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**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Main Street Recovery Act, 2020

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Thursday 12 November 2020

**Comité permanent
des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Loi de 2020 visant à redonner
vie aux rues commerçantes

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Jeudi 12 novembre 2020

Chair: Amarjot Sandhu
Clerk: Julia Douglas

Président : Amarjot Sandhu
Greffière : Julia Douglas

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

Thursday 12 November 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES**

Jeudi 12 novembre 2020

The committee met at 0900 in room 151 and by video conference.

MAIN STREET RECOVERY ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020 VISANT À REDONNER VIE
AUX RUES COMMERCANTES

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 215, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to the economic recovery of Ontario and to make other amendments / Projet de loi 215, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la reprise économique de l'Ontario et apportant d'autres modifications.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. We are here today for the second day of public hearings on Bill 215, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to the economic recovery of Ontario and to make other amendments.

As a reminder, the deadline for written submissions is 7 p.m. on Thursday, November 12, 2020; that is today.

I am the only member present in the room today, but we do have a number of members joining us via Zoom. We have MPP Kanapathi, MPP Fife, MPP Tangri, MPP Thanigasalam, MPP Skelly and MPP Hunter.

As a reminder, I will ask that everyone speak slowly and clearly, and please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Are there any questions or business before we begin?

CITY OF BRAMPTON
GREATER TORONTO AIRPORTS
AUTHORITY

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Okay, seeing none, we have two presenters for our round this morning. We have the Greater Toronto Airports Authority and we have the city of Brampton. Each of you will have seven minutes to present and I'll give you a two-minute warning before the end of your presentation. When you start presenting, I would just ask that you clearly state your name, or names, for the Hansard record and then you can start. Following this, we'll have two rounds of questions from each of the parties present: two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government and opposition, and two rounds of four and a half minutes for our independent member.

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): We will start today with the city of Brampton. If you can begin by stating your name for the record, and you may begin.

Ms. Clare Barnett: Good morning and thank you. My name is Clare Barnett. I am the director of economic development with the city of Brampton. I am joined this morning by my colleague, Gurdeep Kaur, who is our director of corporate projects, policy and liaison. Good morning and thank you again for having the city of Brampton, and for the opportunity to speak with you this morning on this very, very important subject.

We are all very well aware of the devastating impact of COVID-19 and the impact on our economy and our businesses. The city of Brampton has been doing all that we can to support our businesses during this challenging time. We would like to express our thanks to the province of Ontario for the many steps you've taken to support our businesses that you've done in so many ways, and we are very grateful. Now, more than ever, all levels of government need to participate and work together to help our communities cope.

We are here today to speak to you specifically about Bill 215. We would like to start by sharing a few thoughts about the taxi industry, and then Gurdeep will speak to you about the goods movement and the importance of the goods movement in the city of Brampton, the region of Peel and the province of Ontario, specifically.

The taxi industry is an important industry in our city that has been significantly impacted by COVID-19. The city of Brampton is in support of doing all that we can to help this important industry mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. The city supports the changes to the highway act included in this bill, and to increase specifically the penalty range for the operators who do not have a licence or a permit to transport passengers for compensation.

The taxi drivers pay a licensing fee, typically. The city of Brampton has waived that fee during the pandemic, but they typically need a licence to operate their legitimate businesses. We are strongly in favour of legislation that would protect their enterprises and discourage unlicensed operators.

I would like to pass it now to Gurdeep, who will speak to you, like I said, about the goods movement. Thank you.

Ms. Gurdeep Kaur: Thank you, Clare. My name is Gurdeep Kaur. The city of Brampton and the region of Peel are the heart of the goods movement in Ontario and, in fact, in Canada. Approximately \$1.8 billion worth of

goods move through the region every day. Peel's road network serves about 500,000 trucks weekly, accounting for 50% of the weekly truck trips in Ontario. The goods movement industry in Peel accounts for 21% of goods-movement-related gross domestic product, and goods-movement-related industries account for 43% of jobs in Peel.

We are very familiar with balancing noise disruptions and economic activity. On March 16, 2020, the region of Peel, cities of Brampton, Mississauga and the town of Caledon allowed retail deliveries to be exempt from noise bylaws to allow deliveries to take place 24 hours a day. This exemption took effect for 30 days. No complaints were filed during this period.

In February 2019, the region of Peel, in collaboration with the cities of Brampton and Mississauga and the town of Caledon, launched the six-month off-peak delivery pilot project. This took place from February 2019 to August 2019. The objectives of the off-peak delivery included to help optimize highways and major road networks both within Peel and within the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, focusing on where freight is moving; what time and how best to use the available capacities of existing transportation infrastructure; where the region can benefit from new investment in transportation; and additional benefits of reducing congestion and reducing carbon emissions from transportation, which is the second-largest source of climate pollution in the region of Peel. During the six-month pilot, which included participation with LCBO, Loblaw Companies Limited and Walmart Canada, no complaints were filed.

The city's planning processes already factor in minimizing noise as we design communities. We would be able to quickly identify potential areas where 24-hour deliveries would be placed. We would suggest that the government continue to consult broadly prior to these changes being implemented and any associated regulations being made to ensure municipal input is considered.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into Bill 215 and for consideration of our comments. We're more than happy to take any questions at this time. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Wonderful. Thank you so much.

Before we move on to our next presenter, I'm just going to do a quick attendance check. MPP Ke, if you can confirm you're with us and in Ontario.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Yes, I'm in North York, Ontario.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Excellent, thank you. MPP Piccini?

Mr. David Piccini: MPP Piccini here in Port Hope. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Wonderful, thank you.

We'll now move on to our second presenter, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority. If you can start by stating your names for the Hansard record, and you may begin. The mics appear to be unmuted, so I think you're good to go.

Ms. Lorrie McKee: Hello. Good morning. It's Lorrie McKee with Toronto Pearson. Are you able to hear me?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): We can hear you, yes.

Ms. Lorrie McKee: All right, then I'll get going. Thank you so much. I'm the director of public affairs and stakeholder relations for Toronto Pearson. Chair Sandhu and distinguished committee members, thank you for the invitation to be here today. Off the top, I want to thank the government for all the hard work it has been doing with the challenges of COVID; 2020 has certainly been a challenging year for us all.

I'm joined today by the GTAA's legal counsel, Hilary Stedwill, and Robert Higgs, who is the superintendent of the airport division for Peel Regional Police. I should also add that the recommendations that I'm making today are supported by the legally operating taxi and limo industry at Toronto Pearson.

We're here to talk to you about illegal taxi and limo drivers, or "scoopers," as they're known. I'm sure many of you have travelled frequently through your careers through Toronto Pearson. You know what it's like to touch down at Toronto Pearson at the end of a long journey: You're tired; you're looking for a taxi or limo and you just want to get home. Just imagine if, in addition to that long journey, you're a tourist coming to Ontario for the first time. Perhaps you don't speak English. This is what makes the practice of scooping so insidious: illegal operators preying on often unsuspecting and vulnerable travellers, tourists in many instances. What a horrible welcome to this great province.

Scoopers have existed for more than 40 years at Toronto Pearson. They pose a threat to our public safety, and they operate at the expense of legitimate, licensed, hard-working taxi and limo drivers. Perhaps I can ask Superintendent Higgs from Peel Regional Police to step in here and speak a little bit about the public safety threat posed by scoopers.

Mr. Robert Higgs: Certainly. Good morning. It's Superintendent Rob Higgs, Peel Regional Police.

The main issues that we're focusing on in regard to scoopers is that absent a regulated licensing system, authorities have no way to positively identify the persons involved post-incident or ensure the roadworthiness of the vehicle being used. Inappropriate rates can also be levied against passengers, who become increasingly vulnerable the further they progress into the incident.

0910

The most effective legislation is currently the Trespass to Property Act. However, it is largely ineffective, as fines are ignored and there is no working collection process. The HTA has the ability to suspend licences for unpaid fines. This will be impactful.

The points of contact in a typical incident are: Inside the terminal, a ride is offered; the passenger is then escorted to either the terminal roadway or the parking structure; the passenger enters the vehicle and leaves airport property. The best way to ensure public safety is for authorities to intervene at the first instance inside the terminal. This can only be done if the terminal is designated as a public place as it relates to scooper-related offences.

The HTA can be used if the victim is led to the terminal roadway. However, this is not the most common occurrence. Once the victim has been moved to the secondary location of the parking garage, they become more isolated and vulnerable. The offender behaviour can become more aggressive. With care and control definition authorities, authorities will have greater ability to intervene at this point. However, we will still need to address the private property component with prosecutors.

The parking structures should also be designated as public places as it relates to scooper-related offences. The worst-case scenario is that authorities are required to wait until the passenger enters the vehicle and then exits the parking structure. The risk to the public at this point is significant. There is the potential of a pursuit. This is why authorities are, in essence, forced to intervene earlier and use the ineffective Trespass to Property Act.

Amending the HTA will be the best way to ensure public safety as it relates to scoopers.

Ms. Lorrie McKee: Thank you, Superintendent Higgs. Over the years, at considerable expense, the GTAA has taken many steps to try and address scooping. To supplement police and GTAA security staff, we've hired a security firm to identify scoopers and intercept them as they solicit unsuspecting passengers.

We've taken various steps to promote our hard-working and legal taxi and limo operators and warn passengers about taking rides from illegal operators. There are taxi and limo kiosks set up in both our terminals. We have video displayed in the arriving baggage hall areas and throughout the terminals providing information to passengers. We have brochures providing information again. We have run a #therightride social media campaign on the airport social media channels, and signage in the terminal to give information about choosing the right ride. But there continues to be the challenge of how we can legally stop scoopers. As Superintendent Higgs has indicated, it's usually a two-step process.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Two minutes.

Ms. Lorrie McKee: There's a dispatcher in the terminal and a driver.

So we want to thank the government for bringing forward increased fines. We think that's a really great first step. In addition to these increased fines, we would seek additional, tougher penalties, including options to issue demerit points, surrender of licence or suspension. But, really, to stop this, the clarity that's been provided in section 39.1 on the definition of "driver" is very helpful and we would support that. But ideally, what we're looking for is additional clarity about the definition of both our parking garage and the terminal buildings as a public space. We would welcome these additional amendments to introduce these tougher penalties and absolute clarity about the application of the HTA.

Our goal is an important one: It's to protect the public, often Ontario tourists, from the public safety threat posed by scoopers, but we're also looking to protect our hard-working licensed taxi and limo drivers, who are playing by the rules.

With that, thank you very much. Hilary Stedwill, Robert Higgs and I would be happy to answer any of your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Thank you so much. Before we move to questions, just a quick attendance check: MPP Shaw, if you're able to confirm you're with us and in Ontario?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, good morning, Chair. It's MPP Shaw, and I'm in Ontario.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Wonderful. Thank you.

We'll now move to two rounds of questions from each party. We will start with the independent members. MPP Hunter, you may begin.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you so much to the participants for the support that you demonstrated for the taxi industry and how this change in Bill 215 will help. I wanted to ask the GTAA about how you feel the safety has improved since COVID for taxis and limos. It was something I know came up over the summer when you presented at this committee. I'm just wondering if protocols and standards have improved for their safety in the midst of the pandemic.

Failure of sound system.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Sorry, Lorrie, I'm having trouble—Chair, I don't know—

Interjection.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Try again, maybe?

Ms. Lorrie McKee: Yes, you're absolutely correct. Obviously, we were worried about the full workforce at the airport, to ensure the health and well-being of all employees were being protected, as well as the passengers that we continue to see, albeit at a very much lower level.

In terms of the taxi and limo drivers in particular, one thing that we did is we don't require operators to continue to work. They were under specific licence arrangements which we have relieved them from. We've provided them with additional PPE to make sure that they have masks and gloves. As well, we've taken the step, even though they operate separately and they aren't directly employees of ours—and we've installed Plexiglas in all of the 600 vehicles that operate at the airports. At our expense, we've done that.

Additionally, from a financial perspective, we've provided financial relief from their licence [*inaudible*] perspective, as well as from a personal health and safety perspective.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Okay, that's really good to hear. And how is it going on your end? There was a lot of innovation that you were doing in terms of making sure that the premises were secure, that people felt that sense of safety—and that I'm sure relates to consumer confidence that flying is safe and that all protocols are being followed.

Ms. Lorrie McKee: Absolutely. At this point, Dr. Tam has indicated, and continues to, that there is no evidence of transmission of COVID during air travel. That being said, we understand that people continue to be concerned and that we need to take steps to rebuild public trust.

So there are many measures that are in place at the airports, going back as early as the beginning of June, with

respect to the wearing of masks, physical distancing, cleaning hygiene. We've limited access to the [inaudible] to fly or you're an employee on shift.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): One minute.

Ms. Lorrie McKee: We also have many innovations, as you've indicated, looking at UV lighting to help kill the virus, use of sanitization tunnels that passengers and employees can go through [inaudible] additional measures to help clean the air. We know that the virus is in the air, and that's why we're all wearing masks. All of these measures are helping to make sure that people feel safe [inaudible] in the airport. I know the [inaudible] for air travel in the aircraft.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Thank you. We'll have to move on to our next questions here. We will now move on to the government. MPP Tangri.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'd like to thank all of the presenters this morning—all very relevant to my riding. Pre-COVID, I spent a lot of time travelling.

My first question is for the GTAA. I do want to thank you for continually educating us of what you're doing at the airport. On the proposed changes to the Highway Traffic Act, where we want to help ensure Ontarians are safe when they travel, the changes that are being proposed would act as a stronger deterrent to illegal operators, making it easier to protect those arriving at Ontario's airports.

0920

I know you've talked a little bit about this, but I want you to elaborate a little bit more on the changes: what the changes are and how they can ensure that all Ontarians and visitors feel safe.

Ms. Lorrie McKee: Thank you very much, MPP Tangri, and thank you for your continued support of the airport. Absolutely, the government has taken a number of steps that are going to help to protect travellers. We appreciate the work that's been done by Minister Sarkaria and Minister Mulroney, as well as MTO staff.

One is that there are increased fines, so we think those will be very helpful to deter the act of scooping. The second is there's a suggestion to redefine the definition of a driver; [inaudible] who has care and control of a vehicle would now be defined in this specific section of the Highway Traffic Act, and so that would be helpful for dealing with scooping in our parking structure. Beyond those changes, though, we are seeking additional changes, additional penalties for scooping that would have increased effectiveness around driver's licence suspensions, vehicle impoundment, for example, or demerit points.

Then we continue to be concerned about the application of the Highway Traffic Act in the terminal building, so we are continuing to seek clarity and specific language in the Highway Traffic Act that indicates that airport terminals and parking structures are public property and the HTA does apply. As you've noted, this is not just for Toronto Pearson; it would be for other Ontario airports as well, airports in London, Ottawa and Thunder Bay. Those would be in addition to what the government has already proposed.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: As we know, it's obviously an issue not just here at the GTAA; it's an issue across the country and probably in many other jurisdictions around the world.

Do you believe now, in comparison perhaps to other jurisdictions, that the changes that are being proposed will deter some of the scoopers? Do you believe that, for example, if a car is impounded or confiscated and taken away, it will make a significant change to help deter those scoopers?

Ms. Lorrie McKee: That's our belief. We think that if you actually have [inaudible] their ability to drive and their ability to [inaudible] individuals who are driving a vehicle [inaudible] passengers, as well. So if you actually [inaudible] matters to them most, which is the vehicle they're driving, they're out of business.

Maybe Superintendent Higgs has something more to add to that.

Mr. Robert Higgs: Yes, I do. Thank you for the opportunity.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but the government has the ability to indicate what their wishes are through legislation, but it still needs to be prosecuted at the ground level. The key thing is that we need to remove as much ambiguity as possible. Currently, prosecutors aren't proceeding with any charges laid in the terminal or in the parking structures, because they view them as not being public spaces. So although the items being recommended absolutely will help us, there is still that ambiguity. It would be most helpful if we could just remove the interpretation and include those spaces as it relates to scooper-related charges.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Chair, how much time do I have?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): You still have two and a half minutes.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you. I just want to talk about—I've seen it many times personally, where a scooper has approached me when I've arrived at the airport. The most recent was back in February when I was approached, and I clearly told him that he was there illegally and he needed to move on. I subsequently went outside to wait for my husband to pick me up, and that scooper had then brought somebody else out and took him to his van, which was parked right outside for a very long time. I had a security guard right next to me, so she was not—obviously either they're in cahoots or she's scared of him; I'm not sure what the issue was. I took a picture of her. I took a picture of his vehicle. I sent it off, and I'm not sure if any action was taken.

I gave it to some of my taxi driver friends. As you know, their industry has been suffering tremendously, not just during COVID, but prior to that. We're seeing that happen, so I guess we need to make sure—I know that changes were requested under the Highway Traffic Act. We've been listening and trying to make those changes so that you can take action against these illegal scoopers.

How would you see it if a suggestion was put forward that, if I know and, within the airport, the security knows that that particular person is a scooper and the dangers that could exist by taking somebody from there, you could put his picture up on the screen as we're waiting for our

baggage? As the announcements come forward, “Do not take a ride from an illegal operator,” perhaps their picture: “Do not take a ride from this person.”

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): One minute.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I don’t know, as far as the Privacy Act goes, whether that could take effect, but is that something you would consider?

Ms. Lorrie McKee: I’m not sure if we would be able to actually do that and put somebody’s picture up. As I indicated, we do have signage throughout the terminals encouraging people to take the right ride and about the dangers of taking an illegal ride. Those are in the baggage hall. There are kiosks and a social media campaign. All have been ineffective.

I think that even with what you’re suggesting, if we don’t have the right tools under the—

Failure of sound system.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): We’ve lost you again, Ms. McKee. I might suggest, Ms. McKee, that sometimes when there is difficulty with the audio we recommend shutting off the video. Sometimes that helps make the audio clearer, so maybe give that a try.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Yes, it seems like we have—I’ll conclude there. Thank you very much, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Perfect. Thank you, MPP Tangri.

We’ll move now to the opposition. MPP Fife?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Good morning and thank you, Chair. Thank you to both presenters. I have some questions for Lorrie, but I’m going to see if she can get her audio to work. I’ve actually only been hearing every second word or third word.

So actually, I’m going to go to the city of Brampton, please. I have some questions for Clare and especially Gurdeep. I do want to say, though, Clare, that you did bring up how the taxi drivers in Brampton have really suffered, and I want to confirm that that’s an experience that taxi drivers in Waterloo and Kitchener have also experienced, and we’ve heard from them from across the province. I wonder, Clare, if you’ve heard specifically around some of the barriers that the taxi sector has experienced in Brampton to date—does that also include having access to insurance? Because this is an emerging issue that we’re also hearing. Can you please answer that question?

Ms. Clare Barnett: Sure. Thank you for that question, MPP Fife. I’m sorry I can’t speak to other cities and the impact, obviously, of COVID on those other cities. I would say that all costs of doing business will have impacted that industry, and I realize that the insurance costs would be of particular interest.

What has happened to the industry, I will say, likely across the province but specifically with Brampton, is that demand sharply dropped at the beginning of COVID. Also, drivers stopped working because they didn’t feel safe at the beginning of COVID, and that’s when the city of Brampton really stepped in. Council deferred the expiry dates of licences and deferred licence fees, as I had mentioned. Actually, we just revisited it during a recent

council meeting, as well, because the impact is continuing, obviously. The subject that people were just speaking about only really increases the issue.

I’m sorry I can’t speak specifically to your question on insurance, but I will say that the cost of insurance would absolutely have an impact on the drivers as well.

0930

Ms. Catherine Fife: Listen, we do know that auto insurance in the GTA and the Brampton area is a huge issue. What COVID has essentially done is really shone a light on that imbalance, if you will, in some of those costs.

Maybe I’ll go to Gurdeep. I appreciated your comments with regard to the 24/7 delivery. By and large, I have to say that the vast majority of the delegations we’ve heard from, which was all day on Tuesday, they’re supportive of it, because there’s obviously some research that has been done around noise reduction and around reducing congestion and even the environmental piece.

That said, municipalities play an important role in establishing what is best for those municipalities. So, Gurdeep, I just want to give you a chance to talk about your last few comments around still consulting with municipalities on a go-forward basis. Can you finish those thoughts for us, please?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): You just need to unmute. If you can just click unmute, it should let you go. No? The joys of technology.

Do you want to try one more time? Hmm, okay.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): We seem to be having some technical difficulties, I’m afraid.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay. Maybe Gurdeep can follow up with the committee on that particular piece. But I do think it is important to consult municipalities and not have the province impose, that it be a truly respectful relationship.

Is Lorrie back on the line, Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Yes, Lorrie is on the line, so we’ll give—oh, Gurdeep, are you unmuted now?

Ms. Gurdeep Kaur: Yes, it just worked. I was just trying to actually answer by chat. But thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): There we go.

Ms. Gurdeep Kaur: Sorry about that, MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That’s okay. So yes, just around the municipalities’ role in determining what’s best for the municipality.

Ms. Gurdeep Kaur: Thank you for the question. This is a really important topic, especially during COVID, because it allows us to be able to accommodate all of the retailers that are involved, all the drivers that are involved and just the transportation industry overall.

You just also mentioned the environmental piece on this. I do want to add one thing which is really interesting: 30% of the stops at participating retail stores were made in off-peak hours, and the greenhouse gases emission factor basically decreased by 10.6% during the off-peak hours. The air pollutants also decreased, ranging from 11% to 15%. During this time, obviously, no noise complaints were reported.

I think the important part at this point is just to have the important discussion with all the municipalities, including, obviously, the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon, and we continue to do that.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay, good. I think the 24/7 delivery makes a lot of sense. Anybody who tries to get in and out of Toronto understands what that congestion is like, and there's certainly a cost to lack of productivity and all the other factors.

I just want to make the point, though, that the government has sometimes been opting in and out of consulting with municipalities. That's probably the politically correct way to say it. I do think, though, that those voices, those locally elected voices, are really important to be part of the conversation. Sometimes there's inconsistency, and when there's inconsistency, as we have actually seen with health care policy, it really can be very confusing.

I want you to know, and also of course Clare, that we're going to be supporting the legislation, but I do think sometimes checks and balances need to be in place.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): One minute.

Ms. Catherine Fife: With that, I think that's all my time right now, Chair. I have more questions for the second round.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Excellent. Thank you.

We'll go back to the independent members. MPP Hunter.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Hopefully everyone can now fully respond, with all of our technical glitches today.

I wanted to just speak to the situation in Brampton. We've actually heard over the last day of hearings about the confidence that the business community needs, that employees need. I'm wondering, because you're looking at economic development broadly, what more you think is required to first of all keep the Brampton community safe and to reduce the spread of COVID. It is a hot spot. I know you received funding from the federal government yesterday, a \$6.5-million facility for isolation, which is very, very important. I know you've been asking in various ways for more testing and the ability to address those issues at the community spread level. I just wondered if you wanted to speak to that, as it relates to getting this health crisis under control, and that really is the only way that we're going to see economic recovery happen.

Ms. Clare Barnett: Thank you for the question. I can ask Gurdeep to speak to some of the more intergovernmental affairs and funding parts of the question. However, from an economic development perspective, it's critical that our essential workers, whether it be in food processing, in food manufacturing, in logistics, in the goods movement, are supported, those businesses are supported. By that I mean that they are aware of all of the legal requirements to support their employees, but also how can we help them. Our team in economic development in Brampton has held many online webinars and workshops for major employers in the city—hundreds and hundreds of employees—on how to keep

their employees safe. We've done that in collaboration with the region of Peel. I know that my counterparts in Mississauga have done the same. It's really what we have taken on, and it is, if I could say, leadership in the sense of sharing that information with our major employers on how to keep their employees safe.

What we are hearing is more anecdotal about outbreaks at manufacturing facilities or food processing facilities, and so the work my team is doing right now is to find out what exactly the cases are, because we know some of our major employers have some very good checks in place.

We also know that our employers are concerned about community transmission. They're concerned about carpooling to work. They're concerned about transit to work. We actually have to work really closely with our colleagues across the city to make sure that those employees going to work are very supported. If there's any message to leave publicly with this group, it's that we need to provide support for those essential workers in those industries. That is what our team in economic development is really trying to do, as well as our council, and certainly Mayor Brown.

Gurdeep, you might want to answer the other part of the question about the funding. I think it was around testing, specifically.

Ms. Gurdeep Kaur: Thank you for the question, MPP Hunter. Our councillors and Mayor Brown are very progressive, and they've been advocating a long time for this, and also the group of mayors in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. There are lot of joint efforts that go together for the city of Mississauga, the town of Caledon and all the surrounding areas. So everyone is working in conjunction. This is something that was long overdue and everyone advocated for this to happen. We are a hot spot, as Clare has mentioned, but there are a lot of measures in place, there's a lot happening behind the scenes that we continue to monitor, and we continue to encourage everyone to keep with safe practices.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Thank you. I'm afraid I'll have to cut you off there.

We'll go back now to the government members. MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Good morning, everyone. I would like to ask a question to the representation from the city of Brampton. Thank you, Clare and Gurdeep, for representing Brampton and for your presentation.

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Our government has been exploring ways to alleviate the cost pressures on businesses as they recover and go through the second wave. That's why we are proposing changes to permanently exempt deliveries from municipal noise bylaws and enable 24-hour-a-day delivery. Of course, this will bring positive changes to ensure that foods and other important goods can be delivered to all the businesses at all times, and that's the goal of this. Of course, our government continues to consult with businesses and municipalities on this proposed framework that will locally support the economic recovery.

My question is to Clare or Gurdeep. Peel region has been one of the main primary drivers behind off-peak

delivery, and we are working with Peel region on a one-year pilot program, including Brampton. This change has obviously been long overdue. Can you please elaborate the need to implement these changes, especially now during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Ms. Clare Barnett: Thank you very much for the question. I can start the answer and then ask Gurdeep to finish.

To your point about cost pressures on business and supporting the extension of a pilot: We would absolutely recommend anything that the government can do to reduce the cost pressures on business. We have seen, from the beginning of COVID, some major challenges come to the surface, and they are all related to the cost of doing business and also the inability to pay rent, for example. So there's the rent relief issue, which has now hopefully been resolved with the new program, but anything that the government can do to make it easier to do business, to continue generating revenue and continue paying employees, we would highly recommend.

Gurdeep, I don't know if you would want to add anything to that.

Ms. Gurdeep Kaur: Thank you, Clare. Thank you for the question, MPP. I would like to say that during this time, the COVID pandemic was extremely unexpected for everyone, the whole entire world, but as a team everyone is working together, and allowing these deliveries to continue for businesses, for the workers, for the transportation industry allows us to put it back into the very economy that we're all trying to support.

Brampton's downtown core is home to a lot of mom-and-pop shops, and a lot of them have suffered a lot. They have been there for 10 years, 20 years. During this time, they were having difficulties even just sustaining one employee or paying rent, so this is one of the easiest ways to give back and allow them to continue their work.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you for the answers.

Next I would like to ask questions to the Greater Toronto Airports Authority. Thank you, Lorrie and Robert, for your presentation, and thanks to Hilary for also representing the GTAA. I see how the amendments you mentioned to the HTA, the Highway Traffic Act, section 39, would definitely help the illegal taxi operators and limo operators, and I know that you met with MTO a couple of times last year, and also this year during COVID.

We know that some municipalities and airport authorities have statutes that can incur penalties. Enforcement strategies are not effective, and we would like to increase these penalties from \$300 to \$500 to \$20,000 to \$30,000 for these illegal, unlicensed operators. I'll also mention that increasing this fine range for these illegal operators will be a strong factor for eliminating or decreasing these operators.

Can you please tell us how big of a problem these illegal operators are and how this increase in fines will decrease these operators or eliminate these operators? Can you just highlight the importance of the increase in the fine in the HTA amendment?

Ms. Lorrie McKee: Thank you very much for your question. We do agree with the government, and appreciate the increases in fines that have been recommended through Bill 215. Anything that adds a further deterrent to this illegal operation would be helpful.

The challenge I think we face, though, is unless we can actually have the police charge under the HTA and then have prosecutors pursue those charges through the court, it really doesn't matter what the fine structure is because you need to have a charge that's actually going to hold up in court to then have those penalties play out. So we think the penalties and increased fines will be effective. But before they will be, this clarity that Superintendent Rob Higgs has mentioned, and I have mentioned as well—in addition to the great conversations that we've had with officials at MTO, and Ministers Mulroney and Sarkaria have been so supportive of this industry. We thank them for that, and we think that the amendments that have been brought forward are good. We think there are additional ones that would provide even more clarity to make sure that we can deal effectively with this illegal operation and protect the travelling public.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Lorrie. I know in your presentation, and also in the answers, you mentioned about the impact on taxi drivers and limo drivers, and obviously they have Plexiglas in their taxis.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): One minute.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Can you please highlight what are the other impacts for taxi drivers and limo drivers during this pandemic, so that we can take that information to MTO as well? Can you please elaborate, either Superintendent or Lorrie, on the impacts for taxi drivers during this time?

Ms. Lorrie McKee: Obviously, we're operating at about 90% below our normal traffic levels at the airport, so that has an obvious impact in terms of the number of pickups required. There is no question that the taxi and limo industry, along with all of our tenants and business partners at the airport, have been impacted. There have been significant layoffs among businesses at the airport. We at the airport ourselves have laid off upwards of 500 people, a very challenging decision we had to make.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): I'm afraid we'll have to cut you off there.

We're going to go to our last round of questions. We'll go to the opposition. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question this morning will be to Clare or Gurdeep. You could decide who would like to answer this. But we've heard some testimony this week that continues to be distressing in terms of the economic recovery, if it is that. For example, in testimony, we heard that now there are five convenience stores a week that are closing their doors in Ontario. I will just share with you that is similar to Hamilton. I see stores boarding up on our main street—our local community stores, our small businesses. This has really continued to be distressing news. Even yesterday, I just have to say, I was watching the news, and when the new restrictions were announced in Toronto, there was a businesswoman who literally was in tears on the news, saying that she has no idea what she's

going to do now and that they don't understand how they're going to survive.

So my question to you, related to this bill: Is there anything in this bill that you think will substantially help small businesses with their ability to keep the doors open? We've been hearing that they want direct supports, money, cash flow, liquidity. We don't see that in this bill. Is there anything that you think that we could do going forward that's not in this bill to save main street?

Ms. Clare Barnett: Thank you for the question. I can start and then ask Gurdeep if you would like to add anything.

I think the major challenge for businesses throughout COVID, apart from the actual cash flow and economic impact and contributions from levels of government to help with that, is clarity. When requirements—or rules, if I can use that word—are clear and understood, that will really help businesses. So I would say this type of legislation, this act, will help provide that. That is absolutely not a criticism of the government in any way. Governments around the world are trying to deal with the impact of COVID and the economic recovery. So I think that my first reaction in response to your question would be that the clarity provided to businesses is hugely important, and I don't think we can underestimate the value of government and an act to contribute to that.

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In the city of Brampton specifically, we have an economic recovery strategy that has four cornerstones, one of which is to support small businesses and main street businesses. Programs like ShopHERE, to have them become more e-commerce-compatible—some of these small businesses didn't even have websites before COVID. There are programs that have been released or amplified throughout COVID where we are helping our small businesses do that. Our entrepreneur centre has had thousands and thousands of calls from businesses throughout the city to help support them to go online, find out government information. So the support for small enterprise centres across the province is also actually incredibly critical.

We have also partnered—and I use “partnered” more in the sense of “have a connection, a relationship”—with Equifax. That is providing us information on credit issues for businesses in the city, on defaults in the city, and that is something that we are starting to take a closer look at so that we can help respond to the challenges of main street businesses as well.

Gurdeep, did you want to add anything to that?

Ms. Gurdeep Kaur: I think you did well, Clare. You've covered everything.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that answer. Just to delve a little deeper into that, what I'm hearing from small businesses and from the chambers is that eight months into COVID, small businesses have used everything that's available to them. They've taken loans. They've got debt on top of debt. They've used their line of credit. Some of them are using credit cards. They really have run out of options for their ability to make payroll week to week. They're really struggling.

I had one business owner, a fairly large business in Hamilton, that said they don't have confidence going forward, and that the risk to them to continue to open is becoming greater than the risk to close. The scale is tipping to the point where they don't have the confidence, they don't have the clarity to keep open. One of the things for this business person that almost just put them over is that they had to do a one-time cleaning of their facility. It's a fairly large facility, and it cost them over \$4,000, one time, to ensure that their place was safe for their employees and for their customers, and the government's offering \$1,000.

You're doing your job, and it's really fantastic, but I just again would like to say, we need to offer these businesses a lifeline, and I don't see that in this bill. I'm just wondering if you have any innovative ideas about what we could be doing to save these businesses.

Ms. Gurdeep Kaur: MPP Shaw, I can answer that. I was just thinking about what you just said. The cleaning supplies, for example: Maybe we could start donating some cleaning supplies, and also food. There are a lot of donations of food being made across all parts of Ontario, I've noticed. I'm involved in some of this stuff in my off time as well. Perhaps we could look at the local needs of what's needed also, because delivery's being allowed, and there are no restrictions on delivery at this point. Maybe we could see the basic essentials.

A lot of businesses had a lot of food prior to COVID. It was left in the fridges, and it's obviously gone bad because there was too much of it. Now what they do is they buy on a case-by-case basis. It would be nice if we could—even produce or vegetables—somehow come together, because \$1,000 is nothing. It doesn't cut it. If you just put the cost of sanitizer and paper towels, you'll be well over \$1,000 in a small shop.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): One minute.

Ms. Clare Barnett: I would add to that. You mentioned boards of trade or chambers. One of the things we have heard from businesses of all sizes and in all sectors is that the sharing of information and expertise on how to manage the response to COVID has been an enormous value to businesses. We just finished some research with, I think it was about 12 or 14 food processing and manufacturing businesses in the city. The one thing that was identified was that the largest businesses who had an international network responded better than the ones that did not. That international network, that outreach to other countries to find out best practices: how to manage cleaning the workplace; there's innovative—Hop In, I think it's called, which allows companies to help—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Thank you so much. I'm afraid I need to cut you off there.

That brings us to the end of our hearings. I'd like to thank our two presenters for appearing this morning to share your perspectives with the committee. It is very much appreciated.

That concludes our hearings for today. As a reminder, the deadline for written submissions to the committee is 7 p.m. today, Thursday, November 12, 2020. The deadline

to file amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee is 5 p.m. on November 23.

Is there any further business before we conclude? Okay. Seeing none, the committee is adjourned until 9 a.m. on

Wednesday, November 25, when we will meet for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 215.

Thank you, and have a great day, everyone.

The committee adjourned at 0956.

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