remarkable resource in environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial ways. Here in Ontario, we see companies such as dynaCERT creating hydrogen fuel cells to increase fuel efficiency on heavy trucks, reducing emissions. The company's HydraGEN technology uses simple electrolysis to turn distilled water into H₂ and O₂ gases that are produced on demand. Just this past September, the city of Woodstock became the first municipality in Canada to employ dynaCERT's HydraGEN units in their fleet of diesel-powered vehicles.

The power-to-gas technology of Hydrogenics is transforming the energy sector through the production of renewable hydrogen for zero-emission fuel cell electric vehicles, including transit buses, truck fleets and commuter trains, while providing grid services to system operators. Bringing skilled jobs to Ontario, Hydrogenics has hired 45 people at their Mississauga facility since January, bringing their total employee complement to 150, and they're still hiring.

We see OPG and Enbridge using hydrogen in their operations as clean alternatives to traditional fuels, and the growth will continue. The Enbridge-Hydrogenics 2.5-megawatt facility, designed and built on a five-megawatt scalable platform, features Hydrogenics' next-generation electrolyzer technology, which has the highest power density and smallest footprint of any such system in the world.

Hydrogen development is also among the areas of focus for the newly launched Bruce Power Centre for next-generation nuclear technologies, which was announced by partners Bruce Power and Cameco in August. These are good, well-paying manufacturing and technology jobs to be had in this space, and Ontario should capitalize on our competitive business environment by encouraging start-ups and growing job creators to set up shop in our province.

Speaker, I was born and raised and grew up in God's country, the most beautiful part of our province, Niagara West. Pelham, Lincoln, Grimsby, West Lincoln, Wainfleet and St. Catharines: Any one of my constituents in these vibrant communities has gone for hikes on the gorgeous Bruce Trail, visited the many conservation areas sprinkled throughout the Niagara region, and of course gasped in awe at the beauty of our waterfalls, from the Niagara to DeCew to Ball's Falls.

We all have a duty to protect the beautiful and unique ecology of these places, and I will fight to do so, to ensure that my child, not yet born, and my future grandchildren will be able to enjoy the pristine waters and lush forests that I have been blessed to enjoy in my lifetime.

But we can't kill our industry and job creators by heavy-handed and regressive taxes that don't actually

address the energy needs of the 21st century. I know that our government will leave a legacy that honours environmental stewardship and entrepreneurial innovation. In Niagara West, both values have historically been nurtured and celebrated, from early innovations in water power and manufacturing to current initiatives in sustainable farming and biodynamic wines.

A key objective of our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan is to unlock private capital and give local businesses and residents new and more affordable ways to invest in energy efficiency, saving money and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

My motion calls for a smart, regulatory and policy approach to facilitate and enable innovation, rather than hindering it. That's why this motion points to a solution: remove the barriers to growth in these clean industries; encourage entrepreneurs to set up shop in our province; and reduce emissions and fight climate change without a carbon tax. We can do this without punishing seniors by taxing their home heating, without hurting low-income families and taxing their groceries and gas, because hydrogen, although it's not the only solution to our mutual challenge, is a key part of any solution.

I encourage all members of this House to support this motion as a means of preserving an Ontario that is yours to discover.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion and, indeed, to speak to the whole question of how we deal with the climate crisis. I have to say, I was very surprised when I saw this motion come forward, because this government has been involved in a war on the environment, a war on climate action since it was elected. So to suggest that we take advantage of hydrogen technology was not something I expected.

I think it's a good idea to take advantage of hydrogen technology. I think there's a huge opportunity there. In Sweden, just this summer, they started up a commercial operation making steel with hydrogen instead of coking coal and dramatically cutting the amount of emissions. Airbus is developing a hydrogen-fuelled jet craft. It looks, at least at the beginning, like the numbers are good and the opportunity is very much there to transform air travel globally.

The difficulty I have with the approach of the member is, again, that we're in a situation where, for the last two years, we've had a government that has dismantled the action that was desperately needed to move forward. We have a government with a plan that, as far as I can tell, is moribund, a plan that the Auditor General criticized at length and in depth for its inaccuracy, lack of evidence, double-counting and, frankly, overall ineffectiveness. I'll go into greater detail on that, but I wanted to give you the headlines.

Speaker, on this side of the House, we in the NDP are committed to actually a very large-scale comprehensive plan of taking on that climate crisis, and as the member acknowledged, the opportunity for job creation is massive.

It is an opportunity such as we saw at the beginning of the 20th century with the development of the auto industry. It's an opportunity such as we saw mid-century with the development of electronics. It's an opportunity such as we saw later in the 20th century with the growth of information technology. But, unfortunately, this is a government that at every stage has tried to stifle, tried to submerge and kill off the initiatives that are actually needed to take advantage of that opportunity, as other countries have been taking advantage of it, and making sure that we don't actually need to do what needs to be done.

The member may or may not be remembering that in 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change talked about the 12 years that were left to actually make a substantial change, not to avoid global warming or climate change—because it's too late for that; we missed those opportunities a few decades ago—but to avoid the worst of the impacts. And in order to do that, we had to be cutting our emissions on a very aggressive basis.

Unfortunately, this government came in, saw the half a loaf that had been put in place by the Liberal government, the weak initiatives put in place by the Liberal government, and took an axe even to those, so that for two years we have had nothing happening.

Now we have a motion that talks about some good things, in the context of a government that doesn't think that being serious about the climate crisis is the place to go; a government that will hire a climate denier as a consultant, as an expert witness, in its case about the carbon tax stickers. It's staggering to me, but there we are.

We know what the impact is going to be in Ontario and what the impact is going to be globally as the climate crisis deepens. We see it now. Some members know the wonderful little town of Goderich, which was hit badly by a tornado a number of years ago. It's a beautiful place and, I think, one of the jewels of Ontario—if people have been in the central square of Goderich. It was badly devastated. I had friends there who were driven out of their homes and were living in motels and then in mobile homes for a long time before their homes could be rebuilt.

Frankly, Ottawa—not a bad place; in many ways I like Goderich more, but Ottawa is not a bad place—was hit hard by a tornado a few years ago. Tornadoes are not part of the life of Ottawa.

People who live around the Great Lakes, particularly around Lake Ontario, experienced in the last few years exceptionally high water levels. They lost property. They saw roads crumble. Infrastructure had to be moved. Talk to Hydro One; ask them about how they had to move hydro poles along the shores of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie.

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Yet this government has ignored international warnings about the impact of that crisis that builds every day. And because we've wasted two years, it is a crisis that will be deeper and harder on ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

Yet, today, what we have is a feel-good motion. Now, I don't see any reason not to vote for the feel-good motion. I like to feel good, just like everyone else does, but I think

people need to be very clear about what's going on. You have a government whose Minister of Energy had to be beaten up to say that climate change was real, who had to be grilled—pushed out in front of reporters—to back off on his climate denial. That's the kind of government that has spawned this motion.

Speaker, on this side we're willing to take the steps necessary to provide Ontario with that leap into the next world of innovation, to take advantage of the revolutions like the development of the auto, electronics and information technology. This government is not. This motion is hollow. It does not represent where this government wants to go, thinks about going or will go.

I just want to note—because I have a colleague who will also want to speak to this—that I've had an opportunity to look at the Auditor General's report on the government's climate plan, and I urge the member who brought this motion forward to read the Auditor General's report. In fact, I urge the government to read the Auditor General's report because she notes regularly that evidence-based decision-making was absent from that plan. You can't come forward with a plan and do things effectively without actually looking at the numbers and using evidence.

This is a plan that double-counts, so it overstates what it can do. This is a plan that in some spots used illustrated scenarios from organizations without asking them, "What are the numbers that back up this scenario?" and then in other areas says, "Here's something that will actually reduce emissions" without talking about the programs that are necessary to deliver.

Is the member correct that the Liberals didn't serve us well? He is absolutely correct, and he was here when I critiqued them time after time after time. He might not have listened, and I wouldn't blame you; sometimes this place goes on too long. They didn't deliver what we needed, and it's correct to criticize them.

You can even say this: You could actually do an awful lot about climate change without a carbon tax. I think it's a useful tool, but it's not a central tool. But you're not doing that. You're not putting in place the regulations and requirements that would drive an innovation-based agenda to take on the climate crisis. You're not. Your plan is not. The Auditor General makes it clear that that's not what is happening.

So I say to you, if you care about this—and I listened to your words: You're right. We have a responsibility to protect the ecology of this profoundly beautiful province, and Niagara is an extraordinarily beautiful place. As a kid, I grew up in Hamilton; we would go to Niagara Falls regularly. We'd drive through Grimsby. We'd drive through the fruit orchards. We'd drive along the escarpment. It's extraordinarily beautiful, and the thought that this government won't take the action necessary to protect the air and the water that we depend on is staggering to me.

If the member is serious about producing jobs and taking our stewardship seriously, he will engage in a fight within his caucus to actually put a real climate plan on the

table so that we can protect the people of this province, of this country and around the world with other citizens of human society. That's what we need to do.

Speaker, I want to note that the member supports water power; so do I. I ask him to look back at the history of water power in this province, how it was opposed by the coal interests, who argued that it was a technology that wasn't going to go anywhere. Yes, if we were a century back we'd be hearing from that side, "This hydro stuff ain't going to go anywhere. You stick with coal. Coal—that's the future." That's where you would have been.

We made an industrial society in this province because we went with renewable power. That's what happened. Read the books, go to the library in this building—books that are generally not in circulation—talk to the librarians. Read about the history of hydro in this province and the bare-knuckle fight to actually get renewable power established and made available to the people of Ontario.

It wasn't a question of deregulation. It was a question of government initiative to actually build a network that allowed us to industrialize in the face of corporate interest that tried to kill it, and to be honest, corporate interest that understood that public power based on a renewable resource meant a huge competitive advantage against jurisdictions across North America.

I understand that some people may not be terribly happy with what I have to say, but look at the history of this province. Look at the future that we want to carve for ourselves and recognize that this motion, although I think letting it go through is not a bad thing, will mean nothing as long as this government continues its war on the environment. Frankly, across this province, those who care about the environment, about preserving our air, our land, our water understand what this government is about, and that is taking all of that and grinding it down to put out a few bucks for some good friends. That is not the way you exercise stewardship.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: This government was elected on a promise to scrap or axe the carbon tax. They said cap-and-trade was a carbon tax. Once elected, they terminated subsidies for electric vehicle sales. They said these measures do nothing to help the environment. They said the first measure above was a job killer.

Two years later, they have put in their own version of cap-and-trade—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. The crosstalk is unhelpful at this time. There is a member who has the floor and I am unable to hear the member from Cambridge because of the heckling, so I will ask that that cease. All members will have the opportunity to speak in rotation.

I return to the member from Cambridge with apologies.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

Two years later, they have put in their own version of cap-and-trade. So now we have two carbon taxes in

Ontario that cost taxpayers twice as much as what cap-and-trade was to cost, and they are once again subsidizing electric vehicle manufacturing, but not to the end-user but to the companies that build them.

The government is now increasing taxes. They are spending taxpayer money on government programs: both of the above reinstating policies that largely replace the ones they removed two years ago. It is breathtaking to watch. And to spend taxpayer money and increase taxes on Ontario residents at a time when people are struggling due to our economy being hit hard, how can the same policy position be a job killer in 2018 and by 2020 result in economic growth in good jobs? What has changed?

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: I rise today to support the motion 112 on hydrogen technology put forward by my colleague MPP Oosterhoff from Niagara West.

Just on a side note, I want to add that it was a PC government that actually established Ontario Hydro. I just want to put it on the record.

The history of fuel cells is not new. It can be traced back to 1839 when Welsh scientist, William Grove, first invented it. Famous scientist Thomas Edison actually said once, like other scientists of his day, that we are coming to understand that fossil fuels would not last forever. However, the world started paying attention to hydrogen technology during the oil crisis of the 1970s. Fast-forward to 2014, Toyota launched the first commercialized fuel cell vehicle after years of R&D and innovation.

Hydrogen is an energy carrier that can be used to store, move and deliver energy produced from other sources. As we know, through the Paris accord on climate change, there is an increasing global focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while working to achieve long-term economic benefits. A fuel cell has zero emissions other than the water, and hydrogen and fuel cells can reduce the environmental impact of energy use while supporting job creation and economic prosperity using innovative, clean technologies.

Hydrogen fuel technology has a wide application in transportation. Stationary power through uninterruptible power supply, which is a UPS, and distributed power generation can help our remote communities—not just as a consumer; Ontario could be a producer and distributor of technologies.

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Countries around the world are actually proactively investing in hydrogen and fuel cells to stay ahead of the curve. We, in Canada, are well positioned to benefit from growing international demand for hydrogen and fuel cells. Hydrogen is highlighted as a desired sector for private investment in our own Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan. This demonstrates our commitment to addressing climate change without a carbon tax. I will say it one more time: that demonstrates our commitment to addressing climate change without punishing our residents with a growth-killing tax. Madam Speaker, we need to act now. This motion would encourage a nestling industry to set up shop in Ontario.

Thanks to the Canadian Urban Transit Research and Innovation Consortium for organizing the first national hydrogen mobility innovation conference in my riding of Mississauga–Malton last year. Thanks for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to learn about this technology. This conference brought together industrial, economic and public sector stakeholders to foster collaborative innovation in hydrogen technology. Thanks to their advocacy, in the summer of 2019, the public transit operator in Herten, Germany, bought two hydrogen-powered fuel cell buses made by the Mississauga-based Hydrogenics corporation.

Again, finally, Madam Speaker, I want to say thank you to MPP Oosterhoff for your hard work in bringing this motion.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: As we work to fight COVID-19, we have the opportunity to recover the economy while protecting our planet for generations to come. Industries are changing rapidly to adapt to the current times, and we have seen that transformations are possible. Supporting sustainable measures in technology will allow us to protect our environment while creating green jobs for Ontarians. The quality of the future for our children depends on choices we make today.

I support the expansion of hydrogen technologies in Ontario, but we need to do so with caution and ensure that we are still making immediate measures to fight climate change. When one proposes to remove regulatory barriers, we need to be careful. To what extent will these barriers be removed? I look forward to seeing the proposed course of action.

While the expansion of hydrogen technologies is a long-term plan with great potential, what is being done in the short term? While the effect of climate change is happening just right now, I urge the government to build on their plan to expand hydrogen technologies and ensure they prioritize programs and policies that have immediate impacts.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: It's a privilege to speak today in favour of motion 112, in support of hydrogen technology. I guess I thought that this afternoon we would have the opportunity, as we've seen more often in the House recently, for all members to speak together in favour of something that's really good for the province of Ontario: something that is high-tech, is innovative, is green, would create jobs and everything else. I guess I'm somewhat disheartened by some of the comments that I hear this afternoon that would use a good motion that should be providing opportunity for many, many Ontarians as an excuse to get all partisan. I would apologize to the member from Niagara West that that has to happen on a very good motion that is very good for Ontario, but I would like to thank him for bringing this forward, because this is a motion that I think, both in the short and long term, will provide the opportunity for Ontario to move forward in climate.

More than that, we live in a nation that has seen 200 years of immigration of some of the brightest talent from around the world. In fact, when I look around our caucus, I see so many people—new Canadians, including myself—whose parents, who they themselves, made the decision to come to this country because they wanted a better life for themselves and for their children. That kind of innovative spirit is what we are so used to in the province of Ontario. To me, that means brilliant new technologies, which I hear about every single day, are developed here. I think we have a lot of work to do as a government on getting those technologies out to market, but when I think about—and this has always fascinated me ever since I was in early chemistry: If you take a couple of hydrogen molecules and combine them with an oxygen molecule, if you burn—which we think of as a harmful activity—hydrogen, you end up with water and energy, and to be able to harness that effectively I think is something that we can only come up with right here in Ontario.

I am in full support of the member's motion. I thank him for bringing it forward. These are the types of innovative technologies that we all have to work together here to bring forward.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's a pleasure to rise and speak on the member's motion. I certainly support the adoption of hydrogen technologies. I do find this motion a bit curious, and so I'm hoping that it's an indication that the government is going to reverse its cancellation of the electric and hydrogen-fuelled vehicle rebate program, because one of the most promising aspects of hydrogen is for hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, which by the way was one of the very first programs this government cut.

I would also say that the member opposite, I assume, understands—and I'm hoping the people watching at home understand—that you can produce hydrogen through either electrolysis from water or from natural gas. If it's done through water electrolysis using renewable energy, hydrogen is a great technology to address the climate crisis. If it's produced using natural gas, it is actually a contributor to increasing GHG emissions and would actually move us in the wrong direction.

What I find interesting about that is, one of the first acts the government did was to cancel 750 renewable energy projects, the exact renewable energy projects—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government will come to order.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: By the way, Speaker, one of the projects they cancelled was 7.6 cents a kilowatt hour for wind; meanwhile, they're advancing natural gas at 12 cents a kilowatt hour. I'll take seven cents over 12 cents for the people of Ontario any day—any day, Speaker, any day.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to protect the pocketbooks of Ontarians, Speaker.

Here's the bottom line: I support this motion. I appreciate and thank the member for bringing it forward, but I do hope the members opposite understand that if hydrogen is going to be a climate solution, it has to be produced with renewable energy. I'm hoping that the members opposite will support renewable energy projects that can be utilized to enable hydrogen to address climate issues. I'm also hoping the government members opposite will be open to ammonia fuels as well, because both ammonia fuels and hydrogen fuels create opportunities created by research being done right here in Ontario.

Yes, let's create Ontario jobs. Yes, let's utilize Ontario technology to address the climate crisis, but let's do it in a way that actually works.

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

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: It's clear to me that there's still disagreement on climate change and how to tackle it. I would posit to the member for Guelph that the reliability of the source matters. But the debates that I'm personally accustomed to witnessing can range from arguments on climate change as a phenomenon to the extent to which anthropogenic climate change affects our environment.

That being said, I think it's fair to say that people on either side of the argument believe we should be careful stewards of our planet. It's a simple matter of respect. We all want less deforestation; we all want to breathe cleaner air; we all want drinkable water. We should all insist on moderation when harvesting our planet's natural resources. Therefore, I believe that investing more money into hydrogen technology and removing barriers to its use is a good, common-sense idea.

Unlike fossil fuels, hydrogen can be produced in several different ways. What's more, hydrogen is highly efficient and it can be used for a broad range of purposes and even broader range of applications. For example, hydrogen can power vehicles such as transit buses and trucks. It can power auxiliary power units with up to a 60% reduction in emissions compared with gasoline-powered truck idling. Hydrogen can also power combined heat and power systems, with an up-to-50% reduction in emissions. That's impressive.

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Some may be skeptical about hydrogen applications, but the fact of the matter is that hydrogen has been used on an industrial scale for over 100 years. Right now, hydrogen is mainly used to create ammonia for use in fertilizer, but it's also used in metallurgic industries, in the chemical and petrochemical industries and in polymer production. Hydrogen can also be used as a fuel vector for vehicles and as a power source to heat homes and businesses.

Of course, this all seems amazing, but what's the catch? The catch, Madam Speaker, is that so far, hydrogen has proved to be quite expensive. It remains cheaper for us to use fossil fuels. Many auto manufacturers and even some

aviation companies have tested and built hydrogen-powered vehicles but have ultimately opted to scale back production or shelved their plans for wider-scale production.

However, this isn't the end of the story, and it doesn't have to be. The notion that hydrogen is somehow unviable because of current costs is short-sighted. It also presents Ontario, and Canada more broadly, with a great opportunity. Hydrogen is viable. We live in a world where environmental awareness is growing. Even in countries like China and India, where concerns over pollution have long been deferred in favour of economic growth, conversations around pollution and the environment are starting to take place on a mainstream level.

A greener economy is emerging, and with it comes enormous opportunity: the opportunity for Canada and Ontario to stand as a leader on the world stage in green energy; the opportunity to create good-paying jobs, as my colleague said, and benefit our economy; and the opportunity to act as faithful stewards of our home, which cannot be overstated.

Speaker, I'm very proud to lend my support to my colleague's bill today.

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today in support of my colleague from Niagara West for debate on his private member's motion regarding hydrogen technologies. I think it's a thoughtful motion, and I'm proud to represent Durham, Canada's clean energy capital, right here in the Legislature.

Speaker, climate change is a challenge facing us all. This is a global challenge requiring a focus on serious solutions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario and across the globe. Earlier this year, I stood up in this House to speak about one of those solutions, nuclear power, and the potential for small modular reactors. We must work together to support our clean energy future, and nuclear power must be part of the supply mix to secure that future.

But we're not here to talk about nuclear power this afternoon, Speaker. We're here to talk about another proven form of energy. That energy form, if embraced, would certainly reduce greenhouse gas emissions across our province, and that is, of course, clean hydrogen power.

Ontario Power Generation has the potential to be a significant player in providing clean hydrogen to the energy grid in this province. Ontario can stimulate economic growth and reduce emissions in the transportation and industrial sectors by replacing fossil fuels with clean hydrogen.

Ontario's energy sector has very low carbon emissions and can be leveraged to produce clean hydrogen via electrolysis at scale and electrify these sectors. Just to give you an example of how this works, a 100-megawatt electrolyzer facility produces 0.8 terawatt-hours per year of electricity load growth, reduces Ontario ratepayer costs by \$9 million per year, provides \$300 million in economic benefits, with 200 construction jobs and 10 permanent jobs

in operations and maintenance and—get this, Speaker—reduces 39,000 tonnes per year of net carbon emissions. That’s one facility.

Many industry leaders tell me they’re currently exploring various opportunities for clean hydrogen, and in order to pursue these opportunities, they need government support in the following ways: They need regulatory changes to help leverage the flexible hydro fleet we have across the province to produce hydrogen in a cost-effective manner, and they also are looking forward to the development of small modular reactors, which was the subject of my private member’s bill earlier this year.

Hydrogen production and SMRs are actually complementary. Hydrogen production has the potential to help optimize investment in SMRs and lower electricity costs for nuclear generation.

Speaker, I—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I am sorry to interrupt the member, but the time for debate has expired.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I apologize for cutting off the member. I may or may not have been watching the time; I was listening so intently.

I am happy to return to the member from Niagara West for his two minutes to reply.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the members for Toronto–Danforth, Cambridge, Brantford–Brant, Guelph, Ottawa–Vanier and Scarborough Centre, as well as the member for Durham, and I want to thank all those who have spoken to this motion.

Speaker, the choice is clear: The NDP and Liberals believe that the lazy, ineffective tax-and-spend policies that they’ve been promoting for the last decade are the only way to protect our air, water and earth. The reality is that my motion points to a better way forward, where we can remove the barriers to growth in these clean industries, create good jobs in this space, encourage entrepreneurs to set up shop in our province, reduce emissions and fight climate change without tax-and-spend policies, such as the carbon tax and cap-and-trade.

We can do this without punishing seniors by taxing their home heating, without hurting low-income families and taxing their groceries and gas. Hydrogen is not the only solution to our mutual challenge, but it’s a key part of any solution. Because of that, I encourage all members to support this motion, and I thank them for their time this afternoon.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I beg to inform the House that, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to proclaim Somali Heritage Week / Loi proclamant la Semaine du patrimoine somalien.

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 / 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.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should recognize the importance of respecting parents’ roles and rights as their children’s primary educators; support parental engagement in our quality education system; work to ensure Ontario’s education system communicates with parents and guardians; and provides them with ample opportunity for active involvement, knowledge and decision-making in their children’s education.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I’m excited to stand and speak to my motion. There are four areas in this motion I would like to highlight:

- (1) partnership: to recognize and respect parents as an important partner to their children’s education;
- (2) parents’ roles and rights: to respect parents’ roles and rights as their children’s primary educators;
- (3) parental engagement: to encourage and support parental engagement in our quality education system; and
- (4) thorough communication: to ensure thorough communication with parents and guardians and provide them with ample opportunity for active involvement, knowledge and decision-making in their children’s education.

Madam Speaker, I have four children, and they have all grown up, but education is still very important to me. Why? I’m now a proud grandmother, and my oldest grandson is 10 years old. A quality education is very important for him at his growing age.

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It is because of the next generation that I have put myself forward. This motivated me to run as an MPP. I’m honoured and blessed that today I’m standing in the House and presenting this important motion, helping parents—parents that I’ve been hearing, around in Richmond Hill, telling me how important it is for them to make sure that they partner with schools and teachers in order to build a better future for the next generation.

I appreciate the great work of our teachers, administrators, education planners and staff. They all work together to provide the best education possible for the children. But parents are vital partners who can contribute to their children's academic achievements, form their character and build their vision for the future. A child's education starts at home. Parents are their first teachers, and they have a key role in shaping their character. A balance of education at home and at school is the best way for a student to learn.

During this challenging time of COVID-19, it is more important than ever for parents to partner with teachers to ensure that students receive the education they need and deserve, especially for those who are learning at home. This partnership requires respecting the roles and rights of parents in their children's education system. With the increase in immigration over the past 15 years in Ontario, there is an increasing need to work with our diverse communities, especially when families have different cultures and beliefs.

I still remember when my children were in primary school. It seemed to me that they were only playing the whole day. This is very different from how I was brought up in school. When I was young, we studied, we memorized, we stuffed all the information into our heads. I was concerned when I saw that they were playing the whole day, so I took the initiative to understand why my children were taught in a different way. Gradually, I found out that they were taught to understand the principles and use their reasoning instead of mere memorizing. I found out that information stayed with them for a long time, while mine seemed to have disappeared as time went by. In Chinese, there is a saying: "I give it all back to my teacher." If I had not engaged myself to understand the system, I would have been over-worrying.

I enjoyed the parent-teacher meetings at the beginning of the school year. It allowed me to understand how my children were being taught. I also let teachers know we were new immigrants, learning Canadian customs, and hoped that they would understand our culture and our standards for our children. As a Christian family, we have a set of values for our children, too. This communication helped us understand each other, and we partnered well to raise our children for a brighter future.

I still remember my conversations with Mrs. Berley and Mrs. Rose—my children will be very familiar with them. I wished we could have had more meetings throughout the year. I believe that working together with teachers, as a team, is the best way to educate our children.

I was shocked when I learned that students were failing math because they were learning through discovery math. If it were my children, today, I would have shared my concerns and perhaps worked together with the teachers to come up with a better solution, rather than sending the children to Kumon to make up for what they are lacking.

I would be remiss if I did not mention briefly how proud I am that this government has introduced a new math curriculum. Our government made a promise to parents that we would update the math curriculum so students can

improve their grades and develop the skills they need for the future.

We're focusing on getting back to basics with our four-year math strategy, including introducing our brand new elementary math curriculum, to make sure our students succeed. The new curriculum will help students solve everyday math problems, enshrine financial literacy in the early grades, and better prepare students for today's competitive marketplace and the jobs of tomorrow by ensuring every student learns how to code.

In addition to a new curriculum, we are also changing how it makes curricula available to better reflect how Ontarians consume information. The new math curriculum will be the first uploaded to the new curriculum and resources website, a digital space for parents, educators and students to access curriculum and learning resources. We will continue to champion numeracy, financial literacy and everyday problem-solving to equip the next generation of Ontarians with the skills that they will need to succeed. Students and parents deserve this.

Yes, with the leadership of the government and partnership between teachers and parents, it will attain quality education for our children. While we respect our teachers who have the advanced, systematic approach to teaching, parents can share their point of view and, together, find the best approach for the children.

Perhaps raising children was easier in my era than it is now. These days, our children have to work online and surf the web. They might be experiencing cyberbullying without the parents realizing it, and they might be visiting sites that they are not supposed to. Things would have been different if the challenges that our children experience could be detected earlier. If parents partner with teachers, they can bring solutions sooner to get them back on track.

Parents and teachers in partnership can also bring early detection for children who might have autism or mental health concerns. I recall when I took care of the children with special needs at my church, a parent was very grateful that the teacher noticed some habits from her son and recommended that she seek a doctor's evaluation. Her son was able to receive proper treatment and he's now doing very well. Just imagine how this partnership helps students suffering with mental health conditions.

I know that all parties agree and see the importance of engaging parents in their children's education. The previous government introduced the Parent Engagement Policy in 2010; unfortunately, there wasn't much progress, which is why parents have been continuing to express their concerns.

When our government took over in 2018, we heard the growing concerns from the parents. We listened. We engaged in a province-wide public consultation that invited parents, educators and interested individuals from across the province to contribute. As part of the province-wide consultation, parents were asked what elements they wanted to see in the parents' bill of rights. As a result, a public interest committee was formed to ensure that the rights of parents were respected throughout, and following, the reform process.

Resources for parents were developed to encourage communication with parents. Following a thorough consultation, changes were introduced. There were many—I think I’m running out of my time to describe each one of them, but I would like to motion for the roles and rights of the parents to be respected as their children’s primary educators so that they can, working with the teachers, partner in getting them to have the engagement for our high-quality education system.

1530

Let’s work together to ensure Ontario’s education system communicates with parents and guardians and provides them with ample opportunity for active involvement, knowledge and decision-making in their children’s education.

Mr. Speaker, the children are the future of Ontario. They deserve all others to work together to ensure that they are given the best opportunity for a bright future. I encourage all members in this House to support this motion and do our best for the future of our next generation.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I am honoured to be standing up to speak to this motion. I’m going to start off just by explaining to everybody, as I’m sure I’ve said before in this House, that I am a single mom of three children. I have one child in high school, one in middle school, one in elementary.

What I am taken by in this motion is the language of respecting parents. I really do agree it’s important for us to do that, but I’m having a hard time understanding how the actions of the current government are actually displaying respect for parents. So I’m going to try, as I’ve said before in this space, to help them help themselves by outlining some of the ways in which parents don’t feel respected right now when it comes to education.

(1) The first is when we ignore the experts: the teachers; the education workers; the ones who are saying, especially during a pandemic, that we need to cap classroom sizes, cap the number of students—their children—who are on school buses. We’ve got to make sure that we recognize the expertise in that room, because they are the ones who know how much our schools needed to be invested in before the pandemic. The reason why they have the ventilation issues that we have been discussing now—they have been saying that to us. Yet even in a pandemic, this government didn’t think that it was important to listen to them. So that’s number 1.

(2) When you ignore calls for safe schools, you’re not actually respecting parents. I want us to think back to when we first came here and we saw a slew of petitions called “Save Our Schools.” We had parents, people, actually outside of this very chamber who were talking about overcrowded classrooms—before a pandemic.

When they talked about investing in the infrastructure of the schools across this province; when we talked to parents who said it is extremely important to have anti-racist education and curriculum in our schools because

psychological health is just as important, if not more, than our physical health—when this government didn’t listen to those calls, it’s very difficult to feel, as a parent, that we were respected.

(3) When you don’t make public your pandemic plans, well, that becomes a very big problem for parents. I know, because they’re calling my office; they’re sending me emails; they’re letting me know that they need to know what the plan is. Even with this much time into the school year, I still struggle when I drop my children off at school because there is not a guarantee that the extra custodians that were promised got hired, or the extra nurses are actually in the classrooms yet. And we are in the midst of a pandemic. It makes it very, very difficult for parents to feel respected.

(4) When you ignore calls to address racism in schools, when you ignore the advocates that are literally the parents of Black, brown and Indigenous children who are saying that being called the N-word at school is actually extremely harmful—it is something that happens that I’m told about, because I am the critic for anti-racism, because I have my masters and PhD in education and actually looked at anti-racism work in teacher’s ed. That is a very difficult position to be in, to be a parent who is advocating with everything that they can, to explain that we need to ensure that our curriculum is decolonized and that there is accountability included in the Education Act.

At this point in the Education Act, there is no discussion of racism. There is a little preamble that talks about inclusion, but inclusion is not the same as anti-racism work. It’s the reason that parents—the ones that we say we want to respect with this motion—have asked for real investment in the Anti-Racism Directorate. That directorate was supposed to provide a space where research could be done to ensure that we have actual plans and strategies to address racism in a variety of places in government, including education. When we come into this role as government and the first thing we do is we decide that we are going to cut the Indigenous curriculum writing sessions—quietly, on a Friday, when they were supposed to start on a Monday—that is not listening to parents. That’s not being very respectful at all, in fact.

When they decide that they’re not going to invest in the Anti-Racism Directorate, when parents are literally knocking on our doors and standing outside of Queen’s Park to tell us how important it is—do you know that there is a group that actually held a march, the March for Black Students. Parents of Black children held a march on August 3 and they had a list of demands. Their demands were very simple: “Fund education system navigators for Black parents and students. Providing funding for Black-founded, Black-led, Black-serving community groups to hire education system navigators in all boards, including Catholic boards, to help Black families advocate and navigate the education system and represent students and families when they are faced with anti-Black racism in schools.” They asked for that. Those were the parents. They wouldn’t have had to ask for this if they felt respected in this system. So it’s very difficult to respond

to them—because I have actually spoken to this particular group—and tell them that I have confidence that even a motion like this will result, in fact, in respect for parents.

When I think about my own riding—I visited a number of high schools where Black students have started to organize and create Black student associations. They've organized in that way because of the extent of anti-Black racism that they experience in the schools.

I visited Cameron Heights Collegiate, Huron Heights Secondary School and St. Mary's Catholic secondary school in my own riding. Across the region, I've been asked to come to Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary School, the ABC students at Conestoga College, UW RAISE and the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association. The Waterloo Region District School Board, which hosts a conference every year called Black Brilliance, has had me be there to speak as well about the impact of anti-Black racism in the schools.

Those students' advocacy is reflected in their parents' advocacy, and when we don't actually listen to what they are asking for, when we don't show them respect, it makes it difficult to believe that this motion is going to actually change any of the experiences that they are having.

This brings me to something else. I don't know if everybody had been paying attention in the news, but on the CBC, on September 18, there was an article that came out. The headline: "Parents Launch Petition After Toronto's Africentric School Unavailable for Virtual Learning." So in the midst of a pandemic, when the only school that offers an Africentric curriculum—and had already been offering it in March, when the school shut down—come September is told that they will not be able to be offering the Africentric curriculum, it makes it very difficult, in fact, to believe that we respect parents.

I just want to read very quickly from the article. Because we're talking about parents, so why not quote from parents? Tamra Griffiths, who had started the petition along with her husband and some other family in the school community, is quoted in this article as saying:

"We're very shocked because it's a part of the school," said Griffiths, whose daughter Anastasia began junior kindergarten at the Africentric Alternative School last year.

"It's not like in March it wasn't available. They proved they could do it," she said. "Why can't you continue it now, knowing you have six, seven months to put it together?"

The Toronto District School Board, who provided a statement to the CBC, noted this: "With more than 77,000 students in the TDSB Virtual School, we do not have the resources to support the instructional focus of each of the TDSB's alternative schools in the virtual school environment."

That becomes a moment where, if we are going to turn the words into action, I would love to have the member who has tabled this motion talk to the Minister of Education and insist that that Africentric curriculum becomes available. And while you're at it, why not make it available to all the students and not just the students who

are at the Africentric school? I know that the virtual learning environment allows different spaces for people to take classes in different places, so why not?

1540

Just for kicks, un petit peu de français. On a beaucoup de travail à faire et beaucoup de choses qu'on doit expliquer à des personnes en Ontario, parce que les parents ont déjà des droits dans la législation.

Alors, ici c'est l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens : « Nous reconnaissons l'importance de l'implication des parents, mais cela ne peut pas empiéter sur l'espace professionnel des membres. Le système de l'Ontario est reconnu comme un des meilleurs au monde et cela est grâce aux enseignantes et enseignants qui exercent leur profession pour offrir le meilleur environnement d'apprentissage possible pour les élèves. Les parents ont déjà des droits enracinés dans la législation, nous sommes de l'avis que la motion ... n'ajoute rien et risque même de semer la confusion entre où le rôle du professionnel commence et s'arrête. »

Essentially what they've said is that we now don't know, with a motion like this, where the role of the parent and the role of the teacher meet. When is it that you listen to the parents and when do you accept the expertise of the actual educators, who, to be honest, are often parents?

Let's move on to something more positive, something like how to make us move from words to action. One of the things that we can do is just listen to parents. It's that simple. I think that parents want more than just a motion that has words that say, "We respect you." They want to see the action of respect, in the same way that they would want for their children.

With that more positive note, I just hope that this government will take seriously the kinds of concerns that parents continue to bring to us as MPPs.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: For the last two years, this government has flip-flopped their position on virtually every single policy or piece of legislation they bring forward. While I commend the member from Richmond Hill for putting forward this motion to recognize the important role, the fundamental role that parents play as the primary and first educators of their children, I do find it puzzling.

Madam Speaker, advocacy groups seem intent on attacking some members—the ones not in cabinet—for not doing their bidding. They pressure members to present petitions or motions that do not change government policy or legislation and do not bind cabinet. Those same groups largely give the ministers responsible for regulatory changes a pass.

Allow me to give you an example of some of the pressures we face as members. There are advocacy groups that refer to themselves with the same language used in this motion: parents are primary or first educators. They hoot and holler at members to read out their petitions and read out motions. They reject meetings with members. But when it comes to cabinet, who are responsible for regulations impacting education, parents and students, these

advocacy groups play nice. And when members stand up to vote their conscience on binding legislation and they suffer repercussions, what do we hear from these advocacy groups? Crickets. So I sympathize that this member may be under pressure to present such a motion.

But it is important to recap this government's record on the principles contained in this motion, a motion which does not change any government policy or legislation or bind cabinet.

Let's look back at this government's and their ministers' track record in dealing with parents. Two years ago, this government entered the election campaign on a promise to scrap or replace specific portions of Ontario's health and physical education curriculum. The Premier charged that our schools had been turned into social laboratories under the previous government. He vowed to consult the parents.

After the 2018 general election, the government's throne speech promised they would specifically revoke the elements of the curriculum related to sexual education and bring in a new age-appropriate one. On July 11, 2018, the government announced it would be reverting back to the 1998 component of the curriculum on sexual education, citing concerns with regard to the role parents play as first educators of their children.

By the fall of 2018, almost all of the government's MPPs attended their party's convention, which had an entire day devoted to hundreds of delegates who paid \$300 each to debate and vote on policies that largely focused on issues of education. Policies focusing on removing specific elements of the curriculum were permitted to come to the floor, debated and voted on, and then dominated the narrative.

Then, the next day, the Premier said the government would not be adopting the positions approved at that convention. He acted shocked at the results, after months of fanning the flames of promises and commitments to parents, and his party allowing these policies to reach the floor. Why did they allow the policies to come forward and be voted on? I wonder what discussions or promises were made with advocates and even leaders of other parties who were allowed to attend that convention and make their case, getting hundreds of people to spend hundreds of dollars, only to have the government reject their proposals the very next day.

Fast-forward to April 2019: The government made a complete U-turn from its throne speech and announced a curriculum that was the same as the one they had been railing on for over a year. Some advocates who had vilified the prior government for its curriculum took to the media to defend this government: "There is nothing they could do," they cried. "It's time to move on." And then those advocates virtually disappeared. Where have they gone?

Apparently, this government was powerless and had their hands tied on fulfilling their campaign promise. The same government who found the power to tell Ontario voters they can't have 11 people over for Thanksgiving, who found the power to fine someone hosting a Thanksgiving for 11 of their family members \$10,000, were

powerless to keep their promise on revamping the education curriculum.

And now, one year after that, we have a motion once again fanning the flames of parents, to try to tell them they are the primary and first educators of their children. How many times is this government going to change their position? Once? Twice? Three times? Or daily, depending on which way the wind blows?

In my short time here, I have found that what voters demand above all is clarity and consistency. Yes, voters want a representative who agrees with them more often than not, but I have found that most people can accept a different opinion. But the ever-changing positions of governments and politicians who get the hopes of some voters up only to abandon them completely on every file once in power and then call them yahoos is damaging and destructive and leads to an erosion of faith in our institutions and, most importantly, our democracy.

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise in the House today to focus on the motion that was put forth by the member from Richmond Hill. I wholeheartedly share my support with her, as we all do. Congratulations on the very thoughtful motion that you brought forward.

Speaker, my colleague has introduced this motion with specific goals: partnerships in children's education, respect for parents' roles and rights, parental engagement, and open lines of communication.

All of us in this House respect first-hand how important a role parents and guardians play as children's primary educators. During the largest education consultation in history, as I said, we heard loud and clear from parents that they wanted to be engaged and to have their roles and rights be respected. I know this consultation truly inspired the member from Richmond Hill, and I really appreciate the work that went into it—and I have to say that she inspires me. She comes to work well prepared and very thoughtful in everything she does.

Quite frankly, your children and your grandbabies are so lucky to have you as a role model. Congratulations on your motion today.

Speaker, in this time of constant change for children and families, it has become more important than ever that we, as government, foster parental participation in education and work to integrate learning between home and school. We know that continuing education beyond the classroom goes a tremendous way to reinforcing the work our exceptional educators do. Engaging parents in the process of education helps knowledge transfer. The skills are taught in the classroom and brought back home and put into practise.

I think about the French that was taught to a young man in my family. This past spring, he was practising his French as we were videotaping him making French crepes. We couldn't help but all get engaged. It was so much fun. And then we submitted the video. He was very proud of the work that he shared with his teacher. That's what learning truly is about—it's knowledge transfer and then putting it into practise.

Speaker, you could say that some of our children are very tech-savvy right now, but I submit to you that learning virtually is very different than Snapchat. That's why strong partnerships and open lines of communication between parents and teachers are so critical. Given the central role that parents and guardians play, it is incumbent upon all of us in this House, as advocates for children, to recognize, respect and leverage the role parents play in creating better outcomes for the next generation.

This wonderful motion brought forward by the member from Richmond Hill will bring great benefits to parents, teachers and children across our province. I'm hopeful that everybody agrees and will support this motion today.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you very much for your kindness, Speaker. I do appreciate it. I want to start off by recognizing the leadership of our very strong and principled member from Richmond Hill, who is standing up every day for parents' rights, and we are grateful for that.

I think we are, as a society and a province, best as public servants when we listen to those that we serve. Obviously, the rights of parents, the voices of parents, after 15 years, have been ignored, were ignored. I think that's something that perhaps brings the opposition and the government together: that we have to expect better. Let me enumerate the issue and the solution by which we have listened, following the advice and the overwhelming consensus of parents that they expect better quality and a better education system that meets the needs of every child in all regions of the province.

In the area of math, the fact that the majority of grade 6 students could not meet the provincial average, the fact that just a small majority of grade 3 students are meeting that standard, demonstrates clearly that we have to do something. Parents have been clear: They want a more responsive and modern math curriculum that's actually going to help lift their kids' marks up and give them the opportunity to get a job at the end of their academic journey. It's why this government listened to parents. It's why we adopted a new modern curriculum from grades 1 to 8 that literally leads the nation in the context of coding, in financial literacy, in problem solving. That is action on the demands and priorities of parents that we have acted on, a campaign commitment that we have delivered—in the midst of COVID, no less—and we're going to continue to be aggressive in our curricular upgrades, to make sure it's aligned with the labour market needs.

We heard concerns in the context of racialized students that the system does not meet the needs of those young students within our classes who face barriers and racism—often systemic racism—that impedes their progress. We have listened to those parents. It is the basis of why we took historic action to drive and eliminate discretionary suspensions of students. It's why we also ended grade 9 streaming, which is not insignificant in this province, and I think that's a positive example of us listening to those we serve to make sure that the children of those parents have

every opportunity to succeed, that they're not impeded because of systemic barriers.

It's why we worked with trustees when I heard from too many parents—on all sides, to be frank—of trustees within our respective communities violating the spirit of or actually violating the code of conduct: inappropriate language, bad judgment, often in the racial context, but often with other undertones that are just inappropriate within government. It was this government that listened to parents by demanding that the trustees' associations—all of whom I've gotten an agreement with—mandate professional development and anti-discrimination every year for the remainder going forward, and that is another proof positive that we have listened to those parents to expect better of our trustees and likewise of the system.

It was this government that listened clearly to parents, who said in the spring, "Well, we have to send kids home." They wanted their children to have a live, synchronised, Zoom-style learning experience. Speaker, we have a duty to listen to parents, and the voices of parents must triumph over special interests. I find it regrettable that in the spring, when we had an opportunity to come together to say, "Look, to our federation partners, to our school boards, to everyone involved, at the end of the day it may be difficult, but it is necessary for our children to keep them engaged in the curriculum, give them a community and give them access to an educator," which is a safe space for so many children, that was denied. If we listened to parents in the spring, we would be much better off. Our children would be much better off. We would not have the learning loss we have, and we wouldn't have, perhaps, that isolation many children experienced for several months out of class.

We listened to parents every step of the way, because we believe that their voices are key. They are the driving force of our system and who we serve, and so we'll continue to be informed by them, by the mothers and fathers of this province. I want to thank the member from Richmond Hill for reminding all of us within government and cabinet and in this Legislature that we are here to advance the priorities of working parents and ensure their voices triumph over any special interest. That's something I'm very proud to do each and every day.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for Richmond Hill for bringing forward a motion that recognizes that parents should be in the driver's seat when it comes to their child's education.

We are bringing forward this motion today to recognize the importance of respecting parents' roles and rights as their child's primary educator, supporting parental engagement in our quality education system, working to ensure Ontario's education system communicates with parents and guardians, and providing them with ample opportunity for active involvement, knowledge and decision-making in their children's education.

I'm very proud to speak to this motion and in support of this motion, Speaker, because it's an issue that has come up a great deal in my riding. People want to know: Do they have a voice when it comes to their child's education?

Ultimately, no one can love a child like their parents, not the state and not the government.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm standing here today to speak on my fellow member from Richmond Hill's motion.

Madam Speaker, through this COVID-19 pandemic, the lives of our students have been affected greatly. With the health of our students being top of our government's mind in March, we took the decisive decision to close down schools, and we quickly shifted to virtual learning as a method for students to continue their education. We have safely reopened schools now, with the health—including both physical and mental—and safety of students and staff as our number one priority. Our plan, which has been widely recognized as the strongest in Canada, was developed in consultation with the chief medical officers of health, the COVID-19 command table and pediatric experts.

Speaker, our plan is complemented by over \$1.3 billion—yes, with a B—in investments to support safe reopening. Our government stepped up, our school boards and our teachers stepped up, but most importantly, we need to acknowledge the major role parents played in supporting their children's academic success as they navigated and conquered the changes they were surrounded with.

As a parent with two children in the public school system and a former school board trustee, I understand and recognize that parents are vital partners in our education system. Our school system can greatly benefit through working more collaboratively with parents, who deserve to lend a helping hand in contributing to their children's success.

All parties see the importance of engaging parents in their children's education. With the given circumstances, that is, COVID-19, it is more important now than ever to build stronger partnerships and communication between parents and educators.

In 2018, our government engaged in province-wide public consultations and invited educators, parents and invested individuals across the province to participate. I'm happy to say that the motion proposed by the member is another step forward that demonstrates our government is keeping our promises and is committed to our students and the future generation's education.

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

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: I'll be quick. I want to thank the member for bringing this forward. You stated that you have four children and grandbabies. I'm on the other end of that parenthood journey, with two under two. I just really thank you for putting this forward.

You said that partnership is key, and I would take this one step further and say that parents should be the key driver and the key decision-maker when it comes to their child's education. They should be aware of what is being taught to their children. They should have the ability to decide what to include or exclude them from, and they should be consulted on curricular documents, on school board policies and school policies.

One of the members opposite said teachers should be respected. I absolutely agree, but we disagree on the notion of expertise. I think first and foremost, parents are the experts when it comes to their children, and that teachers get the best results for and from their students when parents are involved in their education every step of the way. As a teacher and a parent, I could not support this bill more, and I believe what it aims to achieve will truly be a great thing for our children, and so thank you again to the member for Richmond Hill for standing up for our children. They will certainly be the better for it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Richmond Hill has two minutes for her reply.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'd like to thank all the members for rising to speak today. I am really, really blessed today: I have a former Minister of Education and an existing Minister of Education and his parliamentary assistant all speaking together to review and support what I'm going to say.

I appreciate that the member opposite from Cambridge is saying to make sure we put things into action. Trust me: I'm going to put all of these things into action, because we will go through all of these, and I will be working very closely with our minister and the parliamentary assistant to see that this parents' bill of rights is going to be put into place, and then we're going to execute it. So this is how we're going to respect the role and the rights of parents.

I also appreciate the other two members, the member from Markham-Unionville and the member from Scarborough Centre. I am so thankful that one of them is a former school trustee and that one is a proud parent of two under two and is also a teacher. What is the best advice I can get? We gather together, we get the best from the people in here and we'll put everything into action.

1600

I would also like to thank the members opposite: the member from Kitchener Centre, as well as the member from Cambridge. I agree on some of the things, and I disagree on some of the things.

The member from Kitchener asks us to listen to parents, and because we listen to parents, that is why we have this province-wide consultation. I appreciate the member from Cambridge making sure we put things into action. I assure you, as I just said, I will be working very closely with our ministers.

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

SCOTTISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE ÉCOSSAIS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 14, standing in the name of Mr. McDonell. Mr. McDonell has moved second reading of Bill 208, An Act to proclaim Scottish Heritage Day. 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?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Private members' 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.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Oosterhoff has moved private member's notice of motion number 112. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

EDUCATION

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mrs. Wai has moved private member's notice of motion number 109. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the government House Leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: In accordance with standing order 59, I would like to tell the House the business for next week:

We will be dealing with Bill 207, which is the family law bill.

We will be dealing with Bill 202, soldiers' aid, and a new bill which will be introduced next week.

In addition, I remind the House that we start different hours next week:

On Monday morning, a private member's bill standing in the name of the member for Scarborough–Guildwood;

On Tuesday, a private member's bill standing in the name of the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore;

On Wednesday, a private member's bill standing in the name of the member for Ottawa West–Nepean;

On Thursday, a private member's bill standing in the name of the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOVING ONTARIO FAMILY LAW FORWARD ACT, 2020

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 30, 2020, on the motion for second 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 Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to lead off the debate for the official opposition on Bill 207, Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act, 2020. This act is very technical. It updates procedures, definitions and slightly alters legal tests. Some of these changes are welcome. We know the legal professionals we've spoken with are glad to see some of the changes, but of course they also believe there is much missing.

This bill has three schedules. The first amends the Children's Law Reform Act to change definitions and terminology used relating to custody and other matters. It also adds a few very important amendments, like providing a statutory definition of the "best interests" of the child. This bill also requires that family violence be considered as a matter that is relevant to the best interests of the child, and that children be protected from conflict arising from litigation. And there is a requirement that counsel encourages their client to resolve matters through other dispute resolution processes, including mediation.

Schedule 2 of the bill amends the Courts of Justice Act to clarify the appeals procedure for family law matters. Before this, it was a mixture of legislation and case law. These changes clarify and streamline the appeals procedure.

Schedule 3 of this bill amends the Family Law Act to require the Minister of Finance to provide the court with certified copies of notices of calculation for child support matters. Many of these changes are aimed at making family law more efficient and streamlined, but as I will discuss today, there is still a great deal missing that could have truly helped families.

Family law is a difficult, messy and emotional area of law. Family breakdown is a difficult experience for all involved, including children. There is a crisis in family law that has been decades in the making, and that this bill does not address. There are access-to-justice issues that have gone unaddressed as well. And there are issues around what happens before and after the case that really do matter, as the legal system does not exist in a vacuum. For families, life goes on after their courtroom experience.

While the changes to the law introduced in the bill are fine, and it does help the family in court to actually have legal representation so that they have the best chance of getting a good outcome, after the family law case, how does that family go on to live under those same court orders? Do the community and government agencies, which enforce the orders, have the ability to serve families? I hope to touch on some of these issues within the bill and in the broader context of family law in my lead today.

Before I start, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the hard-working folks who have kept the legal system

running during the pandemic. The workers and legal professionals that have kept our courts running for essential and urgent legal matters really showed the true resiliency of our system. Quickly switching over an entire system to digital and telephone communications is no small task. Thank you to everyone who kept us running during the pandemic.

I also want to mention the great work of our community legal clinics and legal aid throughout this pandemic. This pandemic caused a whole host of issues that impacted people's lives, like workplace rights for health and safety, and housing rights for tenants and those who lost their jobs and couldn't make rent. I know my office heard from many people facing evictions because of this pandemic. And while enforcement and eviction orders were frozen, there was little else done by this government to help these same people. That's where the legal clinic stepped in under difficult circumstances to help members of all of our communities and all across Ontario. So thank you to the community legal aid workers as well.

Ontario's family law system has been in crisis for decades; countless judges, lawyers, academics and community workers have spoken about this. These are important legal matters that impact the lives of all Ontarians in a deep and very personal way. These are legal matters that affect the family: divorces, splitting assets, custody of children, child protection and adoption. All of these matters affect the course of people's lives. It's emotionally charged and it's deeply personal, and many of them affect children when they're young and very vulnerable.

It is deeply disturbing that across Canada more than 50% of people who go to a Family Court do so without a lawyer, and we all know that the outcomes are much worse when you don't have legal representation. The most important reason that people show up without a lawyer is the cost. So many in our province simply can't afford the legal help. Our legal system is designed to keep regular people out.

As of 2013, the average cost for a basic family law case was \$12,000, while the income cut-off for legal aid is way too low: under \$20,000 for a single person. The result is that very few Ontarians can afford access to justice in our Family Court system. Too many people have no choice but to try to follow advice from legal clinics and duty counsel offices while they go it alone. As a result, our legal system is slowed to a crawl, and these people have worse outcomes that impact their families for years. These inequities are amplified for single-mother families, which face a higher risk of poverty if they can't obtain and enforce orders for child support. This impacts women fleeing abusive situations or families interacting with the child welfare system.

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Of course, if you're rich, this doesn't matter to you. You can simply hire the best lawyer and afford your way out of it. Many people who show up at court without lawyers simply ran out of money. They started with legal help, and then they were forced to go it alone. In some places in our province, the majority of litigants are self-represented.

These problems are not new. They are decades in the making and were caused by successive Conservative and Liberal governments. Back in 2011, Justice Warren K. Winkler, who was the Chief Justice of Ontario, had this to say about our crisis in family law: "There is a growing concern among the bar and the general public that our family justice system is not delivering on its primary purpose: access to justice for families in transition.

"I was made starkly aware of the level of dissatisfaction with our family justice system after I became Chief Justice of Ontario four years ago. I travelled throughout the province, and met with law associations to get their feedback on issues facing the legal system. The overwhelming theme of these conversations was that the family justice system was in a state of crisis....

"I agree with Alf Mamo"—a family lawyer—"who has written that our goal in family justice reform should be 'meaningful access to justice,' which he defines as 'the ability of a citizen to bring about a solution to his or her legal problems that is (a) financially affordable; (b) timely; (c) easy to understand; and (d) easy to manoeuvre through.'

"Unfortunately, rather than a system that is financially affordable, timely, easy to understand and manoeuvre through, the public is experiencing a process that is unaffordable, slow and overly complex. Moreover, rather than finding solutions to their problems, litigants often find that the legal process exacerbates problems in an already emotionally charged situation.

"There are two noteworthy trends occurring in the family justice system. Those that can afford it are increasingly choosing methods of private mediation or arbitration where they seek a faster and more efficient process over which they have greater control. Meanwhile, the public court system is increasingly dominated by self-represented litigants. These litigants either commence their litigation in this manner or are forced to represent themselves after exhausting their funds midway through the process. More than half of family law litigants are self-represented. In some Toronto-area courts, over 70 percent are reported to be self-represented.

"We are thus increasingly seeing a two-tiered justice system. On the one hand we have a public court system which is filled with large numbers of people who cannot afford lawyers, and on the other we have a second process for people who can afford to seek justice elsewhere."

These are the words of a Chief Justice of Ontario almost a decade ago, and they are just as applicable today. We've known about the crisis in family law for many years, and again, we have seen no action from the Liberals or the Conservatives to remedy it. This bill before us today does not get at the root of the issue that plagues family law: that many people simply cannot get access to legal help because it is too expensive.

I want to discuss the issue of access to justice and how this bill does not fix it, and how the Conservatives' actions so far have actually worked to undermine access. Any one of us here knows, just from the day-to-day of our constituency offices, that there are so many people who

need better access to legal help. Bill 207 does nothing to improve access to justice for Ontarians, especially as this government has made huge cuts to legal aid during its mandate. Tweaking family law, as this bill does, is great for streamlining practices and procedures in the courtroom, but that's already past the first major barrier that families who are engaged in family law matters have to endure.

The first barrier in family law is access to legal representation. This government would like us to believe that changing definitions in some procedures will enable people to continue to represent themselves in court. That's what the Attorney General told me in his answer to a question yesterday on his lead about access to justice. He assumes that most people are self-represented because they want to be. In reality, I would wager that if you ask anyone who was self-represented in Family Court, with their family and their children and their finances at stake, if they wanted free legal advice, many of those people would say yes.

Access to legal advice and representation is a real financial barrier in this province, and pretending it does not exist does not serve anyone. Instead, this government is ignoring the problem of access to legal help, and it is the families and children that will suffer worse outcomes in court and have to live with those outcomes.

This minister has no idea about the economic reality for most Ontarians. Lawyers are expensive, and most people in court want them but can't afford them. Simplifying the family law system is good—don't get me wrong—but suggesting that people don't need legal representation is irresponsible.

This bill unsurprisingly does not reverse the government's devastating \$133-million funding cut to Legal Aid Ontario. That was 30% of their budget gone. It is great that the courtroom procedures are updated, but how would someone who can't afford a lawyer even know about these updates?

Back when the cut to legal aid was made, there was a huge public outcry, as I'm sure you'll remember, Speaker. That's because people realized that fewer people would be able to access legal help. I recall the Premier in his response to the outcry made the following promise: "If anyone needs support on legal aid, feel free to call my office. I will guarantee you that you will have legal aid." That was ridiculous. Everyone who reached out was let down to find out that the Premier could not actually guarantee legal aid. In fact, he has been working since he became Premier to reduce legal aid.

This bill pretends that the massive 2019 cuts to legal aid never occurred. Originally, the devastating 30% cut was supposed to rise by another \$30 million by next year, but thankfully opposition to these cuts worked, and the government had to back track on that commitment. Perhaps the government actually felt ashamed at some point. Who knows?

What I do know is that Legal Aid Ontario and its legal clinics are an indispensable part of our legal system that provide access to justice to thousands of Ontarians every

year. Last year, Legal Aid Ontario, through its clinics, provided over 100,000 legal aid certificates and helped 650,000 people through its duty counsel services. Many of these clients are fighting for the basics. The clinic works to make sure that people stay housed and with a form of income. It helps people appeal their ODSP and OW applications and helps with WSIB. It would be shameless and callous to reduce legal support for these same individuals. But we've learned never to underestimate the Ford government when it comes to cutting support for those in need. How this government can just slash people's ability to access the justice system is absolutely beyond me.

I have spoken about this issue before, when this government introduced Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act. The cuts to legal aid hit Ontario's most vulnerable people the hardest. That includes women fleeing domestic violence, refugees fleeing persecution, people facing homelessness and many more.

In family law, single mothers bear the brunt of the lack of access to justice. They are dealing with both the power imbalance of their relationship and the court system without legal support. If they don't receive legal help, they could end up without the monetary support their child needs, or with less parenting time or access to their children. These are questions like: Can I see my kids? How can I leave my abusive marriage? Will I receive financial support to support my child?

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We also know that the math doesn't work out either when it comes to self-representation. People who don't have lawyers, who don't know court rules and procedures end up slowing down the court system. It's worth considering the cost of self-representation to the system. Cases drag out much longer than is necessary, taking up costly court costs and resources. We know that investment in legal aid saves our courts money. This is equally true in family court. The Conservative cuts to legal aid are not only cruel, they're fiscally irresponsible, short-sighted and naive.

Like I said earlier, every member in this chamber has a constituency office, and you all know the types of calls we get. My office gets calls from people facing evictions or rent increases who don't know their legal rights as tenants. We get calls from people who need help dealing with child welfare agencies or trying to manage child support payment issues. We also get calls from people simply asking for help getting legal aid. Unfortunately, so few people qualify.

There is a large gap in this province. There are so many people that don't qualify for legal aid but can't afford a lawyer. I would say most people fall into this category. The threshold for legal aid is far too low. Everyone knows this. This bill should be addressing this issue and reversing the devastating cuts.

Ontario justices spoke out against legal aid cuts recently at a court opening ceremony. Ontario Court of Appeal Chief Justice George Strathy said, "It is, quite frankly, a false economy to think that cutting these vital services

saves money. When litigants are unrepresented and unsupported, the justice system slows to a crawl, valuable resources are drained, and other cases are held back. More important, the most vulnerable members of our society, those whom our justice system purports to protect, are further victimized because their playing field is uneven.”

Further, at the same virtual event, Chief Justice Lise Maisonneuve of the Ontario Court of Justice said, “Even more than before the pandemic arrived, legal aid in this province needs to be properly funded to ensure that the most at risk in our society are served, particularly in light of the move to virtual proceedings, which many vulnerable litigants may be challenged to access due to limited access to telephones or Internet. Without the support that legal aid is intended to provide, justice may be out of their reach in this new reality.”

Ontario’s senior judges can clearly see that this government has attacked access to justice in Ontario by cutting funding to legal aid in Ontario. This government simply doesn’t listen, or it does not care. This bill we are debating proves this by not going far enough to promote access to justice. What good are all of these changes to family law if the family that is going through the dispute is unable to afford a lawyer? Who does this bill serve? While this government works to improve the family law system with one hand, the other hand is undermining the system by making it more difficult to access legal help.

The child welfare system is another area where the lack of access to justice intersects with family law. It intersects with family law in a way that is very damaging for families and children, as I’m sure we all in this chamber know. Families are routinely outgunned by children’s aid societies, who have legal teams that are well versed in child protection laws. Children’s aid has an important mission and can do important work in preventing harm to children, and I know they’re working on prevention these days, supporting families upstream, rather than apprehension. But there are still many families who went to court and lost custody of their children simply because they were out-resourced.

Child protection cases move quickly. Deadlines come fast, and they’re very complicated. The court operates in a different language and has its own rules and procedures. Access to justice is critical in these cases.

It is no surprise that Indigenous and Black children and youth are overrepresented in our child welfare system when these communities are disproportionately unable to access legal services as well. The Law Society of Ontario recognizes this and has been working on various initiatives to improve access to justice for racialized communities. The lack of access to justice in family law feeds on existing social inequalities and makes them that much worse. To improve family law, especially in areas that are most damaging to families, we must improve access to legal services for families.

Returning to the content of the bill, schedule 1 introduces a statutory definition, the “best interests of the child.” This is so the courts have a clear and consistent definition of a legal test. It brings this important issue out

of case law precedents. The best interests of the child do not exist in a vacuum but are determined by the world that the child lives in. These legal decisions are all about what comes next for the family once the court case is over. There are community programs and services that allow for the best interests of a child to be met, but we have seen chronic problems.

One of the agencies that supports enforcing court orders is the Family Responsibility Office. My office gets many calls about the Family Responsibility Office, so many—Speaker, I see your face; I understand. Probably the heaviest caseload in most of our offices is FRO. Many people have a difficult time working with it. It consistently generates the most complaints for the Ombudsman when it comes to social services. Families don’t understand how FRO works, and while changes were made to service delivery recently, there are still too many people who don’t understand FRO’s role or power. I often have to send those who reach out to my office to our local legal clinic so they can get legal advice. Community programs that support families are important as well and should be considered when we are talking about the best interest of the child.

There is a perfect example of how this government undermines its own legislation in my city of Hamilton. The Hamilton YWCA has provided supervised custodial visits for parents and other family members for many years. These supervised visits allow court orders about parental visits to be done in a safe and healthy way. The YWCA had received government funding to provide this service, about \$178,000 in provincial base funding annually. What I found shocking is that that amount hasn’t changed since 2008. That’s 12 years of inflation eroding this organization’s ability to do this important work that is very much related to family law outcomes. During COVID-19, this became even worse as they didn’t have the money to open with additional safety measures—no money for PPE or cleaning.

I asked the Hamilton YWCA to share their concerns with me. This is what they told me: “Supervised Access Services at YWCA Hamilton is funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General.

“It provides a safe, neutral, child-focused environment where visits and exchanges can take place between non-custodial parents and children in cases where safety is a significant concern.

“Clients are either court-ordered to utilize the service or must have a mutual written agreement. Reasons for referral include domestic violence, mental health, addictions, concerns regarding parenting ability etc.

“Over the last year, Supervised Access Services arranged 546 visits and 60 exchanges. At this time, there was a waiting list of 20-24 months to utilize the service.

“There is an average of 25 families consistently on a waiting list awaiting court-ordered supervised access services.

“There has not been an increase to the \$178,000 in base funding from the Ministry of the Attorney General since 2008, which has created a significant growing wait-list.

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“In addition, there has not been additional funding provided to support services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The Ministry of the Attorney General has indicated to CBC News that they have provided ‘flexibility in their contractual agreement,’ which would allow providers to transfer any remaining funds from last year’s budget to this fiscal year’s budget.

“For a centre that is already severely underfunded, this is not a viable option. As a result of these funding pressures, parents are waiting months or years to now see their children.

“Moreover, women who have experienced violence are feeling pressured to still deliver the child(ren) outside of the court order/agreement, therefore creating significant safety concerns that could result in violence or fatality for women and children.

“In addition, the centre is struggling to reopen to families during COVID-19.

“Additional funding has not been provided to support social distancing, PPE, cleaning, etc.

“This is resulting in even further increased wait times and parents only seeing their children by virtual means at this time.

“Increased, sustainable-based funding is needed in order to mitigate risk to women and children. Children deserve safe, supervised shared parenting time.

“Survivors of domestic violence should not face further risk and fear of violence or death as a result of a lack of government funding.

“Failure to adequately fund supervised access services is a tragedy in the making.”

I’ll just leave that there with you for one second: children not being able to see their families through the pandemic, court-ordered.

It is difficult to square updates to family law and the emphasis in this legislation on defining the best interest of the child with this government’s refusal to support the child outside of the courtroom.

Life goes on for families. They leave the legal dispute behind and try to live and abide by court orders. Community services like the YWCA’s supervised access program allow families to follow the orders safely, but they are chronically underfunded.

What happens in the courtroom does not happen in a vacuum. If a family doesn’t have access to a lawyer before the court case, and then does not have access to help after the court case, fixing just the courts is not enough.

Schedule 1 of this bill also includes some language around mediation and alternative means of resolving disputes. Here, as well, the government does not go far enough. This bill amends the Family Law Act to add new sections to set out new duties for legal advisers for proceedings that fall under part III of the Family Law Act, which is all about custody, access and guardianship.

One of the new sections added to the act, section 47.2, states, “To the extent that it is appropriate to do so, the parties to a proceeding shall try to resolve the matters that

may be the subject of an order under this part through an alternative dispute resolution process, such as negotiation, mediation or collaborative law.”

Further, this new bill gives new duties for legal advisers to encourage families to seek mediation or other dispute resolution processes. Section 47.3(2) reads: “It is the duty of every legal adviser who undertakes to act on a person’s behalf in any proceeding under this part,

“(a) to encourage the person to attempt to resolve the matters that may be the subject of an order under this part through an alternative dispute resolution process, as provided for under subsection 47.2(1), unless the circumstances of the case are of such a nature that it would clearly not be appropriate to do so;”

Clearly, this government recognizes the importance of mediation and collaborative law, but instead of making some form of mediation a strong part of the legal system, for appropriate situations, they are asking lawyers to encourage it. It’s not clear what this means. It is the duty of legal advisers to encourage families to seek mediation. From what I understand, family law is emotional and taxing, and those involved in it often do not want mediation. They want to go to court. If some form of alternative dispute resolution is not required, it generally doesn’t happen for these families. That’s what we’ve heard from the lawyers and the experts.

This is too important to be in the legislation as a soft encouragement. It should be mandatory—but with mandatory legal counsel provided, in cases where it is appropriate, not in cases of family violence or when women are intimidated by their partners or face some other abuse.

Mediation frees up our legal system to focus on what matters, and it is much cheaper for the family members involved. It helps the family narrow and understand the dispute and works with families to resolve the dispute.

Former Ontario Chief Justice Warren Winkler, at the opening of the courts in 2010, raised this issue: “In the area of family law, I question the effectiveness of the slow and steady approach of fine-tuning and rationalizing the present system. Rather than incremental change, perhaps it is time to consider a more dramatic and pragmatic revision of the manner in which family law services are delivered across Ontario.

“Experience has shown that litigants need a family law justice system that provides early access to legal information and timely disclosure of financial data. The centrepiece of such an upfront family dispute resolution scheme ought to be an alternative dispute resolution process. Such an approach would have the advantage of being more informal, with fewer procedural steps, thus reducing costs to the litigants and increasing the opportunity for early and fair resolution. Accordingly, only in the event that the alternative dispute resolution process is unsuccessful would access to the costly, time-consuming, adversarial and sometimes acrimonious court process be made available to litigants.

“I think the time has come for a fresh conceptual approach to resolution of family disputes in Ontario.”

A decade ago, Chief Justice Winkler said that this sort of incrementalization, that this approach of chipping away at the edges of the crisis in family law, just doesn't work.

Mandatory alternative dispute resolution in some form with mandatory counsel provided, and only in cases where it is appropriate, would have provided a change to the family law that we needed to see. This change would have saved thousands of families per year a great deal of time and money.

In 2019, there were over 75,000 appearances at the Ontario Court of Justice over family law matters alone. That does not include the Superior Court of Justice.

We can reduce the burden on our court system and serve families by making mediation a part of the process. Of course, as I said, any mediation of the dispute resolution process should come with mandatory counsel as well.

Right now in Ontario, some courthouses have dispute resolution officers who are senior family lawyers. This dispute resolution program aids families with early evaluation of their case by a neutral third party. The work conducted by the officers mainly deals with motions to change child and spousal support orders. Only a handful of courts in Ontario have this program. This is another example of a missed opportunity. Instead of expanding this program in a piecemeal manner, this bill could have fully supported the process like this for all family law cases, provided that it is appropriate for the case. There is no ambition in this bill, no strong desire to try to move these cases into alternative dispute resolution process.

Another element missing from this legislation that many experts that our team have spoken with and agree should have been a priority is the expansion of unified Family Courts. Family law is complicated and it involves both federal and provincial legislation. Jurisdiction over family cases in Ontario is divided between the Superior Court of Justice and the Ontario Court of Justice. It gets more complicated when you parse out what each court is responsible for.

Under federal law, the Superior Court of Justice has jurisdiction in cases involving divorce and division of property. Under provincial law, child protection and adoption cases must be heard in the Ontario Court of Justice. Both courts can preside over child and spousal support cases and child custody and access cases. You can see how the different and overlapping jurisdictions can be complicated for families. Now imagine adding that on top of your inability to afford a lawyer. It just gets worse and worse.

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Right now, there are 25 Family Courts in Ontario. These are one-stop shops. These court locations can hear all the issues related to family law under both federal and provincial jurisdictions. Outside these Family Courts, overlapping jurisdictions make this area of law a mess for families and even lawyers. Those we have spoken with about this bill see a missed opportunity to prioritize and expand the unified Family Courts. This bill just continues to seem to lack ambition.

This bill introduces several changes to language used in family law cases that are all very supportable from our side of the House. We think they're very positive changes. What was called a "custody order" will be called a "parenting order." Those orders will set out parenting time, with no distinction in language between what used to be custody and access, and decision-making responsibility. This language reduces the adversarial nature of these disputes.

The definition of family violence in the bill is also something I can support. I'll quote from the bill: "any conduct ... towards another family member that is violent or threatening, that constitutes a pattern of"—I'm getting tired; these hours are long, goodness—"coercive and controlling behaviour, or that causes the other family member to fear for their own safety or for that of another person, and, in the case of a child, includes direct or indirect exposure to such conduct."

The bill goes on to say that "the conduct need not constitute a criminal offence" and the list of actions that could constitute family violence. This definition, plus the requirement that family violence be considered in a legal matter, will likely ensure that the court takes family violence seriously. These are welcome additions to the system that ensure more consideration is given to family violence in deciding what is the best outcome for the family.

The language changes are also very welcome, as his bill makes the language used in court, and outside of the court as families continue to live their lives, less adversarial and confrontational. These changes will help many people move on to continue their lives after a family dispute. But again, we need to make sure that people who have these disputes have access to legal help.

There is an agreement among legal professionals that the changes in this bill are good. The language changes, the statutory best-interests-of-the-child test, and the definition of family violence—all of these are great changes that will help people in family legal matters.

But the bill lacks the ambition to truly tackle the crisis in the family law system, which was outlined in the quote that I read from Chief Justice Winkler. This bill does nothing to address the two-tier legal system we have, where those with money can afford legal representation in their family law dispute, and those who don't have tens of thousands of dollars to spare have to go to court and represent themselves without the help of a lawyer.

This bill does nothing to improve access to justice for families. It does not reduce or reverse the massive 30% cut to legal aid that this government introduced: \$133 million taken from the legal aid sector, from our most vulnerable people: people who are looking for help when they're losing their home, people who are looking for help when they need help with WSIB, people who are just looking for legal counsel—all ripped away from them. The most vulnerable people in our communities—that's the attack that the Ford government made on our communities first.

These are very important issues about family resources, child custody, decision-making power and parenting

rights. These legal matters have lifetime repercussions for children and families.

I know as elected MPPs here in Ontario, we have all had families call our offices regarding child welfare. We've seen child welfare families protesting across the province, talking about being outgunned in courts, talking about the unfairness that they've felt in the system because they didn't have the representation, that they weren't able to read the legal terminology and understand the legal language and what that did to their chances and their opportunities of seeing their children, of having access to their children—of losing their children for a lifetime, of children becoming crown wards.

Those are the repercussions of a system that doesn't have access to legal representation. That's the government that you joined, a government that cut those services to ensure that people didn't have access. Access to legal help in family law must be a priority, and we must be making it easier for them to get help, not less. They shouldn't have to call the Premier's office to get legal aid which never happened.

Nor does it offer any consideration for life outside of the courtroom. As families' lives go on, the community agencies that are supposed to help facilitate court orders are slowly defunded, like the YWCA in Hamilton. We heard very clearly that letter that was sent from the YWCA and what it meant to their families. Those families are still, to this day, not getting access to their supervised court-ordered visits because your government refuses to give them the funding that's appropriate. And the Liberals, I'm afraid, were no different. They haven't had an increase to their funding since 2008 to provide these visits to families. What was it, 546 visits that they provide every year? Some 20 to 25 families on wait-lists are going to wait 20 to 24 months, never having the access to their children that is court-ordered because your government doesn't fund that necessary program. Those are the types of things that we have to be looking at.

As we've said, we have no trouble with this bill. There's no poison pill that we're finding in here. There is nothing that we think is detrimental to our communities. But what we do know is that without access to legal representation, without the services that are court ordered actually being funded and accessible to people in our communities, then what's the point? I mean, it's great that you're fixing terminology so that people who can't afford a lawyer can maybe read the lingo a little better, but that's not access to justice. That's not what people would expect that they could have to serve them in the province of Ontario.

This bill also takes a soft approach to mediation. There's definitely a need to move more family disputes into alternative dispute resolution processes, with mandatory legal counsel provided. This bill only asks counsel to encourage some form of mediation. I've had conversations with many folks for years about mediation. There are a lot of family matters that could be dealt with outside of a courtroom. But again, I think that legal counsel needs to be there to support people. If you have a very domineering

or dominant partner, how can mediation then be a fair process? So making sure that people have representation to help them through that process is really important, but there should have been a stronger focus on mediation and on alternative dispute resolution processes that was province-wide, that everybody had access to. That would have been good to see in this bill.

What's title of this bill, "moving forward"? Moving forward with very baby steps—very baby steps. Like I said, we have no trouble with what's in here; we just wish there was more. We just wish that there was more money in legal aid to ensure that families truly had the access that they need.

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I hope that my comments have had some impact today. I hope that you truly were listening and that you did hear our suggestions, that you did hear our plea for more money for legal aid to reverse those cuts to ensure that legal aid has the funding that it needs to be able to represent our most vulnerable communities.

Many folks don't have the thousands of dollars it takes to go to court. Nobody wants to go to court. Nobody has put themselves in a position where they want to go to court; they're forced into court for whatever reason. It could be a family separation; it could be child custody, things that are already emotionally high—the worst time in people's lives, and to have to go through that alone.

I knew somebody who had to represent herself through the Family Court system. She was a constituent and she asked me for help. She sat in my office and used my photocopier. She had to make five sets of all of this documentation—and I'm talking major documentation. There was so much; it was overwhelming. I was busy and I really wasn't there to help her with the process. I was just allowing her to use the space, because it was—we helped her with some of it, but—she was pretty good, thankfully. She was able to read through that; she was able to get through the legal terminologies—but five complete packages for this place and that place, and if you got one thing wrong, you've got to start all over again.

These are the types of things we see in our office. How many times do you get called into your office to commission Family Responsibility Office documents, when people are like, "We don't understand what's happening. They say they got it. We don't have it. What's happening here? What's happening there?" The Family Responsibility Office is truly one of the greatest caseloads in our office. Would you agree? Family responsibility—big caseloads within your office?

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: Pardon? It must be in your office there, too, Minister. Well, maybe he's just not paying attention. Because I—well, maybe they just come to New Democrats for this kind of stuff, Speaker, because I'll tell you, you can talk to anybody on our benches and pretty much family responsibility is a very high caseload in our office, and families are struggling because they depend on that money. They depend on the employer to be able to send that money off to the Family Responsibility

Office and the calculations of how it truly works, when people think there shouldn't be any changes and yet it fluctuates all over the place depending on how their workweek looked like that week and their income for that week. It's just a cumbersome process.

We see a lot of that, and we would love to see some wonderful, great changes to that. I'm sure the Ombudsman would love to see some changes to the Family Responsibility Office because I know there's a huge caseload for him also.

Support for our legal aid communities: People who have put their life's dedication into our legal system, and not for the greater dollar but for the true community spirit in which they take on that work. It's cumbersome work. It's housing; it's bedbugs; it's Ontario Works; it's ODSP; it's family responsibility; it's WSIB—the list goes on, and none of it is pretty. None of it is pretty, why folks end up in their community legal clinic, but the great folks who work in those clinics work so tirelessly make sure the vulnerable people in our communities have that representation.

That's an important aspect and something that really should have been covered in this bill to ensure that people had that access to justice, and the great words that I quoted from our justices in Ontario, the things that they said and how important access to justice is. When people are outgunned in a system and don't have the supports, then it truly isn't a fair and equitable system. You need to take those people's words into consideration and know how important it is that their words are heard and that they're actually acted on—not just heard, not just swept off the side of the desk, but truly acted on.

It will probably be another decade before this act is opened again. It's not something that happens quite often, and it's unfortunate that your government missed this opportunity to truly reform family law so that there is adequate access.

Just seeing what some of the other folks—from the Toronto Lawyers Association: It's good, progressive legislation. But they raised several concerns about what was left out: no changes to treatment of matrimonial homes; no presumptive mandatory mediation; no presumptive mandatory parenting coordinators; no expanding contingency arrangements to family matters; not fully funding legal aid—family law has almost been forgotten at legal aid—no expanding access to the unified Family Court, especially in Toronto, as well as virtual hearings. These are big things.

Another doctor from the National Self-Represented Litigants Project—what did she say here? That however, more than 50% of family litigants come to court without a lawyer; most common reason is lack of funds; that the result is a travesty of justice for many Ontarians who are not getting a fair chance; that this is completely unchanged by whatever legal name you give to custody or access or even the definition of best interests of a child.

It suggests a number of reforms that should have been implemented: greatly enhanced access to assistance by

more affordable professionals, community justice workers, court registry staff, agency advocates. This will require a legislative change to the Legal Profession Act and/or have regulatory buy-in.

Family mediation: Make it mandatory for all cases with an exemption system for cases where this is inappropriate.

Invest in technologies, including e-filing, but also by re-creating and simplifying legal forms themselves with built-in interactive assistance.

And then moving to technology has all of its own concerns also. Not everyone has access to technology, and so that has to be part of the mindset, part of the thought process when changing and moving us into the future. I know a lot of folks would just like to move us into the future and put us completely online, but that inhibits many folks and takes away the true access that they would have if they had the money to be able to afford the technology and the Internet systems. By also taking that money away from legal aid—it is the same folks who would go to legal aid and look for that assistance.

Well, Speaker, I think I've definitely said a lot through this last hour. It was a really interesting bill to be able to participate on. I'm not the critic for the Attorney General. I'm not a lawyer. But what I am is the critic for children's services for the last nine years, and that has given me a lot of opportunity to meet with families these family laws affect. So that is the perspective that I tried to bring here today: what these rules will truly mean for our communities.

It's really not all about—I get it; the lawyers need better language, and I'm pleased with the definition changes and the way that we talk about the best interests of the children, but we need to ensure that families are thought about. The families who are going to go through this process, how is their experience going to be when they're already in the worst times of their lives, when they're already feeling at the worst point? It could be for many reasons. How are we supporting them through it? And then again, how are we ensuring that the things we're mandating from the courts, the court-sanctioned duties that they have to fulfill, such as supervised access—how are we supporting them through that? We're putting them through an awful court process where they're completely outgunned, and then we tell them that they can only see their kids through supervised access, but there are wait-lists because the government has underfunded that process.

1700

When you're looking at the best interests of the child, make sure you truly do the child test: Is this really in the best interests of the child? Every decision that is made over there on that side of the government should have a child focus: How does this affect our children? Some things may not affect a child. Most things will affect a child in some form or action. If you're affecting a parent, then you're affecting a parent's ability to parent and to provide. So the child focus always needs to be put on that. That's the way I came at this bill.

It has definitely been an interesting bill to dig into. I've certainly learned a lot. But I also see the true failures of

what is missing from this bill and how the government could have worked harder, dug a little deeper, pushed a little further, been a little bit more creative, been a little bit bolder and made better changes to our access-to-justice system.

I'm going to leave it there. Thank you for the opportunity, and I look forward to the questions.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'd like to thank the member opposite for her remarks.

Our government, as the member noted, is proposing changes to the online Child Support Service so parents can request and receive certified copies of support payment notices directly from the service without having to go into a courtroom. These seem like really common-sense changes to me that reflect a modernized system.

Could the member opposite comment on some of those positive things in the bill that are really making sure we're providing that service in the modern way that we would expect in the 21st century?

Miss Monique Taylor: Absolutely. Thank you to the member for the question.

As you heard very clearly, I support technology. I think that we have to move into technology for a lot of things, but we can't leave families who don't have access to technology behind. How are we going to help those families to be able to go through the system and utilize what they need? They need access to that family responsibility—they need somebody to pick up the phone. If your office is the same as mine—people don't answer the phone; people don't get back.

So yes, the technology is good. But you need to be able to support families who don't have access to technology, too.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you for the analysis and your comments on this bill.

I have a friend who works in the Family Court system. She says that often people don't understand, people who can't afford legal aid—and now with the legal aid cuts, it's more and more the parents who are coming and they don't understand the system. Often, they think they've served a document to their ex-spouse but they haven't actually served it, and then the court's time is taken up. The judge has to explain, all the court reporters and everybody are explaining to this person, "Actually, no, you didn't serve this document properly. We have to go back and do it all again." So the court's time is wasted because they didn't have support to access the legal representation.

Are the legal aid cuts that this government made—the 30%, the \$133-million cut—making our Family Court system less efficient?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much to the member from Spadina–Fort York.

You're absolutely right. That is something we heard very clearly today in quotes from some of our justices, through the pandemic—so these are recent quotes. It is not

efficient to stop the legal aid, to cut back on the legal aid, because when people don't have the proper access to justice, it's time-consuming—the paperwork, the mistakes, the things that happen naturally—because it takes lawyers to do this stuff. When people are outgunned, then it's taking a longer time in the courtrooms and it is definitely costlier.

Thank you very much for the question.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: The member from Hamilton Mountain has referenced legal aid in her remarks quite extensively. I have to say that when I was practising law some years ago, I also represented clients with legal aid.

When asked about this new legislation, the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act, David Field, the CEO of Legal Aid Ontario, had this to say: "Legal Aid Ontario recognizes that access to family justice is promoted through clarity and consistency between federal and provincial family legislation. That is why LAO fully supports the Ministry of the Attorney General's proposed amendments to the Children's Law Reform Act (CLRA) as part of the new Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act. In particular, LAO applauds expanding the definitions within the CLRA, and we welcome the necessary steps the ministry is taking to align the CLRA with recent changes to the Divorce Act. All of this promotes a greater understanding of best interests of the child"—

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

Response?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you for the question, and I'm sure he is pleased. Everybody is pleased about the changes that are being made. What legal aid would not be pleased about is the \$133 million that they lost out of the system last year and the possible \$30 million that could still come, that the Premier has put on hold. Nobody is disputing that these changes are good changes moving forward, making it easier for lawyers to be able to get through the work that they need to do, but access to justice and people having the ability to access legal aid is a whole different story, and that's your government that cut the \$133 million for it. Ask him that question and see how he feels and what his response is on that.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you to the member for your excellent presentation. It's not easy to speak for an hour.

I do concur. One thing I just want to mention before my question is that in fact I do get calls to our office complaining about the issues in the system with regard to family law. It is definitely something that I know a lot of members get.

Again—this was a big part of your presentation—we can see improvements around clarity to the system of law in any of the different sectors and different areas, but do

you believe that we can have true improvement without improving access to law when it comes to financial barriers? Do you believe we can truly have proper improvement?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much for your question. No, I do not. Like I said, this entire bill is about helping the lawyers get through the court process and the system smoother, cleaner. It cleans things up that needed to be done. Lawyers are very happy about this, right?

But that doesn't take away from the fact that there is nothing here for our most vulnerable population to have access to justice. That's where this bill falls short. If you talk to legal aid, if you talk to the Federation of Ontario Law Associations, if you listen to the justices, if you listen to the Toronto Lawyers Association, to the nationals, they're all saying the same thing: This bill falls short of where it needs to be, and that is access to justice, which is hurting our communities.

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: In fact, the Federation of Ontario Law Associations has called for the very changes in this bill, and they were great partners in developing this legislation.

I want to highlight how the member opposite acknowledged this encouragement of all legal professionals to make sure their clients are aware of alternative dispute resolution, like mediation. She said that the provisions in the bill were great, but she'd like to see some court-funded mediation services. Well, just to inform you, these court-funded mediation services actually exist. When I toured the province, there was a great review of them. People are really pleased with it. These are low-income members of society who are eligible. There's also a sliding scale, so if you can afford part of the services, you pay for part of the services.

I just want to clarify: Are you supportive of the changes regarding mediation in this bill?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you for the question. Yes, I was very clear: I am supportive of mediation. I think that mediation is a great tool that needs to be used. I also think that it needs to be funded better so that more people have access to it. But we also need to ensure that—there are some families who will still need that balance-of-power security, and so have a counsel person to assist them through that. I'm not sure if the program is actually province-wide or if it could be broader, but definitely better-funded is something that, as the children's critic, I've heard for years for mediation. It needs more funding and people need better access to mediation. But for some of those cases, we need to ensure that the balance of power does become balanced and that they have the appropriate representation.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have time for one very quick back-and-forth. Further questions?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: "The OAFM is pleased to offer our support to the proposed amendments to the Children's

Law Reform Act and other Ontario statutes as a result of the changes to the Divorce Act. We support the update to the parenting terminology and believe the changing of 'custody' to 'decision-making responsibility' is more representative of the responsibility of parents."

Can the member advise whether they will listen to Ontario's family mediators?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member for the question. Yes, I know that the legal community are very pleased with this, but if you listen to them, they're saying that it doesn't go far enough. They like the measures that are there, but they wish there was better access and there were different programs to be able to assist them through that. Everybody is saying that it's a good bill; we just wish that it was a little bigger.

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

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: I'm grateful for the opportunity to stand before you and my colleagues in the House today to lend my support to the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act. While by no means do I wish to presume this bill passing into law pre-emptively, I nonetheless believe that Attorney General Downey deserves some plaudits. This piece of legislation is as comprehensive as it is thoughtful and as intelligent as it is compassionate. It is evident that this bill comes as a result of countless hours of research, planning, discussion, outreach and good old-fashioned hard work. Congratulations and thank you to Attorney General Downey and your team for your efforts.

Contained within this act are several significant improvements to the family law system—improvements achieved either by omitting what is unnecessary or by adding what is badly needed. I'm not sure that 20 minutes is sufficient time to address all of these alterations adequately, but I will do my best and address those that I think in particular achieve the most positive changes.

Speaker, if ever there was a system that was severely in need of modernization and reform, it is the family law system. I'm sure that everybody in this House has heard horror stories about the Byzantine and cumbersome processes that plague family law. Entering the family law system is akin to wandering around an underground warren of tunnels, where there are no maps, no way of knowing which direction you're heading, no signs, and at all times you are totally in the dark. It's an uncomfortable and often frightening experience that can feel punitive in its relentless ambiguity. Parents can't see any end in sight.

There's an old expression in cooking that I feel is quite appropriate here: Remember that you can add but you can never take away. Unfortunately, that aphorism seems to have stood as the guiding philosophy within our family law system for years. For some reason, it never occurred to legislators, or the previous Liberal government, for that matter, to find meaningful ways to streamline processes or reduce administrative burdens on the system. As Attorney General Downey noted in a written press statement, "Families encounter the family law system in some of life's most difficult moments," and of course, he's very

right. There is very little in this life that is as tragic and traumatic as a marriage breaking down, especially when there are children involved.

A marriage is, of course, a happy occasion. Indeed, many married couples remember their wedding days as being the most joyous day of their lives. I believe that marriage functions as a foundation of sorts. It is an act of establishing stability, strengthening bonds between families and strengthening the bonds between two people in love. But when we marry, we're doing more than just declaring our love for another person in full view of our families and friends—although, of course, that is indeed part of the ritual. We are declaring that this is the person I love and with whom I want to spend the rest of my life.

Let's face it: Commitments do not come much bigger than this. We declare that this is the person with whom I want to build a home; this is the person the person I want to have children with; this is the person whose values, beliefs and morals I share and want to share with my children; this is the person I want to sit in the bleachers with and watch our kids play soccer, in sickness and health, till death do us part.

But as conflicts arise and marriage becomes untenable for some, so too does this vision. All of those hopes and aspirations dissolve away. The commitment to loyalty and one's marriage vows are forgotten in the face of a broken, unsalvageable relationship. The dreams of sharing a home, of sharing love, of sharing wisdom with children is replaced with division—division of feelings, division of assets and division of access to your children. In the end, all that is left is too often acrimony, bitterness, fighting and uncertainty over the future.

I say all of this because this is the exact point where families need the most help. The family law system should be on standby, ready and able to ensure a clear path to divorce, free from unnecessary obstacles, but this is not currently the case. Instead the family law system all too often makes an already bad situation worse.

Ultimately, the sad fact of the matter is that we do not live in an ideal world, and we never will. Some marriages will succeed while others will sadly fail. In the latter scenario, it would be nice if couples separated amicably. It would be nice if divorces consisted of a voluntary but fair and honest appraisal of cause and effect. It would be nice if issues like assets, custody and support could be worked out without the need for lawyers, a multitude of courts and hefty tomes filled with complex legislation, but this is not the case. Separations and divorces are often incredibly difficult, and like it or not, we need a good, functioning family law system and we need one that works very, very well.

I'm happy to say that I have never had to endure the drudgery of family law courts personally or, for that matter, the appeals system. The appeals system is daunting, to say the least. At first glance, the appeals system and process may seem straightforward enough. Under the present system, where a case initiates—that is to say, in which court it will first be heard—depends on the type of family law matter in dispute. From there,

however, things begin to get tricky. Additional factors for which courts hear a matter include the type of family order at stake, the level of government that has jurisdiction over the issue and whether a region has a unified Family Court or not and so on. It's quite cumbersome, but put more simply, each of the three courts in Ontario that hears cases has different appeal routes.

This complexity is a significant cause for confusion for those first encountering the family law system. One would hope—indeed, one would expect—that parents that are already racked with stress, uncertainty and no small degree of a fear could at least participate in a system that is easy to navigate. While this may not be the case right now, if passed, this legislation will make these distinctions and appeal routes much easier to understand and navigate. What's more, the addition of proposed routes for inter-jurisdictional custody cases represents a giant leap forward in the right direction.

The proposed changes for these cases delineate a clear line showing an unambiguous transition between the various stages of appeal regardless of where a case originates. Additionally, allowing for a second right of appeal on a judge's discretion alone will speed up decisions and help prevent abuse of process. This will make for a neater and easier-to-understand scheme that will give families a much-needed higher resolution view of proceedings and a faster expectation of closure, or, put more simply, light at the end of the tunnel.

I would also note that there is overwhelming support for these measures among the legal community and organizations, the bar and family support groups, as the member opposite brought up as well.

What is also sensible is this government's stance on creating more unified Family Courts, or UFCs, here in Ontario. Introduced in 1974, Ontario has more UFCs than any other province or territory throughout Canada. And right now, our government is in talks with the judiciary on future UFC expansions. If agreed upon, these expansions will have a dramatic effect on the family law system. In the UFC branch, family law courts are consolidated into one. Judges rule on all family law matters, such as custody, access, child and spousal support, adoption and child protection applications. UFCs also have benches that are specialized in family law and provide intake services so that litigants can enter into the appropriate family law system, given their unique circumstances. Some of these streams include maintenance support and enforcement, information services, legal services and counselling supports.

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The UFC branch also contains several dispute resolution mechanisms. These mechanisms are crucial in preventing delays and in preventing long, drawn-out trials. Housing all family courts within UFCs also results in a more efficient and less trying appeals process. Information is shared more quickly and more efficiently, and this means that cases will proceed on a faster schedule, with decisions reached sooner rather than later. It's a win for everybody involved.

While there are obvious limitations on how expansions can occur—not every location in Ontario could justifiably house a UFC—I am optimistic that expansions will happen soon and that the federal government will accelerate its commitment to moving Ontario to 100% UFC by increasing the number of UFC judicial appointments.

Another area that is in dire need of reform, as we heard from the other side, is arbitration. Speaker, as I mentioned a few moments ago, the previous Liberal government seemed indifferent to the state of the family law system in Ontario, and for 10 long, pointless years the Liberals insisted on unnecessary and expensive reporting components for arbitrators. As things stand, Ontario is the only province or territory in Canada that has a wholly unneeded and unwanted requirement: Arbitrators are obliged to provide arbitration reports directly to the Attorney General's office. This is despite the fact that the Attorney General does not regulate arbitrators in Ontario.

So the obvious question to arise from this is, why is this even happening and how can we get rid of this? It should be noted, Speaker, that this legally binding requirement results in additional financial burdens for families, as well as a longer processing time for cases. It just makes no sense on any level. It also means that our government has to spend time and money receiving, reviewing and securely storing these confidential submission forms and reports. If passed, this act will do away with this overbearing and costly remnant of Liberal misrule.

Contained within the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act is also another common-sense measure, expanding the dispute resolution officer program. DROs are court-appointed senior family lawyers whose primary purpose is to provide neutral evaluations to people involved in a family dispute. By working directly with litigants, DROs can help to bring clarity to issues and improve the chances of an early settlement. Typically, DROs will provide evaluations on matters such as child and spousal support orders. Quite often, there is disagreement around these orders in many cases due to changing personal and financial circumstances. Frequently, with a DRO's input, litigants can find accord on these issues. With the assistance of a DRO, they can speed up case outcomes by obviating lengthy court proceedings. Following a successful evaluation with a DRO, litigants arrive before a judge with agreed-upon settlements already in place. It just needs the confirmation of the judge before it becomes binding.

Expanding these services to Welland and Kitchener will undoubtedly positively affect Family Court proceedings in those areas. Parties in conflict will reach agreements without waiting for court appointments, and they will have shorter appearance times. While the program is currently suspended due to COVID-19 measures, I'm hopeful that it will recommence soon and that we will see even further growth of the DRO program in the future.

In the written submission on the proposed changes on Bill 207, Neil Maisel, chair of the Family Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario had the following to say: "The Family Law Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario

welcomes the bundle of family law amendments in the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act. These changes will directly benefit family mediators, arbitrators and parenting coordinators and their clients. These changes will facilitate the timely resolution of family law cases both within and outside the court system and align the provincial legislation with the recent amendments to the federal Divorce Act."

As a country with both federal and provincial jurisdictions, family law in Canada is especially complex. Depending on the case in question, jurisdiction may vary. However, with recent changes made by the federal government in the form of C-78, amending the federal Divorce Act, it is necessary to update our provincial legislation. By doing so, our government will help to bring further clarity to both provincial and federal legislation and will avoid potential conflict or confusion.

This new federal legislation comes into effect on March 1, 2021. It makes many changes to legal provisions, as well as nomenclature and terminology. C-78, introduced by former Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould, aims to modernize and more accurately reflect the realities of family law. Terms such as "custody" and "access" are replaced with less oppositional terms such as "decision-making responsibility" and "parenting time." Updating our legislation is necessary in order to be in sync with these new federal changes and to facilitate smoother court proceedings. As part of this provincial update, our government will ensure that all relevant agencies and any institutions impacted by these changes will be fully informed before they come into force.

Speaker, as already stated, the rationale for this bill is simple: making the path towards resolution in family law clearer and faster. We live in a digital world, yet we all know that there are some professions—and the legal profession is not exempt from this charge—that have not fully embraced digital means to speed up processes. Earlier this month, Premier Ford pointed out that outdated practices and technology, such as the insistence on using fax machines, are a problem in Ontario's hospital system. It strikes me that the larger the institutions, the more slowly they move.

In Ontario, we do have an online child support services portal. It was created in April 2016, and the service is administered through the Ministry of Finance and was designed to enable parents to set up or to amend child support payments without a court hearing. This was a worthwhile change that saved parents time and money and reduced the burden on our already very overstretched courts, yet in some cases, parents were still required to get a certified paper copy of a notice. These cases can include notices related to inter-jurisdictional orders on enforcement, changes to or registration of child support payments and so on. With this proposed change, parents will be able to receive a certified copy of notice directly from the service, meaning that they will no longer need to travel to court for what should be a simple administrative request. This change will save parents and caregivers considerable time and expense.

I will say that I agree with the member opposite in saying that going fully digital does leave people behind, and certainly that is a consideration that we will take and keep in mind, and make sure that we are not leaving anybody behind. This is meant to be a positive thing for everyone in Ontario.

Speaker, this is truly an impressive piece of legislation. As I examined the bill and its aims, I was struck by how broad it is in scope, while maintaining precision and very achievable goals. To echo my opening remarks, family law needs serious reform. We all know this. While this bill will not fix everything—it's impossible to do—it is, to my mind, the standard by which all serious reform should be judged in the future. I say this because, while complex and far-reaching, the essential purpose of this act is clear: It's to help Ontarians. If passed, Ontarians will benefit from a system that is pivoting away from box-ticking, pivoting away from form-filling and endless paperwork, to one that embraces technology, that prioritizes clarity and efficiency, and that more fully recognizes the stress and heart-break of family separation.

I noted earlier that I have been spared from family courts personally. While that is true in a direct manner, I did actually attend a Family Court trial with a family member who was going through a divorce and vicious child custody battle. I was actually a 12-year-old at the time who was very interested in the legal profession, and so my family member brought me along with her one day. While it was riveting to be in the thick of everything, it was also very difficult to watch. Family courts are not happy places to begin with, but what was most difficult was witnessing how long the process took, how difficult it was financially, mentally and emotionally for my family member. She was devastated at the breakdown of her marriage, and she was worried about the impact that it would have on her young daughter. I was young, but I could plainly see the detrimental effects that the process had on her.

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Watching her experience this left an imprint on me. I have never forgotten the toll that this process took on her and how I immediately felt that an already incredibly difficult situation was made more excruciating by a process that felt outdated and not intuitive in the least. Some 20 years have passed since then, and I still hear about how trying our family law system is on those who are unfortunate enough to have to contend with it.

This is why I'm so proud to lend my support to this bill. Anything that helps families deal with the devastating breakdown of the family unit in a more straightforward manner is something that we should all be able to get behind. An already difficult time should not be made more difficult by a process that simply isn't working. The more we do as legislators to make this process easier to navigate and more efficient to get through, the less families have to worry about as they are reconfiguring their lives.

I'm proud to stand with and for all families today, and I heartily support this piece of legislation.

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

Mr. Tom Rakovec: Thank you to the member for her presentation. Low-income families are often starving for justice, and if you're hungry, you'll often take what you can get. But people requiring access to justice don't need a finger—or the finger, which is what this government often gives them; they need a hand. Without improving legal justice by restoring legal aid, we're not going to see the help they need. Will this government commit to restoring the cuts to legal aid and, in fact, improving that system?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Thank you to the member for the question. I will quote your colleague and mine, who just spoke, saying that she's "sure he is pleased. Everybody is pleased about the changes that are being made," but that access and legal aid are "a whole different story." I will say that I heartily agree with that member: Those are a different story, and the changes that are being made here help families. As she said, she supports it. She wants it to go further. We all want it to go further, and this is a really good step in the right direction.

Under Liberal rule, no changes were made for those 15 years. We have listened to the legal community, we have listened to people interacting with the system and we are making positive changes that are going to make this a system that is more equitable for everyone. I ask you to continue giving us your feedback, and we are going to continue to work on this. As the member also said, she assumes that it will be at least 10 years until this document is opened again, but not on our watch. We're going to continue to work on this as an active, living document, and we are committed to the people who are engaging in the system.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much to the member for Scarborough Centre. Our government is reducing red tape in the justice sector by removing an old reporting requirement for family law arbitrators to submit a report to the Ministry of the Attorney General about the family arbitration award they decided. Can the member please explain how removing this unnecessary administrative burden will make it easier and cheaper to resolve family legal matters?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Thank you to the member for the question. Our government is committed to making it easier for family arbitrators to do their very important work and to help vulnerable families who encounter the family law system in some of life's most difficult moments. The Attorney General and parliamentary assistant Park heard it loud and clear during their province-wide consultations on family law that the family system is too burdensome, too complicated and too emotionally taxing.

This common-sense change to remove the arbitration report-filing requirement not only saves time, but increases efficiency for family arbitrators and staff who process these reports. Ultimately, families and children benefit from a family law system that is easier to navigate and more affordable.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I listened very carefully to my neighbour from Scarborough Centre and her speech. As I think about this bill—like my colleague from Hamilton Mountain already said, we will be supporting this, but after a decade—more than a decade, actually—this is an opportunity to really improve something, and this is the best you get? Seriously? With a majority government?

So my question is, looking at all the things that the member has said, especially talking about vulnerable family members, talking about single parents, for example—legal aid was one of the ways these people had support. Would the member agree, especially being in Scarborough, that we need to increase funding for legal aid?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Again, I thank the member for the question, and I will quote her colleague again and say that that is a separate matter. I will say I'm very proud to move forward with such substantive legislation in the middle of a pandemic. Again, we have listened to the community. We are making changes. Like you said, you support it.

Changes were not made for over 10 years, over 15 years, and we're finally making changes that are going to actually help, tangibly help, the people of Ontario. So I am very proud to stand here and stand for this. I learned a lot in my research for writing this, as well, and I'm very happy with these changes. I support them, and I think it's a very good step in the right direction.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, through you to the member: Our government is making it easier, faster and more affordable for vulnerable Ontarians to resolve their family law matters. Family law arbitrators play an important role in appropriately diverting people from an adversarial court process and help bring resolutions to difficult family disputes.

Can the member please explain how the government removing requirements for family law arbitrators to submit a report to the ministry maintains accountability in the family arbitration system?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Thank you to the member for the question. This change is part of our government's commitment to positioning Ontario at the forefront of building a modern justice system of the future.

To be clear, the government does not regulate arbitrators in Ontario. This reporting requirement was, unsurprisingly, introduced by the previous Liberal government, who added unnecessary burdens on the justice system, meaning added cost to families during some of life's most difficult moments. This red tape requirement has now been in place for over 10 years, resulting in a decade's worth of reports that have been piling up at the Ministry of the Attorney General who, again, does not regulate arbitrators. Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that currently requires these reports. Removing

this requirement is common sense and will save time and reduce the burden on family law participants.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: You say that you want a system that's more equitable for everyone, and you say that this is going to be the justice system for the future. You know, we're going back and forth here. You keep congratulating yourselves because you have found some efficiencies to make the Family Court system a little bit faster, a little bit more efficient. So you've taken a half-step forward. But a year and a half ago, you took five steps backward by cutting legal aid by 30%, \$133 million, which deprived many, many families of access to lawyers so that they could best represent themselves.

As you said, family courts are not happy places. This is where custody is decided, whether parents get to see their children or not. If they don't have access to a lawyer, then they often lose access to their children. So my question is, how does five steps back and a half-step forward make a more equitable system?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Thank you to the member for the question. I will again quote your member and say that this is a separate matter, but I will comment on it for a moment and say that we have increased the eligibility threshold for legal aid every year, and this includes for family law certificates, so I disagree with your positing that we have taken five steps back.

But again, I will say that making this system more accessible in terms of terminology and in terms of less unnecessary paperwork that is an actual cost that families who can't afford it are paying, is taking steps forward and, again, very tangible steps that are helping people in need.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have time for one more quick question and answer.

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Mr. Jeremy Roberts: To the member from Scarborough Centre: Our government is working for Ontario's children and families to move family law forward in our province. That's why the Attorney General proposed much-needed changes to Ontario's family law appeal route, which the member referenced in her remarks.

Could the member please share more about what justice sector partners are saying about these proposed reforms?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Thank you to the member for the question. The Attorney General and his parliamentary assistant, Lindsey Park, travelled across the province consulting on family law matters, including the overly complex and inconsistent appeal routes. That hard work and lengthy consultation with justice sector partners, including the courts, legal organizations, family groups and Ontario parents, paid off. The proposed amendments to the Courts of Justice Act are directly responsive to stakeholder feedback that they received, which is why some of the leading legal organizations in our province support these much-needed reforms.

Sam Misheal, the chair of the family law committee at the Federation of Ontario Law Associations, said that FOLA welcomes changes designed to simplify and

streamline the appeal routes for family law cases, as well as the continuous amendments to Ontario's statutes, in order to make Ontario's justice system more accessible to Ontarians.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines on a point of order.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I reserved rising on a point of order moments ago because I didn't want to interrupt the flow of questions and answers here, but I do have to express my disappointment in a comment that was made in a question put by the member from Humber River–Black Creek. Indeed, I know this person to be collegial and respectful of this place, but his comments to suggest that through this legislation the government of Ontario was giving the people of Ontario the finger when it came to the substantive developments of this family law—that's what I heard, and I'd like clarification. If he didn't say that, fair enough—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I have heard the minister. I do not recognize that as a point of order. All members have the opportunity to correct their own records if they wish to do so.

Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: As I was listening to our member from Hamilton Mountain and the debate back and forth, and even the debates earlier from the Attorney General on this, I looked at this bill—and it's really a serious bill for me. Undoubtedly, all bills in this Legislature are serious and we should take them seriously. But when you talk about families, that usually hits home for a lot of people. It's significant that we understand that the laws we make in this province affect all of us in many ways. But when we make laws that affect our families, it really impacts the future of what our families and their composition could be—the impacts of those decisions on all family members: children especially, parents, grandparents and extended families.

I'm a mother of two, and now I'm a grandmother of three. As I looked at this, I thought that I'm very fortunate that I haven't had to experience Family Court, family law.

Anyone who has to go through a court system—in general, it's a very traumatic experience. There's usually a contentious issue that drives people to go to court. Sometimes people are standing on principle and they want to make sure that the law is behind them. But the law isn't always fair, in many cases. Courts and the legal system truly play a very critical role in our lives, and we don't understand that until we get sucked into it or we're immersed into it—for any reason, whether it's family, whether it's injury, whether it's criminal, whether it's civil. Once you become engulfed in those things, it can really take hold of your life.

Family law, in this context, if there are ways for us to make sure that that process is a little smoother for the family that's already in chaos and already in turmoil—typically, it's people breaking up that drives families to court when there's children involved. Of course, financial

pieces are also something that people go to court over, and the child piece is what we're talking about when it's family law. So when you say family law, automatically a child is involved. In the best interests of the child, we need to get family law correct, because unless you've experienced it yourself, I don't think you understand the traumatic outcome that can happen.

Now, saying that, there could be two parents who want to work together, and some of those stories are coming out. I know in the generation when I was growing up, it was more combative when there was a divorce. Now parents are starting to understand, and caregivers are starting to understand, that in the best interests of the child, you must work together to find resolutions. But that's not always possible, as we've said.

We've talked about how family law is so important to the fabric of a healthy family and the healthy upbringing of a child. In the last 10 years, as has been pointed out, there hasn't been a lot of changes. There's been a lot of studies; there's been a lot of reports. Even the government itself commissioned its own review, which was published in December 2016. It resulted in an action plan that was released in 2017, but there were no concrete actions around that plan. The intent of wanting to fix it, I guess, was there at that time, but we really need to take it seriously enough to make those things happen.

I'm glad this bill is before us right now. Yes, it could be stronger. There could be some pieces in here that are more actionable to help families resolve situations. There are a lot of technical pieces in this, a lot of writing, redefining things, clarifying things, which, again, is a good step in order to make sure that when people go to Family Court, there is some clarity. I think that when you go to court, there's never any clarity because you can argue anything. In court, when you argue legal cases, people can throw everything into it and not necessarily have substantiated evidence behind it. That's where it gets really messy in Family Court: allegations that someone did this and someone did that—they said, she said—and the courts have to work through that and figure that out.

There is a positive piece in here where it's a requirement for counsel to encourage their clients to resolve matters through a family dispute resolution process, through mediation and collaborative practices. That's in there, and that's good. I think before people get to court, if there's an opportunity to sit down at a table and talk through what your perception is of what the other person is going to do or is doing, that goes a long way, because I think half the time miscommunication can cause a lot of extra legal problems.

The one piece I notice that stakeholders were asking about is to make changes around the provision of mandatory parenting tool coordinators. It was something I found kind of interesting. Stakeholders were requesting those changes. I don't know if the member who brought the bill forward heard about that proposal. There are parenting coordinators; it's currently voluntary. In BC, though, the court can impose a parenting coordinator. It's an independent third party that assists with decision-making in

a high-conflict parenting situation. So I took it upon myself to look at a little overview of the parenting coordinator and what it looked like in BC. I wasn't 100% sure what that looked like, so I wanted to focus a little bit in my speech on this, because I think it's important when you have somebody who is helping resolve the conflict before you get to that court process, which can take a long time. It's very hard on families financially—absolutely financially—and emotionally on your well-being and psychological well-being. If you think you're going to court and you may not get custody of a child or visitations with a child, it's pretty hard to understand that.

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The parenting coordinators in BC—usually the parent coordinating representatives don't impose themselves on the court orders, but what they try to do is have them agree, to come to an agreement around some of things they should be looking at. They could help, for example, sort out things like education. That could be something a parent coordinator could get them to collaborate on, rather than having that unknown about the mutual child. Medical and dental care, pickup and drop-off times: These are things that people sometimes dig their heels in about. They can't get past certain topics, and it drags things out. The other one is travelling and holidays with children. Getting these pieces in order before you go to court could help that process go quicker and a little smoother.

Finding a parent coordinator in BC: They have a parent coordination website where you can actually check that out. The question is, do you have to pay for a parent coordinator? There is no government funding around the parent coordinators, so you or the parent or other guardians would have to pay yourself for that service and you would also have to work out the sharing of costs, because if you're going to have one parent coordinator, both people should contribute. The parent coordinator can't get involved in that financial piece. They have to be independent of that.

The piece of that, I think, is that if someone decides to go through a parent coordinator and they can work through those housekeeping things for the child, the very serious decisions around medical health and all those kinds of things—should we be encouraging that and making it available for funding? Because that is going to save the legal system some cash. If people decide to go to a mediator, if people decide to go to a parent coordinator, if that was in the bill, that's going to save the system some cash. Encouraging people to do that is good. It's going to save the people who are in that family dispute legal fees. Legal fees are astronomically out of people's reach, normally. That was something I thought was a good suggestion by stakeholders, who want to see that kind of thing improved.

The other thing they wanted to see improved was expanding the unified Family Court, so that a single court can deal with divorce and property division. Apparently, these courts already exist in the GTA regions, but Toronto has yet to receive one. So that's another way we can streamline some of these processes. That was a suggestion, again, from a stakeholder.

I think when we go to committee and we're looking at the bill, which is, again, cleaning some things up—definitions, technical pieces—we can really look at other ways to help people avoid court, so to speak, or if they do go to court, when we have this unified Family Court, it makes it easier when they're dealing with two things in the same place. You don't have to start another process in that court. So those were good suggestions, I thought.

Of course, as the member from Hamilton Mountain said, it is a supportable bill. There's no poison pill in this bill, but it does need to go to committee, and I hope this government won't time-allocate that piece of it. Again, we're talking about the seriousness of people's lives, and family is so intrinsic to the success of our children. So we want to make sure we don't time-allocate this and make sure we hear the voices at the table when they're presenting. I hope you're going to hear from, of course, families who have been through the court system, parents, single parents. I hope you're going to hear, maybe, from somebody who was a child during that time and what they felt, what happened to them and if it wasn't a good experience. I hope you're going to hear, of course, from law experts and agencies, legal aid. We talked about how legal aid cuts happened—\$133 million. That's a big hit to that sector for access to justice. There's no disputing that.

I even looked at the FRO piece, and it reminds me of a story back in my riding. It was during the 2018 election. A man came in, a father, and his son was being told by FRO that his driver's licence would be taken away because he hadn't made the payments to FRO. And that's usually the case; sometimes there's delinquent payments for support. They were just petrified of what this meant. So what had happened was, they did go to court—the son with the ex-wife—and there was an order made for support. He was paying his ex-wife directly. He had no idea that he was to report to FRO. She never reported to FRO. It ended up that the lawyer he had at the time never told him about FRO. He said, "I had no idea I was supposed to let them know I was paying the support payments."

Now there's some silver lining to this story. A father was doing his duty and paying support. He did keep cheque copies of the payments so he was able to show bank statements that these cheques were cashed, and luckily it wasn't a detriment. But that's what can happen when the small details get missed when people don't have representation in court. That could have been something that could have affected his ability to continue to pay support payments if he didn't have his licence. So I'm glad to see that the FRO piece is in there, and it's going to require documentation etc.

When I was looking through the bill, the family violence section is in there as well—which, you know, it's the reality. During the pandemic, especially, there's been escalation in domestic violence, and kids are subjected to that; kids witness those kinds of things. So having it in this legislation and clarifying it and making sure that—on page 5 of the bill—we act in the best interests of the child is a good thing.

The other piece I thought was interesting was that they included grandparents in the access to children. It wasn't

just a parent; grandparents could make an order for visitation to see the child, so that was good as well.

The other item I think that we need to address is making sure that when there is that mediation, and the member from Hamilton Mountain touched on it, one of the parties could be more aggressive, more intimidating, because that's what happens if there's family violence, domestic violence. Having supports around whoever that person is that is receiving that kind of behaviour needs to happen because then it tilts the balance of justice, it tilts the fairness. When we talk about family violence and we talk about mediation, if there's that family violence—and

oftentimes it's women—we want to make sure that there are those supports so that if mediation is an option, they get the representation that they deserve, and that they also have the supports behind them that allow them to continue to participate in that, to avoid those horrible court battles that can ensue and cause a lot of damage to families.

I see my time is up, Speaker, so I will sit down.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 5, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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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, Stephen Blais
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Catherine Fife, 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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford
John Fraser, 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