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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 21 October 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 21 octobre 2020

Report continued from volume A.

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT (SICK NOTES), 2020
LOI DE 2020 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(NOTES MÉDICALES)

Mr. Schreiner moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 200, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of sick notes / Projet de loi 200, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les notes médicales.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm honoured to rise today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill 200, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of sick notes. Bill 200 would permanently revoke the ability of employers to require sick notes for minor illnesses.

We have learned many lessons from this pandemic, and one of the most important lessons is that if you feel ill, stay home and get better. This keeps you safe, your colleagues at work safe, people in the doctor's office safe, and members of the public who you might encounter on the way to visit the doctor safe. Ontario's labour laws used to reflect this basic public health principle, until the government reintroduced sick notes in 2018. Forcing someone to visit a busy doctor's office just to prove that they're sick was bad public health policy in the before times, but during a pandemic, it's actually outright dangerous. We have an opportunity to fix this with Bill 200.

Speaker, as the COVID-19 virus was entering Ontario in February, health advocates were sounding the alarm: 175 health care workers, part of the Decent Work and Health Network, wrote an open letter to the Premier in which they stated, "In the context of recent concerns with the novel coronavirus in Ontario, we consider the current provincial labour laws to be a serious threat to the health and safety of Ontarians." They went on to say that requiring sick notes "goes against all public health advice that urges people with mild illnesses to rest at home and not expose others to infection, particularly vulnerable patients

at busy medical clinics." I will give the government credit for listening to one of their requests, and I encourage the government to consider their other requests.

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A month later, as the first wave of the virus was taking off, the government introduced a bill to revoke the ability of employers to require routine sick notes for minor illnesses on a temporary basis due to the pandemic. I voted for this bill, and I pushed unsuccessfully at the time to make this change permanent, but we must make it permanent now, because the temporary ban on routine sick notes expires in January.

Speaker, I would like to go through some of the reasons why I feel this bill is so important and why I believe all members of this Legislature should support it. First, this bill is about respecting workers, especially those workers we have all called heroes during this pandemic, workers who have cared for our loved ones and workers who have made sure that the essential goods and services that we need to get through this pandemic are there for us.

We should trust these workers when they say they are ill and allow them to stay home, rest and get better. We should not treat them with suspicion and ask them to prove their illness. This is not how we should treat workers who are sick. This is not how we should respect working heroes. We should not ask them to have to go to a doctor's office and shell out 40 bucks for a sick note.

Now, I know there are some concerns about absenteeism and people who might abuse their sick time. As a long-time small business owner, I get it, but we have other ways to deal with absentee workers, and we should not have dangerous labour laws simply to police a few workers, because the reality is that if we force workers to go through the red tape of getting a sick note, many of them will not stay home and simply go to work.

According to a recent Ipsos poll, 82% of workers said that if they were sick and their employer required a sick note, they would not stay home and they would actually go in to work. That, Mr. Speaker, is the crux of the issue. Allowing employers to demand routine sick notes puts everyone at risk. It does much more harm than good. It will bring more illness into the workplace, into schools, restaurants, meat-packing plants and nursing homes. We've seen the headlines: Viruses spread in workplaces.

Speaker, this pandemic has been such a lesson in the importance of public health, and it makes no sense for government to plead with people to stay home if they're sick if we have laws on the books that actually tell them to do the opposite. We can fix this by passing Bill 200, which leads me to my second point: Sick notes are completely

antithetical to responsible public health. They put unnecessary pressures on the finite resources available to our public health system.

I'd like to read a letter I received from a Guelph physician last year:

"I'm writing you today in response to the Ontario government's action to reinstate the ability of employers to require their employees to provide sick notes for short illness-related absences from work.

"As a physician practising in this province, I'm concerned with the negative consequences of reinstating this ability. This action counters the government's commitment to 'end hallway medicine.'

"When employers were previously able to require sick notes, my practice would receive a continuous stream of appointment requests for patients needing to supply their employers with sick notes for common illnesses, like the common cold.

"These requests were greatly diminished during the short time that this practice was prohibited.

"As a physician, I cannot support a policy that requires patients who are suffering from an illness to risk infecting others in waiting rooms or public transportation in order to seek a sick note when they would have otherwise stayed home to rest and recover.

"As a physician, I would rather be taking care of patients with serious needs, rather than filling out sick notes for people with minor illnesses."

Speaker, this last point is so important: Physicians have better things to do than write sick notes for minor illnesses. It is fiscally irresponsible to spend our precious health dollars on routine sick notes. It's an unreasonable burden on doctors, a task they should not be wasting their valuable time and our valuable health care resources on. For a government who talk so much about cutting red tape—and that's what a lot of the debate has been about today—here is an opportunity for real red tape reduction.

This physician was not the only health care professional calling for an end to routine sick notes. The Canadian Medical Association said this when the government reinstated sick notes: "Requiring sick notes can introduce unnecessary public health risks; patients who would have otherwise stayed home may spread viruses or infection while out to get a sick note.... For physicians, writing a sick note is added administrative work—time that should be spent providing direct care to patients."

The Ontario Medical Association is on the same page, because the last thing we should be doing is forcing infectious people into crowded waiting rooms where (a) they're not actually going to get treatment for their illness, and (b) they risk spreading their illness to others in the crowded waiting room.

Speaker, this brings me to my third point that I want to make: It's not only health care professionals opposed to routine sick notes. Businesses and labour leaders have also reached out to me in support of Bill 200. The president and CEO of the Guelph Chamber of Commerce sent me a note, and I want to quote: "Prioritizing public health is our best long-term economic strategy. The Guelph Chamber of

Commerce encourages the Ontario government to end the application of employer-requested sick notes under section 50 of the ESA, in order to ease the burden on our health care system and minimize people's exposure to the spread of illness."

It's not just business leaders; it's labour leaders. The Ontario Federation of Labour said in a news release in support of my bill, "Requiring employees provide a sick note is not only a burden on an already overstretched health care system, but also poses increased and unnecessary health risks to the employee and public health in general."

The Guelph Family Health Team, which represents most primary health care providers in my riding, wrote me in support of Bill 200, and I want to just quote what they had to say: "The Guelph Family Health Team strongly urges the government to revoke any requirement for sick notes. By asking primary care providers to provide sick notes, we are taking time away from meeting the medical needs of patients. In addition, in most cases it is difficult or impossible for a primary care provider to assess whether or not a patient is able to work. We encourage employers to work with their staff to build processes based on trust and respect and eliminate the need for medical notes." Speaker, that's what this is about: trusting workers, working together. It's not very common to see such diverse opinions on an Employment Standards Act bill in support of it.

I want to close today by saying that it was the right thing to do in March when every party in this House voted in favour of a temporary ban on requiring routine sick notes for minor illnesses. We did the right thing then, and now we have an opportunity to do the right thing and make that permanent.

Our labour laws should be about promoting the public good, and when people have symptoms of the flu, COVID-19 or any other disease that could be harmful to others, we need to let them stay home. We need to trust them. We need to believe them. We need to let them recover and we need to protect others by not exposing them to an illness that could hurt them.

I see Bill 200 as an important step, a first step in improving the Employment Standards Act in a way that respects and supports all workers in Ontario, and I encourage my colleagues from all sides of this House to take that first step, to take that first step in improving the Employment Standards Act in a way that learns the lessons of what this pandemic has taught us. That's why I'm asking all members of this House to vote in favour of Bill 200.

1730

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's a pleasure to rise today in the Legislature to speak to this private member's bill introduced by the honourable member from Guelph. I also wanted to congratulate the member on recently being voted in as Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on General Government. I'm really excited to work with the member moving forward on various pieces of legislation that pass through that committee.

I listened intently to what the member was saying, and I wanted to thank him for his feedback. He spoke a lot about employment standards and COVID, so I just wanted to reiterate some of the things that have happened since this pandemic really took over.

Since the beginning of this global pandemic, our government's number one priority has always been the health and safety of the people of Ontario. I want to thank the member from Guelph for introducing this private member's bill to remove the option for employers to request a medical note from the employees. In this time of uncertainty right now, I think it's critical that we discuss any possible ways we can improve the lives of Ontario's workers. We are all in this together, and we must all work together. COVID does not run across partisan lines, and health and safety should guide every decision we make.

That's why, back in March, the first move that our government made was to amend the Employment Standards Act to provide job-protected leave for employees who are unable to work for reasons related to COVID-19. This was due to the rapidly evolving nature of COVID-19. Because of that, our government is open to discussing any and all ideas that would better support the people of Ontario. That's why I think supporting this private member's bill in second reading to allow for further review at the committee level on whether this proposed approach is in the best interest of the people of Ontario is an excellent idea.

Mr. Speaker, we agree that due to the infectious nature of COVID-19, going to a doctor for a sick note is not following the best available medical advice. Let me repeat that: It's not following the current best available medical advice. We welcome the debate from the member opposite, and we will take this opportunity to properly analyze any proposed legislation, including this one. Because ultimately, no one should have to choose between their job and their health. Every option is on the table when it comes to supporting the people of our province.

I want to just mention a stakeholder quote regarding this topic. This is one from Rocco Rossi, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Rocco Rossi said: "We welcome the continued action taken by the government of Ontario in response to COVID-19 with the passing today of the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Infectious Disease Emergencies), 2020, and the Municipal Emergency Act, 2020."

That, Mr. Speaker, kind of segues into the next part of what I want to speak about today with respect to the member's bill, and that's with respect to Bill 186. Again, everything that we have done is to protect Ontarians and to keep them safe. With respect to workers, for example, our government has continued to make investments in the fight against COVID-19 by allocating more support for people, jobs and a safe reopening. We have streamlined processes and reduced duplication to save businesses up to \$338 million on an annual basis. We've provided grants of up to \$1,000 for small businesses to help offset the unexpected costs of PPE. We've added mental health supports for families, front-line workers, young people,

children and Indigenous communities. These investments bring the government's COVID-19 response action plan to a projected \$30 billion. That is up from \$17 billion that was initially announced in Ontario's action plan back in March.

We've been taking actions to further reduce the burden on household budgets. We've taken steps like introducing fixed hydro rates, at a COVID-19 recovery rate of 12.8 cents per kilowatt hour; child care relief of up to \$200 per child up to 12 years of age; and emergency child care options for our front-line workers.

We've also introduced \$10 million to help community organizations deliver meals to seniors. I'm aware of that first-hand, Mr. Speaker, because there's a non-profit organization in my riding called Rural Ottawa South Support Services which has been taking advantage of this and similar programs to deliver meals to seniors on a weekly basis—free meals, by the way. I was proud to join ROSSS on one of these meal deliveries, to see the positive impact that they were having in the lives of rural seniors in Carleton.

We've also introduced \$75 million to seniors to double their guaranteed annual income and a six-month grace period on OSAP payments and interest for students.

Ultimately, everything that our government has done and will continue to do is in the best interests of the people of Ontario. We have always been flexible. We will continue to be flexible. We will continue to listen. I look forward to supporting this bill and having it go to second reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill 200, the private member's bill introduced by the member for Guelph.

Speaker, as I was preparing to participate in this debate, I decided to review the input that was provided to the committee that was looking at Bill 47. As everyone in this chamber will recall, Bill 47 was the legislation introduced by this government that reinstated the requirement for workers to have sick notes in order to take a day off work, and it also eliminated the two paid sick days that workers had previously had access to.

There were some interesting quotes in the public input that was provided to the committee. I want to quote Dr. Jesse McLaren from the Decent Work and Health Network. What he said, I think, is very prescient in this moment of the COVID pandemic. He talked about how this government's approach is making Ontario "open for sickness." Certainly with the COVID pandemic, the cuts to public health and the undermining of public services that we have seen made us all the more vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic.

Dr. McLaren says, "As an emergency physician, I depend on my patients to not come to hospital for unnecessary reasons, like a sick note." He says that Bill 47—and we just finished a debate about red tape—"claims to cut red tape, but it brings back red tape of the worst kind. Demanding sick notes drives people out of their homes,

where they should be recovering, and into overcrowded doctors' offices or emergency departments, wasting health care resources and putting others at risk."

I just heard the comments from the members across the way about what this government is doing in the face of COVID and how they've eliminated the requirement under the infectious disease emergency legislation, but this is not just about COVID, Speaker. We heard a heartbreaking story at that committee from Jill Promoli. She's a mother. She lost her two-year-old son after he contracted flu at the child care he was attending.

Without eliminating the requirement for sick notes and without giving people access to paid sick days, this is going to be happening across our province. It's not just a COVID problem; it's a flu problem. It's an any-kind-of-infectious-disease problem. Dr. McLaren talked about food handlers who have vomiting, diarrhea and symptoms of gastroenteritis, who are trying to figure out if they should go to work the next day, give up that day's income or take the risk of handling food and serving customers—and many of them don't have a choice.

I'm pleased that this legislation will remove one significant barrier to workers who are sick and shouldn't be at work. It will remove the requirement to get a sick note. But we really need to be looking at providing paid sick leave for every worker in this province, so they don't have to face that choice of whether to stay home from work and not be able to pay the rent, get evicted, not be able to put groceries on the table, get their utilities cut off or risk infecting their co-workers and their customers. As the member said, this is a first step, but we have to go so much further. If the pandemic has taught us anything, I hope it is that.

1740

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak in favour of this thoughtful bill tabled by my colleague the MPP for Guelph. In 2018, this government brought back the ability of employers to require sick notes from their employees. From the beginning, this was not good public health policy. Emergency rooms and clinics across this province exist to provide urgent care, not to write notes for sick employees who are afraid of losing their job.

Les notes médicales font perdre un temps précieux aux médecins et obligent les Ontariennes et Ontariens à payer le prix pour une exigence administrative qui n'a pas sa place. Si ce gouvernement est sérieux quant à vouloir éliminer la médecine de couloirs, il devrait s'empresseur de supprimer des exigences comme celle-ci, qui pèse sur nos médecins de première ligne, qui remplit nos salles d'urgence de personnes qui ne devraient pas être là et qui augmente le coût de notre système de santé public.

Ce que cette année nous a appris, c'est que le fait d'exiger des notes médicales est également une politique de santé publique particulièrement dangereuse, car elle contribue à propager des virus en obligeant les personnes malades à s'aventurer dans le public, plutôt que de se

rétablir à la maison, comme l'a mentionné mon collègue de Guelph.

This was damaging before the pandemic and became even more dangerous as our rates of COVID-19 infection increased. I agree with the well-thought rationale of the member for Guelph. I hope that every member will be supportive of this bill, which is about trust and about modern practice.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm really pleased to be able to join the debate this afternoon, introduced by the honourable member for Guelph. It's clear when the member for Guelph brings forward a bill to the Legislative Assembly that he brings it with passion and intent, which is apparent to all of us in the Legislative Assembly.

Bill 200, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, 2020, deserves further review and discussion. That's why I would urge my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly this afternoon to support this bill.

When you go through the bill, it's legislation that impacts every employer and employee in the province. The changes being brought forward should not be taken lightly, but I have confidence, as I do for the members in this chamber, in my colleagues on all sides of the aisle to thoroughly study and analyze the bill and bring forward their suggestions, as we've seen in the past.

Speaker, as we know, the COVID-19 pandemic has created many difficulties for families and the hard-working people of Ontario, including the constituents in the riding of Whitby that I have the privilege of representing. But what's clear is that since the beginning of COVID-19, our government has been working hard to keep people safe in their communities and on the job.

In that process, we've spared no expense when it comes to supporting the people of this great province. Back in March, when COVID first hit Ontario, the first piece of legislation we passed during the state of emergency was to protect the jobs of every employee in Ontario. Unanimously and in the spirit of collaboration, this House agreed that due to the infectious nature of COVID-19, going to a doctor for a sick note is not following the best available medical advice. That's why we amended the Employment Standards Act. This change provides employees unprecedented job protection.

To be clear, sick notes are not required for any worker who takes this leave. Bill 186 created an unlimited job-protected leave for issues related to COVID-19. If you stay home and self-isolate or care for loved ones, you will not be fired. This includes caring for children when schools or daycares are closed or operating with reduced hours because of COVID-19.

Speaker, I've spoken now about the importance of carefully studying at committee the proposed legislation under consideration today. I've highlighted the key features of Bill 186, a related bill that we passed earlier this session. Lastly, I want to speak about the importance of investing in the fight against COVID-19.

While I've noted the protections available to those impacted by COVID-19, the end goal is defeating a horrible

virus and keeping workers safe every day—I know that’s your goal too, Speaker—so that they come home safe. I think that’s a goal that every MPP in this Legislative Assembly aspires to.

Our government is continuing to make investments in the fight against COVID-19. We have allocated more support for people, jobs and a safe reopening. For example, we’ve provided grants of up to \$1,000 for small businesses to help offset the unexpected cost of PPE, and we’ve added mental health supports for families, front-line workers, young people and children—yet another multi-million announcement today of this government standing up for mental health, young people and children in our province.

Taken together—and this is an important point to stay with—these investments bring our government’s COVID-19 response action plan to a projected \$30 billion. Let’s come back to that, Speaker: \$30 billion. This is up from the \$17 billion we announced in Ontario’s action plan back in March of this year. We’ve acted decisively. We continue to act decisively, and we continue to do so every day and every month. We want every worker in this province to know that our government has your back, so if you’re watching today, let me repeat: We want every worker in this province to know that our government has your back.

Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this bill today. To the honourable member for Guelph: Thank you for bringing forward this bill. I look forward to further discussion in committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park, particularly precarious workers—workers who are in low-wage jobs with no benefits—to speak in support of this bill. It is a crucial step forward to make the temporary ban on employees requiring sick notes permanent.

Allowing employers to require sick notes puts our public health at risk, because sick workers spread viruses or infection while visiting doctors’ offices and emergency rooms, while on public transit, while at work. It’s bad for workers’ health, because they should be at home resting, not out getting a sick note, and it’s a waste of health care resources that are already strained.

In November 2018, an Ipsos poll showed that eight out of 10 Canadians would go to work sick if it meant bringing in a sick note. Both the Ontario and Canadian Medical Associations and the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians oppose employers requiring sick notes for short-term illnesses.

Speaker, it is important to note that banning sick notes will help some workers access unpaid sick leave, but taking unpaid sick days is not an option for workers living paycheque to paycheque who cannot afford to take an unpaid day off. No worker should have to choose between their health and their financial livelihood. Research shows that almost 60% of workers in Canada do not have paid sick days, and this number jumps to over 70% for those making low wages and is the highest for women workers.

Those least likely to have paid sick days are those who need them the most: workers in precarious and low-wage employment. The failure of this government to implement paid sick days will continue to hurt low-wage women workers, and also Black and racialized communities.

1750

Speaker, we’re in the midst of a second wave of COVID-19, and it is shameful that our government has still not acted on paid sick days. It’s a proven measure that will save lives. Recent research from the US showed that paid sick days helped reduce COVID cases by 400 per day per state. Research also shows that jurisdictions in the US with paid sick days saw a 40% reduction of influenza during flu waves.

But, Speaker, we’ve known for years that paid sick days reduce the spread of infectious disease. That is why health care providers have been advocating for seven permanent paid sick days and an additional 14 paid sick days during public health emergencies. So, yes, we need to ban sick notes, but we must also ensure that every worker in Ontario has access to paid sick days. Workers cannot wait any longer. Paid sick days save lives.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: This is really about the numbers, so I need you to bear with me.

In 2017, Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, was passed. It allowed 10 emergency days a year, two days of paid sick leave and no need for notes. It also raised the minimum wage to \$15 an hour over two years, with other supports that were very reasonable, smart, progressive, thoughtful—things that workers deserve.

Fast-forward to the fall of 2018: We have Bill 47. What happens there? The government cuts the increase to the minimum wage, eliminates the two paid emergency days and reinstates sick notes, and then rolls back other gains that were made by workers in that bill. They reinstated sick notes, despite the advice of public health experts, doctors and nurses who simply said, “It’s a burden on our health care system, and you’re going to make people sick.” They went ahead and did it anyways.

Fast-forward to 2020 and COVID-19: We have Bill 186, the emergency measures legislation, which reinstates no need for sick notes—interesting. After the recommendations of medical experts, they made that change—the same recommendations that they were getting before. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a cold, the flu, COVID-19 or some other infectious disease; making people get sick notes is just not a smart thing to do.

Now we get to Bill 200, from the member from Guelph, a bill that I fully support. It will once again make the change that Bill 148 did and reinstate no need for sick notes permanently, because the government’s change is only temporary—sorry, I’m getting mixed up on the numbers here, Mr. Speaker.

Here’s the problem, though: Bill 47 still removed the change to minimum wage, right? It still removed all sorts of paid emergency days—the two paid emergency days. That’s still there, and that’s a problem.

Then we have my bill, which is Bill 194, which gives WSIB to workers in retirement and group homes and other health care settings, where workers doing the same work are getting coverage by WSIB, but some aren't just by the way that the legislation is written.

To sum it all up, Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act; my bill, Bill 194; and the member's bill, Bill 200, all add up to something. The government's Bill 47 doesn't add up to much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to add my voice and my support to the member from Guelph's bill to get rid of medical notes. This is something that I have spoken about in this House on numerous occasions. There was a law that came in Ontario—actually, it came into effect in January 2018—that we were not going to require sick notes anymore. Then the Conservative government got in power and brought back the sick note. Then COVID came and we got rid of the sick note, and now we're back in the House talking about no need for medical notes.

Speaker, I represent a northern, rural riding. Nickel Belt is beautiful: 33 little communities, none of them big enough to be a city. It's a very nice place to live, but like many other northern communities, we have an acute shortage of primary care physicians or nurse practitioners. In my area alone, 30,000 people do not have a family physician or a nurse practitioner. They depend on walk-in clinics or the hospital for all of their health care needs.

What does that mean, Speaker? That means that when your employer requires a sick note from you, you don't have a family physician to go to, so you go to a walk-in clinic. The physician at the walk-in clinic looks at you and says, "Do you want a sick note?" "Yes. Yesterday, I had a really bad migraine, so I stayed home because I just couldn't go to work. My head was so"—but now, it's the next day and there is no way for the physician to really know if you had a migraine yesterday or not. There is no way to know, but they will still charge you 25 bucks and write you a sick note so that you can go back to work. What good came of that? Absolutely nothing. It's a complete waste of our health care system, a complete waste of respect for workers. But the law was there, employers were allowed to require sick notes, and we have some big employers in Sudbury that require sick notes for all of them.

A lot of you will know that I was not always a politician. I came from 25 years in health care. I was the executive director of the community health centre in Sudbury, and we know that some of those big employers in town require sick notes for all of them. On Friday afternoon at the end of the shift, we used to keep some times because of people who had been sick Thursday and Friday but felt like they would probably feel better by Monday and wanted their sick note to go back to work. We would book them all in at the end of day on Friday, because they needed their sick note to be able to go back to work on Monday. But when the physicians or the nurse practitioners saw them on the Friday, sometimes they were not quite

better. They were still coughing, so we were bringing all of those people in our waiting room, spreading whatever they had with others because by Monday they were hoping to feel better and they needed a sick note to go back.

This has to go the way of the dinosaurs. We don't need sick notes. Public health, through COVID, has made it clear that it brings public health risks. We have a government that goes above and beyond talking about red tape. Well, this is red tape that we can all agree on that nobody needs. Really, to send somebody to our health care system when they don't require treatment is really not productive.

Ça me fait plaisir d'ajouter quelques mots au projet de loi qui a été déposé par le député de Guelph qui parle des notes médicales. On a parlé des notes médicales plusieurs fois à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Elles ne servent à absolument rien, et c'est le temps qu'on s'en débarrasse. Les gens doivent rester chez eux lorsqu'ils sont malades. La pandémie nous a montré ça. C'est le temps qu'on passe ce projet de loi.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further debate, the member from Guelph has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I just want to offer sincere thanks to all my colleagues who spoke on this bill and those of you who spoke so eloquently in favour of the bill.

Bill 200 is about respecting workers, it's about respecting health care professionals, and it's about bringing people together to fix a mistake that was made in 2018, when sick notes were reinstated.

I want to read a quote from Sharleen Stewart, the president of SEIU Healthcare, a person who represents the front-line health care heroes that we've all talked about during this pandemic. She says, "Bill 200 isn't just good for families, it's good for public health. It's especially good for precariously employed workers without paid sick leave who should be afforded the time to get well instead of clogging up the health care system."

1800

"I'd like to thank Mike Schreiner for introducing Bill 200"—and I won't talk about the nice things she said about me, but I'll close with this: "I encourage all parliamentarians at Queen's Park to support this legislation and then take the next step to expand access to paid sick leave for hard-working families."

The hard-working families that she's talking about are the front-line health care heroes—the people we've gotten together at night and banged pots and pans for; the people who we've tied ribbons around trees for; the people who we've put signs out in front yards for; the people who have risked their lives to care for us and to care for our loved ones. They deserve respect—respect not only in words, but in actions. Bill 200 is a simple action we can take to respect those workers, and all workers, in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Schreiner has moved second reading of Bill 200, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 101(i), the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House, but I will look to the member. Perhaps he has selected a different committee?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I'd recommend general government, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the majority of the House that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government? Agreed. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

All matters relating to private members' public business have now been completed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SITUATION IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I move that the House take note of the ongoing situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 91.

I recognize Ms. Khanjin.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I rise today to participate in this first take-note debate, to discuss a very important conscience issue that we are discussing. It is a matter of great importance because it is about international peace. Of course, international affairs are not the domain of this Parliament; however, any contribution by this House or by other bodies that promote peace is within our domain.

The issue is of great importance also to both Armenian and Azeri diasporas living in Ontario. As someone like myself who was born in the former USSR, not born in Canada, but also someone who is Jewish, I know the sense of connection that diaspora populations feel with their ancestral countries.

Tonight, as we participate in this take-note debate on the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh, I wish to begin by pointing out that there are no easy answers or quick fixes to settle historic disputes. But there is an obvious first step: There must be an immediate cessation of all hostilities.

Speaker, I would like to further outline why having this debate is not only the business of the House, but important business of this House. I start off by quoting a Lutheran pastor from Germany. He is noted for his opposition to Hitler. In fact, he spent several years in a concentration camp. Today, his words are better known than his name. His words are as follows:

"First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

"Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.

"Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

"Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me."

Those words also appear in Yad Vashem, a Holocaust museum in Israel, and in memorials and museums around the world. This poem and many things demonstrate the importance of peace and to speak up for one another.

They also demonstrate what conservative philosopher Edmund Burke is quoted as having said: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Mr. Speaker, I think it's upon us to not do nothing, but to do something.

I want to use some of my time to address human rights. Everyone, regardless of where they are from, has certain universal and certain fundamental rights. These rights are natural law. They do not derive from man-made law. They are inherent. They are, however, written down from time to time. For example, in the English common law tradition, they appear in the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights of 1689.

It's appropriate that we talk about the Magna Carta. One of my mentors and a predecessor in my riding of Innisfil, Julia Munro, very much strived to entrench the Magna Carta and create a Magna Carta Day, and of course we are honouring her in this House by doing so. What did the Magna Carta do, and what do we honour and what do we remember, but what it stood for? The Magna Carta was instrumental in placing limits on the monarch's power to overrule the law and protect the rights of ordinary people, so it's very important that we remember it today.

On this continent, the US Declaration of Independence speaks of "unalienable rights." In this country, the Canadian Bill of Rights was introduced by the Diefenbaker government. The Bill of Rights preceded the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by more than 20 years. It says that "in Canada there have existed and shall continue to exist" certain rights. The first enumerated right: "the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property, and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law."

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized in its preamble that "inalienable rights" are the "foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that peace itself is also a human right. People—all people—have the right to live in peace. If we accept that people everywhere have a right to live in peace, then we must accept that the violation of that peace is a crime.

Our international order is predicated on the sovereignty of states. Sovereign states have the right to govern themselves. Presently, there's the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. There's a dispute over who is sovereign. I'm not here to answer that question, but I'm here to listen and to discuss that question.

The South Caucasus lands between Persia, Turkey and Russia have been subject to wars in the past. It may be idealistic, but those who perpetuate crimes, whether it be the man who robs the corner store in Ontario or those who engage in acts of war, must be denounced where possible, and they must be punished.

In 2004, the House of Commons passed a motion that stated “That this House acknowledge the Armenian genocide of 1915 and condemn this act as a crime against humanity.” The House of Commons took that action to acknowledge genocide, a war crime, to let the world know that people are paying attention, just as we are here today. We’re having this debate, and we are paying attention.

Speaker, I fervently hope for a resolution to this conflict and for lasting peace. I look forward to the remarks by others in this House. I know that today we are marking history by making sure that we do stand up for peace and we condemn all violent crimes and actions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Black Creek—

Interjection: Humber River–Black Creek.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):—Humber River–Black Creek. I knew I’d get it.

1810

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you, Speaker. Today, I rise and speak in Ontario’s first-ever take-note debate. I believe the matter to be urgent and just, and certainly no debate, as we all stand united in calling for an end to violence and condemning the deaths of civilians.

Speaker, while we discuss this matter today, on the other side of the world, within the Nagorno-Karabakh region, known to Armenians as the Republic of Artsakh, bombs drop, bullets fly and families are being ripped apart, literally.

For centuries, Armenians have made up more than 95% of the population of this region. In 1992, the people living in the region voted by referendum to become an independent state, but this declaration was rejected by Azerbaijan. The area was in conflict until 1994, when a cease-fire and de facto border was established. More than 30,000 people were killed during this conflict.

Since this time, the people of this region have lived autonomously and by self-governance, but small skirmishes would erupt from time to time. On September 27, fighting resumed. Amnesty International and other observers have verified that Azerbaijani forces targeted civilian areas in the capital of Artsakh, Stepanakert, with prohibited weaponry. Stepanakert, a city of 50,000 people, has been under fire since October 2.

In the words of Denis Krivosheev, Amnesty International’s acting head of eastern Europe and central Asia, “The use of cluster bombs in any circumstances is banned under international humanitarian law, so their use to attack civilian areas is particularly dangerous and will only lead to further deaths and injuries.

“Cluster bombs are inherently indiscriminate weapons, and their deployment in residential areas is absolutely appalling and unacceptable. As fighting continues to escalate, civilians must be protected, not deliberately targeted or recklessly endangered.”

Since this time, civilian areas continue to be targeted by massive firepower, military drones and internationally prohibited weaponry, hitting homes, infrastructure, cultural and religious sites, schools, hospitals and more. In fact, as reporters covered the damage of a recently targeted

19th-century cathedral, a second attack occurred in the presence of the journalists while they reported live.

Speaker, the Armenian people have endured unspeakable horrors throughout history. Their trauma is still raw. At the peak of World War I, the Ottoman Empire forcibly expelled and massacred Armenians in immense numbers. By the 1920s, up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed, with many more displaced. Consider that the population today of Armenia is just over 3 million people.

These are just some of the recounted horrors Armenians have faced: People were taken from their homes and marched across the Mesopotamian desert to their deaths. They weren’t given food, water, or even clothing. Those who didn’t die on the way were housed in camps in the desert where many starved to death, and many others were massacred. Armenians were targeted by kill squads, who drowned them, threw them off cliffs, crucified them and burned them alive. Children were stolen from families and given away, never to be seen again. Women were raped, many forced into harems. And the now-empty homes of those families experiencing these atrocities were seized.

This has been named a genocide. Canada has recognized it as such, Ontario has recognized it as such, and it has been reaffirmed multiple times through legislation, speeches and more. The Armenian community, a people who have suffered so brutally here, there, are reaching out, desperately calling for an end to this hostility. Many have already lost loved ones, be it friends or family, and every day, more are displaced, injured and killed.

The international community must urgently intervene to provide humanitarian aid and bring an immediate end to this destruction and death. Peaceful negotiations must resume. We stand in solidarity with all victims of this conflict.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: It is an honour to rise tonight to speak on this important matter. I also want to thank the members in the House tonight for their willingness to speak and make their voices heard.

As someone who comes from a war-torn country, I know all too well how important it is for victims of war and state-sanctioned violence to find moral and political support in the Houses of the democratic nations and the Parliaments around the world. That is why I felt compelled to speak on this matter tonight.

As many of you know, I am a political refugee from Sri Lanka. When I was a university student, I witnessed the horror of civil war and the breakdown of my country of birth. I have seen what happens when a government sends its military and paramilitary forces to brutalize, oppress and slaughter its own citizens. I have seen and walked across too many bodies. If that experience taught me anything, it is that when you defend freedom, democracy, peace and human rights, you have a moral obligation to speak out against those who would violate these principles. We cannot sit silent when people around the world are suffering under the yoke of oppression, ethnic hatred and state-sponsored violence.

Mr. Speaker, I am passionate about this because my principles are rooted in human rights and standing up for

those who have no voice. This is especially true for the women and children who are often the victims of brutal war. I am deeply concerned that if we fail to speak out, if we fail to secure peace, the events unfolding in Nagorno-Karabakh could become much worse—not only for Armenia and Azerbaijan, but for the entire region.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is more than three decades old. Two former Soviet republics, Azerbaijan and Armenia, fought bitterly over the decades for control of this land. The small population of ethnic Armenians who live there, who lived there for generations, consider it their homeland. On December 10, 1991, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh overwhelmingly voted in favour of independence from Azerbaijan to exercise their right to self-determination. The Indigenous Armenian population call it the Republic of Artsakh. Unfortunately, Azerbaijan, as well as many countries in the international community, refuse to acknowledge Artsakh as an independent state or country.

Since 1988, tens of thousands of people have died and hundreds of thousands have been displaced, forced to flee, or have lost their homes and their livelihoods. While there has been sporadic fighting since the first full-scale war ended in 1994, I am deeply concerned, given the recent events, that we are looking at another full-scale war erupting in the region.

On September 27, Azerbaijan violated the 1994 ceasefire agreement in an unprovoked offensive on Artsakh. Reports indicate that well over a thousand people have already died. It is possibly much higher than this. Using weapons and equipment supplied by the Republic of Turkey, Armenia has been under remorseless bombardment by Azerbaijani fighter jets, heavy artillery and drone strikes. Residential areas such as schools and other civilian infrastructure in Artsakh have been bombed and destroyed. Perhaps as many as 90,000 people out of the only 150,000 Armenians who live there have sought refuge in Armenia or are internally displaced. The capital city of Stepanakert has been bombed daily for the last three weeks. Most of the families still living there have fled or are living in underground shelters.

It is nothing less than a gross violation of human rights and international law for Azerbaijani forces, with military aid and support from Turkey, to subject this small republic to such violence. On Turkey's involvement in the conflict, I want to thank our federal partners and the Minister of Foreign Affairs for suspending exports of Canadian drone technology to Turkey shortly after the fighting broke out. The Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drone uses a sophisticated target acquisition sensor manufactured right here in Ontario. That drone is being used to kill innocent civilians as we speak.

A suspension, however, is not enough. I call on the government of Canada to ban any further exports of military hardware to Turkey so long as those weapons of war are being used against innocent civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, footage and photographs have emerged over the past few weeks since the conflict started, possibly implicating Azerbaijani military personnel in war crimes.

In one incident, two POWs were beaten, verbally humiliated and executed. A disabled man, along with his elderly mother and caregiver, were marked out and murdered. Perhaps most shocking, Azerbaijani soldiers beheaded an Armenian soldier and taunted the victim's family by posting a photo of his decapitated head on social media.

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This shocking execution follows the emergence of video footage that appears to show Jihadist groups fighting on the front lines against the Armenian forces. That Jihadists are now in Azerbaijan to terrorize the Armenian population is undeniable.

Multiple reports from France, the United States and elsewhere have confirmed that Turkey has brought in or hired foreign Jihadist fighters from Syria and Libya to fight against Artsakh. Mr. Speaker, this is incredibly worrying. We don't know how many foreign fighters there may be in Azerbaijan, in Artsakh or Armenia proper. We know what such forces are capable of and the unspeakable violence and terror they bring to innocent civilians.

Mr. Speaker, it must be stated that Armenians have every right to raise the alarm bells over concerns of genocide and ethnic cleansing. During and after the First World War, one and a half million Armenians were killed by the Ottoman Empire in one of the worst genocides of the 20th century. To this day, Turkey still denies it committed genocide against its Armenian minority population. This is completely and totally unacceptable.

Leaders in the Armenian community are warning me that they are genuinely concerned about ethnic cleansing if Azerbaijan and Turkish-backed Jihadis capture Artsakh. Mr. Speaker, so where do we go from here?

The OSCE Minsk Group, which was created in 1992 by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe to encourage a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, has largely failed. Repeated calls from the international community for peace have failed to end the conflict. Two recent ceasefire attempts have failed to bring about peace. The foreign affairs ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan are scheduled to meet independently with the United States Secretary of State later this week.

Given that this conflict has raged for over three decades and shows no signs of ending any time soon, we need to ask ourselves: What is the path to peace? What will truly bring about a lasting peace for these two communities?

Mr. Speaker, we know that bullets, bombs and guns are not the answer. That is not the path to peace. Shuttle diplomacy, middle power politics and other mechanisms of international relations are temporary fixes. But that is not enough. The Canadian Armenian community tell me they want peace. They desperately want a resolution to this conflict that has torn apart thousands of lives and has left the region in a state of constant instability.

Mr. Speaker, when I was forced to leave under threat of persecution, I landed first in Europe, but I chose to come to Canada. I came to this beautiful country because of the values this wonderful nation is built on: a nation that is built upon democratic freedoms, a deep respect for human rights and a genuine desire to see peace, harmony and love

in the world. That is what I found when I arrived here more than 30 years ago.

In closing, I firmly believe that Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Artsakh have the right to live and coexist as sovereign nations. If the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh wishes to live as a separate nation state and country, they have that right do so. Self-determination is a human right, and we must say loudly and clearly that it must not come at the cost of fear, violence or threats of bombs and terror.

Mr. Speaker, the path to peace—

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Right now, the world is watching a human rights crisis unfold. People are worried about the ongoing conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, also known as Artsakh, and its devastating impact—the loss of life, the pain, the suffering. We need an end to this conflict immediately. Thousands of Armenians call Ontario home, and they're scared right now. They're anxious. They're worried about their loved ones right now who are being impacted in that region.

There are brutal reports of violence coming from Nagorno-Karabakh, accounts of schools and hospitals being attacked, of civilians being injured and killed. Amnesty International and other observers have even reported on the use of cluster bombs by Azerbaijan. The use of these bombs by Azerbaijan is appalling. Cluster bombs kill recklessly. They maim indiscriminately. These bombs are banned under international humanitarian laws. Their use must be unequivocally condemned.

Imagine the horror of being here in Ontario as your family and loved ones are facing these kinds of abuses so far away. And for Armenians, this conflict is particularly painful because their community has already survived a genocide. In 1915, the Turkish Ottoman Empire enacted a campaign of genocide and violence against Armenian people. This systematic campaign of violence resulted in the death of as many as 1.5 million Armenians. To put it into perspective, the entire population of Armenia today is around three million people.

I was young when I first learned about the Armenian genocide. It was through the music of System of a Down, an Armenian American music band, that I learned about the injustices that the Armenian people have faced.

The Armenian genocide was horrific, and the accounts of what happened are unimaginably brutal. Armenians were displaced from their homes and forced to march across the Mesopotamian desert without food or water. Marchers were frequently stripped down and forced to walk naked and march until they either dropped dead, or they were shot if they stopped. The Turkish Ottoman Empire organized killing squads where Armenians would be drowned, would be thrown off cliffs, would be crucified, would be burned alive. There were campaigns of sexual violence where women were raped or forced to serve as sexual slaves.

To add insult to injury, for decades, this genocide was not recognized around the world. It was only because of

the hard work of Armenian activists and leaders, who campaigned globally, that this genocide became recognized—including Canada, which recognized the Armenian genocide in 2004. That's why it's so important to not only remember the Armenian genocide but to continue to educate and create awareness around it and to make sure that Armenians are protected across the world. We must work to ensure that we never have another genocide against the Armenian people, not in 2020, not ever. This is only possible by ensuring the safety of Armenians across the world.

The security of the Armenian people in Nagorno-Karabakh is only possible if they have access to the rights and freedoms that are inalienable to every single human being: to life, to liberty, to freedom and to the ability to determine their own destiny as a community—the right to pursue self-determination.

We must never remain silent when there is injustice. We must never remain silent when there is injustice anywhere in this world. We must be brave, we must be courageous, to speak truth to power and to stand up against tyranny. I stand with the call for an immediate end to hostilities and a permanent solution for peace and safety in the region.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you for this opportunity to speak on this important issue. Since I heard the sad news about the military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, it is heartbreaking to see civilians injured, losing their loved ones, living under fear, their churches and other cultural heritage architecture being targeted.

1830

My riding, Don Valley North, is the home of many Armenian Canadians. I have been to many of their functions, whether it is their summer festival, their Christmas celebration or their annual genocide commemoration. Their community centre in Don Valley North is a place where everyone enjoys peace and love.

Back in history, the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia from 1991 to 1994 resulted in 30,000 deaths and nearly a million refugees displaced from their homes. It's a heavy price to pay for the region and people. We don't want this sad history repeated. I urge world leaders to work together to call on Azerbaijani and Armenian authorities in Armenia proper and in Nagorno-Karabakh to agree to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire.

I am deeply concerned with the aggression Azerbaijan started on September 27 and the violation of the 1994 ceasefire established between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

On behalf of the mourning Armenian Canadians in Don Valley North, I also call for any external party to cease their involvement in dangerous escalation of the violence. Stay out, stop war messaging; stop fuelling the conflict at the cost of shedding blood and losing lives.

As there is never a military solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, for the lasting peace and calm of the region, Armenia is ready to return to the negotiation table. The international community should use every possible influence to convince Azerbaijan authorities to return to

the negotiation table without precondition. In this regard, I commend our federal government's decision to suspend exports of drone optics and laser targeting systems to Turkey in response to reports that they are being used by the Azerbaijani military against Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.

International humanitarian law applies, in its entirety, to international armed conflicts. All the parties to the armed conflict are legally bound by the rules of customary international humanitarian law. The key rules are the distinction between civilians and those taking a direct part in hostilities, and between civilian and military objects. Deliberate attacks and indiscriminate attacks on civilians are prohibited. Therefore, any attack on civilians is a criminal act, completely unacceptable, and must be stopped immediately.

Also, on behalf the mourning Armenian Canadians in my riding, I condemn any deliberate shelling that targets cultural properties; as it is defined in article 1 of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property, for the purposes of the convention, irrespective of origin or ownership, as "(a) movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular."

A 19th-century building, the Holy Saviour Cathedral, Ghazanchetsots, an iconic site for the Armenian Apostolic Church, have all been targeted and completely knocked down during the conflict. I strongly urge both parties in this conflict to comply with international law to respect and protect cultural property. Two reporters with the French newspaper *Le Monde* and other journalists were injured when covering the conflict.

Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions clearly states measures of protection for journalists: "They shall be protected as such under the conventions and this protocol, provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians."

Also, as per the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia appeals decision, it concludes that journalists working in war zones serve "a public interest" because they "play a vital role in bringing to the attention of the international community the horrors and reality of conflict."

Therefore, I stand alongside with the European Federation of Journalists to call on the authorities in both countries to ensure the safety of journalists covering the conflict and to prevent any act of violence against members of the media.

On August 1 this year, cluster bombs were banned internationally by the Convention on Cluster Munitions, due to severe damage and death to civilians and children. According to the charity Handicap International, 98% of the victims of cluster bombs are civilians, while nearly one third are children. Many of these cluster bombs remain unexploded after an attack and can kill civilians for years.

According to Amnesty International, its experts found that Azerbaijan had likely used the cluster bombs in the region. I firmly condemn any usage of cluster bombs.

I am deeply concerned by the large scale of military action. Experts warn that this conflict could turn into a humanitarian catastrophe. For many people across the globe, including the families and friends of Armenians living in Don Valley North, the escalating aggression threatens the lives of Armenians, and they are terrified and dreadfully worried for their relatives.

I would like to call on all international leaders to douse the fire before it leads to a wider war. It is a complex issue in the region that requires a comprehensive solution. I urge both parties to solve the issue through negotiation and find political resolution instead of engaging in war, which will cause thousands of people to lose their lives and to become even more displaced. I would also call on both parties to respect the ceasefire, end the hostility and protect civilians.

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

1840

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I rise today with a heavy heart. I rise to condemn the unsanctioned aggression of Azerbaijan against the Republic of Armenia, and remain extremely concerned that Azerbaijan is ignoring the United Nations calls for an immediate ceasefire. I know the government of Canada continues to work extremely hard with all of our allies to put an end to the violence, and has encouraged all sides to engage in dialogue and to find a peaceful resolution. Prime Minister Trudeau has urged Turkey, a United Nations Security Council member, to use its influence to bring the parties to the table to resolve the conflict peacefully, and not to participate in the violent conflict. I echo the calls of the Prime Minister to find a peaceful resolution to the ongoing Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict.

Conflicts are best resolved at the negotiating table, not on the battlefield, where the human cost is incalculable. Tonight, while many Ontarians and Canadians are worried about the lasting effects of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic and how they can stay safe, those fears are compounded for the families who are worried about their loved ones on the other side of the world—worried about the effects of the conflict, what displacement could mean during a pandemic and praying for an end to the violence. I pray with them. I've heard these concerns first-hand from many of the thousands of Armenian Canadians in the diaspora who call Ontario home. Numerous members of the vibrant Armenian community live in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, and they've contacted me to express their deep concern.

In the midst of a global pandemic, Azerbaijan broke the terms of the 1994 ceasefire agreement and launched an unprovoked military attack on Artsakh, or Nagorno-Karabakh. This conflict has seen its aggressors actively seeking non-military targets, including civilians and journalists. Since the conflict began, the death toll across the region continues to climb, with civilian casualties and displacements growing as well. Parents have not been able to gather and bury their dead. Our collective humanity must rise to insist upon a peaceful and just resolution.

Even freedom of the press and journalists themselves have been attacked, with Azerbaijan restricting foreign

journalists, while Artsakh and Armenia have invited them to cover the conflict. Since the start of the conflict, Azerbaijan blocked media platforms like Facebook and YouTube. Azerbaijan has targeted journalists in Artsakh and injured at least seven journalists. On October 2, Azerbaijan targeted a minibus of foreign and Armenian journalists.

Further worrisome is that Azerbaijan has committed aggressions within the internationally recognized borders of Armenia. The threat on the Armenian people in these attacks cannot be overstated, given their history in the region. In 1915, Ottoman Turkey perpetuated the Armenian genocide and massacred an estimated 1.5 million people. The parallels between 1915 and the current conflicts are concerning. While the numbers are much smaller, there are 150,000 people remaining in their historic lands in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Repeated xenophobic remarks have been made by the leaders of Azerbaijan and Turkey. There have been violent Armenophobic comments by Azerbaijan's diaspora on the Internet, often including threats of wholesale death to Armenians.

Armenians are concerned that severe Armenophobia in Azerbaijan will lead to ethnic cleansing if the Armenian defence line in Artsakh falls. This is something that we cannot stand for, not now, not ever. It could happen. We have to conceive of that, that all 150,000 people will die on their historic lands. Will we stand by and let this happen with the eyes of the world and our country upon it?

I will emphasize how important it is for Canada and for our allies around the world that there are efforts for a de-escalation of violence in the region and that the terms of the ceasefire be respected immediately so the people of Nagorno-Karabakh can rebuild their lives, their cities and live peacefully and justly in their historic lands.

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

Hon. Rod Phillips: I want to begin this evening by saying that I'm truly saddened to see the loss of life, destruction of homes and return of tyranny to Artsakh, a region that has strived to live freely and democratically for the last 30 years.

As a part-time student of history, I recall, as I'm sure many of you do, as though it was yesterday, the sense of hope that came with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ensuing breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. This brought liberation to millions of people around the world from the tyrannical communist rule of the former Soviet Union. Sadly, failed communist policies continue to cause violence, loss of life and damage to millions of people in that part of the world to this day. Most recently, the escalation of violence between Armenia and Azerbaijan over territorial control of Artsakh has reignited conflict that has not healed in the almost 30 years since the end of Soviet domination of that region.

Stalinist-era policies continue to play a role in the violent conflict between countries that once lived under Stalin's tyrannical rule. Artsakh is an example of a land that was awarded to one Soviet republic over another by the communist dictator to ensure that ethnic cohesion did

not destabilize his control over the vast territory that he ruled. Stalin's policies continue to be a source of conflict in this region and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union.

Since September 27, thousands of Armenians and Azerbaijani citizens have found themselves homeless, facing the realities of war and deeply afraid for what the future might hold if this senseless violence continues.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to call many from this part of the world friends. I have many dear friends from Ontario's Armenian community. In particular, I want to acknowledge Aris Babikian, Ontario's first MPP from Armenian background, who represents Scarborough-Agincourt; Harout Matossian, president of the Armenian National Committee of Toronto, who continues to demonstrate Ontario spirit through the COVID-19 crisis as he produces hand sanitizers; and Sevag Belian, executive director of the Armenian national council, a powerful advocate for his community.

Since this conflict began, all those affected have been vocal that the war has been a deeply troubling experience for the many people who now call Ontario home. I want to reassure all of those in Ontario affected by the war that we stand with them in this difficult time and that we will continue to speak out against the horrific violence being committed in their country of origin.

Reports of bombings of civilian communities, homes, houses of worship and businesses in this conflict are not only alarming but truly reprehensible. I strongly condemn all of the violence against those who cannot defend themselves. I hope that despite this conflict, civilian life can be respected.

Mr. Speaker, I know that many in our province are reflecting upon this conflict being fought so far away. We know that human rights and the rule of law have always been at the core of our democratic values here in Ontario. For generations, we have played host to people from around the world escaping oppression and dictatorships. I know of thousands of people who escaped Soviet rule and made Ontario home, and their contributions to this province are truly amazing. In fact, even in our own caucus, the members from York Centre and Barrie-Innisfil both came to Ontario from the Soviet Union in search of freedom and democracy. Ontario has flourished because of our tolerance and because of our acceptance of diversity.

1850

I urge all sides involved in this conflict to immediately end further violence and negotiate a peaceful resolution to this increasingly alarming war. Conflict and violence will not solve the problems facing the region today. I pray that peace and tranquility return to Artsakh once more, and hopefully that all sides involved in this conflict can resolve their disputes without further violence.

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: As a strong believer in parliamentary democracy, it's an honour for me to participate in our chamber's very first take-note debate. It is my hope that this new forum for discussion will help to raise awareness of issues and encourage informed dialogue across party lines.

Today I rise to discuss an issue that is especially important to Canadians of Armenian and Azeri heritage: the ongoing conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh. Much of the world rightfully celebrated the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. And while we may have hoped that the retreat of communism would have allowed for freedom and liberty to advance, this has not been realized in all parts of the earth. For some regions, the fall of the Soviet Union has led to instability and, unfortunately, violence. Indeed, some actors have used this instability to advance their own aggression.

Over 100 years ago, after the Armenian genocide, the Turkish denial of history and the failure of the current president, Erdoğan, to sincerely pursue reconciliation with Armenians has sown profound distrust between Armenians and Turks. Throughout the arc of his tenure, the president's main obsession has been the reanimation of the Ottoman Empire, and not the integrity of NATO and our critical rules-based alliances. The history rears its head once again in the plight Armenians continue to face in this region. Over 700 Armenians now lie among the dead since late September, as we near the end of the first months of these advanced military clashes.

This is not the first time this region has been touched by violence. As you will remember, Armenia and Azerbaijan went to war over the Nagorno-Karabakh in the late 1980s, and that conflict lasted until ceasefire agreement was finally reached in the mid-1990s. No one knows for certain just how many thousands of soldiers and thousands of civilians on both sides died during that six-year war. But we do know that it resulted in the forced displacement of over one million people, and now the violence has restarted.

With the return of violence in this region, what happens next is crucial, for both sides must either seek to de-escalate the situation, or we risk re-entering an extended period of conflict that will only cause human harm. If we work towards a peaceful solution, then we can hope for a free and democratic people, a prosperous future for the people of this region.

The conflict has been reignited in part because of Turkey's actions, attacks on fundamental freedoms and attacks on the human dignity of innocent citizens. There can only be total moral clarity in this moment. If Turkish forces are to invade in Armenia or disrupt and evoke the horrors of over a century ago to attack the Armenian people within this region, it will be reckless and create even more fragility at a time of needed mediation.

As was noted earlier, we do not forget the Armenian genocide. We do not forget the horrors that took place 105 years ago. Canada has a role to play in this process, and I will note and call on the federal government to support the right of self-determination of those peoples, of those Armenian peoples, and to use its considerable soft-power influence for peace and to make it clear to Turkey, a fellow member of NATO, that its support for Azerbaijan is dangerous and has the power to turn this conflict into a much larger geopolitical war.

Speaker, as parliamentarians, I'm sure that nearly all of us in this chamber have attended a remembrance

ceremony for the Armenian genocide. Many draw parallels between the Ottoman Empire's actions against the Armenians and the later genocides committed by Hitler, Stalin and so many dictators of this earth.

If there is ever to be reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia, it can only start with Turkey stepping away from this conflict, so we deplore the threats—I deplore the threats—by a politically embattled Azerbaijani president that only a military solution can be arrived at. We must call upon the international community to ensure the territorial integrity of Armenia and the rights of those Armenians living within Nagorno-Karabakh.

It is time for peace and time for negotiation, and we stand with Armenians and their inalienable human rights to live in peace and freedom. We stand for the sovereignty of their country, and we condemn the ongoing provocations that threaten a very fragile ceasefire. We deplore the threat of a politically embattled president, as noted, and make the case as one country making clear that avoiding conflict and avoiding death is the only way forward for both countries. We call upon all parties to participate in meaningful negotiation, de-escalate a dangerous conflict and protect the lives of all citizens.

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

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Good evening to all of my colleagues. Speaker, it is always a great privilege to stand before this House and speak, but especially so this evening.

I'm incredibly excited about the inclusion of this new debate arrangement. I believe that the take-note debate format has the potential to provide all of our members with a broader general perspective on several important issues affecting people all over the world. Perhaps this is hopeless idealism, but not only do I hope that this new format can help keep our members informed about important issues; I also hope that it can help to bring more context to our own problems and differences in this House. After all, we are all incredibly lucky to live in Canada.

When we consider the countries around our world that are still riven by constant conflict—in some cases, centuries-old conflicts—we should reflect on our good fortune. We should be humble, be thankful, and perhaps, if I may suggest, adjust our thinking. Maybe we do not always have to disagree. Maybe we can occasionally reach accord, especially given that we have up until now been afforded more peace and more freedom than our fellow humans in many other countries. We as Canadians should be able to stand together for peace and together for freedom, and what I am speaking to this evening is certainly an opportunity to do just that.

As I recently mentioned in this House, I am deeply proud of my Greek heritage. Greeks have contributed innumerable treasures to the world, gems in terms of philosophy, art, culture and even cuisine. However, our crowning achievement is the birth of democracy. It was in the nursery of Athens that democracy grew its first delicate buds. The ancient Greeks germinated this idea, an idea that has thankfully spread worldwide and, to my mind, is the defining hallmark of any fair and just society. I say this

because while democracies may differ, they all contain one unassailable truth: A nation's destiny is not in the hands of those who lead but in the hearts of those who vote. Democracy means that the citizenry—not the politicians—are the ultimate arbiters of a nation's future, and it is their vote and their say that matters.

As privileged and as powerful as politicians all over the world may be, we would all do well to remember this essential truth: We are servants of the people's will. The people choose their fate. They alone have the final say on their lives, and the government of Azerbaijan would do well to remember this.

Speaker, the history of the Transcaucasian region is long and it is bloody. Consequently, the history of Artsakh, or Nagorno-Karabakh, is incredibly complicated. Whether as part of Armenia or not, whether as part of the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid Empire, the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union, this region has seen repeated conflicts and territorial disputes for centuries. It is a region that has struggled to experience sustained periods of peace, stability and independence.

I'd like to state one fact for the record: Artsakh is populated almost entirely by Armenians, Armenians who in 1991 voted through an elected government in a referendum to declare their independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. But they were not alone in this. So, too, did others. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine declared their independence. So too did Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and others. Azerbaijan did not recognize this plebiscite and did not recognize this essential assertion of the right to self-governance, even though they, too, declared their independence following the Soviet Union's fall.

1900

And so began yet another bloody war, a war that resulted in the deaths of thousands of Azerbaijani and Armenian peoples and displaced more than a million people; a war that, in truth, achieved very little.

Following the war and the ceasefire agreement, the status quo was that the people of Artsakh were living as a de facto independent state, albeit one that has received very little international recognition. Skirmishes aside, that ceasefire stood, although at times somewhat unsteadily, from 1994 until 2020.

It should be noted that many commentators have raised questions about the timing of this new conflict. We now inhabit a world consumed by managing the coronavirus pandemic. For every country in the world right now, the focus is squarely on tackling this challenge. Since day one, the media has given the pandemic around-the-clock, front-and-centre coverage. I don't think it's unreasonable to wonder if this conflict was initiated by the Azerbaijani government at a time when the international community might be otherwise occupied and may not pay attention. Arguably, with the world's concentration elsewhere, perhaps such a cynical and self-interested power play may not generate much notice or sympathy for those who bear the brunt.

I think it's fair to draw a parallel between the aggression we've recently seen in Artsakh with what has recently

transpired in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong we witnessed, quite unambiguously, that those who want to live in peace, without harassment, without the threat of arbitrary detention, suddenly found their rights jeopardized by a larger and more dominant power—quite conveniently during an unprecedented time in our world.

Right now Armenians living in Artsakh, like their ancestors before them, find themselves yet again the victims of an unjust war. As things stand, over 700 Artsakh and Armenian troops have died and 30 civilians have died. These are needless deaths. What's more, it is estimated that Azerbaijani forces targeted 6,000 pieces of Armenian infrastructure and civilian sites. People have fled the capital of Artsakh in droves, and those who remain now mostly live in underground bunkers while gunfire, ballistic missiles and drones fly overhead.

Various media outlets have reported that some of these drones use Canadian technology, which has prompted the federal government to suspend military drone exports to Turkey. During this new conflict, Azerbaijani authorities have restricted the free movement of international journalists within their borders or have gone as far as to assign minders to journalists to monitor and report on their findings.

I call on the Azerbaijani President, Ilham Aliyev, to cease all aggression towards the people of Artsakh. And I call on Prime Minister Erdoğan to stop all shipments of weapons and military equipment from Turkey to the Azerbaijani military, and to instead take up a role as peacemaker in this conflict. Prime Minister Erdoğan must change course drastically and swiftly as his role here is one of facilitating destruction, and he does so while taking bolder and bolder steps towards war with Greece as well. This will not stand.

It is also noted that the population of Artsakh is 99% Christian, with 98% of the population belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Both Erdoğan and Aliyev are carrying out a targeted attack on this Christian community, and we know that this is no coincidence.

One thing is clear, Speaker: The people of Artsakh have spoken through democratic means, and their voices should be heard. It is inconceivable to me that the results of a referendum, such as the one that took place in 1991, should have no validity. This must be the central foundation upon which any negotiated settlement is built.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, I'm proud of my Greek heritage. I'm sure no one in this House is surprised that, as a Greek, I share an affinity with the Armenian people. Greeks and Armenians have deep cultural, religious and historic bonds. Ours are ancient civilizations that have peacefully coexisted through mutual respect, recognition and assistance. Following the Soviet Union's fall, Greece was one of the first countries to recognize Armenia's independence formally. Since that time, the Greek government has signed several treaties with Armenia, thereby further legitimizing Armenia's standing as a nation in its own right and strengthening the Armenian-Greek relationship.

But these are not the only ties that bind Greece and Armenia together. We have a shared history of bloodshed

and sorrow. Greece and Armenia have both experienced historical struggles against oppression. Both Armenians and Greeks have been the victims of organized violent riots aimed at the massacre or expulsion of our ethnic and religious groups, and have suffered genocide at the hands of the Ottoman Empire—genocides that still, to this day, are denied by Turkish authorities but recognized around the world as atrocities. Indeed, the Canadian government formally recognizes the Armenian genocide, and marks April as Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month and has designated April 24 as Armenian Genocide Memorial Day.

Additionally, although I have never mentioned this before in this House, my paternal great-grandmother was Armenian. She fled Armenia for Greece and married my Greek great-grandfather. And so my heritage is one of these two great nations that have given so much to the modern world, but are constantly under attack by forces that wish to exterminate them.

As we watch the events unfold in Artsakh, we must not forget the historical context in which they arose. We should take cognizance of the fact that the weaponry in use today is incredibly advanced and more deadly, and there is a significant threat of escalation in this region. This must be avoided at all costs.

I will end not with my words, but with those of Elizabeth Kandaharian, a grade 11 student at A.R.S Armenian private school who lives in Markham, right above Scarborough.

Elizabeth says, “October is Holy Translator’s month for Armenians. This month, as a Canadian Armenian student, we celebrate the founding of the Armenian alphabet by St. Mesrop Masdotz in 405 AD. Amaras Monastery is located in the village of Sos which is in the Martuni province of the Republic of Artsakh. Today, Martuni is under attack by Azerbaijan with the help of Jihadist terrorists and Turkey who have vowed to destroy the Armenians of Artsakh. Other cities and towns falling under Azerbaijani control have witnessed war crimes, ethnic cleansing and vandalism. As 90,000 of the 150,000 Armenians of Artsakh have been internally displaced, the safety and security of the people of Artsakh is under threat, and so is our cultural heritage.... We ask that you celebrate the Holy Translator’s month with us and become a voice to condemn Azerbaijan for its aggression, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing and the targeting of our religious and cultural sites such as the Amaras Monastery. If we allow Azerbaijan to continue its war”—

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight. In Ontario, we cherish diversity, inclusion and peaceful coexistence. We understand the importance of protecting human rights, promoting tolerance and upholding the rule of law. Canadians take pride in championing our peaceful, progressive and multicultural mosaic.

As many of you in the room know well, the importance of a collective commitment made by officials of peace-

loving nations willing to work together to combat hate, intolerance and injustice is a fundamental tenet of civilized society. After all, it is this very commitment made by Canadians long ago that encouraged many families, including mine, to seek a better life and settle in this great province of Ontario.

Enshrined in our Constitution, these fundamental rights and responsibilities of a modern democracy are not, however, unilaterally adopted and respected by others. As civic leaders in Ontario, it is incumbent on elected officials to espouse these very tenets of democracy and uphold their sanctity.

Over the last century, Canada has opened its doors repeatedly to those fleeing persecution, genocide and ethnic cleansing. Canada’s history books are replete with peacekeeping missions and humanitarianism for the disenfranchised. Our collective voice has improved the lives of many such people, and they remain eternally grateful.

One such group of Ontarians are the descendants of the Armenian survivors whose ancestors were victims of the 1915 Armenian genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks under the cover of World War I. Each year, I and many members of this assembly join many of you in front of Ontario’s Legislature to remember the 1.5 million innocent lives massacred, and pledge, never again.

The Georgetown Boys were a tangible expression of Canada’s first international humanitarian project. As Canadians learned of the atrocities, they organized relief efforts and lobbied the government to act. With the direct sponsorship of the Canadian and Ontario governments, these orphaned survivors were brought to safety in Georgetown, Ontario. Among the patrons to this noble initiative were the Toronto Roman Catholic archbishop and Anglican archdeacon, an Ontario Supreme Court justice and two Governors General, along with the participation of thousands of Canadians.

Today, more than a century later, the Armenian people are worried that history is repeating itself. While the world is preoccupied with the ravages of a deadly pandemic, Azerbaijani and Turkish military forces launched unprovoked, coordinated military offensives on ethnic Armenians. I share the Armenian community’s deep concern and anguish about the brutal violence being inflicted upon Nagorno-Karabakh, the growing number of civilian casualties, the indiscriminate bombing of schools, hospitals and places of worship and the mounting evidence of meddling of regional actors like Turkey.

1910

For thousands of years, the region of Nagorno-Karabakh was an integral part of Armenian territory. The vast majority of inhabitants of this land are ethnic Armenian. In 1994, a ceasefire was brokered, and international efforts to mediate the conflict have been ongoing. The ceasefire has been violated many times—with the recent outbreak of violence in July 2020, when Azerbaijan threatened to bomb Armenia’s civilian nuclear power plant. Rather than encouraging Azerbaijan to stop launching attacks, de-escalating violence and engaging in good-

faith negotiations, Turkey has ratcheted up tensions in the South Caucasus region, leaving hundreds of soldiers and civilians either dead or injured on both sides.

Clearly, Turkey's deliberate escalation of aggression in the South Caucasus is an existential threat to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. We call on Turkey to remove itself from the conflict and allow the OSCE Minsk Group mediators to de-escalate tensions and return to negotiations.

On a personal note, I just want to add my voice to all of the members in this chamber, many of us who have large Armenian communities and who have spent many, many Aprils with the community recognizing the Armenian genocide. I also want to thank all of the members of this Legislature for participating in this, the Ontario Legislature's first special debate in its history.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think it's only fitting that, as this debate comes to a conclusion, the first Armenian elected to office in this Legislature, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt—I now yield the floor to him.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you to all my colleagues for their support, for standing up in solidarity with the Armenian people in Ontario, Canada and all over the world. The Armenian people are going through very difficult times.

We are living 1915 all over again. My grandfather was a survivor of the first genocide. He lost six brothers and sisters and 40 immediate family members. Today, Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenians are going through the same experience, the same suffering.

A year ago, I was in Nagorno-Karabakh, which Armenians call Artsakh. I travelled with a Canadian delegation of elected officials from Ontario and Quebec to participate in a peace and dialogue conference organized by the foreign ministry of Nagorno-Karabakh. Their intention was to bring to the attention of the world that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh are yearning for peace. They want to live in peace on their ancestral homeland, where the principles of democracy, civil rights and the rule of law are cherished.

Today, when I look at the pictures that I took during the three-day trip that I went on, my heart bleeds. My heart bleeds that that beautiful city is completely destroyed. My colleagues more eloquently expressed or depicted what happened.

Today, once again, the Azeri and Turkish forces responded with brutal attack. They responded with military force that was unmatched. Today, military experts are saying that we are witnessing the first drone war in the world. The amount of drones that the Azeri and the Turkish forces are using is unparalleled in history. On one side, you have two major forces using 21st-century weapons, and on the other hand, you have peaceful residents trying to protect their homeland with, I would say, 19th-century equipment.

The Azeri and the Turkish forces use F-16s, drones, cluster bombs, Smerch-M heavy multiple rocket launchers, LORA ballistic missiles and Harop kamikaze drones.

They bombarded schools, hospitals and cultural centres. One of the cultural centres they bombarded—I already posted a comparison between a year ago and today on my Facebook. I was in that hall attending that conference, in the same hall, which is completely destroyed now.

It doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. Today, Turkey is sending, according to independent sources, between 3,000 to 4,000 Syrian mercenaries and Libyan mercenaries. They are paying them \$1,500 a month to go and fight and terrorize an innocent population.

It's not only that. Sometimes we Canadians here are living in such a great country that we keep saying: "Why should we be bothered with conflicts overseas?" Regardless of if it is overseas, thousands of miles away or here, it is all the same, because today the Turkish army and the Azeri army are using Bayraktar TB2 drones, which are supplied with Canadian technology. Canadian-manufactured acquisition sensors are bombarding indiscriminately the Armenians.

I'm afraid that if we do not stand up and condemn this act and stop the supply of military equipment to Turkey permanently, Canada might be drawn to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and war crimes, because we will be considered by the international community as accomplices to war crimes.

Just to quote one of the world's experts on the region—Thomas de Waal stated: "Armenia lacks incentives to launch military action now, Azerbaijan moved in first." He added, "For various reasons, Azerbaijan calculated that military action will win it something." This is a quote from an expert.

A large number of members of the International Association of Genocide Scholars issued a statement recently. They say: "Direct Turkish involvement in the decades-long conflict is thus no longer a threat that Armenians in Artsakh, Armenia and Turkey have had to fear, but a fact that threatens to annihilate Armenians in Artsakh and beyond. A recent statement issued by the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, read that they, Turkey, were going to"—they are quoting the Turkish president—"continue to fulfill the mission of their grandfathers, which was carried out a century ago in the Caucasus." This constitutes a direct threat of continuing the Armenian genocide that began in 1915."

The president further stated that "Turkey is ready to once more 'give a lesson' to Armenians, and that the 'deportation' of Armenians in 1915 was the most appropriate decision at the time." These are direct quotes.

Mr. Speaker, many Canadian intellectuals also signed the letter to the Prime Minister, asking him to condemn the Turkish action and condemning the Turkish-Azeri alliance. Among the signatories of this statement were Margaret Atwood; Robert Lantos; Deepa Mehta; Sarah Polley; Dr. William Schabas, international law expert; Andrew Coyne; Mychael Danna; and many others.

I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister recently and I brought to his attention the fact of the International Criminal Court. I also stated that Canada should take a

resolute stand. First of all, Turkey should be expelled from NATO, Turkey should be expelled from the G20 forum, and Presidents Erdoğan and Aliyev should be brought to the International Criminal Court for justice.

Also, I mentioned to him that if we do not act resolutely and if we do not stop this appeasement policy towards Turkey—Turkey is becoming a menace to world peace. My colleague already mentioned that Greece and Cyprus are being threatened. It is not only Greece and Cyprus. Libya, Syria, Bulgaria, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea—all these countries. He is becoming a world threat. He is using mercenaries to destabilize countries. This cannot be tolerated.

Otherwise, if we continue with this appeasement policy, we are doomed to repeat Prime Minister Chamberlain's great mistake on the eve of the Second World War. His appeasement policy towards the Third Reich was a disaster, not only for Europe but for the entire world. Do we want to be an accomplice to and an enabler

of the destabilization of world peace? I don't think Canadians are willing to be part of that legacy.

Therefore, it is our duty to uphold our forefathers' legacy, who fought for peace, democracy and Canadian values in so many wars around the world. We are not allowed to tarnish that legacy which we enjoy here in Canada today as a peace-loving country, as the best country in the world, where persecuted people from all over the world come to live, raise a family, work and live peacefully with their neighbours. We want peace. Canadians want peace. Armenians want peace. It is time to stop this dictator's charade.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, thank you to all my colleagues for your support and solidarity.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Seeing none, I declare the debate concluded.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1923.

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Karpoche, Bhutika (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lece, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC) Pang, Billy (PC) Park, Lindsey (PC) Parsa, Michael (PC) Pettapiece, Randy (PC) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC) Piccini, David (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest Markham—Unionville Durham Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill Perth—Wellington Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP) Rasheed, Kaleed (PC) Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud Humber River—Black Creek Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC) Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC) Sandhu, Amarjot (PC) Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN) Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC) Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Guelph Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Simard, Amanda (LIB) Singh, Gurratan (NDP) Singh, Sara (NDP)	Glenarry—Prescott—Russell Brampton East / Brampton-Est Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC) Smith, Dave (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook Peterborough—Kawartha Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP) Stiles, Marit (NDP) Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	St. Catharines Davenport Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Tangri, Nina (PC) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC) Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Toronto—Danforth Mississauga—Streetsville Hamilton Mountain Scarborough—Rouge Park Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC) Vanthof, John (NDP)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Wayne Gates, Randy Hillier
Andrea Khanjin, Jane McKenna
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Mitzie Hunter, Logan Kanapathi
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
Jeremy Roberts, Amarjot Sandhu
Sandy Shaw, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Robin Martin, Norman Miller
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Roman Baber
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Roman Baber, Will Bouma
Lucille Collard, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Jill Andrew
Toby Barrett, Stephen Blais
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Catherine Fife, France Gélinas
Christine Hogarth, Daryl Kramp
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
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