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Jeudi
8 octobre 2020

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 October 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 octobre 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers/Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER FOR PEOPLE,
SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020
POUR MIEUX SERVIR LA POPULATION
ET FACILITER LES AFFAIRES

Mr. Sarkaria moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 213, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking a regulation / Projet de loi 213, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau administratif qui pèse sur la population et les entreprises en édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et en abrogeant un règlement.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the associate minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'm happy to rise today to speak to second reading of the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. I'd also like to note that I will be sharing my time today with two of my colleagues, both the member for Scarborough Centre and the member for Willowdale. I also want to take an opportunity to thank them in advance for helping take this legislation through the House and speaking today on the lead-off.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by providing some context about the situation we find ourselves in. Our government recognizes the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on businesses and people across Ontario. That is why, since the onset of the pandemic, we have taken action to provide more clarity for businesses and support for people. We moved quickly to make \$10 billion in financial relief available. This includes \$6 billion in relief through an interest and penalty-free period for payments on most provincial taxes, \$1.8 billion in property tax deferrals for individuals and businesses and \$1.9 billion in relief by allowing employers to defer Workplace Safety and Insurance Board payments for up to six months.

We also made key regulatory updates to improve cash flow and help people and businesses adapt to the demands of physical distancing, and we are partnering with Ontario's manufacturing sector to help meet the challenges of the outbreak, including by helping businesses to retool to

produce PPE and market Ontario-made goods and services for a more self-sufficient recovery. The legislation that we're debating here today builds on this work.

The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020, will make government work better for people and smarter for businesses throughout this pandemic and beyond. Our government has made a made-in-Ontario plan for economic recovery, renewal and long-term growth. The plan starts with reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens, cutting costly red tape and digitizing processes to help more people and businesses recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic. The global crisis reinforces the urgency of our work, to streamline and modernize regulations—and to tackle persistent obstacles to growth and success. We're making regulations easier to understand and comply with, so people and businesses can focus on what really matters: regaining stability, creating good jobs and preparing for the opportunities of the future.

This new legislation sustains and strengthens our ongoing effort, since 2018, to reduce regulatory burdens in the province of Ontario. People and businesses need the government to ensure that the rules are not unnecessary barriers to economic recovery, innovation, growth and opportunity. This is something I know first-hand from my own family. I'm proud to be the son of small business owners. I understand what businesses mean to the people who run them. I understand how much these businesses mean to the wider communities they serve, to the economy they support and to all of us. And I understand that we need to do everything that we can to cut unnecessary red tape that holds back investments that create jobs, prosperity and opportunity to the province of Ontario.

That's why reducing regulatory burdens on hard-working job creators has been an important priority for our government. As the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, I see it as job number one to bring regulatory relief to everyday people and the businesses they rely on to get ahead.

Last October, I had the opportunity to introduce another piece of legislation, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019, which the Legislature passed in December. The act was the centrepiece of the government's fourth regulatory burden reduction package in 18 months, and it was a huge package. Along with the regulatory changes and announcements, it contained over 80 measures to reduce regulatory burdens and the cost of complying with regulatory requirements. Through that package, we took a wide variety of actions to spur jobs, growth and investment, and make it easier for people in their everyday lives.

Most of our government's work on regulatory burdens has been through packages like that one. But that's not the whole story, because this is an across-the-whole-of-government approach. Some of our most significant actions to reduce burdens have been part of broader packages that didn't have the red tape label. For example, the More Homes, More Choice Act, passed in June 2019, includes reforms to streamline, simplify and speed up development of industrial as well as housing projects, and changes to the Putting Drivers First plan in the 2019 budget include giving drivers the option of carrying proof of insurance on their smart phones instead of pink slips.

Now, through this new piece of legislation, we are building on our success in reducing burdens in economic sectors and communities across our province. If passed, this act will remove regulatory roadblocks to help get businesses thriving again so that they can create good jobs and opportunities for the people of Ontario. This act is the centrepiece of a package that also includes dozens of regulatory changes and announcements. Once again, we're bringing forward a significant package. In total, it consists of over 85 actions.

0910

Although we are focusing today on the legislative measures, I want to briefly mention some of the other actions we're taking. The first is Green Button, also known as Connect My Data. We're launching this smart phone app to give Ontarians a better understanding of their energy usage so they can save money. We are requiring gas and electricity distributors to provide people and businesses with their own real-time data on their energy usage so that they can cut costs; for example, by lowering their thermostat when they're not at home.

The second example concerns approvals for industrial projects. Ontario's approvals system is so complex that it's hard to predict whether a proposed project will get the permits, licences and other approvals it needs to go ahead. Now, we've asked a multi-ministry team to study our approval processes and recommend how to streamline them to make it more predictable. This would help make Ontario a more attractive place to invest and create jobs.

I want to add, also, something about this important work that we're doing. As part of our approvals process, we'll only consider making changes that maintain strong protections for public health, safety and the environment. This is true of all of our work through any regulatory changes that we put forward. In our efforts to streamline and modernize regulatory systems, we never lose sight of something fundamental: that these regulations are essential to the quality of life we enjoy here in Ontario.

We are not against regulation; we are against unnecessary regulation. Ontario families expect and deserve clean air and clean water. They expect and deserve safe products and safe working conditions. Regulations are there to ensure these very things. That is why, as we continue to work and make regulations effective, targeted and focused, we are maintaining and strengthening protections for public health, safety and the environment.

In fact, that's the first of the five principles that guide us in this area of work, and I'd like to share some of those

principles with the House. The first is to protect public health and safety and the environment. We're working to ease regulatory burdens in a smart and careful way to ensure that health, safety and the environment are maintained and enhanced.

The second principle is to prioritize the most important issues. We assess which regulations cost the most time and money, while looking for innovative ways to ensure that these rules are effective and efficient.

The third principle is to harmonize rules with the federal government and other provinces where we can. We're targeting duplicative red tape and aligning where possible with other jurisdictions in order to eliminate steps that cost job creators time and money.

The fourth principle is to listen to the people and businesses of Ontario. We want to hear directly from you about what we can do to remove red tape and create the right conditions for businesses and communities to prosper.

The fifth principle is to take a whole-of-government approach. We want to take a coordinated approach to make sure everyone is on the same red tape reduction page—a whole-of-government perspective to deliver smarter government for Ontario, with the economic growth to match it.

Now I'm going to focus on a couple of proposals that will make life easier for individual Ontarians through this piece of legislation. We want to prepare the people of this province for the better days that lay ahead after we get through—and during—this pandemic, because reducing regulatory burdens isn't only important to business; regulations also have a real-time impact on the people of Ontario in their everyday lives. Right across our province, you can see the positive impact of the steps we have taken to make regulations more flexible to help in response to the pandemic.

For example, we made it easier for restaurants and bars to open or extend a patio. You can see the difference this has made as people enjoy a meal on one of the thousands of new or expanded patios on sidewalks or curb lanes across Ontario.

Another example: We all remember the wave of panic buying in March and April that left grocery stores and pharmacies struggling to restock their shelves. We took action by allowing trucks to start making deliveries 24/7. You can see the difference this has made, as retailers have almost eliminated empty shelves, restoring people's confidence that they can buy the things their families rely on.

This new piece of legislation continues and enhances our work to make the lives of everyday people easier. This act includes proposals that would make a meaningful difference in their day-to-day lives—a difference for anyone who is buying a house or a condo, a difference for anyone who is enrolled at a private career college, a difference for anyone who relies on an intercommunity bus to get to a class or an appointment.

We're fine-tuning Ontario's regulatory processes to ensure they provide the protections they're meant to. We're updating rules written decades ago to ensure they

reflect the realities of 2020. And we're removing regulatory barriers to ensure people have access to an essential transportation service.

I want to take the House through some of the examples that would really make a tangible difference. I'll begin with an example of an action to ensure that regulations provide the protections for the people they're meant for—proposals that support our commitment to ensure consumer confidence during what for most people is the biggest purchase of their lifetime, a new home. Amendments to the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act would pave the way to establish a separate regulator of new home builders. These amendments would overhaul the Tarion Warranty Corp., which administers and enforces this act. These changes would strengthen consumer protections by focusing Tarion on new home buyers rather than builders. This focus would support higher-quality construction, which would reduce the number of defects and resulting warranty and protection claims, and it would better protect consumers from bad actors in the marketplace.

Next, I'll highlight an action that would protect communities by giving them more say when a water-bottling company proposes to build a new well or extract more water. Our review of Ontario's water-taking program found that takings for bottled water are managed effectively under the current framework. However, local municipalities made it clear they want a more direct say in the decisions to allow water bottling in their areas. This proposal would require bottlers to have the support of the host municipality before they could apply for a provincial permit for new or increased water-takings.

Now I'll highlight some examples of a regulatory process that we propose to update in order to reflect options that didn't exist when the regulations were written. This would modernize practices for child and spousal support payments by introducing new payment options. Currently, employers are required to deduct the amount that an employee owes from their pay and forward it to the Family Responsibility Office, or the FRO. This method reflected the payment options available in 1996, when the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act came into effect, but we now have reliable and automatic payment options, such as pre-authorized debit and online banking, which weren't readily available 24 years ago. This proposal would give the director the discretion to offer support payers new options like this to pay what they owe. This wouldn't mean that everyone would switch to one of these new payment options; instead, the FRO would only allow support payers to use different methods in appropriate cases, and it would monitor these cases consistently. In these cases, employers would be relieved of the administrative burden of deducting support payments from an employee's pay.

The next action I'll highlight would better ensure protection for students enrolled in private career colleges. It concerns government oversight of a fund that provides protection for students if a career college suddenly closes or loses its registration status. The Training Completion Assurance Fund, or TCAF, ensures that if this happens,

eligible students can complete their training at another institution or get a partial refund on their fees. This is a more flexible model, and it's widely used because it simplifies the process for selecting committee members. Adopting this model would ensure we continue to receive the advice in this important area, but in a more nimble manner.

0920

Now I would like to quickly walk through some of the actions that would benefit Ontarians who live in border towns, like near Manitoba or Quebec, and are treated by a doctor or nurse practitioner from one of these provinces. This proposal would turn a successful pilot launched in 2015 into a permanent regulatory practice. Under this pilot, health care professionals in Manitoba or Quebec with patients across the border in Ontario are designated as authorized prescribers under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program. This allows them to submit drug-approval requests under the program on behalf of their patients. Making this approach permanent would expand access for people in border towns to the medications they need.

The next action would address significant gaps in a vital transportation service: intercommunity buses. Buses are a lifeline for people in many communities, especially in rural and northern Ontario. They rely on the bus to get to a hospital, make a court date or attend a college or university class. But there are significant gaps in this service, and COVID-19 has widened these gaps as bus carriers have responded to decreased demand by reducing or disconnecting service on many routes.

We're proposing to address these gaps by deregulating the intercommunity bus services sector to allow new entrants to enter the market. This would create an open and competitive market that would support economic recovery. It would permit new carriers to offer improved services for residents in rural and northern communities. For example, they would be allowed to introduce innovation such as using smaller buses on routes where that would match lower demand for passengers. Deregulating the intercommunity bus sector would also benefit existing carriers by providing them with more regulatory flexibility as they continue to restart this service. It would give them the scope to retool their service offerings and respond to demand and their own financial capabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to highlight a couple of actions, some of the actions that this piece of legislation proposes to make it easier and better for the people of the province. Our government remains committed to making Ontario open for business, whether it was before this pandemic or during this pandemic. These regulatory modernization actions are in line with the unprecedented support this government has put forward for businesses and the people of this province.

Whether it was \$10 billion in immediate cash flow, whether it was investments like the Digital Main Street program, a \$57-million investment to help small businesses go digital, whether it was putting forward programs like CECRA, the commercial rent relief program that supported over 55,000 small businesses in this province,

our government remains committed to finding ways to support businesses and continue helping them as they get through this very difficult time.

I would now like to introduce the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, MPP Cho, who will take you through the rest of the legislation, along with the MPP from Scarborough Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I recognize the member from Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: It's a pleasure to rise in the House always, but particularly this morning, on the eve of Thanksgiving weekend. I want to take a moment to wish everyone a happy Thanksgiving, albeit a unique one this year, in 2020.

This morning's debate is hugely important, and this bill, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, comes at a critical moment. Over the past few months, I've heard calls for support for small businesses from members of all sides of this chamber, and I've heard heartbreaking stories of local businesses in Hamilton, Timmins, Ottawa and London struggling to survive. I've seen first-hand how this pandemic has affected businesses that call Willowdale home.

The members in the government benches have long known the importance of small business for the health and vibrancy of our communities, the prosperity of hard-working middle-class families, and the economic success of our province. That's why, since our election, we've fought, often against strong opposition from members across the aisle, to make it more affordable to do business in our province, less onerous to create good-paying jobs, and just a little bit easier to support a family the way my family did, by running a small business.

And so I'm glad that, finally, we all agree that supporting our entrepreneurs and mom-and-pop shops is a fight worth fighting. The question that remains, and the one I hope to litigate, in part, this morning, is how best governments can help them, not just during a time of crisis like the one we find ourselves in now but all the time.

However, before I begin, Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank my colleague and friend the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Having worked with him and toured several small businesses in my riding with him, I know first-hand how deeply he cares about small businesses across this province. This minister works with businesses. He sees them as partners, and he collaborates with them to deliver policies that will have the biggest impact on the ground. I know that's exactly what he has been busy with—over 100 consultations very recently. This is evidenced by those hours of consultation the minister has done across the province, not to mention the submissions that he and his team received through the Tackling the Barriers website our government launched in April. This has generated many of the ideas that would be implemented through the passage of this bill.

Speaker, I've spoken often in this House about the importance of small business, especially in my life. It has played a pivotal role in shaping who I am today and was the bedrock upon which my parents built a new life for

themselves and a future for me, my little sister and my little brother here in Ontario. I grew up in the back corner of my parents' little convenience store in Rexdale. I did my homework there, I played there and I watched them work seven days a week just to make ends meet. As I grew up, I remember distinctly, when I was 12, listening to my parents have long discussions and making the difficult decision to take out a second mortgage on their house and to take all their savings made from the convenience store to open a real estate brokerage in North York. And from a young age, that's exactly how I learned first-hand just how difficult it is to operate a small business, even during the best of economic times.

There can be no doubt that today small businesses are in crisis. And yet, even in this dark moment, facing a threat to their very existence, small businesses throughout the province have stepped up. Throughout the pandemic, many have provided essential services and supplies, putting themselves at risk to serve their communities. For some, stepping up has meant closing their doors to protect their customers and staff. For others, it has meant retooling to make masks, deliver groceries or provide meals to those in need.

Now, more than ever, these small businesses are counting on us to help them recover. Over the past seven months our government has provided \$11 billion to support small businesses. We provided relief on electricity rates, cut taxes by \$355 million for 57,000 employers through the employer health tax exemption, made it easier for businesses to get online through the \$57-million Digital Main Street program, and we helped them retool through the Ontario Together Fund.

We also worked with our partners in Ottawa to provide \$1 billion in rent relief through the Canada emergency rent relief program. I know our Minister of Finance even this morning was on the phone with Minister Freeland, talking about further supports, and we continue to collaborate with our partners in Ottawa. We call on them to fill gaps that exist for those businesses still struggling today, even with rent. We call on them, our partners in Ottawa, to have a tenant-led program—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Opposition members, come to order, please.

Mr. Stan Cho: —and we will continue to work with our federal counterparts in Ottawa to provide those outcomes for businesses here in Ontario.

That's all to say that our government recognizes there is certainly more that must be done. But one of the best ways we can help small businesses is to lift the cumbersome and outdated regulatory barriers that needlessly slow them down and cost them money. Small business owners know better than most that while direct support is needed in this hard time, these are their tax dollars, Speaker. These are their tax dollars that the government is spending. What they often need is for government simply to get out of the way. The Better For People, Smarter For Business Act is an important part of our government's plan to fix Ontario's broken regulatory framework.

0930

We also acted quickly through the pandemic to make temporary changes to rules and regulations, to be responsive, to adapt to the new normal that businesses, non-profits and our broader public services were facing. The actions that we've taken are helping people weather this pandemic and helping businesses stay in business.

As an example, Speaker, our government heard directly from restaurant owners and bars that allowing licensed establishments to sell alcohol with food orders for takeout and delivery would help them keep their doors open. And while this simple regulatory change has been mocked by members opposite, I've heard first-hand from restaurants like Nomé Izakaya in Willowdale or Sher-E-Punjab on the Danforth, and countless others across this province, that this simple change has made a world of difference to their bottom line. It's helped them keep the lights on, and it's helped them keep their staff employed.

That's not all, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from our agriculture sector—our grape growers in Prince Edward county and our wineries in Niagara—I've heard from our craft brewers in Hamilton and our cideries in Peterborough that this simple change has helped them stay afloat. My point is that removing red tape, while far from the only way to support job creators, can have a real impact. And better still, it means every dollar in direct support we provide goes further.

Speaker, to be clear, this government doesn't believe that all regulation is bad regulation. Certainly, the government has a role to play in looking out for employees, ensuring a fair and equitable market, protecting consumers, and safeguarding the health and safety of communities, to name a few. But the government also believes that regulation should only go as far as necessary; that we should put as little burden as possible on our businesses, especially small businesses; that we should make it as easy and as simple as possible to comply with that regulation; and that government has a responsibility to constantly review, assess and adapt regulation to ensure that it's both relevant and necessary.

That's why this government created a ministry dedicated to the reduction of red tape, and it's the reason why our government has enshrined, in law, seven core principles to reduce the regulatory burden on small business: to use industry standards or international best practices; to apply a small business lens; to go digital; to strengthen risk-based inspections; to create a tell-us-once culture; to focus on the user; and, finally, to focus regulations on desired outcomes. The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act has a number of red tape reduction measures and new, good regulations that follow and flow from these very principles.

While I don't have time to discuss them all, I do want to highlight two examples of measures I'm sure will receive support from all sides of this House and that I think illustrate the larger philosophy behind the kind of regulatory framework we envision for our province.

The first is a measure that, if passed, would create a single window for businesses to access information and

services from the government online. Anyone who has ever spent time on a government website knows that it leaves something to be desired, and I hear often from constituents, and businesses in particular, about how difficult, confusing and contradictory accessing forms, applying for government programs or simply trying to figure out what the rules are can be. Ontarians are used to fast, easy access to information online or through their apps. They're used to Amazon, Uber Eats, Google, Netflix, and that's only becoming truer during this pandemic. Businesses should expect the same ease of use when they access government information. You shouldn't need a degree in constitutional law to find out what regulations and rules apply to your business. I hear from businesses all the time that they want to do everything they can to comply with rules, but they just need to know and get a clear view on what those very rules are.

Providing that better customer service and a single window or one-stop shop for every interaction that a business has with government will make compliance easier, let businesses access programs and services to help them grow and, most importantly, leave business more time to do what they do best: run their business.

The other area of the bill I'd like to draw attention to this morning is a measure that, if passed, would change the way certain pensions are regulated in Ontario. Now, I admit that pension regulation is not an area of policy that I find particularly fascinating or one that I'm an expert in, but I don't want to highlight the specific regulatory change so much as the change in approach of the regulation. It's one that I really do think will demonstrate how government can do regulation differently. It also protects the public and the public interest while minimizing the burden on businesses by moving to a principles-based regulation.

The proposed amendments in this bill give the Financial Services Regulatory Authority, FSRA—the body that regulates, among other things, pension plans in Ontario—rule-making authority on prescribed technical aspects of regulating pensions. In short, our government is allowing the regulator not just to enforce the regulations, but to create certain rules it thinks are necessary to properly regulate this sector.

This is important for two reasons. First, it allows the experts—our regulators, who come with decades of technical expertise and experience working in the pension sector—to set the rules, instead of leaving it up to us politicians.

And two, it allows FSRA to adapt to changes quickly, since they can change their own rules without needing amendments in legislation. They can remove regulation when it becomes outdated or create rules as new situations, technologies, or problems emerge, without waiting, in some cases decades, for politicians to get around to amending the legislation.

This principles-based approach allows legislators to set the goals and expectations, what it is we all want to achieve by regulating this sector and business, and leave the decisions to the technical experts to write the rules to ensure that those goals are being met. Not only does it take

pressure off of the Legislature to review and amend outdated regulations, but it creates a culture of collaboration and co-operation between the regulator and the business they regulate. It's a less prescriptive approach, and it puts more trust in businesses but it still holds them accountable. Sometimes it won't matter how a business is complying with that regulation so long as they're meeting the expectations and the principles set out in that legislation.

I really do hope that this shift in philosophy continues as our government modernizes Ontario's outdated regulatory framework. It can be a competitive edge in a world that is only growing more difficult to compete in, and it can make a real difference in the lives of entrepreneurs, job creators and businesses big and small. And our small businesses deserve every advantage they can get.

We often focus on big businesses, companies that employ thousands, or sexy new start-ups in the tech space, and both are important for a vibrant economy here in Ontario. But if the pandemic has shown us anything, it's the importance of the businesses we pass in our communities every day: our barber, my local convenience store down the road—I saw the owner out this morning at 4:30, setting up to open—our favourite date-night restaurant in our neighbourhood. These are the businesses that make our communities whole.

Talking about restaurants, for example: Every dollar spent on a meal in a restaurant employs more people than in almost any other industry. Our main street businesses employ young people. They're often first-time jobs that provide valuable experience. My first job was at a Korean restaurant not too far from here, Mr. Speaker. I was a first-year university student, and I still remember the lessons I learned from that first experience fondly. These businesses are often owned by new Canadian families like mine, and they help set future generations up for incredible success in the greatest place to grow in the world.

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It was very touching, Mr. Speaker, during our budget consultations, when I was in Guelph to visit the very first convenience store that my dad worked in, for minimum wage, and to see now a new Afghani family with the same story as ours—new to Canada, three young kids—providing a better life for the future, thanks to those local businesses. That is worth fighting for. Their success powers our economy. It generates the revenue that funds our schools and hospitals, that builds our highways and subways. Our government will continue to stand by small business, just as we have since our first day in office. We're going to provide that direct support, reduce that red tape and make it just a little bit easier to do business here in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

I've told this story many times in this Legislature—I tell it proudly, and it's not the last time you're going to hear it, either: My dad, when he moved to this country from South Korea in 1970, had little more than the clothes on his back. His first job wasn't at that convenience store; it was going out in the middle of the night to sell earthworms as fishing bait. Today, his company, before he

retired, employed 200 people throughout the greater Toronto area. That's 200 families, Mr. Speaker. And that really embodies the Ontario spirit we always speak about, that in this country, in this province, with hard work, you can go from selling earthworms as fishing bait to owning a successful business.

That is the dream that we are fighting to keep alive today, and this legislation will help to keep that dream alive here in the great province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): When the minister started off the debate, he said he would be sharing his time with the member from Willowdale and the member from Scarborough Centre, so we turn to the member from Scarborough Centre.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: I'm excited to stand before the House today to give my support to Minister Sarkaria's Better for People, Smarter for Business Act.

Let's face it: Despite everybody's best efforts, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant damage to our national, provincial and local economies. We all know about restaurants, bars, salons, medical practices and other businesses that have been forced to close their doors temporarily. We know the hardship that this has caused, the worry, the sleepless nights and the no-doubt very dark thoughts about the future. We also know that some businesses have very unfortunately already closed their doors permanently. We know of employees who have lost their jobs and are struggling to pay the bills. These are incredibly difficult circumstances for many Ontarians.

This being said, our government is also very aware of the challenges of kick-starting our economy and preventing further business closures, and our government can point to fast and decisive action. We created a financial relief fund, making \$10 billion available to help Ontario businesses. Part of that fund includes \$6 billion in provincial tax and interest relief, \$1.8 billion in property tax deferrals and \$1.9 billion in WSIB payment deferrals. This was an excellent way to help ease the burden on businesses, help them keep the lights on and financially survive the pandemic.

When our government took office, we did so with a mandate to reduce financial waste and to adopt a prudent approach to financial and fiscal affairs. Indeed, this philosophy was the rationale for the creation of the Ministry of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Anybody who has ever run or worked within a small business is painfully aware of the constraints of red tape and bureaucracy. They say in business that time is money. This is true, and by extension, it makes sense that small business owners are far better off spending their time on things that improve their businesses rather than carrying out endless administrative tasks.

Speaker, one of the reasons I am in favour of this bill is it essentially works in two ways. It works as a response to the economic damage caused by COVID-19, but it would also work if we had never encountered COVID-19. However, as we are currently working with COVID, there really isn't a better time to introduce this bill.

Minister Sarkaria's bill will help businesses that are struggling as a consequence of COVID-19 by reducing

regulatory burden and removing unnecessary processes. It will also help rebuild companies that have been hit particularly hard and get people working again sooner rather than later.

What's more, if passed, this legislation will have a positive impact on businesses of the future here in Ontario as well. It will create an impetus for the future drivers of Ontario's economy to get off the ground quickly.

Speaker, this is a sweeping bill that will bring about clear rules and guidelines for businesses and institutions while maintaining focus on reducing overall regulatory burdens. I cannot help but feel a strong sense of déjà vu today, however, because it was in this House just last week that I stood to support Attorney General Downey's bill on family law. That bill aims to streamline the family law system and make it easier to navigate; and here today, we see Minister Sarkaria's bill and his efforts to make the same positive changes—in this case, for Ontario's businesses, companies, employees, and Ontarians generally.

This bill stands as a testament to this government's coherent approach to reducing red tape and making life easier for all Ontarians. This new legislation will help strengthen our economic recovery, help businesses and governments better adapt to emerging trends and changes in the marketplace, and create the conditions for investment and prosperity over the long term.

More specifically, this act will do this in three ways:

—it cuts costly red tape to boost our recovery by helping businesses increase their cash flow, invest in safety measures and, most importantly, rebuild;

—it reduces unnecessary and redundant requirements for businesses, to save time and streamline how government works, in turn supporting business and government transformation; and

—it modernizes regulation to increase innovation and prepares people and businesses for the opportunities of the future, promoting investment and growth right here in Ontario.

If I may, I'll take the House through some of our proposals to reduce regulatory burdens on our businesses, along with some concrete examples of how these proposals will bring about positive change. The proposals in our legislation would make a tangible difference for businesses in many spheres of our economy, including changes to regulations that affect the aquaculture and mining exploration sectors, real estate transactions, redevelopment of brownfield sites and decision-making at business corporations.

I'll begin by telling you about a change that would take the first steps toward the launching of a digital delivery system to provide environmental information on properties. Land developers use environmental information to help inform their decisions, for example, on real estate transactions and projects to redevelop brownfield sites. However, the current system requires public servants to gather paper-based information stored in a wide array of various physical sites. This manual process typically takes anywhere from two weeks to a few months to complete, and it is clearly and very needlessly cumbersome.

By moving property information requests online, we would reduce turnaround time by up to 20 days. By doing so, we would reduce delays for property developers and the real estate sector, which would allow them to make faster and better-informed decisions to support property transactions here in our province. What's more, this would also help us move away from paper-based processes generally as part of our Digital First strategy.

Across the government, we're working to deliver services more efficiently, improve the user experience and provide very timely responses. For example, we want to make it easier to sell excess soil from construction projects for gardening in addition to avoiding delays for infrastructure projects. This next proposal would increase regulatory flexibility for construction projects to develop brownfields or build infrastructure. It would do this by amending what's known as the RSC regulation. This initialism stands for "record of site condition" and is a summary of the environmental condition of a property.

Our amendments would create standard rules for processing excess soil from construction sites for resale as a gardening project. Implementing this rule would help put vacant lands back into good use, and it would support our efforts to ensure that excess soil is managed according to its quality and potential for reuse. It would also reduce the cost for managing and transporting excess soil, reduce the amount of soil being sent to landfill, lower our greenhouse gas emissions and maintain strong protection of our health and of the environment.

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Other amendments to the RSC regulation would extend grandfathering provisions for infrastructure projects. This would mean businesses with projects that run into delays due to COVID-19 will not have to repeat technical assessments that they have already completed. This is applicable in a number of areas, such as speeding up regulatory approvals for the aquaculture sector.

A more flexible regulatory framework is essential for our province's growing aquaculture industry. The current framework does not address the diversity of aquaculture operations across Ontario or the varied risk associated with them for that matter. For instance, regulations on which fish species can be cultured must currently go to cabinet for approval. We are proposing to move this authority to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. We expect that this would reduce the time it takes to approve the cultivation of additional species by three to four months while maintaining oversight by the ministry. Speeding up approval times would allow aquaculture facilities to diversify and grow their businesses more quickly, and of course we all know that having this go to a specialized ministry to deal with it is best.

This next proposal would reduce regulatory burdens in the mining sector by streamlining the Mining Act and making it more consistent. For example, when a claim holder makes a request to be part of a lease application, occasionally small gaps of land are identified. These proposals would be simplifying what can be quite a laborious process for including these gap lands when a lease is issued.

Another improvement is our proposal that would support our Digital First strategy again by allowing lessees to apply online to have their lease renewed, and yet another way this bill helps the mining sector is by providing stability to miners and mining companies. Due to the pandemic, some claims holders are facing automatic forfeiture of their claims for failing to meet their obligation to perform and report on assessment work or to make payments on time to keep their claim in good standing. The following proposal would give the government more flexibility in a crisis to act quickly, to provide stability to mineral claim holders who have become concerned about their claims due to an emergency.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Northern Development has the authority to annul a forfeiture, but not for boundary claims in specific circumstances. This proposal would allow the minister to make blanket exclusions and extensions for assessment work. This would give claim holders some breathing room in the event of another crisis—heaven forbid—helping to stabilize this critical sector and save jobs within it.

To get even more granular, think for a moment about the Côté Gold development in the Ring of Fire mining district, which had its groundbreaking ceremony just four weeks ago. The CEO of IAMGOLD, Gordon Stothart, said the following to the press during the event:

“The permitting processes are there for a reason. Yes, we understand things need to be done and things need to be checked and validated by the cold second eye, if you will, and we’re happy to do that. But sometimes bureaucracy will catch up with itself and things don’t move forward if there isn’t some impetus...”

That sounds eerily familiar to situations we have seen develop in other jurisdictions in Canada. We cannot allow that to happen here in Ontario. We are called the Progressive Conservatives for a reason. We are not called the “wait-and-see” Conservatives. Progress means progress along all avenues, including getting shovels in the ground, speeding up processes and removing unnecessary obstacles. What’s more, with this bill, we’ll be able to protect the jobs associated with this and other projects in the area with the above-mentioned proposals.

Another area plagued by regulatory overreach is land development as it pertains to the creation of subdivisions. The next proposal I’ll highlight relates to housekeeping amendments to provisions in the Planning Act about what is known as subdivision control. Very quickly, Speaker, these provisions ensure proper government oversight when land is divided into subdivisions. The government evaluates a proposal to create a parcel of land to ensure it adheres to land use planning principles, and in doing so, it addresses any long-term impacts from creating that parcel of land.

While these provisions are vital, they can be overly complex, as I have learned. These technical amendments would help make the subdivision control provisions in the Planning Act clearer and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens on everyone.

Again, we see similar burdens of administration when it comes to getting forfeited land back into productive use

sooner. The next action incorporates and applies the knowledge gained by public servants in administering legislation on forfeited corporate properties to improve the system. When the Forfeited Corporate Property Act came into effect in 2016, it consolidated the management of these properties with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. This year, the ministry completed a review of 332 files on forfeited properties over the first three years under this act and identified ways to improve the regulatory process associated with it.

Our proposed amendments to the act would reduce burdens on people, businesses and the government. They would also remove duplication and clarify requirements to make it easier for both consumers and businesses to seek relief from forfeiture or to buy a forfeited property. Not only this, but these proposals would give the ministry new tools to manage and dispose of these properties more quickly and efficiently when needed. In doing so, forfeited corporate properties can then be put back into productive use efficiently, which would in turn support revived businesses and protect businesses that are legitimately operating on forfeited property.

Speaker, this bill contains an incredible amount of sensible, actionable changes that will benefit Ontarians, their businesses, employees, customers and our government. I want to brief you on one final example before I make my closing remarks.

If passed, this bill would also make it easier for shareholders in private business corporations to make decisions. The next proposal would allow privately held businesses to make decisions requiring shareholder approval through an ordinary resolution faster and more cost-effectively. Our amendments would apply to written shareholder resolutions to approve certain types of corporate actions, such as adopting new bylaws, appointing an auditor or electing directors. Currently, companies must spend time and money obtaining signatures from every voting shareholder. Some of these resolutions fail because companies just can’t collect the signatures within the timeline required under the Business Corporations Act, not because shareholders are opposed in any way.

We are proposing to align with the practice in BC, the Yukon and Delaware by lowering the approval threshold from unanimous to a majority of stakeholders. This would not apply to special resolutions, which are typically for significant corporate decisions such as amalgamations, so that stays as it is. We are proposing to align our practice with jurisdictions that are often cited as being attractive for corporations. This would allow these businesses to make certain types of decisions more quickly so that they could capitalize on emerging opportunities and avoid missing out on opportunities due to a burdensome approval process. This would help strengthen a pro-investment business environment in Ontario that would help create good jobs and attract new businesses.

My colleagues and I have gone into detail about a number of proposals in the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. We have done this to give the House a sense of the scale of our government’s ongoing efforts to reduce

regulatory burdens. We are working to drive economic recovery by removing regulatory roadblocks so that businesses can once again thrive and create good-paying jobs. These actions will support businesses on the ground as we work with them to overcome challenges that they and we have never faced before. And they will deliver clear and effective rules that will protect public health and safety and the environment, without sacrificing innovation, growth and opportunity.

Personally speaking, I don't believe that it's necessary to sacrifice the environment to benefit from its resources. Ontario is a beautiful place in which to live. I am confident that this Progressive Conservative government will continue to be caring custodians of our environment while allowing for the responsible harvesting of resources that we need to flourish as a province.

As I reviewed this bill and its many proposals, my mind kept coming back to the constituency that I represent: Scarborough Centre. During this pandemic, my team and I have received hundreds of calls and emails from concerned constituents, whether concerned about their jobs or concerned about their businesses. We have held round table talks with businesses and community stakeholders, and we have visited a variety of companies to see how they are doing, to see what they needed or to find out simply how we can help. Indeed, I was joined by Minister Sarkaria on occasion during these discussions and tours, and Premier Ford has also visited Scarborough Centre, as has Minister Phillips.

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Minister Sarkaria and I visited larger local businesses like Cosmetics and Baskits, and smaller success stories like Mad Mexican—which has the best guacamole in town—and Nova Ristorante, which is helping the community even as they have struggled. Premier Doug Ford visited Toronto Stamp in my riding, and Surati sweets and JXY Dumpling in the broader Scarborough area; Minister Phillips and I visited ICP Defense. There are common pivots among all of these businesses. They have all pivoted to produce things that are helping Ontarians during this unprecedented time.

There are common concerns among all of these amazing and resilient people. I say “people” because this is what businesses are made up of: people. I feel that sometimes the opposition loses sight of this, and the red tape and needless bureaucracy in our province make this confusion possible. By doing away with this overly prescriptive approach, we help everyone see the people behind the businesses—and the work that they are doing to help their fellow Ontarians—more easily.

Our government has actively reached out to businesses in a variety of ways, with the hope of understanding the impact of COVID-19 on them and developing plans to assist them in tangible ways. What was very interesting to note during these discussions is that while there were obvious concerns about COVID-19 and how businesses would survive this, there were likewise discussions about businesses generally and the often complex bureaucracy that goes along with owning one.

We heard from owners of nail salons, car dealerships, fast food restaurants, gift stores, cosmetics companies, dance studios and many more in my riding of Scarborough Centre. Almost all complained about the red tape. Almost all complained about a lack of transparency, a lack of reasoning and a lack of an intuitive process. We have to get Ontario moving in the right direction and we have to get it moving quickly. Owning a business is hard enough without the government continually getting in your way.

Of course, I feel it needs to be stated that the previous administration thrived on such bureaucracy and did absolutely nothing to help businesses streamline processes. Not only this, but the previous government went on a spending spree, wasting billions of dollars of taxpayer money on pet projects and spectacular boondoggles, such as the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants. That debacle cost the Ontario taxpayer over a billion dollars. And what did we get for our money? Nothing, zero, zilch—unless, of course, you count the largest sub-sovereign debt on the planet or the downgrading of our credit as getting something positive out of it. Speaker, you will not see that from this government, nor will you see this government funnelling money to unions, nor will you see us having a spiraling debt that goes unchecked, nor will you see wholesale losses of very important manufacturing jobs.

When it comes to the economy, our mandate is clear: Make sensible spending choices that benefit all Ontarians. Make Ontario an attractive destination for overseas business. Get consistent inward investment that will create good-paying jobs. Improve conditions for Canadian and Ontarian companies to grow and thrive right here in Ontario. And a big part of how you do all of this is by creating the kind of legislation that we see before us today—legislation that is focused on stripping away the unnecessary, speeding up the slow and adding only what is necessary to create even more efficient processes. Put more simply, we are creating the conditions for overall growth here in Ontario.

I wish to extend my congratulations—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. Thank you. The time for the government debate has expired on this bill. It is now time for questions and responses.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, my question, through you to the government: The government's response to the pandemic can be characterized by a simple term, “Too little, too late.” They have done too little, too late when it comes to preparing our schools for our kids to go back; too little, too late building up capacity for testing; and now too little, too late helping small business.

My question, through you, Speaker, is: Doesn't the government think that they would be better prepared for the second wave if they had spent the summer preparing for the second wave, instead of going out campaigning and nominating candidates for an early election?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I return to the minister for a response.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I absolutely reject the premise of that question. Here are the actual facts: At

the onset of this pandemic, this government put forward \$10 billion of direct support to help businesses with their cash flow. We have invested in programs like Digital Main Street to help businesses pivot—\$2,500 grants—because we know how important e-commerce is because of the pandemic. We've put forward up to \$1 billion by working with our federal partners in the commercial emergency rent relief program that helped support over 55,000 businesses in the province of Ontario and helped almost 500,000-plus employees. We have invested money, just as of this past day, to support the costs of PPE that businesses have incurred.

Our government will continue to listen to businesses. We will continue to support them and ensure they continue to get the supports they need.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to read a letter that I got: "Hi Wayne,

"Just wanted to see if you can get some answers for us on insurance. These people are robbing us during the worse time in history. We are running at 45% capacity and limited hours. Yet they still charge us 100% of the rates. They didn't give us a refund when we were forced to close completely last spring. Now they want to kick us again while we're down. My own experience is this. Last year was \$6,500" for rates. "This year, it's \$12,400 with little coverage for a joint that's empty. Not sure too many of us are going to survive this bullshit"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. The member for Niagara Falls will stand and withdraw his use of unparliamentary language.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I withdraw.

"What is your government doing to stop insurance companies from gouging small and medium-sized businesses?"

I want to make sure you know that that was a quote from a small business, not necessarily what I would say.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Since the onset of this pandemic, we have been hosting consultations with small business owners. I've personally attended over 100 consultations where issues like insurance have come forward.

Our government continues to work with our businesses, work with stakeholders to ensure that businesses get the supports they need, whether it was \$10 billion of initial cash flow support for businesses at the onset of the pandemic, whether it was electricity rate relief to the tune of \$175 million for small businesses, whether it was investing in programs like Digital Main Street, the \$2,500 grants that are going help almost 23,000 small businesses in the program.

We need to continue to support small businesses. We need to continue to hold those consultations and work on issues, like the member has pointed out, like insurance, that impact so many. I'm proud of the work that both PA Stan Cho and the Minister of Finance have been doing to address these concerns, and we continue to look for solutions going forward.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I want to thank the Associate Minister for Small Business and Red Tape Reduction for bringing the bill forward. I know that this must be an awkwardly difficult session for the NDP to participate in, because anything that talks about small business, supporting small business and reducing red tape runs counter to the NDP philosophy of big government, big taxes and overregulation. I suspect that's why you get nonsensical questions about nominations in what is a very important debate.

I wonder if the member would talk a little bit about—when we brought forward a budget that reduced small business taxes to 9%, the opposition was dead set against that. The NDP were dead set against that. What would be the consequences of raising taxes and raising regulations on the people and the small businesses of the province of Ontario, should an NDP government ever come to office?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: That's a great question. Let's highlight the record of the NDP on small businesses. They voted against a 9% decrease on small businesses. One of the first actions we undertook when coming into government was to stop \$300 million of tax increases on small businesses. The members opposite voted against that. We put forward an accelerated capital cost allowance to the tune of \$2 billion to help support businesses. The members opposite voted against that. We put forward WSIB premium deductions to the tune of \$1.9 billion. The members opposite voted against that, Mr. Speaker. Their record is abysmal when it comes to supporting small businesses.

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This government has always supported small businesses. Since being in government, we have provided over \$331 million of relief just through our focus on regulatory modernization. Whether it's before the pandemic, during this pandemic—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Further questions?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Why is this government hell-bent on not providing provincial direct funding to our small businesses across Ontario? Businesses like Pure Vibes Barber Shop in Little Jamaica had to shut down because this government has done jack-all for small businesses across Ontario. We put forth the Save Main Street plan—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. My ruling is to withdraw the unparliamentary language.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Which one, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): You should withdraw them all.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Toronto—St. Paul's has 10 seconds to pose her question.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Bottom line, this government did not implement our NDP Save Main Street plan back in April,

which would have saved our businesses throughout this entire mess. Why did you not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

The minister will respond.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'd like to take the opportunity to highlight some of our direct supports for small businesses, like investing in the CECRA program, \$241 million, along with our federal partners; \$1 billion in direct supports—over 55,000 businesses were able to receive that support.

Let's talk about the Digital Main Street program: \$2,500 grants to support over 23,000 businesses in this province—direct supports to small businesses. Let's talk about the electricity rate relief, \$175 million of relief for small businesses and people in the province.

Yesterday, we announced a \$1,000 PPE grant for the businesses hardest hit, who have gone above and beyond to support their customers and their employees. We continue to host conversations, round tables with these business owners because we support them. Whether it's before the pandemic, during the pandemic, small businesses are so critical—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

The next question.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I want to thank the minister for that, especially for highlighting some of the tax reductions that were so important to small businesses. He did highlight the fact that, of course, the NDP voted against those tax reductions.

I wonder if he might also talk about the first red tape reduction bill that he introduced, which was very important to small business. It won acclaim from small business groups across the province of Ontario. He's shown leadership not only in Ontario, but across the country, in red tape reduction, which is good for small businesses, which is good for small communities, which is good for main streets. I wonder if he would talk about that and how the NDP voted on that.

I wonder if he might comment on this magical, mystery bill that apparently the NDP have before the House about main streets. I'm not sure how you can vote on something when there is not a bill on the table from the NDP on main streets.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I echo the sentiments from that question. It has been absolutely ridiculous to see that the members opposite have voted against everything this government has done to support small businesses. When we talk about the previous red tape piece of legislation, the members opposite voted against those in agriculture, voted against measures that would support the logistics in the trucking industry, would support the smallest businesses in our community. Everything the members have done, whether it's voting against tax cuts to small businesses, has gone contrary to what small business owners—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member for Toronto—St. Paul's referenced a bill that was before the House with respect to the NDP's proposals on main streets. I wonder if she might table that for us.

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

The time for debate in this portion has expired.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jill Andrew: Our Toronto—St. Paul's needs safe and frequent public transit, not less. Instead, this government is threatening to cut four bus lines—5 Avenue Rd, 33 Forest Hill, 14 Glencairn and 142 Avenue Rd Express—used by many in my riding, including seniors, students, child caregivers, essential workers and disabled residents trying to get from point A to B safely during a pandemic.

I thank community members like Matt, who volunteers with TTCriders, placing signs to save our bus routes all across our neighbourhood; Jerri, an aging adult; and Carla and Anthony, who I recently met near Oriole Park, for sharing their grave concerns about losing these bus routes. Speaker, contrary to popular belief, not everyone on Avenue Road or in Forest Hill is "pushin' a Bentley."

Ontario's largest transit agency, the TTC, is projecting a \$700-million budget shortfall by the end of 2020. It is time for the Premier and his Conservative government to step up and address our public transit funding crisis and permanently invest in transit operating costs so that we can have more buses and more drivers in St. Paul's. We need to be able to practise social distancing safely when we board our buses to keep ourselves and others safe.

This Premier's priority should be improving public transit, not increasing the salary of wealthy CEOs like Metrolinx CEO Phil Verster by 35% while my constituents can't board a safe bus.

ROTARY PARK

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: One thing we've learned in the current context of COVID-19 is the importance of places for outdoor recreation. While my riding of Niagara West is best known for its parks and its trails, I was happy to also join local municipal leaders, volunteers and residents this past Saturday for the grand opening of Rotary Park in Beamsville.

The new park features a skate park and a pump track—the first pump track in Niagara—that are sure to provide hours of recreation and physical activity for the growing number of young families and youth in the green space near the Fleming Centre, in the heart of Beamsville. The

park provides an outdoor complement to the indoor track, arena and library next door.

Public consultation for the project, facilitated by the town of Lincoln, began in 2018, and it confirmed the widespread support for the park that I have been hearing. I want to thank the Rotary Club of Lincoln, the Lincoln Uptown Skateboard Park Association and the town of Lincoln for all their work to build the park.

Of the many sponsors and community drivers of this unique project, I would also like to acknowledge Reverend Walter Mittler, who was the inspiration for the skate park; as well as Sue Foster, the past president of the Rotary Club of Lincoln; and local skateboard and cycling enthusiasts Trevor Donegan, Adrian Pennachetti and Nik Halkias.

On your 50th anniversary of incorporation, congratulations to the town of Lincoln on your new skate park and pump track.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: Ontarians are watching with horror as COVID makes its way back into our long-term-care sector. Fairview Nursing Home, in my riding of Davenport, has the largest outbreak in Ontario right now, with 50 residents—about half of the patients—and 22 staff infected, and at least two tragic deaths. My thoughts are with their families and everybody who cared for them.

For essential caregivers—those family members who support their loved ones every single day—there are real concerns that a lack of access to testing will keep them from providing that care or is going to shut them out altogether.

My constituent Mary Oko is an essential caregiver for her mother, Wanda, at a Copernicus Lodge and has struggled with long waits at assessment centres. Today, she finds herself on an endless waiting list to get into a pharmacy for a scheduled appointment.

Irene Gabinet's mother is also a long-term-care resident, and Irene is her essential caregiver. She's experiencing the same challenges.

Irene and Mary have a simple suggestion: Let's move asymptomatic essential caregiver testing into the long-term-care homes, where regular testing of staff and residents is already happening. Mr. Speaker, this is already under way in the Glebe home in Ottawa. I call on the government to act now: Prioritize the testing of our essential caregivers and do whatever it takes to ensure our elders get the supports and care they deserve and so greatly need.

THANKSGIVING ACTION DE GRÂCE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: With roots in Indigenous celebrations, celebrating Thanksgiving long predates the arrival of settlers in North America and can look very different all across the country. This weekend, Thanksgiving celebrations will look even more different than usual.

Given the rise of cases of COVID-19 in Ontario, it is safest for all of us to restrict our festivities to our immediate family. I want to thank Ontarians for putting safety above all and doing their part in fighting this pandemic. Regardless of how we celebrate, giving thanks is especially appropriate right now.

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Pour ceux d'entre nous qui pourront prendre plaisir à partager un festin avec notre famille immédiate, soyons reconnaissants de notre chance. Bon nombre des membres plus démunis de nos communautés ont du mal à mettre de la nourriture sur la table et doivent dépendre des banques alimentaires. L'impact dévastateur de la COVID-19 sur le système des banques alimentaires a rendu les choses encore plus difficiles pour ces personnes et ces familles. Personne ne devrait souffrir d'insécurité alimentaire dans cette province.

Let us take this Thanksgiving to reflect on what we, as MPPs, can do better to support the people in our communities that are in need. Happy Thanksgiving to all who will be celebrating this weekend.

MUSICIANS FROM CHATHAM-KENT-LEAMINGTON

Mr. Rick Nicholls: As a lover of various music genres, I know Chatham-Kent has been home to many aspiring artists. I remember back in the early 1970s the success that Ian and Sylvia Tyson had as Canadian folk and country music singers. Their greatest hit was *Four Strong Winds* and in 1992 they were inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame.

Another Chatham artist who had a successful career in the country music field was Michelle Wright. She is one of the country's most widely recognized and awarded female country singers of the 1990s. She was inducted into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame in 2011.

But Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't mention yet another young and talented female artist from Chatham. This young lady started singing in church at an early age and continued to pursue her dreams. Now she is a Canadian worship leader and songwriter. She has been named female vocalist of the year by the Canadian Gospel Music Association for three straight years. In 2020, her latest album, *Pursue*, with the hit song *The Darkness Doesn't Scare Me* and her album's title track, *Pursue*, resulted in her being a 2020 Juno nominee. She's married to a highly talented and accomplished music producer, Steven Lensink.

Speaker, I've known this young woman her entire life. Like all of us, she has enjoyed the good times but has persevered through the dark times, relying on her faith to help her get through. This beautifully talented and hard-working woman is my daughter, Brooke Rebecca Nicholls.

Oh, by the way, Speaker, she and her husband are expecting their first child in February.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Congratulations.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: It's Thanksgiving weekend coming up. Thanksgiving is traditionally a time when families come together and celebrate. This will be a much different Thanksgiving and I hope that everyone will act responsibly and protect themselves and protect others. But there's one thing that isn't different this Thanksgiving than any other: The food on the table will be brought to you by the agricultural sector, by all the people.

The week before Thanksgiving is Ontario Agriculture Week, a week when we celebrate the agriculture sector. We all talk about farmers being hard-working, and they are. They're incredible people. But they're part of a whole chain, and we have to remember the whole chain. We have to remember people like the vets, who show up at 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the morning if there is a cow that has to have a calf and the farmer can't do it all by himself or herself. We have to remember the mechanics, who sometimes show up at night to do something. And this year, we have to remember the migrant worker, who picked the vegetable that's on your table.

Give thanks; give thanks to them all.

OXI DAY

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: I would like today to commemorate Oxi Day, which is celebrated around the world on October 28 each year. We will not hold a parade on the Danforth this year, but this does not make this day any less significant.

Oxi Day commemorates the rejection by Greek Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas of the ultimatum made by the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini on October 28 in 1940. We were up against a mighty enemy, but we were brave. We stood on that day virtually alone in the world against the seemingly unstoppable Axis forces.

President Roosevelt said, "When the entire world had lost hope, the Greek people dared to question the invincibility of the German monster, raising against it the proud spirit of freedom."

Churchill said, "Let us not say that Greeks fight like heroes, but that heroes fight like Greeks."

Greece's victory over Mussolini changed the fate of the world. I am so proud to be a Greek Canadian and to call this my heritage. Greeks will always stand against tyranny. We will always stand for freedom and we will always stand for true democracy. Democracy and freedom are always frail, but Greece's history as a force for them assures me that they will always persist and that Greeks all over the world will always fight for them.

We will always say no—[remarks in Greek]—to those who challenge freedom, and as a proud member of the Greek diaspora, I am so proud to be raising my own little Greek Canadian warriors for democracy. Thank you.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Sara Singh: Housing is a human right, not only here in the province of Ontario, but across the world. But

unfortunately, in many communities we are seeing an increasing rate of homelessness and the pandemic has simply made that worse.

In Peel and the city of Brampton, we see our numbers increasing and people being forced into unsafe and illegal housing options. Where is the relief, Speaker? Where is the relief for tenants and small-to-medium landlords? They have been asking this government for support to assist in the underlying issues that they are facing.

I have spoken with many tenants who have shared with me harrowing stories about the reality of the housing that they are subjected to. One tenant shared with me that bedbugs are dropping from the ceiling into his bed and onto his clothes. Another tenant shared with me that roaches are entering the food that they make for their family and their children.

Speaker, it's really unfortunate that in a province as rich as ours, Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to invest in housing to ensure that people have adequate options and a safe place to call home. I'm urging this government to think about what we need to do to make sure that everyone has access to a safe and affordable place to rest their head at night. Think about options like rent relief and a rent bank, because it's not just tenants; landlords also need support, and this government has failed to step up and support anybody.

360°KIDS

Mr. Billy Pang: 360°kids is a non-profit organization that has served the vulnerable youth of York region for over 30 years. I had the opportunity to attend an event organized by 360°kids, where I had the experience of spending a snowy night overnight on the street and connecting with youth and adults who were without a home. The event was an eye-opening experience for me, and the programs and services 360°kids offer are changing and impacting lives every day.

Last week I was delighted to join 360°kids as the organization, in partnership with Markham Inter-Church Committee for Affordable Housing and with funding from our government's Ontario Trillium Foundation Grow grant, announced permanent housing for two bright youths in their newly constructed apartments.

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Touring these units after, and seeing how they are appropriately furnished and equipped, I am proud of 360°kids' efforts in making these youths feel welcomed, safe and comfortable in a place they can call home. The Ontario Trillium Foundation's Grow grant will support the organization's Transitions housing program, which aims to provide basic needs and more stable housing options and guidance for vulnerable youth between 16 and 29.

I want to thank 360°kids for the vital role this organization plays in Markham–Unionville and surrounding communities.

BETHESDA HOUSE

Ms. Lindsey Park: I rise to recognize the 25th anniversary of Bethesda House, a local shelter for women fleeing violence in my riding of Durham.

In 1995, with the support of the St. Vincent de Paul society and donations from the Clarington community—and I might add, support from the former MPP for Durham, John O’Toole—a small shelter for women fleeing violence opened its doors in Bowmanville.

The original intent of Bethesda House was to support victims of domestic violence. However, over the years they have grown into an agency providing a wide range of services and supports to women, youth and children who are dealing with all types of gender-based violence, including but not limited to domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, familial abuse, cultural violence and human trafficking.

Speaker, we recognize that during the pandemic, when public health officials have been encouraging Ontarians to stay home, home is not a safe place for everyone. I want to thank Bethesda House for continuing to be there for women facing violence during this time of crisis. They have continued to provide their essential services and support, and their trained counsellors have been taking calls around the clock.

Speaker, I had the chance to visit Second Chance this past weekend, Bethesda House’s new and gently used clothing store, and hear the story of how it began 25 years ago, starting as a small room in the shelter to help meet the practical needs of the women they serve and that’s now on the main street of Bowmanville.

I want to congratulate everyone who has been involved, including executive director Jaki MacKinnon and her whole team.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question this morning is for the Premier. Yesterday, Toronto’s medical officer of health released detailed modelling which showed that without action from the Ford government, there could be more than 30,000 new cases of COVID-19 infections over the coming months, with a peak that won’t arrive until the spring.

Today, we have almost 800 new cases of COVID-19. The Premier said he wants to see the evidence before he acts. Has he seen enough yet?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: We have been following the numbers very carefully as well, and there are some hot spots, as we all know, in Toronto, in Peel and in Ottawa. We already have taken some steps to try and flatten the curve. The problem with what has been done is the backlog. What’s happening and the numbers that we’re seeing now are a result of infections that happened a week to 10 days ago.

We have taken steps to make sure that unmonitored groups don’t come together, that we are dealing with bars and restaurants—only six people at a table and making sure that they close earlier. We are taking steps and monitoring this.

We have received our own modelling and we are considering what needs to be done in conjunction, I would say, with Dr. de Villa. Dr. Williams is in contact with her on daily basis and we are monitoring the situation very carefully.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, if those numbers are from a week ago, who knows what the numbers really are today? That is cold comfort from the Minister of Health.

The Premier spent months dithering and delaying, trying to save money, when he should have been focusing on saving people. We know that the Premier failed to fund expanded testing back in April, even though the experts were pleading for him to do so. Doctors and lab technicians—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —tell us that they’re scrambling today because Ford’s Conservatives wanted to save a buck. Once again, the Premier is refusing to act.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to ask the Leader of the Opposition to refer to other members by their title or their riding name.

Leader of the Opposition, place your question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Absolutely, Speaker. Thank you.

Once again, the Premier is refusing to act. Every day he refuses, this pandemic grows even worse.

How much more evidence does this Premier need? How much does he need to see before he actually does something?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We have a very substantive fall preparedness plan, Keeping Ontarians Safe, and we are putting that into action across a variety of scenarios, including putting \$1 billion into testing, tracing and contact management. That is allowing us to do far more tests than we ever have before. In fact, yesterday, in Ontario we conducted 48,000 tests. That’s a substantive increase even from a week ago. We are constantly building our ability.

In contrast, I would tell you that Quebec did 20,000 tests yesterday. Ontario is a leader across the country in testing, tracing and isolating. We are doing that, and we are going into communities. We are going into communities at risk, and we are making sure that we seek out the cases that are causing the problems. We know that some of the cases have been in certain areas in those hot spots, and that’s where we are addressing our resources.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, might I remind the Minister of Health that in fact a couple of jurisdictions have abandoned contact tracing because they simply don’t

have the resources, because this government didn't fund them to have resources to do that contact tracing.

It's already too late for the thousands and thousands of families who have lost and who continue to lose loved ones. The Premier could have prevented that from happening if he had actually stepped up to the plate. But he can take action right now, and he should. All summer he refused to make the investments needed to stop the spread in our hospitals and long-term care, to keep students and teachers safe in the classrooms and to get proper testing in place. All of that should have been done during the summer.

The Premier's dithering and delays have left us completely unprepared for the second wave, which is upon us. Will the Premier finally stop ignoring the evidence, stop trying to save a buck and invest the money desperately needed to bring order to the chaos that he has created in our province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the leader of the official opposition, through you, that that is absolutely incorrect. We have taken steps since the beginning of this pandemic and invested hundreds of millions of dollars into being prepared.

We have the fall preparedness plan, and we've put money behind each and every one of those steps. We're ready for the biggest flu immunization campaign in Ontario's history. We've put \$935 million into hospitals this year, a 5.5% increase, which is the greatest increase in over a decade. We've put \$124 million into opening reactivation care centres so that we can have the capacity in our hospitals to deal with COVID-19, and we've also invested over \$300 million to get caught up on all of the surgeries and backlogged procedures, MRIs and CT scans.

We have taken every action necessary, every step along the way, and we're going to continue to make those investments. We have invested, and we're responding and taking action.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, but I'll inform the health minister that I'll take the word of experts on the front lines, because those are the folks who know what's really going on and are prepared to say so publicly.

Ontario's Patient Ombudsman confirmed in a report today what families and residents of long-term care have been telling us for months: Decades of cuts from both the Liberals and the Conservatives have left a broken long-term-care system that is unable to protect our seniors in the face of COVID-19. Understaffing, a lack of inspections and decades of cuts have created a system where staff were forced to work when they were sick with COVID-19, couldn't access proper protective equipment, PPE, and residents were left in bed literally for months at a time.

The ombudsman is joining a chorus of people calling for urgent changes. When will those changes be in place, Speaker?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. It's a very important question that I'd like to provide—really substantial progress in terms of what we're doing in terms of IPAC, in terms of staffing and in terms of funding for our homes, creating the partnerships that the Patient Ombudsman has asked for.

I would really like to thank the Patient Ombudsman office and the Patient Ombudsman for the work that they have done on this. It was very insightful and obviously work that was deeply felt by them. I appreciate everyone who is working so hard in long-term care.

Many of these areas that they have touched on, we have already implemented, including the partnerships, which are ongoing, to make sure that our homes have support from the hospitals, as I mentioned. The staffing is a priority and our government is putting dollars behind that as we speak, and the caregiver piece that we have implemented at the beginning of September. So we continue to work, continue to add layers, and we'll keep at this. We will be focused, and we will continue to—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the second wave of COVID-19 is already here, and we are seeing the tragic consequences in long-term care. Ottawa's for-profit West End Villa has seen 19 deaths since August. Now we're seeing new outbreaks and deaths at long-term-care homes in Toronto and Beeton. Fifty seniors, literally half of the residents, at the for-profit Fairview Nursing Home have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

The ombudsman has called for urgent changes: a boost in staffing and protection for whistle-blowers. Why are these measures not already in place, and when will they be?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thanks for raising those issues. All of those issues are areas that we are working extremely hard on and taking our most vigilance to address them. This is happening as we speak.

I want to mention again that "outbreak" means one resident or one staff case in the home. Right now, we have 44 homes with no resident cases, although they are considered in outbreak, two homes in Ottawa with resident cases—and those homes are stabilizing. This is much better, compared to the first wave.

Whether it's through the partnerships with our hospitals, working with our Chief Medical Officer of Health, the medical officer of health, and making sure that we do every measure based on evidence, based on data—our homes are stabilizing. Many of the homes that are in outbreak right now have no resident cases—44 homes with no resident cases.

We will continue to take advice from the Patient Ombudsman, from other groups, to make sure that we're doing everything possible to support our homes, and we'll keep doing that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister talks about urgency, but what people see is dithering, delays and penny-pinching by the Ford government.

What terrifies residents and front-line staff in long-term care is that despite months of promises, we still aren't ready—and she knew that, because the minister received a letter identifying that from the people who have first-hand experience with long-term care. There is still no legislated minimum when it comes to standards, when it comes to hands-on care. There is still no meaningful staffing strategy. There is still not enough PPE for the workers in long-term care. Whistle-blowers are still not protected here in the province of Ontario.

We're entering the second wave with fewer health care resources, burnt-out workers and exhausted and terrified family members.

The Premier promised he would spare no expense when it comes to protecting our seniors in long-term care. Why did the Premier break that promise?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Unfortunately, that's a mischaracterization, on many points, of what is actually happening.

Our government has been committed to the safety and well-being of long-term-care residents. We've not only got plans and are working on those plans ever since the new Ministry of Long-Term Care, a stand-alone ministry, demonstrating the dedication of this government—making sure that we put dollars behind our plans: initially, \$243 million to help stabilize our homes. The emergency orders that we put out, four sets of those—the amended regulations. We have been working speedily and active this whole time to an evolving, unprecedented threat, an invisible intruder into our long-term-care homes.

I have been advised that our homes have six to eight weeks of PPE. That was last week's announcement.

Some \$540 million, half a billion dollars, is going to assist our homes in staffing, in IPAC training, in minor capital repairs, to enable them to fight COVID-19 more effectively.

Our government has demonstrated its willingness to understand the science, to work with the experts. We continue to do this. We will stay focused, and we will get this job done.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, even as the Premier blustered about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on small business and jobs, his President of the Treasury Board was confirming that small business tax deferrals have come to an end and was boasting that he planned to collect every penny of deferred taxes from small businesses.

As always, there is a massive gap between what the Premier says and what the Ford government actually does.

Tax deferrals push debt down the road. Now the government has come to collect, in the middle of phase 2 of this pandemic. Is this really the Premier's plan to help small business and protect jobs?

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

Mr. Stan Cho: We recognize how difficult these times are for small businesses out there, and that's why there has been \$11 billion in direct support for these businesses; \$241 million in the form of a commercial rent relief program that has provided relief to 60,000 commercial tenants here in the province of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, that is over 604,000 employees who have been assisted by this rent relief program.

But we understand that there is still suffering going on and that's why we continue to collaborate with the federal government. Just this morning, the Minister of Finance here in Ontario was communicating with Minister Freeland about additional supports, and those additional supports will be coming soon. They will be announced in our multi-year plan, our recovery plan, on or before November 15 of this year.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to say that those businesses in Ontario would love to see that \$11 billion, because they have not seen it.

The Premier says he's refusing to act on desperately needed COVID measures because it could hurt small businesses and cost jobs, but those small businesses are already hurting; jobs are already being lost. If we want to get this second wave of COVID-19 under control, we need to provide direct support to small businesses to pay for their rent, which is their number one ask, and to protect jobs. The Premier's half measures and now tax clawbacks will only make things worse.

Will the government stop trying to save a buck and make the investments now to save jobs and small businesses before they disappear? They deserve our real support in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: From the onset of this pandemic, this government has been committed to supporting small businesses. We understand the challenges that small businesses are having, and that is why we continue to not only consult but also act on those consultations, like direct supports through the commercial emergency relief program that saw over \$241 million from the province—close to \$1 billion in total, with the federal government—support over 500,000 employees, over 55,000 businesses. Our investment in Digital Main Street to help businesses pivot to e-commerce digital platforms helped support 23,000 businesses in this province—\$2,500 grants for the hardest-hit businesses.

Just yesterday, I had the opportunity to announce a \$60-million program that will support main street businesses with \$1,000 to cover the costs of PPE, because they have stepped up and protected not only their employees but their consumers. We will continue to support small businesses and invest in them.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. Minister, you often say Ontario offers the world in one province. That's why every year there are thousands of festivals and events exploring different cultures and bringing us all together.

This year has brought drastic change. Festivals and events across the province were left with the tough decision to cancel altogether or significantly alter their programming.

My question for the minister is, what is the government doing to help these amazing festivals and event organizers successfully and safely adapt their events?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to say thank you to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville. I had the opportunity over an 11-week period to travel through every corner of Ontario, and I was able to join him in his riding. We took in a few events and took a really nice tour of his community.

I understand, Speaker, that it's very hard for Ontarians to gather. We recognize that this is first and foremost a public health crisis. We also recognize within this ministry that there's an economic and social crisis as well, which is why we flowed \$9 million early during the pandemic to preserve and protect existing festivals and events that had to either shutter, postpone or go digitally.

Earlier today, I announced that the Ontario government will be putting forward a plan to reconnect Ontarians safely, virtually, digitally and through other means in order to bring Ontarians the traditional experiences that they love so much around Halloween, around Remembrance Week, and around Hanukkah, Christmas and of course New Year's. That \$9-million fund opens as of today, but will be retroactive to August 12 and will help fund events right up until March 31 so we can reconnect and still have that experience; and Santa, of course, is coming to town as of December 5.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you, Minister, for being a champion for those in the culture industries across this province as they fight to overcome the challenges of COVID-19.

Minister, I know I speak for many Ontarians when I say community events have been greatly missed. The reconnect program will definitely help support many events across the province as they work to adapt to the new safety guidelines. I look forward to seeing the innovative approaches taken by organizers to ensure health and safety measures are met while still being able to connect us all together.

Minister, what are some ways organizers can use the funding from this program to enhance the possibilities of a successful and safe event?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Earlier today, I joined music-together.ca, along with the Toronto original Santa Claus

Parade, to talk about how they would be able to access this type of funding—as well as municipalities across this great province. We want them to regroup, reimagine and, of course, reconnect with their neighbours. Some of the experiences that will be eligible for these organizations will be drive-through pumpkin-lightings, virtual Remembrance Day events, reverse holiday parades and drive-by static floats, drive-in music concerts and movies, holiday tree-lightings, and, of course, I think we're all prepared to say goodbye to 2020, so we will invest in New Year's Eve events as well.

I encourage all members to go back to their communities over this Thanksgiving weekend and find out how they can access this funding. This funding will be used for eligible expenses such as programming and production, promotion, mobile applications and website development. We look forward to having everyone safely reconnect virtually or through drive-by experiences this season.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the urgent need for access to child care in Ontario. But instead of opening up new spaces and providing some stability to the sector, the response from this government is to increase the size of child care groupings, putting 12-month-old infants in a room with two-year-olds and making other changes that the experts say will result in worse, not better, care.

Can the Premier explain why he is using the cover of a pandemic to try and sneak through changes that could harm children in Ontario?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Two years ago, when we came to office, we inherited the most expensive child care in Canada, after the former Liberal government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Leader of the Opposition, come to order. Member from Waterloo, come to order. Over here, government House leader, come to order. Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, come to order.

Minister of Education, please reply.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you, Speaker. It should not be controversial that we make clear that affordability is a centerpiece of our program, when it's clear during this recession, during this pandemic, that we have many people who cannot participate in the labour market because they're hindered by access and because of affordability, compounded by the former government, who did nothing to create child care spaces. It was this government, last year, that helped facilitate the creation of 19,000 net new spaces. Our plan is to consult the sector midstream while we deal with this pandemic to ensure child care is affordable and is accessible for working parents every single day, now and well into the future.

Interjections.

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

Place your supplementary, member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's not just that infants will be placed with two-year-olds; the Premier's proposed changes would also move two-year-olds from a room with 15 children to a room with 24 children. There would be fewer trained, caring ECEs and non-licensed staff filling ECE roles. Larger rooms and fewer staff is not what parents want, it's not what children need, and it's not what experts and educators say is best.

COVID-19 has highlighted what families have been saying for decades: We need more high-quality, affordable, public, licensed care, not new rules to water down the care we have. I ask again, why is this government trying to bury these wrong-headed changes in the middle of a pandemic when families are already stressed to the max?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: What families expect is for the government to work immediately to make sure child care is accessible for families, now and in the future.

Let me advise the member what, in fact, this consultation aims to do. We're aiming to improve quality of child care in the early years setting, creating flexible options for families, flexibility which does not exist for many parents; enhancing the workforce retention, trying to work to ensure we have more ECEs within the system; clarifying the requirements for the inclusion of children with special needs is an important part of this consultation; ensuring culturally relevant programming is important for new Canadians that come to this country; and reducing the administrative burden and the red tape on those non-profits, on those organizations that are providing child care within our community.

We are working very hard to ensure that parents can get back to work, and we will do everything we can to make sure it is affordable for parents in this province.

GREENBELT

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. Ontarians will never forget the infamous leaked video during the 2018 campaign where the Premier promised to open big chunks of the greenbelt for developers. He backtracked then, and he backtracked again when the public outcry against opening the greenbelt for development happened with Bill 66.

Well, tonight, Speaker, York region councillors are voting on a resolution to ask the province to open the greenbelt land for industrial and commercial development. Every time this comes up, the Premier is forced to backtrack and apologize and reconfirm a commitment to not open the greenbelt for development. So my question is: Will the Premier keep his promise to the people of Ontario to maintain existing protections for all two million acres of the greenbelt, even if this resolution passes at York council tonight?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Through you, Speaker, to the honourable member: The Premier and I and our government have been very, very clear. We have indicated over and over again, quite frankly, when we've received resolutions and letters—the member is right: the resolution hasn't been debated yet; I'm not in receipt of it. But we've made it very clear to people who have sent us resolutions about developing in the greenbelt that the answer is no. I can share those with you. You know that they exist, because groups that work with you have asked me on certain developments, and we've been crystal clear.

Speaker, through you, we will again reiterate, like I have and like the Premier has so many times: We will protect the greenbelt in all its beauty.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the minister reconfirming that commitment, but the question is, why does this keep coming up for debate if discussions weren't happening somewhere? I'm wondering if some of this is being driven by the streamlined environmental assessment for the GTA West Highway 413, which will pave over parts of the greenbelt and pave over 2,000 acres of prime farmland.

Speaker, it is Ontario Agriculture Week. This is the week where we celebrate farmers, and we especially celebrate those farmers for their \$30-billion contribution to our economy and for feeding us during this pandemic. My question to the minister is: Will the minister commit to protecting farmers and farmland by not paving over any prime farmland, whether it's with highways or subdivisions?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again to this member: We've been very clear. I have got a book full, quite frankly, of resolutions that councils have—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member knows he can't use props. Please reply.

Hon. Steve Clark: Local councils are democratically elected. They have debates in their chamber just like we do. I cannot predict what requests I am going to get from Ontario's 444 municipalities, but I can tell you today, Speaker, and I can tell the members of the House and every head of council and every councillor in every community across Ontario that if you're going to give us a request to develop property within the greenbelt, we have one short answer: No.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: In August 2019, I was joined by Premier Ford to announce important infrastructure investments in the Niagara area. Over \$1.6 million of provincial funding is being invested to reconstruct 2.5 kilometres of Pelham Street in my riding, and in January, our government also invested nearly \$10 million through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, with over \$3.3 million allocated to the city of Niagara Falls, nearly \$1.1 million for Fort Erie and over \$1.1 million to Grimsby, to name just a few. These investments will enhance the safety

and reliability of the roadways across Niagara and will have a significant impact on the region's economic development.

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I'm proud our government is working with partners to get projects built. I'm wondering if the minister could tell the House about the economic benefits of building key infrastructure projects such as these across Ontario.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'd like to thank the member from Niagara West for his important question and his advocacy for his constituents. Infrastructure is one of our province's key economic drivers. It creates jobs, keeps Ontarians healthy and gets people where they need to go. Ontario has nominated over 140 road, bridge, air and marine infrastructure projects, for a total provincial investment of more than \$150 million through the rural and northern stream of the ICIP bilateral agreement. If all the rural and northern projects nominated to date are approved by the federal government, the joint investments could reach up to \$592 million for Ontario's communities. We are also investing in hundreds of transit infrastructure projects across the Niagara region and other communities outside of the GTHA.

Our government is and will continue to work with our municipal partners, families and businesses to make smart investments in infrastructure to keep it reliable for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I know that Niagara has seen tens of millions of dollars of these funds flowing into our region and we're very grateful for the minister's advocacy.

After announcing the nomination of several public transit, road and bridge infrastructure projects last year, this summer I was thrilled to be joined by my municipal partners and federal counterparts to share that the federal government has approved a number of these nominations. Finally, Niagara municipalities can get shovels in the ground.

These investments total over \$14 million combined, and will have a positive impact on the daily lives of my constituents. For example, more conventional expansion buses can be purchased and technology can be upgraded to improve operations and safety for transit users in the Niagara region; in West Lincoln, St. Ann's Road will finally see the repairs it desperately needs; and, notably, the replacement of a key Welland Canal bridge can finally get under way—and I know the members opposite will appreciate that as well.

Would the minister tell the House when Niagara region will see more infrastructure projects like the ones announced over the summer?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I thank the member for the question. As you know, the projects from the Niagara area are part of the hundreds of projects we've submitted for review, and we're waiting for federal approval on several more. The member from Niagara West has been a strong advocate, sharing stories of damaged vehicles, from blown

tires to broken shocks, because of the potholes on St. Ann's Road.

Ontario's infrastructure cannot be left to crumble to a state of disrepair. We've made progress towards improving Ontario's infrastructure, but the need for renewal remains. There is much more work to be done, but we can't do it alone. That's why Premier Doug Ford has called on the federal government to end approval delays and invest an additional \$10 billion per year over 10 years to get shovels in the ground on infrastructure projects.

Through strategic investment, we can continue to help improve the quality of life for all Ontarians. It's time for Ontario to get its fair share of funding.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Judy owns Free Times Café, a restaurant and music venue that has been in the neighbourhood for over 40 years in my riding. Free Times supports local art and music, and is a hub and an institution for the downtown Jewish community. Now Free Times is in trouble. The federal rent subsidy has ended, and the second wave of COVID-19 is hitting hard. Judy cannot afford to cover the \$10,000 a month in rent. She can't do it. Without financial support now, Free Times Café will be forced to shut down permanently.

Speaker, will the Premier commit to providing direct rent relief to small businesses like Free Times?

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Certainly, we are understanding the difficulties that businesses like Free Times are going through during this pandemic. That's why our government reacted very quickly in March with \$3.7 billion in direct supports and increased that total in August to \$11 billion in supports for individuals and businesses, and our Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction has done hundreds of hours of consultations with small businesses, as has the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

We continue to collaborate with our partners in Ottawa. We understand there is a need for continued support and we call on the federal government to provide more relief on things like rent for small businesses in Ontario. I know our Minister of Finance is hard at work, continuously communicating with Minister Freeland in Ottawa. We understand that there is more to be done, and more will be done.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's very important that the buck is not just passed to the federal government and back and forth. These small businesses are waiting for real action. They are going under.

Across my riding—across so many of our ridings—small businesses are struggling to keep their businesses open. Every single day I get contacted by businesses who say, "I can't make it work any more."

Kathy, an owner of a Santosha yoga studio, can't afford the money to invest in virtual classes. Monty, the owner of Boat Thai Noodles, can't pay the utilities, which cost upwards of \$1,500 a week. Sneaky Dee's, the iconic music venue in my riding, is also facing closure.

Speaker, it is not enough to rely on the goodwill of landlords or to offer grants for PPE. We need real relief. When will this government take real measures to save main street?

Mr. Stan Cho: Yes, the member is correct in saying that small businesses face a number of challenges. She mentioned PPE. That's why I was so happy to hear our Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction announce \$60 million in grants for \$1,000 directly for businesses with 10 employees or less.

There have been a number of initiatives that we've introduced in that \$11-billion bucket we announced in August, but we recognize that there is more that needs to be done. That's why we continue to consult with the sector. We continue to work with our partners in Ottawa and call on them for additional support.

We are in this together, as the Premier always says. That means all levels of government must work together to provide small businesses that relief. It's good that this government exercised fiscal prudence in its first two years because that's why we have those funds available to protect those small businesses. We will get through this together.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Yesterday, Ontario's Patient Ombudsman, Cathy Fooks, released a special report outlining concerns over the response to COVID-19 in Ontario's long-term-care homes. Among the 568 complaints she received, she noted that there were errors that caused some workers to be working with a COVID-19-positive patient without PPE, infected COVID-19 residents being left in the same room as uninfected residents and staff shortages that required some people to work 15 to 18 hours a day. The SWAT teams the ministry promised were slow and not effective.

The ombudsman says, "Many of the key public health risks remain the same for a second wave and Ontarians should not expect a different result under the same conditions."

Speaker, through you: What is the Minister of Long-Term Care doing to protect residents in long-term-care homes and prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Our government, across ministries, is working with our sector and working with the experts—the scientific experts, the medical experts, the public health experts—working with hundreds of people, really, to address the issues in long-term care. Staffing, obviously, is a priority. You've seen the dollars put forward: \$540 million—over half a billion dollars just recently announced to address staffing, IPAC, the PPE.

We're providing six to eight weeks of PPE for all our long-term-care homes. That is done from our government ministries to make sure that they have the protection that they require.

I will acknowledge that in the first wave the global competition for PPE created numerous challenges. We were getting PPE to some of our homes only within 24 hours of need, but we were getting them there.

We are continuing to work on staffing with the Ministry of Health. We are putting dollars behind that. We are continuing to work on staffing, IPAC, capacity, emergency stabilization and—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. John Fraser: Reasonable, rational, thoughtful people across this province—the Patient Ombudsman, infectious disease specialists, chief medical officers of health—are all saying the same thing. They're sounding the alarm.

Fourteen homes in Ottawa are in outbreak. That's two more than yesterday. That's in the minister's backyard. One of those homes, West End Villa, has more than 130 cases, and 19 residents have died. That's not a result that any of us want.

1110

Speaker, I don't want to hear answers with zeros attached to them, because that's not what matters. What matters is what's actually happening in the homes. It's not happening—people are telling the minister that—and I don't know if she's not listening.

Through you, Speaker: What is the minister going to do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario's long-term-care homes and protect—

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Our government, multiple ministries, hundreds of experts are working around the clock to ensure that our homes are supported in as many ways as possible, looking at the scientific evidence as it evolves.

But I want to take you to task a little bit on the numbers you mentioned, because I was very clear earlier in this chamber that only two homes in Ottawa have any resident cases, and you've mentioned over 100 cases. That is reflective of the staff that are being tested. Our testing, our surveillance mechanisms, are working. We're picking up the tests that are positive, and the staff are self-isolating at home. Our surveillance is working: 98% of our homes across Ontario do not have any resident cases.

The two homes in Ottawa: The West End Villa is being well taken care of; the Ottawa Hospital is involved. My heart goes out to everyone who has been affected by this. We will continue to do everything possible, to use every tool, every measure. But I do take exception to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The next question.

SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILDREN

Ms. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Over the last few months, we have all had to adapt our lives to the new normal. Ontarians have stepped up, made sacrifices and worked hard to curb the spread of COVID-19. But doing so has challenged families across the province, especially those caring for children with special needs.

Through you, Speaker: Minister, what has our government done to provide support to families caring for children with special needs?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Burlington for the question this morning. Our government knows that providing support to families caring for children with special needs is crucial to ensuring that all members of that family are able to thrive. That's why our government is investing an additional \$20 million in the Special Services at Home program. That will ensure more than 4,700 families get the help and support they need to access things like respite, so they get a break, and programming for their child as well.

This investment builds on existing initiatives like the CARE tax credit that our government introduced last year. That means that families with children with severe disabilities are getting \$8,250 per child in relief in child care expenses, which is really important for those families.

We want these families to know—and we know they're experiencing extremely trying times right now during COVID—that their government is here to help them during this difficult time. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much, Minister, for all your hard work, compassion and passion in this ministry. I'm glad to hear that our government has expanded the reach of the Special Services at Home program to an additional 4,700 families with an investment of \$20 million.

But Minister, during the outbreak, these families are spending more time at home, and many do not have access to their normal supports as we all work together to stop the spread of COVID-19. What is our government doing to ensure that families receiving funding through the Special Services at Home program are able to take advantage of this investment?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the member from Burlington, who does an outstanding job in representing these families in her community.

Speaker, when we announced this investment, we knew that funding alone wasn't going to be enough. We needed to make sure that families would be able to spend their funding on what they needed when they needed it. That's why we made it flexible. That's why we expanded the list of eligible expenses to accommodate activities and services and supports that can be offered to individuals in their own homes, because a lot of them were confined to their own homes, unfortunately. This included access to items like arts and crafts, recreational facilities, fitness

activities, technology and those types of devices, that they would normally access through their day programs which, unfortunately, have been cancelled because of COVID-19.

We provided families with 25% of their funding for this year in advance, and we knew these families needed support. Our government was quick to act to—

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

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Premier. This week, my office heard from Paul Wyman, whose wife, Ursula, is at AR Goudie long-term-care home in my riding of Kitchener Centre. Recently, Paul became an essential care worker for Ursula. This allowed them to reunite after months of separation, and it renewed her spirit, but then the second wave hit. Paul placed 20 calls to make an appointment to get tested so he could be with his wife, only to find out that everything was booked solid for an entire week.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Can the Premier tell Paul when he will be boosting testing capacity, especially for essential care workers, so that people can finally be with their loved ones?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I can tell the member opposite that we are already boosting capacity. We indicated, in a previous question, that we conducted 48,000 tests yesterday. We're well on our way to our 50,000 goal by the end of this month, and then onward to 68,000 by mid-November. We're boosting capacity and our lab capacity at the same time.

However, we're asking for a bit of patience because we have moved to this new online appointment facility, which is better for people in the long run, because once they have the test they will receive the results sooner.

So please ask him to continue with the request. There may be the possibility that he can also be tested at a pharmacy, if he wants to try to book an appointment through a pharmacy for a test.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Back to the Premier: Paul is not the only one who is raising this issue in my office. Ken is an essential caregiver for his 96-year-old mother, who is also a resident at AR Goudie. Like Paul, Ken told me that the testing backlog is keeping him from caring for his mother. He's literally considering driving two to three hours outside of Kitchener just to get tested.

Families are filled with anxiety because they cannot reach their loved ones. But the Premier keeps telling us that this is all part of his plan.

Will the Premier explain why there are no mechanisms in place to allow essential caregivers to be given testing priority and explain how he plans on fixing the mess that he has made?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We are boosting capacity on a daily basis. Our numbers keep going up. We were at about

40,000 tests about two weeks ago; we were at 48,000 yesterday, and we're continuing to grow.

We want essential caregivers to be able to go into long-term-care facilities to help care for their loved ones. But I might suggest, as we are expanding capacity into more pharmacies and other locations—we want to be able to have more locations available for people to be tested.

Perhaps calling a pharmacy and arranging an appointment there, if he's asymptomatic, which I'm assuming he is, might be the best way for him to proceed, because there is an ability for people who are essential. He's an essential caregiver in a long-term-care facility. I think that would probably be the best way for him to try to approach it, to be able to get in sooner to be with his loved one at the long-term-care home.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Premier. Ottawa has set a record again today, Mr. Speaker: 182 new cases in the nation's capital. And Madonna Care Community in Orléans is experiencing its fourth outbreak of COVID-19. COVID-19 has penetrated Madonna's iron ring that the Premier said he would build four times. Residents living in Madonna are facing their sixth and seventh invasive, uncomfortable COVID-19 test, and of course, they're facing the isolation that comes with the declaration.

Testing backlogs are stopping some employees from showing up to work, and now staffing agencies are using loopholes in government regulations to move employees from one location to the next to the next. When is the government going to close this loophole and permanently and properly staff long-term-care homes in Ottawa?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question, to the member opposite. First of all, let me address Madonna. In Ottawa, there are only two homes with resident cases. Madonna Care Community has no resident cases.

1120

Mr. Stephen Blais: Fourth outbreak.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Again, I reiterate that the definition of an outbreak can mean no resident cases, no case of COVID in the home, but the staff being picked up on surveillance testing to make sure they do not enter the home while they are positive. So this is working.

We know that Ottawa, Toronto, Peel and York are hot spots right now. The prevalence in the community of COVID-19 is being monitored, and I know that many eyes are on that to assess the situation and understand what can be done.

The staffing is a critical piece. We've acknowledged that from the beginning, and we've been working on that. Ever since we were a new ministry in 2019 in the summer, staffing was a priority. We will continue to put dollars behind that, as we did last week. We will continue to work on that with a plan with the—

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: My supplementary is also for the Premier. There was another record today in Ontario: 797 cases province-wide, Mr. Speaker.

For-profit clinics are charging \$250 to skip the long lines at government testing centres. Private pharmacies are making money offering COVID-19 tests. The Ontario government is shipping COVID-19 samples to private, for-profit labs in California because they haven't invested in public health care here in Ontario. "Proudly tested in California" is at the top of all the test results. How long is the government going to rely on private, for-profit, two-tier American health care to get us through COVID-19?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader to reply.

Hon. Paul Calandra: As the health minister has said, and as the Premier has said, testing remains a priority for the province of Ontario. We've significantly increased our capacity since the first wave, going from 5,000 in the early days to, as the Minister of Health just reported, 48,000 yesterday. At the same time, we've been increasing lab capacity.

We will spare no expense to make sure the health and safety of the people of Ontario is maintained. That's why the Minister of Health, the Premier and this government put forward a significant fall preparedness plan that is working, that is showing results and is, quite frankly, the envy of Canada.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Premier. This week, I heard from a parent in my riding, Deb Turkovich. This week, she discovered that her daughter's class of 27 students will be increasing—no, not decreasing. More students are returning to the classroom because they are finding that virtual schools are just not working. We have all heard from parents who are struggling to manage the cost of staying home while losing income.

It is clear that this government has not given any real or safe choices for parents. Will the Premier listen to the evidence, listen to the residents of Niagara, like Deb, and commit to keeping our children safe by capping class sizes to 15?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member for the question. Obviously we are fully committed to the safety of children in Niagara and across the province. That's why, in Niagara, for the district school board, there's available funding of over \$71 million specifically for COVID-19, between funding provided by government and the unlocking of reserves. What that has led to is the hiring of teachers, the hiring of custodians, and we're seeing classroom sizes in kindergarten at 20, grades 1 to 3 at 17 children, and grades 4 to 8 at 23—well below the provincial average.

What we have said clearly is that, in every region, for every student, we will provide them with the funding and the resources to ensure that they are safe. That is our obligation in all regions of this province.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Back to the Premier: We have 14 schools in Niagara with COVID cases so far because community spread is spiralling out of control. That's because community transmission is increasing.

For Deb and her family, they know that protecting children cannot be done in schools alone. It takes a community with adequate resources. In fact, when Deb's husband presented symptoms for COVID-19, it took him seven days to get a call back for a test. Yes, I said seven days just for a call back. Shame.

Families in my riding of St. Catharines and in Niagara are struggling with unsafe, overcrowded classrooms on one hand, and fearing transmission in their community because of under-resourced assessment centres on the other hand. Why is the Premier unwilling and unprepared to fund smaller classrooms or provide resources so assessment centres can keep up?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We should be proudly supporting the work of our front-line health practitioners, our nurses and doctors, our teachers and administrators who are working very hard to keep us safe. Speaker, just for context, in this province, when you compare us to a jurisdiction like Quebec yesterday, they have a population of 8.5 million people and we have 14.5 million. They tested 20,000 people; we tested well more than 40,000. And yet, they have three times the cases—two thirds, three fifths of the population, half the tests, three times the cases.

It is clear, Speaker, that we are doing everything possible within our schools, within our communities to reduce the risk, to ensure our kids are safe. I am grateful for the work of our doctors and nurses, those in the assessment centres and our teachers doing everything they can and going above and beyond to keep this province safe.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Good morning. My question is for the Minister of Health. Prior to the 2018 election, the Premier said on the campaign trail that he was dead against injection sites. He promised to focus on rehabilitation instead, but after winning the election what did we see? The government decided to fund 21 consumption sites across Ontario—another flip-flop, another policy implemented by the previous government that this government has embraced.

In August, the mayor of Cambridge had a delegation meet with the government and requested that the province fund a drug injection site in my riding of Cambridge. Constituents opposed such a move. My question is: Does the government intend on funding a drug injection site in the riding of Cambridge?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'm very proud of our government for supporting consumption and treatment services sites. They're saving lives. They're absolutely necessary

and the communities that have them have reported a significant improvement in results. But there still is more work to do.

We have not received applications from all municipalities that want to have consumption and treatment services sites in their ridings or in their communities. If they want to, we're examining them very closely and we encourage municipalities to come forward with them. Any suggestion that this was a wrong decision, I think, would be really rebuked and denied by the communities that already have them, because there is no question: They are saving lives.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: It's an interesting response seeing as how in Alberta, when a site was introduced, we saw first responders responding to overdose calls on a daily basis, and that went up from 24% to 67%, an increase of 2.5 times. There are other examples across Canada.

In Cambridge, there is a demand for rehabilitation and treatment, for laws to be enforced for criminal acts—not just for people gathering at Thanksgiving—and for jobs. Communities should be given the option to have centres that strictly focus on rehabilitation without consumption. This government has not given communities that choice. They have only a one-size-fits-all, take-it-or-leave-it option: a drug injection site or nothing at all.

My question is: Will the government provide the communities with the option of applying for a centre that only focuses on rehabilitation without consumption, or will it stick to funding only these sites and provide no funding for any other possible solutions like rehabilitation and treatment centres?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To be clear, first of all, municipalities are able to apply for consumption and treatment services sites, and many communities have done that. As I indicated, they're receiving good results. However, we also announced yesterday that we are investing \$176 million in community mental health supports that are going to be providing rehabilitation services as well. That is going to be open to municipalities to ask for, to apply for, and we are already in the process of working with many communities to do that.

We were at CAMH yesterday for an announcement, where they are opening a response centre for people who are in very serious condition. That has been expanded tremendously. We want to provide other communities across the province with rehabilitation services, in addition to consumption and treatment services sites.

You're right: The rehabilitation part is very important. Sometimes people, through the consumption and treatment services sites, can be helped into rehabilitation after they've been receiving services there. That's part of the purpose why they are there, but we then have to make sure that we have the rehabilitation—

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Chris Glover: This province is experiencing a homelessness crisis and yet this government has cut \$161

million in supplements for shelter funding. They have frozen funding for the homelessness prevention program. They've cut the ending homelessness program funding by 25%. They cancelled the basic income pilot. All these cuts that your government has made are fuelling this crisis in the middle of this pandemic.

1130

The city of Toronto has released a plan to build 3,000 affordable supportive housing units immediately, and 350,000 over the next 10 years. They're asking for provincial support to fulfill that plan. Will your government commit to supporting the city of Toronto plan to build affordable housing?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Well, thanks, Speaker. Through you to the honourable member, I know now that he's not the finance critic because some of his financial information that he has released both in this House and outside this House is totally incorrect.

Our government has worked very closely with the city of Toronto and all of our 47 service managers and our two Indigenous program administrators. In the House, just a day or two ago, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, in response to a question, talked about how our government, early on in the pandemic, provided \$200 million in advance to our municipalities to help those most vulnerable. We followed it up, and now, the total amount of dollars that we're providing municipalities is over \$510 million.

Again, the member says that community homelessness monies have been cut. That's absolutely false. The number he's quoting is from the estimates for the affordable lands project. You can't buy lands twice. We don't buy it every year. We provided an affordable lands project, we created new housing, we moved on to the next program, and again—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Chris Glover: In June 2019, the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that the provincial government—your government—cut \$161 million from rent supplements and shelter funding. That's the federal budget officer. They're not my numbers; they're the federal budget officer's numbers.

This week, I was just speaking with the member from St. Catharines. She said that people who are experiencing homelessness are lining up for hours around the block at a church to get a shower. There are tent encampments in Hamilton. There is one park in my riding with 60 tents and more than 100 people living in it.

The residents in my riding, business owners and people experiencing homelessness came together this week and we asked three things from this government: Reverse the cuts, declare a state of emergency on homelessness, and support the city's plan to build affordable housing. Will you do any of those things to address this crisis?

Hon. Steve Clark: The Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative dollars for the city of Toronto this year

are up from last year. The Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative for the city of Toronto this year is up compared to last year. The dollars that we provided in the pandemic, \$39 million under the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund, and the fact the city is eligible and we're encouraging them to ensure that they get their long-term, sustainable plan in—an additional \$118 million. The Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program is exactly the same amount of money this year as what the city received last year.

In total, the \$384 million that the city has already received or is eligible for is up compared to last year, up compared to the year before, up compared to the year before and up compared to the year before that. It's up, up, up.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Question period has come to a conclusion.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Point of order.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you, Speaker. I'm honoured to stand in the Legislature of Ontario today and recognize this month being Women's History Month, and also October 11 is the International Day of the Girl and October 18 is Persons Day. May we never forget the undeniable contributions of women and girls, past and present, and may each and every one of our actions as legislators seek to uplift and amplify women and girls' voices and act on their calls for justice and equity.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Technically not a point of order, but good news nonetheless.

And before I recess the House, I want to extend my very best wishes to all the members, their staff and the staff of the assembly for a very happy Thanksgiving, and a good week next week when you have a chance to be back in your ridings to reconnect with your constituents and your families and do your constituency work.

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

SPEAKER'S AWARD FOR YOUTH WRITERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for Guelph has a point of order before we get started.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: On a point of order: Just to offer sincere congratulations to Mirren Litchfield, a grade 8 student in my riding of Guelph, who is the 2020 winner of the Speaker's Award for Youth Writers for her piece called Just Around the Bend.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Long-Term Care concerning the

response to COVID-19 in long-term-care homes. This matter will be debated on Tuesday, October 20, 2020, following private members' public business.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I beg leave to present the Sixth Interim Report: Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Small and Medium Enterprises of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: This was the sixth report that our finance committee is presenting on our study of the economic impacts of COVID-19. We heard from over 200 witnesses from small and medium enterprises right across our province. I'd like to take a moment to thank each and every one of those witnesses who presented, and thank our incredible team of committee staff for all of their hard work throughout this study.

Report presented.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I beg leave to present the Final Report: Study of the Recommendations Relating to the Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020 and the Impacts of Covid-19 Crisis on Certain Sectors of the Economy from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I will be brief, but I do want to take a moment to recognize the historic importance of this committee's work. This was a truly bipartisan effort of this chamber to get together during this pandemic crisis and hear from witnesses straight across the province about the impacts of COVID-19. We heard from over 500 witnesses, conducting, I believe the latest figure is, somewhere around 200 hours of committee testimony, and it was one of the first times that we saw virtual committee structures used widely across this committee procedure.

I would like to thank all of the people who presented their ideas and their stories. They were very, in many cases, heartfelt and appreciated. I would also like to thank the committee staff for all of their hard work and the hours they put in, whether it was translation or audiovisual or our wonderful Clerks, and of course also thank our committee members and our Chair for the hours they put in. I think just about every member of this chamber subbed in at various times on this committee. So thank you to everyone.

I now move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

ENTRETIEN HIVERNAL DES ROUTES

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: It's a pleasure to have this opportunity to reiterate our government's commitment to keeping our roads and highways safe during the winter months. Today, I'd like to give an update on our winter maintenance activities and some new actions that we're implementing this winter to keep our roads safe.

Nous reconnaissons que les mois d'hiver posent des défis importants aux conducteurs, en particulier dans le nord de l'Ontario. C'est pourquoi nous avons des normes d'entretien hivernal parmi les plus élevées en Amérique du Nord. Car rien n'est plus important que la protection de la santé et du bien-être des Ontariens.

The Ministry of Transportation is responsible for the year-round highway maintenance of 16,900 kilometres of provincial highways, including 2,880 bridges, representing about \$82-billion worth of assets. As many of you know, Ontario has been using contractors to clear snow and ice on provincial highways since the 1980s, and we're always looking for ways to improve our highway maintenance program.

I wanted to provide members of the House, as well as the people of Ontario, with information about how MTO manages its road maintenance work. The province is divided into 23 maintenance areas, and each winter we closely monitor contractors' work to verify that they are meeting our high standards and fulfilling their contract requirements. Our government has high expectations when it comes to winter maintenance standards. The public can expect plowing to begin once two centimetres of snow or slush begins to accumulate on the roadway. We swiftly deploy equipment within 30 minutes of the start of a storm. More than 1,100 pieces of equipment are ready to fight the harshest winter conditions. We also audit contractors' operations to ensure that they have responded quickly, meeting the time frame that I just stated, used equipment and material that is appropriate during the storm and restored roads to bare pavement conditions after the storm in expected time frames.

Les équipes d'entretien surveillent et ajustent leurs opérations tout au long d'une tempête en fonction de l'intensité, de la durée et du type de précipitations. Ces équipes travaillent sans relâche pour déneiger, saler et sabler continuellement notre réseau routier pendant une tempête et pour le nettoyer le plus rapidement après.

L'entretien hivernal ne s'arrête jamais. Nos entrepreneurs sont actifs 24 heures sur 24, sept jours sur sept, pendant et après une tempête. Nous avons de solides

antécédents. Nous avons des engagements de service pour garantir que nous atteignons la norme de chaussée dégagée après les tempêtes hivernales 90 % du temps, en moyenne, dans toute la province. L'année dernière, nous avons respecté cette norme dans plus de 95 % des cas.

In fact, we now have enough vehicles clearing Ontario's highways to reach bare pavement often much sooner than even our own very high standards. For Highways 11 and 17 in northern Ontario, we have been achieving bare pavement within eight hours almost 90% of the time.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know that there is always more that we can do to make our highways safer and clear ice and snow faster. For many drivers, especially in the northern part of our province, bad winter weather can severely affect their ability to get around.

Et cette météo hivernale peut être imprévisible. Par exemple, selon notre indice de gravité hivernale, l'hiver de l'an dernier dans le nord de l'Ontario a été l'un des pires de mémoire récente, ce qui a rendu les conditions difficiles pour les équipes d'entretien et pour les conducteurs. L'année dernière, le nord de l'Ontario a obtenu un score de 78 sur l'indice de gravité hivernale, alors que la moyenne des quatre dernières années se situait entre 51 et 69.

Mais, quels que soient les facteurs environnementaux, les gens doivent toujours se rendre au travail ou à leurs rendez-vous en hiver, et ils ont besoin de routes dégagées pour le faire.

This year, my parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park, did a driving tour of northern Ontario in February, and had the opportunity to speak to officials from municipalities, Indigenous communities, transportation agencies and businesses about the challenges that they face and the importance of winter maintenance. He experienced the challenging conditions first-hand, driving through snowstorms, long stretches with no cellphone service and limited places to stop and rest. He witnessed the efforts of our contractors and got a sense of how critical their work is to connecting people and places in northern Ontario.

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Mr. Speaker, that's why our government is taking action to further improve winter maintenance this year, especially in northern Ontario. We are increasing the use of proactive anti-icing liquids, which will help us prepare before the storm arrives. We've installed more cameras and are spending \$2.9 million to build 24 new road weather information stations, with 14 stations in northern Ontario, including eight along TransCanada Highways 11 and 17. This new infrastructure is essential to helping us better monitor weather conditions and more quickly identify areas where snow and ice are accumulating.

We are improving and expanding our rest area infrastructure in northern Ontario and other parts of the province to give drivers, especially large trucks, a safe place to pull off the road, especially in severe weather conditions. And we will be improving Ontario's 511 to

help drivers plan ahead and better prepare for winter driving.

Le 511 de l'Ontario dispose de fonctionnalités permettant de trouver des aires de repos publiques, d'accéder aux informations météorologiques d'Environnement Canada et de connaître et prévoir l'état des routes en hiver, et de suivre l'emplacement des chasse-neiges sur les routes provinciales. Cet hiver, nous ajouterons des fonctions de conduite hivernale à notre application Ontario 511, qui a été récemment lancée, que nous avons mise en place ce printemps pour aider les camionneurs lors de la pandémie de COVID-19.

As many of you know, we also took a hard look at Highways 11 and 17, specifically this past year, to identify opportunities to improve winter maintenance there. Lower traffic volumes on some northern highways and lower temperatures in the north, in general, impact the effectiveness of the methods that we use to clear highways. While this is an important reality that we face, we are always looking for ways that we can do more.

As part of that analysis, we've strengthened the oversight of our private contractors. What does that mean? It means that we are working with them to move more quickly to clear our highways when the snow begins to fall.

Over the last few years, we've hired over 20 new inspectors and coordinators, and provided them with the tools to effectively ensure our contractors are upholding quality. And, Mr. Speaker, we will also launch a pilot project to identify sections of Highways 11 and 17 where we can impose tougher standards for clearance. The pilot will look at areas where we have yet to meet our standards. I know that this project will directly address the concerns of residents travelling in this region and ensure that we meet appropriate winter maintenance standards.

All of these actions demonstrate our government's firm commitment to keeping our roads and highways safe this winter for the people of northern Ontario and everywhere else across our province.

I want to take this opportunity to remind everyone that keeping our roads safe is a shared responsibility.

Nous rappelons aux conducteurs de conduire prudemment cet hiver et, en cas de mauvais temps, de ralentir et de conduire en fonction des conditions. Avec plus de 1 100 équipements d'entretien hivernal sur les routes, j'espère que tout le monde se souviendra de contribuer à la sécurité de ces conducteurs et à la leur en restant bien en arrière et en ne dépassant jamais un chasse-neige au travail.

Ensemble, nous pouvons améliorer le bilan déjà solide de l'Ontario en matière de sécurité routière et faire en sorte que tout le monde arrive à bon port cet hiver.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise in this House, and today to respond to the Minister of Transportation regarding winter road maintenance across the province and specifically in northern Ontario.

I listened intently to the minister. We have sparred many times on winter road maintenance, and I was

encouraged by some of the things that she said. I look forward to seeing the changes that the government is planning to make, seeing them come to pass. I truly am looking forward to that and seeing how much difference they make.

I'm glad that the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park did a northern driving tour. For northerners, many of us—since I've been elected, I've done about 900,000 kilometres driving back and forth to Queen's Park and around my riding. So I've done a fair bit of a northern driving tour too.

Some of the worst conditions I have ever been on on a road was when I was driving to Leamington. I always listen to classic rock; I'm that age. And the classic rock DJ said, "There's a streamer coming down Commissioners Road by London." I'd never heard of what a streamer was. Well, a streamer is a whack of snow coming off the lake. People drove through it. There were cars in the ditch on both sides. In northern Ontario, we would have closed the road. And then a mile down, it was clear again. So it's not just northern Ontario, and I'm fully cognizant of that.

The difference for northern Ontario is, Highway 11 or Highway 17—and I can name a few others—when they close, we're cut off. If you want to go to a hospital appointment, you're not going. That's the big difference.

We, in the official opposition and before, in the third party, fought continuously to improve conditions. The NDP started the Northern Road Report years ago to build up a catalogue of evidence to force the government of the day to make changes, and we did, and we continue to do that. I hope, like I said before, that the government is going to follow through.

I'll give you an example. When you have two contractors and a border—there's a spot by Marten River where two contractors' borders meet. When I'm driving through there, there's a sign that says that you're now entering into a different zone. You don't need the sign. Sometimes you'll go from bare pavement to glare ice, because they've been there at different times. I'm not blaming the contractors.

Something I would really like to point out: I would like to give a shout-out to the people who actually do the work—the people on the plows, the people on the sanders. They are out in times when no one else dares to be on the road. I have talked to snowplow operators and listened to some of the harrowing experiences they've had. The fight to try to get better winter road maintenance is not a fight between the snowplow operators and the official opposition or anyone else. We fully recognize the valiant work they do. They're on the front lines of winter road maintenance.

But everyone in northern Ontario has had, on a fairly regular basis, one of those moments where you're pulled off the road—and but for the grace of God, there go I.

The minister mentioned it, and I want to commend her on that, and hopefully we can work together on that—one of the issues is transport trucks. They have to get from A to B in a certain amount of time, and there's no place to pull over. They frighten the drivers in the passenger

vehicles, but they're as frightened as we are. To make more pull-off ramps, pull-off places for them will make a huge difference, and I hope to work with the government on that.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I, too, was listening very intently to the minister.

As some in this House might know, in my previous role I was responsible for overseeing the committee in Ottawa that took care of winter maintenance for the city of Ottawa—6,000 roads, everything from four-lane highways to small country roads with cornfields on both sides. I understand very clearly the difficulty and complexity of managing winter maintenance on a road network as diverse as we have in the province of Ontario, and I look forward to seeing the results of the improvements the minister spoke of.

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One thing the minister did touch on was the different conditions in northern Ontario, the lack of traffic and how it impacts the various methods needed to clear those roads. What we didn't hear, though, is how that's going to be related this winter on 400-series highways that will see a reduction in traffic as a result of the pandemic. We know that fewer and fewer people are travelling into our cities; fewer and fewer people are using those provincial highways. How is that lack of traffic going to change and impact the maintenance of those highways? How are the ministry and their contractors going to respond to those changes? We didn't hear anything about that, unfortunately.

I, too, want to thank the workers, who often work 12- or 18-hour shifts to clear snow from our highways and roads, on call, on Christmas Eve, away from their families during important events, so that they can keep our roads safe. Unfortunately, we didn't hear anything about how the government plans to keep those workers safe during COVID-19 this winter. How are the vehicles going to be cleaned between shifts? What is the proposal to ensure that there are workers available for those shifts in the event that they or members of their families come down with COVID-19? A human resource shortage in this area this winter could be devastating for connectivity to hospitals in northern Ontario and the safety of our highways. I was disappointed that I didn't hear anything from the government on how they plan to address that in winter maintenance this year.

I look forward to seeing the improvements that the minister spoke about, but I'm very concerned that they haven't done a forward look on how COVID-19 will have an impact on winter maintenance across the province.

PETITIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is entitled "Support Ontario Families with Autism.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is entitled “Reverse Cuts to Social Assistance.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” Premier “Ford eliminated the Basic Income Pilot project and slashed the new social assistance rates by 1.5%, and did so without warning;

“Whereas cuts to already-meagre social assistance rates will disproportionately impact children, those with mental health challenges, persons with disabilities, and people struggling in poverty;

“Whereas the decision to cancel the Basic Income Pilot project was made without any evidence, and leaves thousands of Ontarians without details about whether they will be able to access other forms of income assistance;

“Whereas the independently authored Income Security: A Roadmap for Change report, presented to the government ... recommends both increases to rates and the continuation of the Basic Income Pilot project as key steps towards income adequacy and poverty reduction;

“Whereas the failure to address poverty—and the homelessness, hunger, health crises, and desperation that can result from poverty—hurts people, families and Ontario’s communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse” the “callous decision to slash ... social assistance rates by 50%, and reverse” the “decision to cancel the Basic Income Pilot project, decisions that will undoubtedly hurt thousands of vulnerable people and drag Ontario backwards when it comes to homelessness reduction and anti-poverty efforts.”

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Paul Calandra: In accordance with standing order 59, I wish to provide the House with an update on the order of business for when we come back.

First and foremost, let me wish to everybody a very happy Thanksgiving and a very safe constituency week.

When we come back, we will be dealing with government bills, Bill 213 and Bill 215, standing in the name of the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

On the Tuesday, we will be dealing with an opposition day motion, standing in the name of the member for Hamilton Centre.

With respect to PMBs:

—on the Monday, Bill 196, standing in the name of the member for Kitchener Centre;

—on the Tuesday, a food literacy for students act, standing in the name of the members for Hastings–Lennox and Addington, and Peterborough–Kawartha;

—on the Wednesday, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, standing in the name of the member for Guelph; and

—on the Thursday, a motion related to police training to recognize the link between animal and domestic abuse, standing in the name of the member for Carleton.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you’ll find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario should ensure that its current review of charitable gaming regulations includes consideration of the need for Royal Canadian Legion branches and service clubs to raise funds to maintain their social and financial vitality by using local 50/50 and progressive draws.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I don’t know if a motion such as this has ever been debated in the Legislature before. It doesn’t seek to change legislation; it merely calls on us to show our support for Ontario’s Legions and other charitable organizations.

The AGCO sets the rules and regulations on games of chance in Ontario. More than a year ago, there was a crackdown, and the Legions and other not-for-profit charity clubs and organizations were told they could no longer hold a members’ draw or a weekly draw—one was a daily, where the weeklies are loonie and toonie draws. These draws were incentives to encourage members to come to

the club, maybe sign the book for the draws and drop some change in the jar for a chance at the pot.

A lot of Legion members are seniors or retirees who aren't as socially active as they used to be. Coming to the club gives them a chance to spend time with friends and neighbours, maybe play a game of darts, shuffleboard or euchre, and perhaps have a social drink.

When you look at the numbers—nearly 400 Legion branches, nearly 100,000 members in Ontario—you get a better idea of the scope of the problem. The average age of the men and women who served their country during the Second World War is 94; for Korea vets, it's 87. But many of our Legions today are home to those who served with UN peacekeeping missions in the Balkans and faraway places such as Somalia and Rwanda. Don't forget, over a 12-year period, we had 40,000 Canadian military personnel in Afghanistan.

The purpose of the Royal Canadian Legion is to serve our veterans so their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten. Legions provide a safe place, a welcoming home, and, as with any home, there are costs in keeping the doors open, the insurance paid up and the heat and lights or air conditioning on. That's where the daily loonie and toonie draws come in.

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Municipal licensing and bylaw officers were made aware that AGCO regulations didn't specify that progressive draws were permitted, so there was a province-wide crackdown. It has caused great financial distress for our Legions and other such charitable organizations.

Our Legions raise tens of thousands of dollars for a variety of worthy causes. To remain viable, especially post-COVID, they need people, members and visitors to drop in and spend a few dollars. At my Branch 255 in Riverside, President Ken Dault says the draws sparked optimism, motivated members—especially seniors—to get out of the house, come to the branch and sign the book, and maybe stay for a meal or a beverage or a bit of fun.

Stephane Guy from Branch 641 in Nepean writes about losing their draws in the crackdown. "It was a disappointment for all of our members—as they appreciated having a chance to win a prize but also to interact with others when they came in to sign the book."

Toronto Branch 22 president Brenda Heath says, "I can tell you it not only has restricted our abilities to raise much-needed funding for the branch itself, but our ability to assist members of our communities, and has negatively impacted Legion membership."

Here's another good one, from Bob Thomas from Branch 551 in Waterdown on the value his Legion has within his community: "We actively support youth: scouts, venturers, guides, brownies, cubs, army and air force cadets ... we run poster and essay contests each November. From spring to fall our front parking lot becomes a farmer's market at no cost to our community. On Sunday mornings our Legion becomes a church." And, Speaker, Bob ends by making this myth-busting point: "We're not a bunch of old soldiers sitting around drinking beer. We are an integral part of our community."

Look, this isn't rocket science. Daily loonie and toonie drives didn't hurt anyone. They didn't take any kind of a concerning bite out of the AGCO's profits from scratch tickets or Lotto Max and 6/49 draws, but they certainly helped our Legions and other charitable clubs remain viable.

Most of all of us here in this Legislature have at least one Legion in their riding. I have four and another one just outside my riding, just a few blocks to the west of me. My father served in World War II, and later was a career soldier—once, serving as a peacekeeper on the Gaza Strip. He was a proud member of the Royal Canadian Legion and served in various executive positions, including Sergeant-at-Arms. My mother, who at 96-and-a-half is still alive and kicking, is a past president of the Ladies Auxiliary at Branch 29, Salt Pond, Burin, Newfoundland.

I grew up on army bases in Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland. I was in the army and air force cadets and served in the militia in New Brunswick. I've been a Legion member for more than 30 years. My brother Barry in Ottawa retired from the air force as a chief warrant officer and is also a proud Legion member.

I've been out there every year with my poppy box. I value our veterans. I thank our veterans for their service. I want them to know that we, in this House, value their contributions. I want our Legion branches to know we're doing our part to support them, because we know they are hurting right now. I want the AGCO to know our Legions need their progressive draws, and they need AGCO's help now more than ever.

I applaud the government for expanding the support for younger veterans. They'll get that now because they're receiving new aid from the Soldiers' Aid Commission. I applaud them for their plan to create a new monument here at Queen's Park for veterans of the war in Afghanistan. I applaud them for saying that if any Legion was still paying property tax, they would no longer have to do so. I hope they follow through with a proposal to create a Silver Cross licence plate, as has been done in other provinces with the full support of the military. That's for the immediate families of those who lost their lives and paid the supreme sacrifice in recent military conflicts.

This is early October. Next month, we'll all be attending Remembrance Day ceremonies back in our home ridings. I'll be there wearing an old pair of my father's shoes, Speaker. I wear a pair of dead man's shoes on Remembrance Day to honour my father and the friends and comrades with whom he served.

Wouldn't it be great if this motion passes this evening and we send a letter to the AGCO, and we hear back from them before Remembrance Day, telling us that they agree and they'll be making the changes we're suggesting on behalf of veterans? That way, our vets and our Legion branches will know the AGCO is on their side, as are each and every one of us here in Ontario's provincial Parliament.

Speaker, I want to thank our member from St. Catharines, Jennie Stevens. Not only is she a long-serving member of her Legion branch, but she's the lead spokesperson

within the NDP caucus for veterans, Legions and military affairs. Mrs. Stevens's son is currently serving in the Royal Canadian Navy as a petty officer 1st class, and we speak of him often here in the House. He's 37 years old. We know the average age, these days, of someone leaving the Armed Forces is 39.

If today's veterans are going to have a safe and welcoming Legion to come home to, we need to do our part in helping keep those doors open.

The Americans used to have a big poster proclaiming "Uncle Sam needs you." Well, today, here in Ontario, our Legions and our Knights of Columbus halls and sports clubs need us.

I'm a proud member of the Riverside Sportsmen Club. We used to run the weekly draws there, and our members look after a huge number of charities as well. We need the progressive draws back. We are asking the AGCO to hear our pleas and to work it out with our municipal licensing and bylaw people—who do a great job, by the way, but they follow the rules and regulations as set by the AGCO.

A couple of weeks ago, when we were discussing the merits of expanding the Soldiers' Aid Commission Act, we heard again the sad story of Phillip Kitchen, an Afghan vet. He fell on hard times, had PTSD, and ended up living in a tent with his wife and young family.

We also hear, according to the experts who study those things, that here in Toronto 13% of the people living on the street, our homeless people, are ex-military personnel.

Speaker, we're failing our veterans in little ways, in dribs and drabs. Eventually, the little things become the larger issues that demand action. To the AGCO, progressive draws at Legion halls and sports clubs or where the Knights of Columbus gather may be a little thing, but it's leaving a major hole in the sustainability of so many organizations. We can't afford to allow red tape to handcuff a reasonable solution.

I recall the words of the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, who was speaking on the need to update the Soldiers' Aid Commission Act. "Through the mud of Flanders," he said, "the waves of the North Atlantic, the beaches of Normandy, the skies over occupied Europe and the tough fighting in Korea, our veterans preserved our freedom. In later years, in more modern theatres of conflict such as the UN peacekeeping missions in the Balkans, Rwanda, Somalia and elsewhere, and of course the war in Afghanistan, our veterans continued to serve and continued to distinguish themselves."

The minister pointed out to the House that today's veterans don't necessarily fit the image that many of us have if we're asked to visualize a veteran in our mind's eye. He said, "It could be a 30-year-old single mom or a young man entering university or college, younger than most of us here in the House."

Speaker, Legions need to recruit younger members in order to keep doing what they do to honour our veterans, and that's a challenge in some areas. But they also need our help in small ways. This motion may be seen by some as a small step, and I won't argue that, but it's a crucial step.

The AGCO has a lottery licensing policy manual which sets out the types of charitable lottery schemes for which a licence may be issued. The AGCO has been working to modernize charitable gaming and is committed to helping grow and sustain a healthy gaming sector in Ontario. They're on record as saying they want to ensure that games of chance are offered with honesty, integrity and in the public interest. The AGCO told me they'll take into account the feedback from industry stakeholders. Well, I'm asking all members of the House to give their feedback to the AGCO, to let them know we support the legalization of daily loonie and toonie draws at our Legion halls and other charitable organizations which used to hold them before they were told to stop. We see it as in the public interest. Our Legion halls are public gathering and meeting places. We need them to stay open and available to the public, and the progressive draws have always helped them pay the bills.

COVID-19 has had many such facilities hanging on by their financial fingertips. Let's do our part. Let's look after the little things that mean so much to our veterans and those who support them and wish to continue to do so.

I say to the AGCO: Visit a few Legion halls, ask around and see how they're doing, and ask how much more they could do if they could get back to offering progressive draws for their members.

There must be a way for this to happen. There has to be a simple solution. The draws were held for years without complaint.

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Cut the red tape, give the Legions a break and help them stay viable so they can continue to support Canada's military personnel, veterans and their families. Simply put, we need our Legions today more than ever. They need to stay open.

Cut the red tape, pass this motion, send a letter to the AGCO, tell them how we feel and ask them to help save our Legion halls and other not-for-profit clubs and organizations which do so much to support our communities and our local charities. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's an absolute pleasure to stand here in the House today and speak to the motion from the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. I do appreciate so much how much pride he has in his family's service and in the work that Legions across Ontario do.

I'm sure we all agree in this House that in all of our communities the Royal Canadian Legion branches serve and honour those who have risked their lives and who today continue to do so for the freedoms that we enjoy. They provide support to veterans, their families, and the brave women and men who actively serve in the Canadian Armed Forces, all the while remembering those who fought for our freedom in the Great War and World War II, the Korean War, in Vietnam—we can name the entire list, because we recognize them every year. We go to the services to recognize our Legions during Remembrance Week.

Legions throughout Ontario also provide critical services to their broader communities. I remember speaking

as a student in the Legion public speaking events. They support sports. They support active living. They support our seniors.

It's important to recognize that our youth today are recognizing the importance of remembering our veterans as well. I want to give a shout-out to the member from Oakville. MPP Crawford brought to me, here at Queen's Park last year, a class who were in grade 7. They had such a thoughtful presentation in terms of why it's so important to appropriately remember our veterans as well as our soldiers who serve today. I have not forgot that presentation, and I look forward to continuing to advocate on their behalf in terms of seeing one of their goals realized.

The Victoria Cross I know is very important to the member opposite. Our conversations about that have not been forgotten, either. We'll see what we can do with that, too.

I have to share with you that locally, across Huron–Bruce, our Legions are incredible. They work so very hard to ensure that they embody everything that Legions in Ontario mean. We do need to support them. I think about driving through the town of Seaforth last week. They have their banners up, their remembrance banners, that have been sponsored by various families. In a certain way, it's a little bit of a fundraiser as well, and other towns in my riding are doing that as well.

In the town of Wingham—it's fascinating. My family has sponsored two banners as well, to remember my great-uncles Joseph and Ernest who fought in the Great War. But they're running out of light posts to hang these banners. I think it's fantastic that people now more than ever are realizing the importance of remembering, and in doing so, by extension, we are recognizing the importance of our Legions as well.

I have to say, as well, while I have the opportunity, remembering our military heroes is very important and I want to thank you for all of your courage and honour that you demonstrate as you represent us in our Canadian Armed Forces.

I just want to share that our Legions are the very fabric of our communities. I always remain mindful that we need to remember how important it is to listen and to take appropriate action. That's why I'm pleased to share with the member opposite that we'll be supporting motion 108 today.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It's always an honour to be able to rise in the House on behalf of all the residents of St. Catharines. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh for introducing this very important motion on AGCO regulations to support Legions and service clubs. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh has always been and always will be a great supporter of Legions and charitable organizations in Ontario.

As the critic for veterans, Legions and military affairs, I will be concentrating on the importance of this motion and how it will be so beneficial to our Legions across this province. It is always my goal to ensure this government

does all they can do to honour our veterans, their families and even the places they gather.

I have said it before: Legions are the backbone of many communities. They're a place for residents to socialize—big or small. I know that a few of us in this House are very proud Legion members.

The way in which Legions assist veterans is not only by offering a safe, inclusive space, but also by providing financial supports to help ease the other burdens when necessary.

The effect of COVID-19 on our Legions' viability has been tragic. It is no surprise, and should not be, to anyone in this House that many Legion branches across Ontario are at threat of closing their doors permanently, after suffering huge revenue losses over the past seven months due to the pandemic. When I spoke with our local Polish Legion in St. Catharines, Branch 418, they reported that they had already lost out on \$30,000 by the end of May—and this number possibly could have doubled, if not tripled.

Exorbitant operational costs and lack of provincial funding have made it very, very difficult for Legions to even attempt fundraising again. With such looming uncertainty too, we need to consider ways to help support their experiences. We need to help Legions and service clubs so they can continue to help out our communities.

With the Alcohol and Gaming Commission's current review of charitable gaming regulations, this becomes a great opportunity to see where we can ease up on the restrictions, like allowing Legions in our communities to use local 50/50 draws and progressive draws as a means of other avenues of revenue, which could and will provide enough money to help with operations, and definitely will help with keeping the doors open for a little while longer. Legions will be able to continue supporting the needs of others. By easing up on restrictions, all Legions will be able to continue helping veterans with getting needed supplies like walkers, eyeglasses or even necessary medical supplies. It is our duty to ensure the social and financial viability of the Legions across Ontario.

I must say, as well, that the revenue Legions could possibly generate from the 50/50 draws and other initiatives simply goes back into all of our communities.

When I spoke to Bill 202, the Soldiers' Aid Commission Act, a few weeks ago, I spoke about conversations I had with branches and branch presidents in my riding. It is important that I reiterate those details now, as it demonstrates the level of selflessness that all our Legions, Legion executives and members show on a daily basis.

One particular conversation was a real eye-opener for me. I asked what their branch needed at the time—remember, we're in the middle of a pandemic. I was so moved to hear the president, Yvonne, explain to me that revenue loss will affect a whole slew of local organizations and veterans that greatly rely on the generosity of Legions. It really blew me away, because the concern was for others in need, despite the Legion's immediate needs being at stake as well—which is no inexpensive feat.

In the end, it is our goal to make sure Legions can sustain themselves. The rules and regulations they are

currently forced to follow are the exact rules this government has enacted. The right thing to do is to introduce additional revenue streams for Legions to take advantage of and get creative with so that veterans and community members can rest assured that they have a safe place to go—a true, safe place for camaraderie, fellowship and friendship.

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Legions across Ontario have always provided a safe place to go. By supporting this motion, it will help Legions and service clubs all across this province to have a chance to continue all the good that they have always done for all residents, for communities within communities.

Again, I would like to thank the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for bringing this very important motion forward and for his continuous advocacy for Legions and service clubs.

I also would like to thank, at this time, all the men and women in service uniform, land, air or sea. Thank you.

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: It's a pleasure to rise in support of this motion from the member for Windsor–Tecumseh—I hope I got that right. I think that's the right area of the province.

We've had many conversations in the past about this. We've had the Ontario Charitable Gaming Association come down here to Queen's Park and inform us all on the great work they do to help charities raise money and support our local communities. I look forward to continuing to work with the member opposite on some of the things he has brought forward here. I know he has been in productive discussions with the AGCO about it and in communication with the AGCO on it.

Our Legions would not be able to make the contributions they do without fundraising from their communities, and we want to ensure that there are as few barriers as possible to allow them to do this work. That's why our government has been working with communities to make life easier and more affordable for charities and the people who support them with their hard-earned money.

To make life easier for charities and their supporters, our government and the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario have been working with community partners and charities to understand how we can help charitable organizations continue to diversify their activities and pursue new opportunities such as social gaming. Through this work, we've learned how expanding gaming opportunities for charities gives charitable organizations more options and allows people to more easily support causes that are important to them and their communities.

Red tape and outdated regulations tie up valuable time and resources that could be dedicated to charitable work. Thus far, we've been encouraged by the progress the AGCO is making, but we know there's more work that can be done.

In the same spirit of the motion that's being debated this afternoon, our government has worked to bring forward two important initiatives over the past two years to make

life easier for charities and the people who support them with their hard-earned money.

In January 2019, I was pleased to announce, with the support of the then Attorney General, the member for York–Simcoe, that we were making changes to give charities more flexibility when holding electronic raffles. With these changes, Ontarians are now able to support charities through a wider variety of online and in-person electronic raffles, including things such as 50/50 draws and catch the ace.

There's a wide variety of charitable organizations that take advantage of these opportunities, ranging from major sports organizations—their charities—to Legions. The Bowmanville Older Adult Association in my riding of Durham takes advantage of these opportunities to fundraise.

Ontarians are now able to purchase raffle tickets during an event even if they're not there in person. This is a change that has provided previously unseen value, as charities have been able to use new technologies to continue their fundraising efforts throughout COVID-19. This change expanded opportunities for charities licensed by the AGCO to sell raffle tickets, select winners and distribute prizes electronically, including online. And online doesn't necessarily mean electronic, in how that's defined. It could be electronic, but you could still be there in person. So those are two different categories.

We've seen that the power of the online platform for charities' 50/50 draws is truly remarkable, and so are the valuable benefits that have been generated for Ontario charities. For example, in game 2 of the NBA finals last year, more than \$978,000—almost \$1 million—was raised in 50/50 tickets that were sold by the MLSE Foundation, which has a mission of improving the lives of youth by building facilities, giving to sustainable programs and empowering youth through sport and recreation. A full 87% of those sales took place online.

I'll give you another example. This August, the Jays Care Foundation broke the Major League Baseball record for 50/50 draws, raising over \$1 million to support families disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Ontarians across our province wanted to help, and the changes we made to allow online 50/50 draws simply offered them that opportunity.

Another recent example I heard about from the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex was in the small town of Glencoe, the Glencoe Fair—so many fall fairs are affected by COVID-19 and not able to continue on in the normal way this year. They got creative and used online 50/50 to raise funds for their fall fair, and they raised over \$366,000, which was quite incredible. They took leadership, took the chance, and surely were rewarded for it, just because we were flexible with provincial regulations to allow them to do this good work.

While 50/50 raffles are now permitted inside Legion halls, and there is one progressive raffle licence that is already permitted in Legion halls, we recognize that there are more opportunities for the AGCO to provide Ontario's Royal Canadian Legions with new and more diverse

opportunities to fundraise for their valuable service to veterans and our communities.

I look forward to continuing to work with the member for Windsor–Tecumseh and to hearing the response from the AGCO to his inquiries.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to rise in this House and, today, to support the member from Windsor–Tecumseh on this motion to allow progressive games of chance in Legions.

I think I speak for many people. Whenever I walk into a Legion hall, I always get a personal memory, because my father told me that the reason that he immigrated to Canada is because Canadian soldiers came, they fought, they won and then they went home. They liberated. He thought that for people to come and help and go home, they must come from a wonderful country. That's why he came to Canada, and I remember that every time I walk into a Legion hall.

In rural Ontario in northern Ontario, in my riding, there are 16 Legion halls—and in some of those towns and villages, they are the only hall. They are struggling. They provide a vital service. They started by giving veterans, who had given their all—and sometimes even though they came home physically, they left with scars from the battlefield. They came home and found solace with people who they had served with. In a way, in rural Ontario, they provide that not only to veterans, but to many other people.

In our part of the world—and I think across the province—if we lose Legion halls in villages and small towns—anywhere, but in a small town, in Larder Lake or Virginiatown, Matachewan—if we lose them, that is their community centre.

1400

So I listened intently regarding the changes the government is making, and I understand that the government will support this. I'm hoping and I understand that they will support this motion. I welcome that. I hope that AGCO actually responds favourably so that Legions can continue to provide the community bonds that they do.

Remembrance Day will soon be upon us, and I'm not sure Remembrance Day is going to be the same this year as other years. We know Thanksgiving is not going to be. But the feeling will still be there. And in my part of the world, and I think everywhere else, the members of the Legion perpetuate that feeling, the feeling of thankfulness for living in the country we do and gratitude for what the people who came before gave up. At the very least—at the very least—we should be able to help these Legions and these Legion members raise the money they need to keep that afloat.

The Legion members I know, the presidents I know, the secretaries I know—could you imagine what the Legions could do with \$900,000 or \$1 million? They're not asking for that. Although their forefathers did change the world for us, they're not asking to change the world. What they're asking, what the member from Windsor–Tecumseh is asking is to make it a little bit easier, a little bit less complicated, so that they can raise money and so that the people who are participating can actually enjoy

themselves doing it, and that they can keep alive what they all fought for.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I would like to thank the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for bringing this forward today. Windsor–Tecumseh is a bit like a second home for me. My grandparents live in Windsor–Tecumseh, and I have to say, after I got elected, I spoke with my grandparents and I said, “Can you tell me about your MPP in Windsor–Tecumseh? I'm going to be meeting him soon.” And much to my surprise, my grandparents, who are dyed-in-the-wool Progressive Conservatives, said to me, “You know what? Mr. Hatfield is a good man.”

This bill here today is really a reflection of that, because the bill here today that's going to help our local Legions is exactly the sort of innovative policy that we want to see our government pursuing.

This topic is close to my heart. My father worked for the Ottawa Senators Foundation about 10 years ago, and of course the sports and entertainment world foundations were some of the first at the forefront of bringing electronic gaming in and showing how much of a difference it could make for the charitable world. I remember my dad telling me at the time that at the Saskatoon world junior games, they were selling 50/50 tickets, and on average every night they were getting somewhere around \$10,000 in revenue for the foundation that it was going to support. And then when they brought in electronic 50/50 partway through those games, that number skyrocketed to \$100,000 each game that was being raised for local charities.

This bill, which is going to hopefully get us to think about progressive gaming, I think is a fantastic idea. Speaker, I think it's a good idea for the AGCO to take a closer look at reviewing regulations so that they may consider allowing charitable organizations to offer progressive raffle draws.

Again, I thank the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for bringing forward this timely bill that will help our Legions when they need it most.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, the time for debate has expired, but the member for Windsor–Tecumseh has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you to everyone who spoke this afternoon: my friend from Ottawa West–Nepean, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General and my two great colleagues from my side of the House.

The poppy campaign this year isn't going to be the same. Legions rely on the poppy campaign to raise their money for veterans. You're not going to see us out in our blues and greys. There are going to be boxes on a table or there's going to be—maybe we'll be able to swipe our credit card this year. But it's not going to be the same, and whether they raise enough money, or as much as they used to, is up in the air.

Our Legions need our help, as do the sportsmen's clubs and the Knights of Columbus halls and so on. But our Legions across Ontario are our gathering points. They raise so much money for other charities besides supporting

veterans. It could be a school breakfast program. It could be money for hospice. It could be the local food bank. The Legion helps us all. It takes a village.

As the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane said, in many small Ontario towns and villages, the Legion hall is the only public gathering point. In times of climate change, floods, tornadoes, forest fires, Legions are the place of refuge that open their doors, and people come in and seek refuge there.

We have to do more. We can't tell the AGCO what to do; they're at arm's length. But we can ask them, and we are asking them, to please take into consideration, if there's a way of doing it—maybe they have to answer a skill-testing question, whatever it is—the loonie draw, the toonie draw, the daily draw—it's no big deal. My wallet is full of 6/49 and Lotto Max tickets. It's not taking money

away from the AGCO to allow Legions to raise a bit more money through the progressive draws they used to be able to do.

Thank you for your time, and we'll be in touch with the AGCO if this motion passes this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The time for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Hatfield has moved private member's notice of motion number 108. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 19, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1408.

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Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
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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**

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
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 / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**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