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Lundi
30 novembre 2020

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 November 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 novembre 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

LEGAL SERVICES

Mrs. Gila Martow: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should encourage the Attorney General to modernize and digitize our legal system by making temporary emergency measures put in place for COVID-19 for the virtual witnessing of wills and powers of attorney permanent in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mrs. Martow has moved private members' notice of motion number 121. I recognize the member for Thornhill. She has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The pandemic has taught us many things, and one of the things that it has taught us is that we can make much better use of technology in everyday lives for the citizens of Ontario. Whether it's getting government services or doing their planning for their business or their estate planning, whatever it is—even seeing their doctor virtually, sometimes—they want to have that choice.

I think that one of the pillars of Conservative thought is that people should have more choice, that they should have the option to make decisions on their own behalf. What we're putting forward today is a motion to make the changes that were temporary during the pandemic so that people could use Zoom conferencing or FaceTime with their lawyers and they could sign documents for power of attorney and estate planning virtually without having to go in person to a lawyer's office.

Nobody is suggesting that they should have to do it virtually; we're just saying that we agree as a Legislature—I'm hoping for everybody to agree with this—that we should make the choice permanent and have that discussion to take it further. This is not limited to just wills and powers of attorney but any type of legal action. We see it with purchasing real estate, that they have electronic signatures. So can we move toward people having the choice to have a digital identity and to use electronic signatures to do legal work?

I just want to say, for a bit of background, that our government has been working with its justice partners to modernize and digitize the very, very complex and outdated

justice system to make it easier, faster and more affordable for people to resolve legal issues. I just want to mention that, a lot of times, estate planning and doing things like wills and power of attorney documents is very uncomfortable for people, so they look for any excuse not to do it. I'm hoping that we can also use today to tell people that this is something very, very important to discuss with their family members and their immediate family members: what their plans are and what their wishes are in the future, should the inevitable eventually happen, hopefully later rather than sooner.

I just want to remind everybody that the Attorney General worked with partners—the members of the estates bar—about the need to allow the ability to witness the making of the will or the execution of a power of attorney through audiovisual communication technology and the ability to sign identical copies in counterpart in this emergency. In response, of course, the Attorney General made an emergency order to temporarily enable the virtual witnessing of wills and powers of attorney with an Ontario paralegal or lawyer present on the video conferencing.

I want to jump right to what some lawyers have sent me from Thornhill and from Toronto. I spoke to quite a few. Many of them were happy to share their thoughts to me, and I want to read some of it into the record.

Allan Goldstein is a family lawyer in Thornhill. He's suggesting that: "All documents that are currently required to be signed in the presence of witnesses or a notaries public (including but not necessarily limited to wills, powers of attorney, separation agreements, marriage contracts etc.) will now be legally binding if signed in the presence of a witness or a notary public with the witness or notary public witnessing the signature over video conference instead of by personal attendance. Should the witness or notary public be required to confirm the identity of the signatory, then such confirmation of identity may be done by the witness or notary public viewing the signatory's identification documents by way of a video conference." I want to thank Allan for that information and for his thoughts.

I also spoke to Tilda Roll, another family lawyer in Thornhill. She's suggesting that we broaden it to include domestic contracts in all types of separation agreements and anything pertaining to the family and the children to create that sort of comfort zone also. I think a lot of times people are very uncomfortable going to lawyers' offices and places like that, not to mention how expensive it can be just for the parking, and they want that option.

Robert Karol, who has an office on Yonge Street in Toronto, said that he's pleased to know, and he joins with

others in the legal community—he wants to applaud our efforts here in the Legislature to modernize Ontario’s legal system: “Clients across Ontario have truly benefited from the Ontario government’s recent authorization of the virtual witnessing of wills and powers of attorney during these challenging COVID-19 times. This important move by the Ontario government is one which should be extended indefinitely in order to serve the needs of Ontarians through updated, responsive, and modernized legal systems.

“We thank you for your important work that supports the best of modern technologies and updated legal systems.”

Then I have Alan Silverstein—we have a bit of a discussion in Thornhill sometimes: Is it “Silverstine” or “Silversteen”? I hope I’m saying it correctly—“The original March 2020 emergency order regarding the virtual execution of wills and powers of attorney was changed as of April 22, 2020. According to the amended order, wills and powers of attorney can be validly signed and witnessed virtually ... on separate documents, in counterpart.

“However, the lawyers with whom I have spoken still find the amended process cumbersome for several reasons.” And these are three of the reasons he gives:

“—A valid will and power of attorney would consist of two separate documents, and could consist of three separate documents, which together comprise the one valid will or power of attorney.

“—If (a) the two witnesses (one of whom must be a lawyer or paralegal) are together, or (b) the testator and one of the two witnesses are together, the video conference will take place at two different places. Otherwise, it will be held at three separate places. Not all video conferencing programs can facilitate meetings at multiple locations.

“—Clients experiencing ‘cabin fever’ are often looking for an excuse to leave their homes. Signing legal documents is as valid a reason as any.”

So he’s suggesting that people should have the choice. “Therefore, many wills and powers of attorney are still being signed and witnessed face to face ... at a spaced-out distance.” He’s held driveway meetings, “where the parties sit in their cars, and we communicate either directly or by cell phone.” That is very interesting to consider as well, Madam Speaker. “Meetings have also been held on picnic tables and at food courts (when permitted).” So there’s “no lack of creativity.”

0910

I’m very pleased when I hear of our legal profession and our medical profession thinking outside the box and sharing with the public their ideas to have safe distancing. I think that going into the future we’re going to realize, even when COVID-19 is hopefully some day a distant memory, we’re still going to have to be a lot more cautious about infectious diseases.

Now I have from Klein and Associates—Matthew Klein put this together for us. I’m going to try to fit it all in. He says:

“Under Ontario regulation 129/20 under the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 ...

licensees within the meaning of the Law Society Act have been permitted to have wills and powers of attorney witnessed and executed through the aid of audiovisual technology.

“This method of witnessing and executing wills and powers of attorney is novel, supplementing the standard practice before COVID-19 of requiring licensees to witness and execute wills and powers of attorney in person.

“It is obvious why this change was necessary during this pandemic. Those most vulnerable to becoming severely ill by COVID-19 are likely the same people who are seeking the services of licensees to prepare wills to manage their estates. Taking reasonable steps to relax formal requirements of execution where strict adherence poses a significant risk to the health of these vulnerable peoples was the right decision.

“The question is whether this policy should be lifted as the pandemic is brought under control. Arguments in favour of lifting the policy stem from protecting the integrity of the original formalities. There is a public interest in ensuring documents like wills and powers of attorney are signed by testators demonstrating a clear intention without any duress. Conventional wisdom is that the formalities of signing ensure that this public interest is protected.

“I submit that video conferences are a perfectly adequate alternative to such in-person meetings for protecting the aforementioned public interest. There is a tendency to resist change. Law has been practiced a particular way for many years. Why implement such a change and risk unsettling established legal norms?

“This concern is addressed in the May 1, 2020, decision of Justice Myers, Arconti et al v. Smith et al.... Here, the plaintiffs objected to examinations for discovery being performed over Zoom, a video-conferencing software which has been widely adopted by the legal profession during the COVID-19 pandemic. The plaintiffs were concerned that, compared to an in-person hearing, a video conference would be much less capable of providing accurate assessment of witness demeanour, protecting the process against sleight of hand by the defendants, and would be unable to create a morally persuasive environment for elucidating truthful statements.

“In considering these arguments, Myers stated that, ‘It’s 2020. We no longer record evidence using quill and ink. In fact, we apparently do not even teach children to use cursive writing in all schools anymore. We now have the technological ability to communicate remotely effectively. Using it is more efficient and far less costly than personal attendance. We should not be going back.’”

I’m continuing with Klein and Associates, Matthew Klein specifically, when he says, “I agree with the perspective expressed by the honourable justice in this instance. When the pandemic ends, that does not mean the utility of executing wills and powers of attorney via video conference ends. Vulnerable people will still be at risk of serious illness from seasonal flus and they will still quite often suffer from mobility issues as they always have, even before COVID-19.

“There is no evidence-backed reason to suggest that documents executed remotely with the aid of audiovisual technology are any less legitimate than those executed in person. The implementation of audiovisual technology into the law of estates has reduced risk, increased efficiency, and improved access to legal services for vulnerable members of our community. We should not be going back.”

Of course, I support these wonderful words and I thank all of the legal profession for all that they've done to embrace the changes that our government has put forth, supported by the opposition, in terms of ensuring that we have safety for the clients, safety for the legal profession, whether it's lawyers or notary publics or paralegals, and of course safety for their employees. Thank you very, very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity. I look forward to what my colleagues on all sides of the House have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good morning, Speaker. It's always a pleasure—an honour, really—to stand in this House on behalf of the good people of Windsor–Tecumseh. This legislative chamber is where the laws of Ontario are made.

Now, I'm not a lawyer. I don't hold myself out as having any great experience in the law. But I can understand most legal terms, provisions, intentions, updates and corrections. When I was a journalist, I was heavily involved with my union and served several times on national bargaining teams and national grievance committees. So while not holding a degree in law, not being a lawyer or pretending to be a lawyer, I am familiar with contracts and enforcement of contract law.

I am also aware that times are changing. Most of us are becoming more familiar with technology that didn't exist before. The younger generation especially is much more familiar with the latest in technology and, for the most part, I believe, gets more practical and daily use of communication devices than ever before in our nation's history.

All of us in this chamber are using programs such as Zoom, Teams, Skype and any number of other similar applications that some of us never used before or even heard of before this COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we go about our business. So this motion, 121, the virtual witnessing of wills and powers of attorney, comes at an appropriate time in Ontario's ever-evolving history.

It was necessary a few months ago to allow this to happen because we began to be restricted in our movements and in the places we would normally gather and meet to discuss such legal matters. It made sense that we would use the latest in technology to finalize legal transactions that may have been time-sensitive and would otherwise be cumbersome and even downright risky to assemble together to do the paperwork.

The change came with an end date, and this motion seeks to make such usage a permanent factor of life in Ontario. I'm sure there are pros and cons. Some lawyers have jumped in support of it; others, not so much.

But the question remains: If the virtual witnessing of wills and powers of attorney can be done safely, can be done in a way that those taking part are satisfied is a fair and honest transaction, with at least one of the witnesses being an Ontario-licensed lawyer or paralegal, then can audiovisual communication technology be a legal vehicle of the future? The answer seems to be yes.

Normally, Speaker, wills must be signed in the physical presence of two or more witnesses and powers of attorney must be executed in the physical presence of two witnesses. But if by the use of the latest in technology, if that makes it possible for everyone involved to be able to see, hear and communicate with each other in real time, then why not a virtual presence instead of a physical presence?

Obviously, those taking part have to all agree that they know what's going on and they fully understand the process, are comfortable with it, that the intent of the will is clear, and they have no issue with discussing such personal matters in front of everyone else. If that's the case, then why not? I mean, sure, the identities of those on the shared screen would have to be validated. Everyone would have to agree that the person making out the will is of sound mind and not being unduly influenced by anyone else in the room.

As a backup, Speaker, recordings, audio or visual, could and perhaps should be taken, especially if a translator is being used for a second opinion or as a technological witness, if you will. It would still be important to determine if this will is a brand new one or replacing one that was filled out sometime prior, and that everyone involved is made aware of that fact. When the virtual signings and the copies are being signed, it would be imperative to have on record the page numbers being attested to. All of the legal people should be taking notes in case of a future challenge.

Motion 121 makes sense in this day and age. I thank my friend from Thornhill for bringing it to our attention this morning. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I think that the member for Thornhill is actually presenting a very thoughtful bill, and I'm happy to support it as it makes a lot of sense in terms of access to justice. I happen to be a lawyer and I've worked with courts for a number of years, so I do appreciate this move to get to a more efficient court system. But I want, also, to discuss the importance of ensuring accessibility in all forms within our justice system.

0920

In a perfect world, everybody could afford a lawyer and everyone could go to court to solve their problems quickly and painlessly. While we are a good distance from achieving perfect access to justice, there are ways to make improvements to the justice system to deliver good justice for everyone, not perfect justice for a lucky few.

Access to justice can mean many things, such as getting legal assistance when you need it, and having courts that can resolve your problem on time. But in order to achieve

this, tools and services need to be available to all. A deficient access to justice reinforces existing inequities. Cost is the most obvious barrier to access to justice and this is why legal aid services were introduced in the mid-1970s. Weakening access to legal aid means failing women, people with disabilities, recent immigrants, members of racialized communities and Indigenous peoples, who are overrepresented at lower income levels. Delays are creating additional barriers to access to justice. Over the past decades, Ontario courts have fallen behind with an increasing backlog of cases that generate delays equivalent to denial of justice. Having easy access to legal information is also another component of a more efficient justice system.

Nos tribunaux ont tardé à adopter bon nombre des services numériques novateurs qui pourraient contribuer à rendre le système de justice plus efficace et plus accessible. Le fait de se fier encore en grande partie sur des dossiers papier dans nos tribunaux n'est pas pratique et a un impact évident sur l'environnement. Une transition vers le dépôt électronique présente des avantages attendus tant pour les Ontariens écologistes que pour la justice.

La pandémie COVID-19 a forcé les gouvernements du monde entier à faire preuve de créativité pour continuer à fournir des services gouvernementaux accessibles numériquement. Je reconnais et remercie le procureur général pour son travail visant à permettre davantage de solutions numériques pour répondre aux défis de fonctionnement des tribunaux pendant la pandémie.

While moving to make virtual witnessing of wills and powers of attorney permanent in Ontario is a small step in the right direction, I also encourage the government and the Attorney General to expand this mandate for modernization to include a broader strategy for improving Ontarians' access to justice. Digital services can certainly be an element of improving case management, but we also need to address the substantial inefficiencies arising from the prevalence of self-represented litigants. People go to court without a lawyer because they can't afford it, and they appear insufficiently prepared, which adds significantly to the burden of the judges and to our justice system. We need to fundamentally rethink how we provide and fund legal aid services to improve access to legal representation for the thousands of Ontarians who are forced to navigate our courts without legal representation. To cut funding for legal aid on one hand, as this government did in 2019, but provide some conveniences through digital services on the other, does not leave our system more just, fair or efficient than it was previously.

Finally, this government should consider that access to justice is also an economic driver. A person who is denied justice is not going to be a positive and productive member of society. Similarly, people in business need to get commercial disputes settled quickly. While large businesses can hire lawyers, small and medium-sized ones may not have that luxury. In some cases, accessible justice can mean the difference between staying in business or filing for bankruptcy. When justice is not accessible there is a real economic cost on top of the social and human costs, and it affects us all.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I am proud to rise to speak in favour of the motion before us, motion 121, from the member from Thornhill. I really commend her for introducing such a motion because it follows suit with a lot of the things that the member is trying to do in terms of the push to bring things to the 21st century, and really thinking outside the box when it comes to legislation. A lot of thought has been put into this motion and it really echoes everything that our government has been trying to do from day one, which is put the people of Ontario first. Everything that we do, we do to put the people of Ontario first, and part of that is also bringing respect to taxpayer dollars.

When you see these types of changes and moving to the 21st century not only are you putting people first, but there is a cost savings involved where you can take those additional funds that had been saved and put them to other digital needs and other services, such as our Attorney General had done when he passed his Smarter and Stronger Justice Act. Part of those digital efforts was also to give more funding and supports to victim services and those on the front line and, of course, as you saw recently, the investment of \$1.3 million in technologies to help courts and tribunals to continue the transition to remote operations. These investments are going to definitely help those on the front lines, especially when it comes to victim services.

When you think about what we've seen through COVID-19 and the expediting of digital services, it's really moving the province and where the country is going in terms of getting with the 21st century. We have a lot of seniors now, but we also have a young population coming up. The way that young population was raised was that they're online. They do a lot of transactions online. They have a bigger digital footprint than I would say I do, if I compare myself to my brother and my cousin. That's just what they're used to. So if we're making changes today, we have to understand that they are actually going to create a better and formidable society for the future.

A lot of what we're doing today is to provide, obviously, convenience, and to make these conveniences more permanent for the current population who might be discussing their wills or powers of attorney, but we have to look past that as well to those people that it's going to affect in the future. It's just very practical. So it's no surprise that you've got all-party support—to the member for Thornhill—because, again, it's a very practical, pragmatic solution to everyday issues we interact with. We do our banking online. You can sign up for a course online. You call and get your doctor to email you a backgrounder online. All these things are already happening, so it makes sense to get the justice system to also be a little more digital and, as the President of the Treasury Board likes to say, get people out of line and online. This is very much with that too, in terms of—we talk about backlogs that may be occurring because of COVID-19.

This also has the potential to allow people to access justice immediately—quicker and much easier—and it

does echo many of the changes that have been made. I just want to quote our Attorney General, who has put a lot of thought into how to transform and digitalize the judicial system. He says, “We have heard loud and clear from people across Ontario that the justice system has grown too complex and outdated, and needs to better support the growth of safer communities while standing up for victims of crime and law-abiding citizens. Our government is proposing smart and sensible reforms that will allow people to spend less time and money resolving their legal matters while strengthening access” and supports to Ontarians in need.

That really shows you what the member is trying to do with her motion, which is strengthening the system for those who may want to access the justice system in a safe manner. COVID-19 has obviously shown us that it's safer for seniors and individuals to stay at home, so to be able to do such a transaction, which is a very important one for life planning, is very key.

I, for example, take care of my grandfather. If it's up to him, he prefers to do everything in person. We would literally drive from bank to bank to do all of his banking. But since COVID-19 has happened and we have to change how our family functions a little bit, he has warmed up to the concept of online banking and certainly other things. Unfortunately, his health condition has deteriorated quite significantly, so he is at the point where he is thinking about his will and he's thinking about what he needs to do and, if something happened to him, who in the family would be power of attorney. It gives us peace of mind in the family to know that if he decides to make that decision, we're not putting him at risk by taking him out and exposing him to COVID-19. Instead, we can do it safely for him and we can do that online.

That's something many families are faced with right now. I gave my family as an example, but there are many people who are in the sandwich generation, where they have young kids they have to take care of all the time but they also have their parents they have to take care of full-time. For them, a lot of time, going to in-person appointments can add a lot more stress on their lives—especially now with COVID-19, additional stresses. So this is also giving that peace of mind to people to know that they can do more of these things and witness these types of transactions online.

0930

Again, it's very common-sense in terms of who we're dealing with, in terms of who it's going to help—the moms and dads of the world, the sandwich generation; also young people, millennials, to get them understanding the importance of doing these types of transactions online. Of course, it has the added benefit, we were saying, of the legal profession—the member for Thornhill quoted many people in the legal profession who are supportive of these changes. It made me think of when we were talking about the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act and the tremendous amount of support we received.

I want to read some quotes. This one is from David Clement of the Consumer Choice Center. He's the North

American affairs manager. He said, “Allowing for virtual commissioning and notarizing is a positive step for those using legal services. Permitting virtual commissioning and notarizing ultimately makes the system more consumer friendly and more responsive. From a consumer standpoint, this is a welcomed change.”

In addition to him, we had others who also spoke in favour of the bill—to just make it practical. I spoke to local lawyers in my riding of Barrie–Innisfil, and they see how this is, as one lawyer told me, a no-brainer. Another one said, “Finally, we're making progress on this, in addition to some of the CCTV stuff we're doing in the courtroom, so that people can do things digitally.” It's a bigger step, because it shows that it's convenient.

Making the system more digital is not just convenient and adds cost savings, but it also helps with things like not having to retraumatize individuals. It's not so much pertaining to witness wills and power of attorney, but we see a lot of our children's aid services, where instead of having the child retell their story, there's a centre—we have the CAS in Barrie, where they tell their story once. They're doing it in front of a camera that's not very visible. There's a person behind the screen who might be a police officer, a health professional, a social worker. It allows that child to only tell their story once. You've seen how much it makes an impact. So you have that set up for that case. Again, when you're talking about making things digital and transcending it to other parts of our transactions, this one is so important.

We know we have an aging society. We know how important things like powers of attorney and wills will be as people's health conditions and circumstances and lives change. We need to think of those individuals and how we make this safer and easier for them. Safety, as we've seen with COVID-19, has been paramount. The member for Thornhill mentioned the amount of individuals who have said that this is the paramount of safety as well—not just that this was put in place for COVID-19 and we're looking to make it safer, but just easy access.

For some individuals to be able to actually leave their home, it's quite the endeavour—just being able to put on those easier pair of shoes. I see this with my grandpa all the time. We have to get him a specific pair of shoes that are much easier to put on. He used to be able to use that spoon thing to get shoes on, but now it's much harder. For him to get dressed, get on his shoes, it's frustrating for him. He's frustrated that he can't be like he was in his twenties and do these things very easily. It's not easy. So if you can make life a little bit easier for those individuals, they'll certainly sign up for it. You have to explain a lot of it at first, as to how this is going to be done digitally and his safety is protected etc., but at the end of the day, it's great. Now he has more time to do the things he likes, more time to read, more time to enjoy life. These things can be done virtually, in the comfort of one's home, not having to face the—we're going into the winter season. The majority of our weather, especially where I am—I might not be the buckle of the belt, but I'm part of the snowbelt. It allows us to make sure that we're safely inside and, again, doing

these transactions online for seniors and preventing them from things like slips and falls, as well.

So it might seem like a small measure, but it does go a long way—both addressing our aging population, who have done a lot to build the country we live in today, and our upcoming young generation of individuals.

I fully support this bill. I applaud the member for addressing all age groups and how this is going to be helping them move forward with life.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's a pleasure to rise today and contribute to this debate. I thank the member from Thornhill for introducing it. Certainly we do support this move, and I think it's good that she's pushing the government to make this change permanent. It certainly does shift how things are done, and has the potential to expedite some of the proceedings that go through the court with the witnessing of wills and such.

I have a very brief amount of time, so I want to be very careful, though, because one of the things that we're supposed to do with legislation is to look at unintended consequences. The member—what's your riding?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Windsor–Tecumseh. Sorry. It's early in the morning, Speaker.

The member for Windsor–Tecumseh mentioned how young people are often more adept at using some of the technologies out there, and it immediately made me think of the sort of fraud concerns that a number of people have raised with this. It would be really great if the government could elaborate on how they're protecting people from fraud as they transition to this new system.

I think about all the fraud schemes that are targeted at seniors across this province and across the country. It is rampant. Seniors fraud is a huge problem. We all know that to be true. We all get the phone calls. The scammers have a lot more success with certain age demographics.

I just want to draw attention to one thing: We're all very used to the ability to add in fun Zoom backgrounds around us on a video, but it's actually not particularly hard to reverse that, to keep the background of your room and actually flip the person who is appearing on Zoom. We've seen the deepfakes that have been made of presidential candidates, for instance, and other ones, but that technology is actually readily available at home. As a joke for one of my friends, we created a video where he was singing 1990s gangsta rap, and it was totally convincing. It was my friend's face and the voice of the artist, and you really couldn't tell the difference.

And so I would hope that the government has considered these advancements, because as we improve communications technology, the ability to have Zoom meetings—we're not doing it here, but Parliament is meeting over Zoom, and there are a series of safeguards put in place. I know having a paralegal is part of it, but it's not that much of a leap to think about a very computer-savvy young person posing as a senior, being able to insert a video feed if they have pictures that they received from the

Internet—I can actually very easily go and build a digital version of that person using a couple of different photos that I found of them on the Internet, and then I'm able to manufacture a fake version of that person and present it as myself.

That is readily available technology. It really doesn't even cost anything; it's free on the Internet. Mostly it's used for fun, but it's not that hard, as I said, to think about how this could then be taken and used for nefarious reasons, to target our seniors, who perhaps don't understand the technology as well. I'm really wary of that side of it, and I do hope that the member from Thornhill is able to come back with some of the precautions that the government will take, to ensure that this isn't where this goes, that this is prevented from happening ever, that we don't wait until after it has happened once and somebody has been taken advantage of for it to come back.

That's about all my time. That's the major concern I have with this. We'll certainly be supporting the legislation. I'm just trying to provide feedback in a meaningful way that could actually make this stronger and make sure that we're thinking of all possible angles on this. Thank you to the member for Thornhill, and I look forward to supporting this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Thornhill for motion 121. This is what we've been talking about at the Treasury Board: making things online, to make it much easier and much better even for our environment, to reduce our carbon footprint from travelling from place to place.

Look at the cost of parking in Toronto. Here, when I come to work, is one thing, but when I have to go see my lawyer, I have to spend \$20 or \$30 for parking. If I can do this online, it's much better.

Last night was a prime example. I realized I hadn't renewed my stickers on my vehicle, so right away I went online and I renewed all the stickers for my car. Doing this for our wills and our powers of attorney, I think, is moving forward in the 21st century.

My in-laws are in Montreal, and I remember last year we had to go five hours to Montreal to be a witness there for their wills and for their power of attorney. Like I said, doing this with Zoom or with Teams would make it much, much easier for everyone, especially instead of travelling all that distance and time, and a chance of you getting into an accident travelling as well.

I want to commend you very much on this. I think this is a great idea and I hope that we can move this forward in other areas, as well, to make it much more efficient for the people of Ontario.

0940

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak to this motion today, which would allow for virtual witnessing of wills and powers of attorney. During the pandemic, we know that many of us

were not able to leave our homes and be able to get the services we need, and they were important legal services. What we're seeing today is that for Ontario to maintain this physical distancing, it's important to find accommodations for legal services that require group settings.

In Ontario, for a will to be legally valid, it requires two witnesses to be present in person and to sign off on it. For the power of attorney, there was also the need for two witnesses. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these in-person witness rules were suspended under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. That act allowed for the witnessing via teleconferencing and signing on separate documents if those documents were identical. These were good accommodations, given the emergency that we found ourselves in, and I have spoken on this, in this House, at length, about the access to justice in Ontario.

While this motion might seem on the surface like it removes barriers for legal procedures around wills or powers of attorney, it's not 100% clear that it does. Has this government done the work to ensure that it doesn't open the door to fraud and abuse, as we have heard very clearly and quite eloquently from the member from Kingston and the Islands? Wills and powers of attorney have a big impact on people's lives or the lives of their beneficiaries. That being said, if this government puts in place some checks to ensure that the virtual process is fair, that would be best.

I want to be clear about the fact that I'm not against virtual services. We have all gone virtual in the past year. I use Zoom for everything. My staff are all working remotely and use it, too. Virtual meetings have the power of reducing barriers and cost. With a virtual meeting, you can meet anyone, anywhere, regardless of their ability to travel to your location. If being allowed to virtually witness wills and powers of attorney removes barriers for people with disabilities or for seniors and brings down the cost of these proceedings, then it's a good change that serves the greater goal of improving access to justice. Perhaps it should remain an option if in-person meetings are impossible.

We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that Ontario's legal system is full of barriers and accessibility issues throughout it. Allowing for Zoom witnessing doesn't solve the fundamental issues at work, but the main barrier, I think, is how expensive the legal system truly is. Many people can't afford legal services and, therefore, have little access to justice. Legal aid in this province received a 30% cut from this government in its 2019 budget, which was devastating for access to justice. The income thresholds to even qualify for that are so low that people can't access or afford a lawyer without going into debt.

I know there's very little time, but again, pressing on access to justice: People being able to access the legal system needs to be a key issue. This is a good motion. It will serve its purpose. I hope that the government and the member are looking at the fraudulent aspects of this. We know that at the punch of a button and the click of a finger, people can see anything they want, so let's make sure what they're seeing is actually the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The time provided for private members' public business has

expired. Ms. Martow has moved private member's notice of motion—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Apologies. We're just cutting to the chase. I recognize the member for Thornhill with her two-minute wrap-up.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Of course, today we're talking about virtual witnessing of wills and power of attorney being a choice that's made permanent. I want to thank, of course, the members for Windsor–Tecumseh, Ottawa–Vanier, Barrie–Innisfil, Kingston and the Islands, Mississauga–Lakeshore and Hamilton Mountain for their very thoughtful comments this Monday morning.

I just have a comment from Robert Karrass, another lawyer from Thornhill, who wants us to know that he thinks that video conferencing is a very useful tool when used responsibly by lawyers following all legal protocols, including capacity assessments and client identification and verification.

Of course, we're hearing concerns about fraud, and that's an ongoing concern in terms of wills and powers of attorney. We hear of mortgages being put on properties. Our elderly are very vulnerable. Sometimes we imagine that it's strangers who come in and do this; unfortunately, Madam Speaker, all too often it's their own family members. It's very difficult for the lawyers. They're dealing with the family members, and they have to try to get inside peoples' heads and try to figure out the motivation, try to figure out if other family members are aware of what's taking place.

You know, we heard the line from our President of the Treasury Board, through the member for Barrie–Innisfil, that we want to get people out of line and we want to get people online, and one thing that this pandemic certainly showed me is how many seniors are capable of doing Zoom, because I've seen them, in their nineties, through Zoom.

I think it has almost doubled how many of our seniors in Ontario are using online banking, and they're using it safely. It's a problem for seniors going to those bank machines. It's something that I think we're all worried about, if some vulnerable senior is seen taking cash out of a bank machine and somebody is right over their shoulder watching them and can assault them for the money.

It's certainly far safer for our seniors to do some of their services, some of the legal services, banking services and medical services—not all, Madam Speaker; we know that there is no replacement for actual in-person visits sometimes. But if they have the choice, if they have the ability—just like we now have the ability to use technology, to read from it in the House. We didn't when I was first elected. It's a huge advantage. It doesn't mean we can't have paper, but it gives us that choice.

I want to thank all my colleagues here in the House for their support.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. We're doing it for real this time: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mrs. Martow has moved private members' notice of motion number 121. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? That is carried.

Motion agreed to.

Orders of the day? The member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:15.

The House recessed from 0947 to 1015.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Jamie West: Ontario was a world leader when we created our first comprehensive no-fault workers' compensation system, Speaker. However, under WSIB, Ontario covers fewer workplaces than any other province in Canada. Employees who work in group homes, banking and insurance, health care and social assistance, as well as professional, scientific and technical services, are not covered by WSIB. This leaves over one million workers in Ontario with no WSIB protection in the event of a workplace illness or injury. It's disproportionately impacting women, racialized or marginalized workers.

Recently, I spoke with Jacqueline Haynes, who has been ringing the bell on this issue for years. Specifically, Jacqueline is fighting for WSIB coverage for developmental service workers. Jacqueline has worked as a DSW for over 23 years. DSWs work with vulnerable individuals who have developmental, physical or mental health challenges. It's an extremely important job. Although the job can be satisfying, it comes with a high risk of injury, including repetitive strain injuries and injuries caused by violence.

The WSIB operational review report recommends that WSIB and the Conservative government extend mandatory coverage to developmental support workers and those working in residential care facilities. This recommendation should be implemented, and, Speaker, it shouldn't stop there. All workers in Ontario deserve the right to what is fair: 100% of Ontario's workers deserve no-fault compensation for workplace injuries, illnesses and disease.

HEDDLE SHIPYARDS

Ms. Donna Skelly: I rise this morning to congratulate Heddle Shipyards in my hometown of Hamilton on signing a long-term contract with Vancouver-based Seaspan to manufacture ship components. Over the next decade, Heddle will be Seaspan's main supplier for ladders, gratings and handrails for two navy joint support ships. All of the ship components will bear the Ontario-made label.

The work will create high-skilled, well-paying, year-round jobs for Hamilton, St. Catharines and Thunder Bay's facilities, and it will generate tens of millions of dollars in economic activity. This contract, Mr. Speaker,

will create jobs across Ontario's advanced manufacturing supply chain and generate the potential for additional opportunities at Heddle for supplying larger ship modules in the future.

This investment is a tremendous opportunity for workers, and it will help revitalize the province's shipbuilding industry. It means that Ontario's shipyards will play an increasingly significant role in the National Shipbuilding Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier has written a letter to the Prime Minister supporting Heddle and Seaspan's bid to build the polar icebreaker, the next flagship for the Canadian Coast Guard.

The Heddle Shipyards contract reinforces Hamilton's position as a critical transportation hub sitting at the crossroads of trade and commerce for the province and for the country. It confirms that Ontario has one of the best advanced manufacturing sectors in the world, and it proves that the steps our government has taken to make the province more attractive to business and manufacturers like Heddle Shipyards is creating an environment for investment, job creation and economic recovery.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I stood in this House not long ago to stand up for provincially significant wetlands and for Duffins Creek, a beautiful but, more importantly, a vital and necessary wetland in the Durham region. Again, I'm asking this ambitious Premier to stop wrecking the environment. Knock it off with the MZOs, which allow the minister to override local planning rules and run roughshod over environmental protections. Stop weakening conservation authorities. This government has been inundated with calls to stop their attacks on conservation authorities, an attack they snuck into the budget bill, Bill 229, in schedule 6.

The province's Greenbelt Council has asked this government to stop moving on MZOs and to remove schedule 6. The Canadian Environmental Law Association recommends that schedule 6 be withdrawn and instead recommends that the government support conservation authorities.

From a November letter to the Premier sent by the Chiefs of Ontario, Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald writes, "We are all treaty people. Duffins Creek protected wetlands, which has been granted a minister's zoning order (to fast-track development), happens to be located within the traditional and treaty lands of the Williams and pre-Confederation treaties."

1020

"Granting an MZO to bypass public participation and due process to rezone the Duffins Creek wetland complex would be incredibly short-sighted, undemocratic, and an infringement of section 35 and treaty rights."

"The increased use of MZOs by this government is a disturbing abuse of power, especially when applied to override environmental protections."

Speaker, voices from across the province are loudly telling this government to stop attacking the lands, the

green space, the wetlands and the water. We will never be able to undo the terrible damage this government is hell-bent on doing, and their private-interest priorities are destroying our province.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Lorne Coe: Late last week, the government announced that it is providing over \$2 million to support Ontario's 47 small business enterprise centres, led by the Business Advisory Centre Durham, located in Whitby, to create a new Small Business COVID-19 Recovery Network. This network, Speaker, will enhance the capacity of all SBECs across the province to expand their services, supporting businesses throughout Ontario.

Led by Whitby's Teresa Shaver, the executive director of the Business Advisory Centre Durham, the network will be one central portal where businesses can access digital tools and training, connect with mentors and industry experts, and get information on government programs to help them navigate COVID-19 and beyond. Through this network, up to approximately 100,000 small businesses in Ontario can be reached.

Speaker, as you know, small businesses are the backbone of Ontario's economy, and they're making extraordinary sacrifices to keep their employees safe, their customers confident and their communities strong, like Whitby, during this tough time. This new program, located in Whitby, builds on the government's commitment to be in the corner of small businesses and on previous actions, including our main street recovery plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today I'd like to speak about schedule 6 of Bill 229, the Conservative government's budget bill. Many of my constituents have contacted me and government members to express their serious concerns with schedule 6, which is the latest effort by the Ford government to undermine environmental protections in Ontario by weakening the power of conservation authorities to protect our communities from issues like flooding, while favouring private developers. It will narrow the powers of conservation authorities and will allow developers to bypass them by going straight to the ministry for approvals to build on a flood plain or pave over a wetland.

This is a huge concern for the Windsor-Essex region in particular. Last year, Premier Ford chose to revoke the provincially significant wetlands status of the South Cameron woodlot in my riding in Windsor. Revoking this status opens the door for potential development of 50 acres of the woodlot, a wetland that is critical to flood mitigation. This is despite the fact that, before this Premier shuttered the office of the Environmental Commissioner, the commissioner reported, "Even a wetland as small as 2 hectares can retain water runoff from an area 70 times its size, buffering against flooding." In a region where we have seen devastating flooding numerous times in the last

few years, this news came as a shock, and raised serious concerns about the disappearance of natural habitats and endangered species.

It is this disregard for our environment that my constituents and I are incredibly concerned about and that we fear will increase with schedule 6. I am asking this Conservative government to, for once, put aside their deep-pocket private developer friends whose only care is to make billions, to stand with the families in their communities and mine, who cannot afford to lose their homes and belongings to devastating floods—sometimes numerous times. Stand up for endangered species and the natural habitats that are so crucial to the environment and strike out schedule 6 from Bill 229.

PERSONNEL LÉGISLATIF

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Monsieur le Président, puisque c'est l'une de mes dernières déclarations avant qu'on se laisse pour les fêtes, je tenais à sincèrement remercier chacun et chacune ici dans cette Chambre, dans cet édifice, et tous ceux et celles qui nous appuient dans nos travaux parlementaires de la maison.

Ce n'est vraiment pas évident, considérant la nature de notre travail, le fait qu'on doit effectivement être ici en personne, faire le voyage comté-Toronto, gérer notre personnel, aider nos commettants etc. Malgré ce stress, cette anxiété et cet ajout de travail, je crois qu'on a travaillé de façon constructive, en réelle collaboration, puisque dans l'espace de seulement trois mois, deux de mes propositions ont été adoptées par le gouvernement. Alors, ceci démontre qu'on peut, et doit, continuer de proposer, débattre et travailler ensemble. Les Ontariens comptent sur nous, maintenant plus que jamais.

Mr. Speaker, we're so focused on helping people outside this building, our constituents, that we often forget that it's the people working in this building that essentially make it all happen. And so I want to thank every single person in this chamber: members, House Clerks, interpreters—my most important—security, administration, political staff. The work you do is indispensable at the best of times, and now, during these extremely challenging times, I truly have no words for how grateful I am, so thank you.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's an honour to rise today to discuss the importance of shopping local. As Christmas and the holiday season approaches and we're looking for the perfect gift, shopping local has never been more important than this year.

In every part of Ontario, our small businesses have been hit hard by COVID-19, and we need to give back to them since they have given so much to our communities. In Oakville, we have tremendous BIAs and local businesses who need our support.

Recently, Lakeshore Road in downtown Oakville has been reopened and rejuvenated by the Oakville town council with street construction and a streetscape project. Walking through the downtown Oakville BIA, you can find great businesses, like COBS Bread, Seasons Oakville and Barrington's.

My constituency office is located right in the heart of the Kerr Village and I frequent many businesses within that community. In this area, there is Sandwich Society, Justino's Wood Oven Pizza and the Wool Bin. Additionally, on December 4, the Kerr Street BIA will be hosting a virtual tree-lighting ceremony, which I encourage everyone to attend.

My riding is also proud to have the Bronte BIA. In the Bronte BIA, we have great shops and restaurants such as Lakeside Livin', Plank Restobar and El Spero.

These are just a few of the select amazing local businesses that will welcome you in Oakville. Whether you're looking for a great meal or the perfect gift, my riding of Oakville has everything. Small local businesses are often family-owned. They are the backbone of our communities and they need our support this year more than ever.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Chris Glover: I've been speaking with dozens of business owners over the past couple of weeks and they are wondering why small business owners are bearing the economic brunt of the pandemic. They need more relief measures.

Arturo, who owns the Milagro restaurant, and Zeeshan, who owns Naan and Chai restaurant, are incredibly successful entrepreneurs in Toronto's very tough restaurant business, but they are struggling.

Aaron Binder, who owns a tour company in the Distillery District, and Louie Cristello, who owns the Banknote restaurants, say that Digital Main Street and the \$1,000 PPE are not enough and deferring taxes is not helping; it's creating a mountain of debt that business owners can't pay off. They also talked about the unfairness towards small business owners.

JM Ghent, the fourth-generation owner of Curry's art supplies, has a 10,000-square-foot store, and he's asking why the government is allowing big box stores to open and he can't even have three customers in his massive store.

Tonny Louie, the president of the Chinatown BIA, says, "They let the big box stores open and make billions of dollars. Meanwhile the main street businesses can't survive."

One business owner says, "The Conservative government is forcing the little people out of the game, then the big corporations can have more."

It's not only unfair that this government is not providing the supports that these businesses need to survive, but if this government continues to let them collapse, we will all suffer because it will take years for our economy to recover. To the government: Please listen to these business owners. Don't just provide some support. Provide them with what they need to survive the pandemic.

LIFE INSURANCE

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: A month ago, my private member's bill, the Life Settlements and Loans Act, passed second reading.

For almost a century now, Ontario seniors have been blocked from accessing the fair market value of their life insurance policies. If passed, Bill 219 would modernize Ontario's Insurance Act and give our seniors the same options seniors have had for decades in Quebec, Europe, the UK, US and Japan.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has called or written to express their support over the last month. This includes Professor Steve Pulver of York University; Peter Martin, a fellow at the Canadian Institute of Actuaries; and even Michael Strain, the CEO of a life insurance company, the Grand Orange Lodge of British America. He has seen many policy holders become stressed financially, and the cash surrender value just isn't enough to really help them. Based on his experience, being able to access the equity in their life insurance policies that is built up over many decades of premium payments through a well-run secondary market would be one of the most consumer-friendly options available. On the other hand, to continue to deny consumers access to the valuable asset they funded for years at a time when many of them desperately need it is simply not appropriate.

1030

Speaker, I couldn't agree more, and I'm looking forward to public hearings on this bill in the early new year.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Mike Harris: Two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to share some exciting news with the seniors in my riding, especially those in Wilmot township. Our government is moving forward with an expansion of the Nithview Community, a long-term care home in New Hamburg operated by Tri-County Mennonite Homes. This expansion will include 95 new beds and will modernize 97 beds, creating a 192-bed home on the existing campus of care.

Speaker, we know that the previous government neglected long-term care. In 10 years, they only built—get this—611 new beds across the entire province, meaning seniors in my riding have been left to languish on growing wait-lists.

Getting more long-term-care beds in Waterloo region is one of my top priorities, and our government has been making progress. In addition to the expansion of the Nithview Community, alongside the member for Kitchener South-Hespeler, I announced an additional \$41 million for three projects in Waterloo region.

Our government's new funding model, which will get beds built faster, is benefiting Schlegel Villages Winston Park, peopleCare AR Goudie and Cambridge Country Manor. All together, these four projects will bring almost 600 new and upgraded beds to the region of Waterloo.

I'd like to thank our Minister of Long-Term Care for her commitment to ensuring our seniors can get the high quality care that they deserve closer to their families and loved ones, by building 30,000 new long-term-care beds over the next 10 years. I hope to have the opportunity to share more good news with my constituents very soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our member statements.

The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has informed me she has a point of order she would like to raise at this time.

M^{le} Amanda Simard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm seeking unanimous consent that orders for the second and third reading of Bill 236, An Act in respect of food and beverage delivery fees, be immediately called and the questions be now put without debate and amendment so that there are no further delays and small businesses can get immediate relief from price gouging on delivery fees.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On that point of order—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Yes. The member for Timmins wishes to speak to the point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, we would be glad to have a very quick debate at second reading, just to put it on the record—five minutes for each party—in order to get this into committee and to make sure that this bill actually applies to all businesses in Ontario. If she could amend it that way, we would be amenable.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is seeking unanimous consent of the House that orders for second and third reading of Bill 236, An Act in respect of food and beverage delivery fees, be immediately called and the questions be now put without debate and amendment. Agreed? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House has made its decision on that point of order.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Over the weekend, 12 more families learned that their loved ones had died in Ontario long-term-care homes. The Premier promised that he would leave no stone unturned in the search for answers in the problems of fixing Ontario's long-term-care system.

If that's the case, why, as reported in QP Briefing, is he currently impeding the efforts of his own commission on long-term care to get information?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: First of all, my heart goes out to everyone who has been affected by this. Looking at the recent numbers, there are ongoing issues in some of the homes, and we are taking every measure and every tool

to address those. We have a much better responsive system that has evolved over the current process of this pandemic.

I want to emphasize that Ontario is not alone in its challenges with COVID. We are taking every measure, every tool, as I said, including the rapid tests, including making sure that we're doing more frequent testing in our homes. This is an invisible intruder that we will continue to put every resource into.

Looking at other provinces that are being affected in this wave 2—this is an invisible intruder, and our measures are ongoing. We will continue to learn about what further we can do and continue to address the concerns in these homes and get them the support that they need.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I guess I'll try the question again—the same question in another tack. In the summer, the Premier blocked the full public judicial inquiry, but he insisted that the truth would come out: "I want to get down to the bottom of this. I need answers, I want answers."

A government that truly understands the sense of urgency in long-term care shouldn't work this hard to hide the facts. Will the Premier or the Minister of Long-Term Care release all documents to the commission today and start publicly reporting on what documents have been requested by the commission and which ones have actually been provided?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Open and transparent—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Minister of Long-Term Care to respond.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I reject the characterization of your question, to the member opposite. We have been absolutely transparent—this is an independent commission; it was designed to be transparent, and we have been providing all the information that a variety of groups are asking for. This has required thousands of hours of staff time, and we are getting this information to the commission. Their early guidance has been very well-received. We appreciate everything that they are doing on this.

We want to be transparent; we are being transparent. We are getting them their information, along with other groups who are asking for it. So I want to thank the commissioners; they are highly respected and eminent in their fields, and our government is doing everything it can to get them the information that they are requesting in a timely way while dealing with many other requests as well. We are being transparent, and I reject the characterization of your question.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It might be costing the government thousands of hours of staff time, but it's also costing thousands of lives.

For families worried about loved ones in long-term care, the lack of urgency and pattern of secrecy from the

Premier and the Minister of Long-Term Care is frightening. Families after the first wave were promised this would never happen again. They were promised protection. They were promised answers. Will the Premier and the Minister of Long-Term Care stop blocking the efforts to actually get those answers?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Once again, I absolutely reject the characterization of that question. There is no question about the transparency of this government's efforts to provide the information in a timely way. We are dealing with many stresses, as you can imagine, making sure that our homes are the focus of our energy, making sure that they are getting the support that they need in an integrated effort with Ontario Health, Public Health Ontario, our hospitals, which I am so thankful for their integration and their assistance, and taking the medical and scientific advice as it evolves.

We are being transparent, we will continue to be transparent and we will provide the commission with the information that they are requesting, in a timely way, as we deal with pandemic effects in our long-term-care homes, on our staff and on the residents there. I reject the premise of your question.

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EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Sara Singh: This weekend, families saw COVID-19 case counts continue to climb, despite this government's claim that the curve was flattening. That's especially frightening for people who have been deemed essential workers and don't have the option of working from home.

On Friday, Ontario's big-city mayors joined the call for paid sick days so that working people don't have to choose between a day's pay and staying safe. After so many months, why is this government still resisting this common-sense public health measure? Is it at the advice of the chief medical officer?

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I thank the member opposite for this question, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to stand behind the workers in this province every single step of the way during COVID-19. In fact, as the member opposite knows, the very first measure we brought in was a passing of Bill 186, which told any worker across the province that if they are impacted by COVID-19, they can't be fired for that. If they're staying home to look after a son or daughter, for example, or if they are in isolation or in quarantine, they won't be fired for that. And sick notes are no longer required.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to give credit to the Premier for leading the charge across the country to bring in over \$1 billion of paid sick leave for people in Ontario.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: COVID-19 has hit Brampton and Scarborough especially hard. These are communities full

of essential workers who do not have the privilege of staying and working from home. They are going to work and keeping our supply chain moving so that other people can stay safe. But these workers need to know that if they do fall ill, they can stay home and isolate without fear of lost wages or work.

On Friday, the chief medical officer said what New Democrats have been saying for months: This government should be ensuring that all workers have paid sick days. Will the government follow that advice and table legislation to provide all workers with paid sick days today?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, nobody should have to choose between their job and their health. That's why we passed the most progressive legislation in North America to protect jobs during COVID-19. It was literally on day one. We were all here in the Legislature to pass Bill 186, which told every single worker in this province that if they're in isolation, if they're in quarantine, if they have to stay home and look after a son or a daughter because of the disruptions in the education system in those early days, they can't be fired for that. Furthermore, sick notes are no longer required while COVID-19 is here in the province of Ontario.

But Mr. Speaker, on July 16, the Premier of Ontario led the charge to sign an agreement with the federal government to bring in over \$1 billion of paid sick days for workers in this province. That's 10 paid sick days. I'm proud of our Premier for leading the charge and standing behind every single worker in this province.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Speaker, just to be clear, that's a federal program that most workers aren't able to access.

Brampton is now a hot spot for COVID-19, with cases spiking across our city. We know everyone in the community is doing all that they can, but they need help from this government.

The chief medical officer, Dr. Williams, confirmed on Friday what health experts, workers' advocates and New Democrats have been saying for months: Paid sick days will help stop the spread of COVID-19 in cities like Brampton or Scarborough. Why is the government ignoring this advice?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying to all of those workers who have worked every single day, those millions of workers across the province—those front-line health care heroes, those truck drivers, those grocery store clerks, and the more than half a million people who have been working every single day in the construction industry to build those hospitals and those testing assessment centres for COVID. We're standing behind those workers every single day. As I said, we passed Bill 186, which ensured that no worker could be fired because of COVID-19.

The Premier signed an agreement on July 16; he led the charge. He brought all the territorial and provincial leaders together to sign an historic agreement between the federal government and all the provinces and territories to provide, in Ontario alone, \$1.1 billion. Those applications

opened on September 27. I commend the federal government, and we're going to continue working as a government with every level of government.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. In August, the member from Nickel Belt and I wrote to the Chief Medical Officer of Health to ask about a province-wide school surveillance plan for testing, early detection and contact tracing. It never happened. Now, four months later, nearly halfway through the school year and well into a devastating second wave, the government has finally announced a voluntary testing program for some schools in some regions. Over the weekend, that testing uncovered at least 19 more cases among students at Thorncliffe public school, with more positive cases expected.

Mr. Speaker, 670 schools have reported cases in this province, but we simply don't have the data to know what the real number is. Why did the government wait so long to start testing in our schools?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The commitment of this government and Premier is to ensure that we keep kids and staff safe in Ontario. It is why we have ensured every layer of prevention is in place according to the public health advice, including the Chief Medical Officer of Health's, who has endorsed our plan.

The member opposite spoke about the number of cases in schools. There are 86% of schools in this province that have no active case at all. In the context of asymptomatic testing, yes, indeed, we did expand, working with the Ministry of Health, into the highest-risk regions with high rates of community transmission to ensure, as was done in the case of Thorncliffe, that cases are ultimately identified and isolated from the school to prevent, to mitigate further spread.

We're grateful for the work of public health and the collaboration on the ground. We will continue, as the Premier has made clear, to do whatever it takes to overcome the challenge of COVID-19.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: We know from the auditor's report that the testing system failed because this government put saving money ahead of protecting people in this province.

When it comes to our schools and the safety of our students, we cannot let them do this again. We need a robust, fully staffed in-school testing program. We need supports for families that test positive, including—yes—paid sick days, space to isolate.

Community spread is growing in Brampton, Mississauga, Kitchener-Waterloo, Etobicoke, Humber River, Weston, Black Creek, Scarborough, Windsor. Thursday's last-minute plan with those remaining federal dollars simply isn't going to get the job done. It is a matter of equity.

Why, after all these months, is the government still reacting to this virus instead of listening to the experts, planning ahead and investing the resources necessary to keep our schools open and our students safe?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely agree that keeping students and staff safe is a priority. When you look at the fact that 99.94% of students in this province do not have active cases and 99.9% of staff do not have active cases, I think it underscores that the plan put in place—fully endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, fully funded by the Premier—is helping to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The member opposite spoke about certain regions of rising numbers of COVID transmission: in Waterloo, in Durham. In Halton and Hamilton last week, the Premier and I announced additional surge funding for those very communities to do more hiring, to ensure that they can combat COVID-19 within schools. Of course, weeks prior, we announced it in Ottawa, in Toronto, in York and in Peel to further ensure that students in Ontario—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Why did you wait four months?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport will come to order.

Minister of Education, please wind up your response.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We put these monies in place, part of a \$1.3-billion allocation, to ensure that we keep students safe, to ensure that we fundamentally work hard with public health to ensure every student and every staff person is safe in the province. We will continue to do that over the course of the coming weeks as we look forward to 2021.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Minister of Finance. We know that responding to the COVID-19 health crisis and the economic challenges it poses has necessitated collaboration from all levels of government as we work together to respond. Will the Minister of Finance please share with the House what concrete actions the governments of Ontario and Canada have been able to deliver together for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook—a great representative and does a great job of representing her constituents.

The member is absolutely right: COVID-19 has required all governments and indeed all parties to work together to protect Canadians and Ontarians. At the beginning of this pandemic, Premier Ford made a non-negotiable promise to do what it took to get Ontarians through this pandemic, and that's exactly what this government has done. Since the onset of this pandemic, we have had historic collaboration with the federal government—the \$7 billion secured for Ontario for the Safe Restart Agreement, a very important and historic agreement, part of \$19 billion secured by all provinces. That included \$1.5 billion of pandemic pay for our front-line heroes—again, a joint expenditure to support 378,000 front-line workers—and \$900 million of urgent relief for our rent relief program.

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We look forward to the federal Minister of Finance's financial statement today and further opportunities to partner with the federal government.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I am proud to be part of a government that understands the challenges that families face in Ontario and have been inspired to see our government take the necessary steps, in collaboration with the federal government, to ensure that they are provided the support that they need and the support that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please share with the House what the people of Ontario would like to see in this update?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member for the question. The theme of Ontario's budget—protect, support and recover—would also be a good theme for our federal partners. So I might suggest to Minister Freeland some of the areas for her to collaborate would include listening to our provincial Premiers, who have unanimously called for an increase of transfers through the Canada Health Transfer of 35%. That conversation needs to begin to happen.

The Premiers have also unanimously called for \$10 billion a year for the next 10 years for vital infrastructure. Again, unanimously, the provinces across the country have said this is important.

And our government has recently, now, raised its commitment to rural broadband to \$1 billion. This is the infrastructure of the 21st century. We would also like to see our federal partners lean in to support Ontarians and Canadians.

We look forward to this afternoon's federal financial statement.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. On Friday, despite the lockdown restrictions in place, we saw hundreds of people deep line up outside of big box stores and megamalls across the GTA. But for small, family-owned shops on main street, their doors remained barred and they're just barely hanging on.

Last week, the Premier told everyone that they need to get out and shop at their local shops and businesses; the problem for those businesses, though, is that the Premier shut all those businesses down, with little financial support. Speaker, if you can buy shoes and books and flowers at Walmart, then you're creating an unlevel playing field for main street businesses.

So my question, through you to the Premier: If you won't level the playing field, because clearly you've resisted that, will you at the very least provide small businesses with the direct financial support that they deserve to stay open?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Our government recognizes that small and main street businesses are the backbone of Ontario's economy. That is why our main street recovery plan was designed based on over 100 virtual meetings, round tables and discussions with owners, workers and economists. But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, it was

also based on the largest-ever stakeholder consultation in the history of this province.

Our plan draws from across government and builds on more than \$10 billion in urgent economic relief provided through our COVID-19 action plan. Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance and the role that small business plays in Ontario. That is why we have put in place a plan that will help them rebuild, invest and grow through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, businesses don't need more consultation if you don't listen to what they're actually saying.

The Premier wants to pretend he's on the side of small business, but since day one of this crisis, he's done everything in his power to make things actually harder for them. He ignored their calls for rent relief, waiting for the feds to bail us out instead. He dragged his feet on the evictions ban, as hundreds of small businesses closed their doors forever. And now, during the busiest shopping time of the year, he's handing out lumps of coal to small businesses across the province.

Speaker, we know that these Conservatives are not tired of their own mixed messages and vague directives and half measures, but businesses in the province of Ontario are exhausted. We need this Premier to level the playing field. So when is he going to step up and ensure that small businesses get the same support this government gives to the big box stores, the big corporations and the Premier's friends?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say again that our main street recovery plan was designed based on hundreds—actually, more than that, thousands—of consultations across Ontario with small and medium-sized businesses. The plan draws from across government and builds on, and I have to say this again, more than \$10 billion—that's with a B—in urgent economic relief provided through the COVID-19 action plan.

Our plan includes the Main Street Recovery Act. It's a plan that will modernize the rules to help small businesses. It includes programs like the \$1,000 main street recovery grant to fund PPE. It is a plan that includes the recovery network and our small business recovery web page.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said and as we've heard so many times in this House, our government recognizes the value of small businesses, and that is why we are working so closely with them to help them rebuild, invest and grow beyond the pandemic.

RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Ma question au gouvernement : It took this government over six months to respond to pleas from small business owners, over six months to place a cap on the commission fees charged by food delivery services. I first asked for this in May, both in this chamber and in a letter written to the associate minister. After numerous times asking over the past six months, I

was given the standard fluff response that is basically, “Got it, but no.”

I’ve received countless calls, emails, voicemails and social media messages from restaurant owners begging for this. I find it impossible to believe that the associate minister didn’t hear from these job creators himself and was unaware of the difficulties they were facing. There are so many restaurants in our province who had to close their doors because of this delayed reaction.

Mr. Speaker, how can the minister justify why this simple legislation that the community asked for from the onset of the pandemic took so long to be introduced, when other jurisdictions did so months ago? Why is this government always late to the party, causing even more unnecessary damage to already vulnerable sectors?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Flamborough–Glanbrook again to reply.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Speaker, I want to remind you that our government has, from day one, listened to the voices and the concerns of small business owners right across Ontario. Our government is committed to making Ontario open for business, open for jobs and open for opportunity. It’s something that you heard at the beginning when we were first elected, and it’s a message that we carry through COVID-19.

Everywhere we have gone across Ontario, our job creators told us the same thing: Our regulatory burdens were weighing them down, and that is why, Mr. Speaker, we have worked diligently to get rid of these burdensome regulations. They have had a negative impact on everyday Ontarians, making their interactions with government and access to services unnecessarily difficult. That applies to small businesses and restaurant owners right across Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I will say again and again and again: That is why our government has put in place a plan that will help businesses, restaurant owners and all small businesses right across our province rebuild, invest and grow, through this pandemic and beyond.

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

M^{le} Amanda Simard: This legislation, while long overdue, is a welcome beginning of actual support for restaurant owners, but again it falls short in supporting restaurant owners who are able to open but with such reduced capacity that they rely almost entirely on takeout orders and, therefore, delivery companies. Those small business owners are still facing incredible difficulties and they’re not receiving any protection from high commission fees or any support from this government.

Now that we will be debating this legislation and proposing amendments, will the minister even the playing field by placing a cap on commission fees for all restaurants in Ontario for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and keep this measure in place for at least six months after indoor dining resumes to ensure that restaurants can get back on their feet?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Once again, I want to share all of the things that our government has done to help small business across Ontario—restaurant owners and all small

businesses, regardless of where they operate in our fine province. As I said earlier, our government is committed to making Ontario open for business. We have put in place legislation; we have made changes that help businesses right across Ontario. Everywhere we have gone, Ontario was telling us, “Please get rid of burdensome regulations,” and that is what we are doing through the numerous pieces of legislation we’ve brought forward in this session, and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with small businesses right across our province to ensure they can keep their doors open through the pandemic and that they can grow and hire more Ontarians once we pass this pandemic.

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TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is for the Premier. Since the Landlord and Tenant Board resumed eviction hearings in August, the board has focused all of its energy on scheduling as many hearings as possible without any regard for human rights or access to justice. Disabled tenants have been denied accessible hearings that would accommodate their disabilities. Tenants without access to phones or Internet have called into their hearings from pay phones in the rain, from convenience stores when their pay-as-you-go cell phones run out of minutes, from their cars in parking lots, from their work. Tenants who don’t speak English or French are being denied access to translators, and the way the board is currently scheduling hearings means there are more hearings happening at the same time than legal aid can attend to.

Disadvantaged tenants have no access to anyone to help them navigate a complex legal system or to advocate for them when they need it most. Evictions are being rubber-stamped in as little as 60 seconds, while tenants don’t even know what’s going on in these online hearings.

Why is the Premier fast-tracking evictions of thousands of tenants in the middle of a pandemic?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General to respond.

Hon. Doug Downey: I appreciate the chance to speak on such an important topic for our government. Throughout COVID-19, you’ve seen, in the emergency recovery, that our government has been focused on keeping Ontarians safe and addressing the impacts of COVID-19 on tenants and landlords. As the threat of the pandemic began to spread, we took action. We’re working with our partners, we’re working with the legal representatives, the clinics to make sure that we have right-sizing for the hearings, to make sure that people do have access to those phone hearings and to Zoom hearings where possible.

Mr. Speaker, we know that it’s important that people have the ability to feel safe and to be safe. We’re taking actions to make sure that the system is running as smoothly as possible. We’ll continue to monitor that situation and work with tribunals, as an independent group, and we’ll make sure that people get their hearings, that they get the

ability to be heard, and the protections that the Landlord and Tenant Board offers to the tenants, as well.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: The Premier, the Attorney General and the minister responsible for municipal affairs and housing have all known about the problems at the Landlord and Tenant Board for months, but instead of fixing those problems, they are proceeding with an eviction blitz. Why would a government undertake mass evictions in the middle of a pandemic? The upcoming release of the Ombudsman's investigation into the massive backlog at the board might have something to do with it.

Speaker, this government sat on its hands for months and refused to appoint adjudicators to the board, and are now trying to course-correct the backlog that you created by compromising human rights and evicting tenants as fast as you can in the middle of a pandemic. Lives are at stake here. In the United States, researchers found that lifting of state moratoriums on evictions caused over 10,000 deaths from COVID-19—10,000 additional deaths from COVID-19.

Will the Premier immediately reinstate the moratorium on evictions to protect the health and safety of vulnerable and low-income tenants in Ontario?

Hon. Doug Downey: Again, I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the government and address this very serious issue of people needing the ability to have their hearings. If we don't have hearings, the NDP are upset that we're not having hearings and a backlog is being created; if we don't have enough adjudicators, they say that we're not doing our job.

We currently have the greatest number of adjudicators it has ever had, permanent and full-time, so that the Landlord and Tenant Board can function appropriately. They complain when we don't have enough adjudicators. Now they're complaining we have adjudicators, and now they're complaining that we're making adjudicators work. I just don't know in what direction they want to go, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you this: They might want to look in the mirror and ask themselves whether it's appropriate that they show up in Landlord and Tenant Board hearings and give evidence as MPPs.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Premier. In the government's 2020 budget, it read, "The province doubled funding in the Ontario Autism Program to \$600 million annually, beginning in 2019-20." Mr. Speaker, the former Minister of Children, Community and Social Services told the House seven times that \$600 million would be spent on autism services. The current minister has told the House no less than 14 times that autism services would be funded to the tune of \$600 million.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier explain to the House why the official public accounts directly contradict his ministers and his own budget, and show that the government has only spent \$434 million in 2019-20?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for the question. The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, in his recent statement on September 3, announced that our government will be spending a combined \$1.2 billion to support children and youth on the autism spectrum over the 2019-20 and 2020-21 fiscal years.

Last December, our government committed to providing interim one-time funding for families who were on the wait-list. Those who were on the wait-list by March 31, 2020, who have submitted their applications for one-time funding have received their payment. We continue to issue payments as families register for the programs and complete their application forms. Many of these payments will not be reported in public accounts until next year as the payments to families are being reported in the year in which they were made.

The past six months dealing with COVID-19 have been difficult for many families, but even more challenging for those families who have been home with no access to their normal supports. That's why the ministry has ensured that families still have 90 days from the date of their invitation letter to accept the funding.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: Families with children with autism are being betrayed once again. I'm not sure why we would believe that they're going to spend more next year when they didn't spend everything they told us they would spend last year.

The lack of support for these families has compounded the already precarious situation that they find themselves in as a result of COVID-19. Parents in my riding have told me that they find themselves stuck in limbo because of failure to access the supports that they need, because the government isn't providing the funding for those supports.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: Why should parents trust anything this government is telling them about supporting autism, and when will the government stop shortchanging these families and give them the desperate supports that they need?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for your supplementary. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's plan for the Ontario Autism Program failed to respond to the growing needs for autism services in this province. While the former government was in power and that member sat around the cabinet table, along with Stephen Del Duca, the wait-list for autism services skyrocketed in this province.

According to the Financial Accountability Officer, between 2012 and 2018, the autism wait-list grew by a staggering 47.8% per year. Our government undertook the unprecedented step of doubling the Ontario Autism Program's funding, and we will be spending a combined \$1.2 billion over the 2019-20 and 2020-21 fiscal years, as more than twice as many children are receiving supports as we transition to the new needs-based program designed by the autism community.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Donna Skelly: Mr. Speaker, the previous Liberal government had over a decade to help Ontario prepare for the impacts of climate change. Instead, it created a carbon pricing scheme that would have sent almost \$500 million—Ontario dollars—to California and Quebec by 2020.

The Liberals' own environment minister said their 2017 carbon pricing scheme was not a real solution to addressing the country's emissions. The people of Ontario deserve a government that will ensure these important environmental issues are addressed in a way that considers Ontario's priorities, regional-based challenges and opportunities in rural and northern communities.

I know the ministry recently celebrated the two-year anniversary of its Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan. Can the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks share with the House how the government, unlike the last Liberal government, is actually protecting air, land and water?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Guildwood will come to order. The member for Orléans will come to order.

The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will answer the question.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I thank the member from Scarborough–Glanbrook for that question. I know it's really hard for the members of the independent party to understand the truth of what really occurred, but our government is committed to protecting and conserving our environment. We want to ensure that Ontario's natural beauty can be enjoyed for generations to come. Thanks to our blueprint environment plan and the strength of our relationships with many of our partners, we have made considerable progress over the past two years.

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Some of the accomplishments are finalizing Ontario's emissions performance standards for large industrial emitters, to ensure polluters are accountable; transitioning Ontario's blue box to a producer responsibility model; and becoming the first province to require fuel suppliers to increase the amount of renewable content in regular-grade gasoline to 15%.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous government, we recognize that there's an important symbiotic relationship between supporting a healthy environment and a healthy economy. Both can be done, and our progress is proof of that.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: When it comes to the environment, there are no quick fixes. The environment is simply not a static thing. It doesn't make sense for anyone to advocate for a plan that doesn't adapt to emerging issues and trends or one that does not address the real-time needs of this province.

Under the previous Liberal government, and backed by the NDP, the people of Ontario watched their hard-earned

dollars used on expensive and ineffective policies that did not deliver results. Ontarians expected the previous government would have brought forward environmental policies that were effective; unfortunately, that's simply not what happened.

Now more than ever—the pressures of COVID-19—it's important that we have clean air to breathe, safe water to drink and well-protected lands to enjoy. So will the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks commit today that this government will implement effective and affordable solutions so that the environment is protected now and into the future?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks again for that question. Our government recognizes the importance of adapting our plan to new challenges, as well as new innovations and data and research that emerge so it addresses the priorities of the province.

We know there's still a lot of work to be done, and that is why we've already started to move forward on some of our next steps under our plan, including moving to phase out food and organic waste sent to landfill by 2030; supporting wetland restoration and creation in priority areas in Ontario, in partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada; continuing initiatives, such as the Ontario's Living Legacy, which was cancelled by the previous government; and providing young Ontarians with more opportunities to share their insights by establishing a youth climate advisory group.

We're proud of our accomplishments on this side of the House, especially during these unprecedented and challenging times. We'll continue to make progress as we work to support a healthy economy and a healthy environment.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. My community is experiencing the biggest COVID outbreak of the pandemic at London Health Sciences Centre: 3 new outbreak-linked cases were reported among LHSC staff and patients over the weekend, bringing the total cases to 65. Two patients who acquired COVID in the hospital have died, their families shocked and grieving.

On Friday, the Middlesex-London Health Unit issued a letter to the hospital with 25 instructions on strict measures that must be taken to get the outbreak under control.

Will the Premier commit to providing whatever supports and resources are needed by the hospital to ensure compliance with these critical public health directives?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. This is a serious concern, and one that we're keeping daily contact with Dr. Mackie on, the local medical officer of health for the London area. Dr. Williams does that.

We have been supplying them with whatever assistance they need because we want to make sure that the patients, of course, are kept safe, the staff are kept safe and it's confined, as much as possible, within the hospital. We don't want it to continue to spread. So whatever assistance

the hospital requires, of course we will be there to help support them to protect lives and to make sure that we contain the spread as much as we can within the hospital.

But part of it's coming in from the community, as you know. That's why some of the restrictions have been placed on the London area, but we are continuing to monitor it very closely on a daily basis.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Dr. Mackie has said that, for the past nine days, 50% of the cases in our region have been linked to the LHSE outbreak, with transmission occurring within the hospital. Six hospital wards are now confirmed to have cases, including organ transplants, cardiovascular surgery, palliative and orthopedics. This has once again forced the cancellation of non-urgent surgeries and procedures.

London was already at the bottom of the list for the longest surgical wait times in Ontario, particularly for joint replacements. This cancellation is devastating to those whose surgeries were postponed during wave 1 and to those who are still waiting for their procedures to be booked.

What is this government's plan to ensure that access to surgeries is restored for Londoners and to prevent any future surgical cancellations at LHSC once this outbreak is under control?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Clearly, in order to be able to proceed with these surgeries and other procedures that had to be postponed during wave 1, it's going to be very important to get this COVID outbreak under control. That's why we have been in touch with Dr. Mackie; we will continue to be. We will supply the hospital with whatever other resources they need. If it's more personal protective equipment, they know that it's available on a daily basis. That can be ordered. If they need more human resources, if they need more staff, we'll help supply more staff there. But clearly, we need to get that done in order to be able to proceed with those surgeries.

We know that there's a backlog. We know that we need to proceed with them. If you lose a loved one to COVID, that's tragic, but it's equally tragic if you lose a loved one because they haven't received their cancer or cardiac surgery on time. That is a key part of our fall preparedness plan, to keep those surgeries going. But we need to deal with the COVID outbreak first, and then we will move as quickly as we can to get back on track in dealing with those backlogs.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

Day after day, the Premier stands in front of the cameras and says that he feels for small business owners. While they likely welcome his sympathy, I'm sure they would prefer strong action from this Premier to help them. At a minimum, small businesses want a level playing field—a chance not to be rolled over by big box stores that can remain open.

Unlike Ontario, Manitoba requires big box stores to cordon off aisles of non-essential goods. Can the Premier explain to small business owners why big box stores can sell books, flowers, electronics, clothes and other non-essential goods when those in lockdown areas cannot?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Finance to respond.

Hon. Rod Phillips: I appreciate the member from Guelph's question. I am taking from that that he supports the government's public health measures, understands the importance of them and understands, therefore, the need for us to work within those.

That's why this government has provided unprecedented support for our small businesses: \$600 million. That's double the original number, and that's because these measures have been required, again, because of the necessary public health that we have to observe for us to expand that support. My colleague has already talked about our main street support program. I'll also talk about the \$57 million for our Digital Main Street program.

I'd also like to perhaps ask the member back about his support for the vital, vital changes that we're making in terms of property taxes. I know that his mayor in Guelph supports the idea of the creation of a small business property tax class. I know he supports our cuts to the education property tax and our electricity rate cuts. Mr. Speaker, I would be interested in the member from Guelph—if he supports those further supports today and for the future for small business.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Of course I support supports for small businesses, but I will not take my marching orders from the CEO of Walmart Canada. I will take my marching orders from small business owners across this province.

CFIB CEO Dan Kelly said the Premier—he didn't say Premier, but I'll say Premier—"has unfortunately signed the death warrant of thousands and thousands of businesses." Of course small businesses understand that we have to take public health measures to save lives. But they are asking this government to throw them a lifeline.

Quebec is offering small businesses in lockdown areas grants of up to \$15,000 a month to help keep them alive during this pandemic. Speaker, I ask the minister: Will the Ontario government step up with direct financial support, similar to Quebec, to help keep small businesses alive in Ontario?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, this government is providing those direct government supports, direct supports in terms of dollars well beyond those referenced by the member.

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I am disappointed. I noted the quote from his mayor, Cam Guthrie, that he disagrees with Mike Schreiner. He supports the idea of property tax relief, unlike the member from Guelph, who apparently does not.

Interjection.

Hon. Rod Phillips: I'm just quoting your mayor.

I should comment that Mr. Guthrie has just completed his term as head of the Big City Mayors. I know that we, on this side, appreciate the hard work that he did in that regard.

But Mr. Speaker, this government has been for small business since it was elected. It will continue to be for small business, providing the supports—not just the immediate relief that we're providing, but also the ongoing supports. Again, I ask the member to reconsider his lack of support for property tax reductions, for electricity reductions and for payroll tax reductions that will support small businesses today and in the future.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

Last week, the Ontario Nurses' Association wrote to our Chief Medical Officer of Health; the letter is concerning. It states that Ontario has not updated public health directives to recognize the aerosol risk that COVID presents, although it's been two months since the Centers for Disease Control did it and one month since public health Canada updated their directive.

Speaker, from the beginning, Ontario has refused to use the precautionary principle, the number one lesson we learned from SARS, and 9,554 health care workers got infected and eight long-term-care workers have died from COVID.

Now, the science is here: The coronavirus transmits through aerosol. That means that all front-line health care workers need access to N95 respirators or better when caring for suspected or infected people.

When is this government going to listen to science, listen to public health experts and update their directive on COVID-19 transmission?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question. If a front-line health care worker is performing an aerosol-generating procedure they, of course, do have access to N95 masks. That's important for their protection going forward.

But the idea of further generation just through air transmission is another matter. That's something that is still very controversial. Not all of the experts agree on that. Most of the experts right now believe that it is generated through water droplets and aerosol-generating procedures; however, not everyone believes that. The science is still being developed in that area and we are still awaiting some of the results. Not everyone has come forward, even with some of the Canadian evidence and some of the evidence from the Centers for Disease Control.

We're continuing to follow it very closely because we are making decisions based on clinical evidence and based on science.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: Back to the Premier: Ignoring science costs lives. COVID-19 is a clear aerosol risk and Ontario still hasn't updated public health directives recognizing this.

In my riding of Sudbury, the first wave of COVID-19 caused the loss of a life at St. Joseph's Continuing Care. The Minister of Long-Term Care continues to state that long-term-care homes have the PPE they require; however, Jo-Anne Palkovits, the CEO of St. Joseph's complex continuing care hospital and the CEO of two long-term-care homes, has been trying to replenish her stock of N95 masks since June. Count along with me: June, July, August, September, October, November—it will be December tomorrow morning.

Speaker, the Premier needs to listen to science. We need to update the directives and get the badly needed N95s into our province's long-term-care and retirement homes.

After several months of delay, will the Premier commit to finally getting the N95 masks to St. Joseph's Continuing Care in Sudbury?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Let me reiterate that our government's top priority is the safety and well-being of residents in long-term care, and all Ontarians. This is something that our government has demonstrated not only with its policy; most recently, in October, the \$540 million—over half a billion dollars—to go towards efforts to improve IPAC. That included \$2.8 million to make sure that our long-term-care homes have the personal protective equipment that they require.

Homes in outbreak do have access to the N95s, and homes can contact the regional tables and make sure that they get the shipments that they need. This is something that we are absolutely committed to, and I'm working with our other ministries to make sure that the availability of PPE is there. That's the \$2.8 million for eight weeks of supply to all of our homes across Ontario, including N95s for those in outbreak.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. We've known for a long time, since the SARS outbreak, that long-term-care homes are vulnerable settings for respiratory disease. Viruses are not a mysterious, invisible intruder; they can be met with proactive and effective IPAC. The government's own commission investigating "heard that long-term care ... homes were forgotten in the initial provincial plans to control the spread of COVID-19 until residents started dying, and pleas that this not be repeated when this crisis is over."

We're now in the throes of the second wave. Tragically, this month alone, over 250 residents in long-term care have sadly died from COVID-19, yet the commission that this government created to report on how COVID-19 is

spread in long-term-care settings has reported that the government is withholding the documents it needs to do its work.

Speaker, through you: Why is this government impeding the work of the commission by withholding requested documents? Is it because they are afraid of what they might find?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will come to order.

The response? The Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. It's absolutely our commitment as a government to be transparent. That's why we created the process by which the independent commissioners will report. It is absolutely essential that we get to the bottom of what happened, and we've been consistently transparent. We've provided almost 48,000 records to the commission, and we have conducted over a dozen briefings—17, to be exact—to the commissioners. They have a publicly posted site, where they can provide communication to the public, where people can submit their stories and their concerns. They have issued interim recommendations.

And I will repeat: We are in a battle of our lifetimes against COVID-19, all around this world. And if the member opposite does not understand that a virus is invisible, then I would hope that you would educate yourself. Please, please inform yourself. It's absolutely critical that you understand the science and the nature of COVID-19 and how it spreads.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: This minister—one of the things that I've been listening to you—because I was the one who asked in March, on March 11, about long-term care—no word from this government on what you're going to do to protect those residents.

Over 2,300 people in long-term care are now dead as a result of your government's refusal to act. Now, in your own appointed commission—this commission was appointed by you to give answers to people who have lost their loved ones, like in my riding, in Extencicare Guildwood and in Seven Oaks. They deserve to know what went wrong.

No one needs your lecture. That's not what we're here to do. What we're here to do is to answer the questions that the people of Ontario are asking you. Why are you withholding these documents? It is the commission that says that—

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

Minister of Long-Term Care to reply.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Again, I will reiterate that we created an independent commission to provide guidance and get to the bottom of this. Nothing matters more than understanding what else can be done as the world struggles with COVID-19. Across Canada, they are struggling with COVID-19. COVID-19 is an invisible intruder that gets into our homes. One case can be devastating.

And the commissioners—I appreciate their expertise. I have a great deal of respect for their credentials, and they are eminently respected. We are making sure that this process is transparent. We are allowing the commissioners to gather this information, to hear from residents in a very public way, and staff and their families. This matters a great deal.

I have been a family doctor for 30 years. I've been understanding the science of this since the earliest days. I will continue to take every measure and every tool possible.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. It has been two weeks since I told the Premier that Niagara's chief medical officer of health instituted an additional regulation to try to stop the spread of COVID-19 which has put restaurants and bars, the tourist sector, operators and the wineries in a very tough spot financially. Now we see the Premier is offering money to restaurants and bars elsewhere in Ontario, but not Niagara.

1130

You can't punish our local businesses because the chief medical officer acted proactively in a way he believed he had to. The regional chair of Niagara has asked the Premier for support. The Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake has also asked for financial support. Speaker, will the Premier tell the businesses of Niagara today that help is on the way and they'll be giving them the financial support they should have given them two weeks ago?

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

Hon. Rod Phillips: I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the many programs that are available for businesses, and I think it's an important opportunity for this Legislature to as well be clear to our constituents. There is an exceptional support that this government is providing, in partnership with the federal government. Specifically, this government is providing \$600 million for businesses in red control zones and in the gray lockdown zones. That support will be for all the businesses that are affected in those areas by the public health measures.

For the broader areas where there are also needs for support, we've provided programs like my colleague spoke about earlier: \$60 million for \$1,000 of personal protective equipment, \$57 million to help businesses get online—that program has already helped 23,000 businesses—and through this budget that I know the member is considering right now, direct support which will support the businesses in his riding. Property tax reductions, significant; electricity reductions, significant; and payroll cost reductions, significant.

I hope that the member will consider that as he looks at the budget that will come before—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier. I don't need an education from the finance minister, telling me what programs are available to Niagara. I've talked to you guys for the last two weeks. Niagara should be entitled to the

\$600 million that is out there, because the chief medical doctor put us in a section 22 and it's killing our businesses. So I understand the program; I'm saying to you we should qualify for that program.

The regulations passed in Niagara means you can only dine with three other people and they must be from your household. Our chief medical officer of health implemented this additional regulation because he felt he needed it in order to halt the spread of COVID-19 in Niagara. You can't tell people they must listen to public health experts and follow the regulations, and then let their businesses fail when they don't follow the rules.

Niagara restaurants, the bars, the wineries, the tourist operators and other small businesses need the Premier to help today, or they'll lose everything. Will the Premier listen to the appeals from me, from the community mayors, from the Niagara region, and immediately approve emergency financial funding for our small businesses?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I appreciate and I believe what the member is saying is, it's important for businesses to support the public health requirements that are being put in place. We absolutely respect the role of local public health officials in terms of providing that support, but when it comes to the \$600-million program that the member speaks to, that program is specifically targeted at the red control zones, as I said before, and at the gray lockdown zones. These are areas where business is restricted in a significant fashion.

As well, the member will know the other supports available through this government. I already mentioned the \$60 million for the PPE, the \$57 million for the online support, Mr. Speaker; and I'm sure the member is also aware of the federal rental supports and the wage supports where we've worked in partnership with the federal government to provide coverage for the fixed costs of businesses, so we can see small businesses through the pandemic.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Minister, as you are likely well aware, there have been notable concerns in my constituency around police interactions with individuals who may be in crisis or living with a mental health and addiction challenge. I know this is not only an issue affecting my riding, but it can be seen in communities right across Ontario.

Minister, across Canada and even around the world, both advocates and researchers alike have been calling for innovative ways to ensure police have the necessary tools and resources to safely handle calls for service involving someone experiencing a mental health crisis. Minister, can you explain how our government is helping our brave front-line officers in handling mental health cases?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'd like to thank the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook for the question. The member is absolutely correct, Mr. Speaker. From the GTA

to remote rural and northern communities, we know there's been a significant demand for innovative services to assist our police in handling mental health cases.

That's why, just a couple of weeks ago, I stood with Premier Ford, our Deputy Premier and our Solicitor General to announce that our government is providing over \$37 million to expand mental health services across Ontario's justice system. Speaker, \$6.5 million of this funding will see the expansion and launch of mobile crisis services in 33 communities across the province, including a brand new service in Ottawa, a new Indigenous service in Six Nations of the Grand River, and additional teams in small communities in the northwest, such as Red Lake, Sioux Lookout, Dryden, Atikokan, Fort William First Nation and the surrounding area of Marathon.

Mr. Speaker, we listened, and we will continue to listen, to the first responders and provide the officers the supports they need to be able to do their work for the people of the province.

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Nickel Belt has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health concerning N95, precautionary principle. This matter will be debated tomorrow following private members' public business.

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

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

SPECIAL REPORT, CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: Special Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on Election Administration and the COVID-19 Pandemic.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 222, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 222, Loi modifiant diverses lois à l'égard de questions relatives au transport.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I rise today to recognize November as Woman Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario. This month, we acknowledge the need to continue to work together to end violence against women and girls in Ontario.

As I have said in this House before, the silence that used to surround the issue of violence against women is ending. More and more, people are raising awareness and learning about how they can keep people safe in their communities, because we know that reducing this violence is critical for each and every Ontarian. I am proud that our government is working to make this a reality.

But this year is different, Speaker. Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the rates of domestic violence, including violence against women, has tragically increased. COVID-19 has only reinforced the fact that violence against women crosses every social, economic and cultural boundary in our communities.

One in three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. Women are three times more likely to be stalked and four times more likely to be the victim of intimate partner violence. Some women are at even greater risk of experiencing violence, including those who are Indigenous, racialized, newcomers, members of the 2SLGBTQ community and women with disabilities.

Across Canada, police-reported data on human trafficking has shown that over 90% of victims are female and more than 70% are under 25, with over a quarter of victims being children under 18.

There is a cost to all of this. First and foremost, there is the tremendous pain, trauma and dislocation that is inflicted on victims, survivors and families. That's why our government moved quickly to boost support for women facing a heightened risk of violence due to COVID-19.

We announced a \$40-million COVID-19 Residential Relief Fund to help address increased costs, including supports for agencies and Indigenous-led organizations supporting women and dependants experiencing gender-based violence and survivors of human trafficking. We invested \$1 million to help front-line counselling agencies adapt to remote service delivery and support continued operation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks to the work of the Attorney General, we have provided an emergency payment of more than \$2.7 million to support services for victims of gender-based violence and other violent crimes during the COVID-19 crisis.

Because of the efforts of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing through the Social Services Relief Fund, we have provided \$500 million to municipalities and Indigenous organizations to support our most vulnerable. Over \$14 million has gone directly to agencies that are helping women.

And our recent budget announced that we are investing \$2.5 million in a new victim support grant to fund partnerships between police services and community groups to fill existing service gaps and tailor programming to address local needs across Ontario. This investment will improve supports for victims of these crimes and ensure they have timely access to culturally appropriate services.

Speaker, we know how hard those on the front lines are fighting for those affected by gender-based violence. So, on behalf of our entire government, I want to thank our dedicated and committed front-line workers for their heroic efforts this year. To support them, we implemented a \$4-an-hour raise for shelter and sector workers retroactive to the beginning of the pandemic.

I meet with front-line workers and I visit violence against women shelters on a regular basis. This allows me to make decisions that reflect their expertise and understanding of what those fleeing violence need the most. I am also inspired by the spirit and the determination of survivors of violence to rebuild their lives and am grateful to have been given an opportunity to hear their stories and experiences.

Let me say once again, our government believes it is every woman's fundamental right to live safely and securely in her home and community, free from violence. These crimes must end so that children, women and everyone in this province can live safely and free from the threat, fear or experience of exploitation and violence.

This year, our government is investing more than \$172 million in supports for survivors and for violence prevention initiatives. That includes crucial services like emergency shelters, counselling, 24-hour crisis lines, safety planning and transitional and housing supports in both urban and rural areas, because violence against women knows no boundaries.

This past March, we took action to combat human trafficking and child sexual exploitation with a \$307-million, five-year strategy focused on raising awareness, protecting victims and intervening early, supporting survivors and holding offenders accountable.

I want to speak about sex trafficking for a moment. This is a fight Ontario cannot afford to lose. The health of our communities and the lives of young people are at stake. Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable, and those from Indigenous communities are disproportionately targeted. When it comes to sex trafficking, Ontario needs to know exactly what they are looking at and what they're looking for. That's because sex trafficking is an invisible crime that often goes unseen. Shedding light on and raising awareness of human trafficking is our first line of defence in preventing this crime and protecting children and youth.

Speaker, we've been fast out of the gate this year with several important pieces that give life to our anti-human

trafficking strategy. On June 15, we issued a call for applications for the Anti-Human Trafficking Community Supports Fund and the Indigenous-led initiatives fund, two key programs to increase community-based supports for survivors.

These funds will focus on services that support early intervention, increased protection for child and youth victims of sexual exploitation and dedicated supports developed and delivered by survivors of human trafficking. These funds also recognize the need for Indigenous-specific supports to respond to sex trafficking and will help to increase the availability of culturally appropriate, Indigenous-designed supports for First Nations, Inuit and Métis victims, families and communities.

In August, we released two new awareness tools designed to actively engage youth in discussions about human trafficking and provide culturally relevant resources for Indigenous communities.

Speaker, I mentioned earlier that Indigenous women and girls were particularly vulnerable to being targeted by traffickers. That's why we worked very hard to embed Indigenous-specific resources across our new strategy. Many Indigenous communities are familiar with the pain and reality of sex trafficking. It is critical that we work together to find culturally appropriate interventions and solutions, not only to sex trafficking but to broader issues of violence against Indigenous women.

Indigenous women are three times more likely to experience violent victimization than non-Indigenous women and are two and a half times more likely to experience spousal violence.

1310

In June, our government established a new Indigenous Women's Advisory Council to provide expert advice on violence prevention. This council is a way for government to hear from Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQ leaders on anti-violence priorities and culturally grounded programs and services needed in Indigenous communities across this province. The council will help to ensure that Indigenous women, girls and members of the 2SLGBTQ community have the necessary supports for their safety and security, with anti-violence actions designed by and for them.

Speaker, talking about violence against women year-round is key to raising awareness and encouraging women to come forward with their stories. On November 25, we continued the conversation by marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the beginning of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence campaign.

Another important campaign is the White Ribbon initiative. In the words of my colleague the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, this is not just a women's issue. Men need to be part of the solution. Minister Smith, alongside many men worldwide, wore the white ribbon earlier this month. It is a symbol for men who have pledged to never commit, condone or remain silent against violence against women and girls. I encourage men to visit whiteribbon.ca for more resources on how to be an ally and to take the pledge to show your commitment for

women's safety and ending violence against girls and women, and I thank all the men in this House for being strong, supportive allies.

Speaker, as I said at the outset, 2020 has been a year like no other. It has challenged all of us in ways we could not have foreseen. I am proud to say that our very strong effort to end violence against women has not been derailed by COVID-19. If anything, we have learned so much more about how we as a government can support women and keep them safe. We know that for girls and women to be able to achieve their goals and dreams, they must first have confidence in their personal safety and security. That's why we have maintained a sharp focus on violence against women this year.

I look forward to continuing to build momentum and progress in 2021 as we work together to create an Ontario free of violence and full of opportunities for girls and women.

ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Jill Dunlop: It's a privilege to also recognize November as Adoption Awareness Month. This month, we thank the thousands of families across Ontario who have opened their hearts and homes to children and youth in need of a family. These mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, grandmothers and grandparents are providing what many of us take for granted: A loving family that is there for us through life's many celebrations as well as challenges.

This month, we also thank all those who work every day to help find permanent, loving homes for children and youth, whether it's by way of a public adoption, private domestic adoption, international adoption or a relative adoption. These dedicated professionals are helping children and youth find safe, secure places they can call home. This month, we raise awareness about how adoption can be an incredibly beneficial and rewarding experience for both the child being adopted and the family opening their hearts and homes. As I speak, there are many children in the extended care of children's aid societies eligible for adoption. Every child is unique and will thrive with the right family in the right environment.

The research is clear: Children who are placed in a permanent home through adoption have significantly better outcomes compared to those who remain in care. They are more likely to graduate from secondary school, be employed and have higher incomes. They are less likely to rely on social assistance, be homeless, involved with the justice system or have substance abuse issues.

Speaker, there is nothing more critical, nothing more fundamental to a child's well-being and success, than knowing they have a permanent place to call home. Every child deserves the best opportunity to succeed and reach their potential. Every child deserves a loving, permanent and safe home and family, and every child deserves to have a strong voice in the type of home and the type of care that they are receiving.

That is why our government funds adoption programs such as AdoptOntario, Wendy's Wonderful Kids and

Adoption Resource Exchange, which help match children and youth in care with the right families.

That is why we fund organizations like Adopt4Life and the Adoption Council of Ontario to support adoptive families.

And that is why the parliamentary assistant and member from Ottawa West–Nepean held round tables last year with adoptive parents, prospective adoptive parents, Indigenous partners, front-line workers and leaders in the adoption sector. We wanted to hear from them about their experiences and their ideas on how to approve the adoption system.

Speaker, I want to take a moment to recognize a friend and colleague of mine the Minister of Colleges and Universities, who is an incredible advocate for adoption and the very proud father of three beautiful adopted boys. While I cannot speak for him on the impact adoption has had on him or his boys, I can feel the passion and joy that these boys have brought him. I applaud him and his wife for opening their home three times and giving these boys a loving family. They are just one of many examples of the joys from adoption.

A key priority of our recently announced plan to transform and modernize the child welfare system is to develop lifelong connections and supports for children and youth through permanency, increased stability and the success of family-based placements such as adoption or customary care. We intend to increase adoptions and offer a more consistent, responsive experience for children, youth and prospective adoptive parents.

As part of our plan, we recently announced \$900,000 to develop an online centralized adoption intake service that will modernize the adoption system and offer a more consistent and responsive experience for adoptive parents. With this funding, we will also expand centralized online matching by requiring societies, where appropriate and in the child or youth's best interests, to profile children and youth who are eligible for adoption on the AdoptOntario Web-based adoption matching platform.

To mark November as Adoption Awareness Month, we also announced nearly \$600,000 to enhance post-adoption financial supports, parent training and peer supports to help ensure successful adoptions.

We are also working to establish service standards to improve adoption services provided by children's aid societies to prospective adoptive parents, adoptive parents and children and youth, and to greater support consistency across the province.

We will undertake a public education campaign to recruit new and diverse adoptive parents, as well as retain prospective adoptive parents already approved for adoption and awaiting placement of a child in their home.

We must also match more kids, where appropriate, with adoptive parents of a similar religion, race or cultural background, and we must speed up the process safely so that more kids and families can be matched quicker.

Speaker, while we know that our investments and efforts are making a real difference for children, youth and adoptive parents, we also know that we must continue

working diligently with our partners in the adoption community to continue strengthening Ontario's adoption system. This is the goal that has guided us this month and throughout the year, as we help more and more children and youth find permanent and stable homes in our great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH
MOIS DE LA PRÉVENTION
DE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to respond to the statement made about gender-based violence and other violent crime, specifically related to COVID-19.

When the decisions were made, they were the right decisions at the time, in March—to ask everybody to stay home, to ask everybody to confine to their own homes. A lot of couples who were experiencing domestic violence saw that it was very difficult to be confined to their own home. The feeling often turns to anger, and this anger was often directed toward the spouses. I've had the opportunity to talk—it's the OPP who support most of my riding. The number of calls for domestic violence went through the roof during the confinement.

1320

You have to realize, Speaker, that for women who live with domestic violence, if they decide to leave the couple, this is the highest risk of a fatal outcome. This is when most women are at highest risk. If you look at women who are victims of domestic violence and end up dying at the hands of their partner, it is at the time of separation. So you can understand how worried the people I represent are when this government has closed the OPP station in Foleyet. Foleyet's closest detachment comes from about 300 kilometres away, and just last month, they closed the OPP detachment in Gogama. The same thing: For every woman who is a victim of domestic violence, the closure of OPP detachments in northern and rural areas puts every single one of these women at higher risk—the risk of violence all the way to the risk of death.

J'aimerais également profiter de l'occasion pour féliciter le Centre Victoria pour femmes, qui célèbre son 25^e anniversaire cette année. Le Centre Victoria pour femmes offre des services aux femmes victimes de violence. Ils ont un bureau à Sudbury, à Elliot Lake, à Sault Ste. Marie, à Wawa, mais ils ont également une ligne d'écoute qui s'appelle Fem'aide, qui est là pour tout le nord-est de l'Ontario pour les femmes francophones. Ils offrent des services de counselling et de soutien. Ils offrent des groupes pour femmes. Ils offrent des services juridiques, des services d'accompagnement, des renvois en service et également font beaucoup, beaucoup de prévention.

Si vous allez sur leur site Web, vous allez voir que c'est au moment où la relation de couple prend fin que le risque de violence mortelle est la plus élevée pour les femmes victimes de violence conjugale. Ils donnent le numéro

pour appeler la police—parce que dans mon comté le 911 ne fonctionne pas, donc il faut mémoriser le numéro 1-800-566-1122 que les gens ne savent pas—et, également, si vous voulez établir un plan de sécurité, d'appeler Fem'aide.

Fem'aide est toujours à l'écoute. J'aimerais donner leur numéro : c'est le 1-877-336-2433. Si vous êtes une femme francophone, si vous êtes dans une situation inquiétante, n'hésitez pas à composer ce numéro-là. Je vous garantis, ils vont vous appeler. C'est fait de façon sécuritaire. Personne ne saura que vous allez appeler.

ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: As the minister also did a statement on adoption, it always makes me really proud that it was Marilyn Churley from the NDP who brought forward the bill that allowed women who had been pressured to give up their child at birth to adoption to reconnect with those children. There was a time not that long ago when women having a pregnancy out of wedlock were really discriminated against. We treated these women horribly and forced them to give up their children, although many of them would have loved to keep them—the social pressure was such. Well, it was Marilyn who pushed this, and we now have in Ontario that if you have given up a child for adoption, you're able to reconnect. Many, many very happy reconnections happened thanks to her work. Many people now know who their birth mother was, and that's all for the good.

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's an honour to rise today in the Legislature during Woman Abuse Prevention Month. I know everyone here wishes that such a month was still not necessary in 2020. Too many women in our society continue to face unbelievable, unconscionable and horrific abuse from those around them. This abuse—psychological, emotional and physical—sometimes comes from the hands of strangers, but too often is inflicted by friends, partners, employers and those in positions of authority around them. It's this abuse of power and authority that I'd like to focus on today, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, the Integrity Commissioner at the city of Ottawa finished a year-long investigation into shocking and horrific abuse and harassment of women in the workplace by city councillor Rick Chiarelli. The revelations from this year-long inquiry are both shocking and horrific. The city councillor repeatedly abused his authority and demeaned and harassed the women who worked for him in ways that are difficult to read about. His actions are so beyond the pale that the city has imposed the most severe penalties afforded to them under legislation: the suspension of pay. The city has done its best to support the courageous women who have come forward with their stories and take action, but anyone who has read the report, Mr. Speaker, will know that in any other workplace, the penalties would be much more severe.

Last year, as reports were first starting to be made public, I joined my colleagues on city council standing at my place around the table in protest of Mr. Chiarelli's abuse of power and privilege. And while I'm proud that my former colleagues have taken the most severe steps available to them, and that they will be donating his forfeited pay to non-profit groups and organizations that deal with violence against women, these steps on their own are not enough.

The women who faced this harassment and emotional trauma have taken the most difficult and courageous step. They've come forward and reported their abuse. They've shared their stories so that a light can be shone on this dark corner and so that actions can be taken to stop it from happening again. Now it is time for the government to act just as courageously. In any other workplace, a person who harassed and abused employees and co-workers in this way would lose their job. They would lose their title. They would lose their position of authority.

Unfortunately, these actions are not limited to one city councillor in Ottawa. We've seen similar situations in Brampton, and undoubtedly there have been situations across Ontario. It is time for the government to set an example and take action to let it be known that elected officials won't be treated any differently than any other employee in any other workplace. There must be a system put in place to stop elected officials from abusing the trust and authority placed in them and, if necessary, to remove them from office for violating this trust.

I stand in solidarity with the brave women from Ottawa and all those who have faced harassment, abuse and trauma from those around them. There will always be reasons not to do something. Taking action often requires difficult conversations and contemplating the tough what-if questions, but the women who have suffered this abuse deserve the respect of having those conversations, asking the what-ifs and finding a solution. I hope that the government will step up for them, because they deserve nothing short of the province's full support.

ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I just want to briefly rise in the remaining time to recognize Adoption Awareness Month. We all know that reasons for wanting to adopt a child can vary, but what really remains constant is that every child deserves a caring environment and supportive parents to help them develop their potential.

Family relationships are often the anchor that help us get through stormy episodes in our lives. Creating these relationships through adoption can prove to be challenging, and this is why it is important that family services are supported with adequate and sufficient resources. There are gaps in the system, infrastructure needs and barriers that need to be addressed.

Adoption Awareness Month serves also as a reminder of the need for adoptive families for children in the foster care system, and carries hope for more lifelong connections to happen.

MOTIONS

REAPPOINTMENT OF INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

Hon. Paul Calandra: I seek unanimous consent to move, without notice, a motion providing for the re-appointment of the Integrity Commissioner.

1330

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move, without notice, a motion providing for the reappointment of the Integrity Commissioner. Agreed? Agreed.

Again, I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, in accordance with subsections 23(2) and 23.1(2) of the Members' Integrity Act, the Honourable J. David Wake be reappointed Integrity Commissioner of Ontario for a further term of five years, commencing on February 1, 2021.

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

Motion agreed to.

REAPPOINTMENT OF OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I again recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to move, without notice, a motion providing for the reappointment of the Ombudsman.

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

Again, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, in accordance with subsection 2(2) and 3(2) of the Ombudsman Act, Paul Dubé be reappointed Ombudsman of Ontario for a further term of five years, commencing on April 1, 2021.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved that, in accordance with subsection 2(2) and 3(2) of the Ombudsman Act, Paul Dubé be reappointed Ombudsman of Ontario for a further term of five years, commencing on April 1, 2021.

The member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm not going to debate this for more than about two minutes. I just want to say that New Democrats will obviously be supporting this motion as well, but I think it speaks to what we in this House always try to do as New Democrats, which is that you just don't automatically reappoint somebody. You need to have a process where you sit down with the individual after their five years. If they have an opportunity for reappointment for a second five or whatever, you bring them in and have a discussion. It allows that person to ask us questions as well as members of the assembly, to be able respond to what may be on their minds when it comes to the job they're doing, and for us as members to ask questions of them.

I'm glad that we were able to do that again in this case. I thank the government House leader for that. That was not

the original intent, but finally, at the end, they allowed that to happen. It shows that we are not opposed to re-appointing, but we do believe in process. I only wish we would have done the same when it came to the Chief Medical Officer of Health, because I think there were questions there on both sides, for both the medical officer of health and for us as members to ask each other, to have the conversation in regard to the reappointment, the job that is being done and the job that needs to be done.

Again, I just want to say, as New Democrats, we're glad to support this motion. We are in favour. It proves where we're at, that we're not trying to slow things down. We're actually trying to make sure there's a process that allows us to get where we've got to go, with some integrity.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved that, in accordance with subsections 2(2) and 3(2) of the Ombudsman Act, Paul Dubé be reappointed Ombudsman of Ontario for a further term of five years, commencing on April 1, 2021. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Betty McIsaac, who is from Val Caron in my riding, for this petition. It reads as follows:

"911 Emergency Response....

"Whereas when we face an emergency we all know to dial 911 for help; and

"Whereas access to emergency services through 911 is not available in all regions of Ontario but most Ontarians believe that it is; and

"Whereas many Ontarians have discovered that 911 was not available while they faced an emergency" of their own; and

"Whereas all Ontarians expect and deserve access to 911 service throughout our province;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To provide 911 emergency response everywhere in Ontario by land line or cellphone."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's a pleasure to speak here today this afternoon. I have a petition from residents in Oakville to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Glen Abbey golf course is one of Canada's most iconic golf courses, having hosted 30 Canadian Open professional golf tournaments; and

"Whereas the Glen Abbey golf course is the home to the headquarters of Golf Canada, the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame and Museum; and

“Whereas the Glen Abbey property sits on 229 acres of land designed by the world-famous golfer Jack Nicklaus; and

“Whereas the Glen Abbey golf course is a cultural heritage landscape and an integral point of pride for the town of Oakville and the surrounding communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the assembly review all options to preserve this significant part of Oakville’s heritage.”

I will sign this and pass it to the page.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I’d gladly sign that petition myself that was just read out.

I have one: “Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing needs and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC home deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommend 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard to provide an average of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

Speaker, I fully support this. I’m going to sign it and have one of the ushers bring it down to the table.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Al Deschenes from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions:

“Improving Broadband in Northern Ontario....

“Whereas people and businesses in northern Ontario need reliable and affordable broadband Internet now to work, learn and connect with friends and family; and

“Whereas too many people can only access unreliable Internet and cellular or don’t have any connectivity at all especially in northern Ontario; and

“Whereas the current provincial Broadband and Cellular Action Plan has failed to provide northern communities with the same opportunities for economic growth, recovery and participation;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To call on the Ford government to immediately provide a plan with dates and actions to be taken for every area of northern Ontario to have access to reliable and affordable broadband Internet.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier Jeanne Lachance from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions.

“MS Specialized Clinic in Sudbury....

“Whereas northeastern Ontario has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis (MS) in Ontario; and

“Whereas specialized MS clinics provide essential health care services to those living with multiple sclerosis, their caregiver and their family; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is recognized as a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

“Immediately set up a specialized MS clinic in the Sudbury area that is staffed by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of multiple sclerosis, a physio-therapist and a social worker at a minimum.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a very important petition received from Family Council Network 4 Advocacy. It’s for Time to Care, Bill 13.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing needs and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

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“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommend 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard to provide an average of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

ANTI-VAPING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Arthur Schmitt, who lives in Lively in my riding, for these petitions.

“Protect Kids from Vaping....

“Whereas very little is known about the long-term effects of vaping on youth; and

“Whereas aggressive marketing of vaping products by the tobacco industry is causing more and more kids to become addicted to nicotine through the use of e-cigarettes; and

“Whereas the hard lessons learned about the health impacts of smoking, should not be repeated with vaping, and the precautionary principle must be applied to protect youth from vaping; and

“Whereas many health agencies and Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada fully endorse the concrete proposals aimed at reducing youth vaping included in Bill 151;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To call on the Ford government to immediately pass Bill 151, Vaping is Not for Kids Act, in order to protect the health of Ontario’s youth.”

I support this petition, Speaker, will affix my name to it and send it to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Karry King from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions.

“Bill 153 ... Till Death Do Us Part...”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011 ... to 152 days in” 2019 and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents’ Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: “to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table.

LCBO

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Frank Philippe from Val Caron in my riding for these petitions called “Support the LCBO.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the LCBO in 2017-18 transferred dividends of \$2.12 billion to the Ontario government, which were invested in the public services like health care, highways and colleges that the people of Ontario depend on; and

“Whereas the LCBO is a socially responsible retailer that ensured the safety of our communities in 2017-18 by challenging 13.9 million transactions over concerns of

intoxication, underage purchase or second-party purchase; and

“Whereas the LCBO raised \$11 million in charitable donations in 2017-18 for MADD Canada, children’s hospitals, the United Way” as well as “local charities;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To direct government to keep alcohol sales in public hands in order to protect our young people and communities and to ensure the profits are invested in our public services.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier M. Pierre Leclerc pour cette pétition. Pierre est de Hanmer.

« Accents en français sur les cartes de santé de l’Ontario....

« Alors qu’il est important d’avoir le nom exact ... sur les cartes émises par le gouvernement » de l’Ontario, telle « la carte santé...;

« Alors que plusieurs personnes francophones ont des accents dans l’épellation de leur nom »—comme moi;

« Alors que ... le ministère de la Santé » a « confirmé que le système informatique de l’Ontario ne permet pas l’enregistrement des lettres avec des accents; »

Ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario « pour qu’elle s’assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur » les cartes de santé émises « par le gouvernement de l’Ontario, » et ce, « avant le 31 décembre 2020. »

J’appuie cette pétition et je vais la signer et l’amener à la table des greffiers.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Mike Harris: I thought I had already read out the last one of these, but I found another one, and it is the House’s favourite petition and I know that for a fact.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the ban on hunting and trapping in sections of Ontario to protect the eastern hybrid wolf was put in place without regard for the overall ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario’s ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban is no longer needed and is in fact causing more damage to Ontario’s ecosystem and increasing unnecessary encounters between wildlife and Ontarians;

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

“That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry immediately lift the ban on hunting and trapping set in place to protect the eastern hybrid wolf.”

I believe, Madam Speaker, for the final time, I have affixed my signature to this petition and will pass it to the usher when they come over to bring it to the table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Dr. Jamie Maki, who has a practice in my riding, for these petitions. They read as follows:

“Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas optometrists now subsidize the delivery of OHIP-covered eye care by \$173 million a year; and

“Whereas COVID-19 forced optometrists to close their doors, resulting in a 75%-plus drop in revenue; and

“Whereas optometrists will see patient volumes reduced between 40% and 60%, resulting in more than two million comprehensive eye exams being wiped out over the next 12 months; and

“Whereas communities across Ontario are in danger of losing access to optometric care;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately establish a timetable and a process for renewed negotiations concerning optometry fees.”

I support this petition, Speaker, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING LOCAL RESTAURANTS ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES RESTAURANTS LOCAUX

Mr. Sarkaria moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 236, An Act in respect of food and beverage delivery fees / Projet de loi 236, Loi concernant les frais de livraison de nourriture et de boissons.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The minister.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Before I begin, I'd like to note that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore and the member from Whitby.

It's an honour to rise today to lead the second reading of the Supporting Local Restaurants Act. Our government introduced this act on November 26, and today I'll have the opportunity to take this House through some elements of this legislation. I'll be outlining how it will provide a much-needed hand-up for local restaurants and communities weighed down by the devastating health, social and

economic impacts of COVID-19. We will also address the actions our government continues to take to support the rebuilding of main streets in these communities and across the province, into which these restaurants are tightly woven.

1350

First, some context about the situation that we all find ourselves in: As we are all too aware, the pandemic has wrought devastating effects on the health of our people, while posing serious threats to our economy. As we confront its second wave, we are dealing with another onslaught of health concerns and responding with strict public safety measures.

While we've targeted restrictions in accordance with public health data, the social and economic toll is being felt by all of us, wherever we live. We are truly in this together. That's why the burden we carry must be shouldered by all of us.

Protecting people's lives will always come first for our government, just as it must for our economy. Supporting the businesses that are the source of our livelihoods is a close second.

As a new father, my heart breaks for the lives this pandemic has taken and the families that it has devastated. As a son of two Ontario small business owners, I can relate to their pressures and financial pain.

As Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, I'm in a privileged position to support the small and main street businesses that we all depend on. It's a position that requires tough choices and bold actions—something small business owners can relate to. I've experienced the worries, the hurries and the juggling it takes to run a family business. Keeping so many balls in the air takes foresight and flexibility. When you're responsible for supporting your family, your neighbours and much of your community, you need to plan for each and every scenario. But no one could have foreseen this situation.

While many local restaurants have managed to sustain their operations by pivoting to takeout and delivery, few have seen the same traffic they've built their businesses on. Main streets all across the province are being drained of customers, and it's straining the livelihoods of our families and sapping the vitality from our communities. It's something our government takes very seriously. We will not rest until we shore up small businesses and restaurants through the second wave and set them up for success beyond.

Keeping small businesses running and people employed during a once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic that spreads through close contact is a monumental task, but the bill before you today acknowledges the scale of this challenge and provides a response to it, helping more main street restaurants to stay open and in business without compromising public safety. We've designed it to address desperate circumstances faced by small and independent restaurants in those regions that have been impacted. The bill empowers them to do what they do best: serve up good food and great memories, while keeping their employees safe and their businesses solvent. And it couldn't come at

a more critical time. Ontario's small and independent restaurants have borne an unfair share of the economic burdens put forward by COVID-19. They are facing their greatest challenge in our lifetime as the pandemic has overturned their business model and undercut their revenues.

COVID-19 has taken the lives of so many people we love, and it has threatened the social fabric of the communities we cherish. Woven through these communities are the thriving independent restaurants and bars where we eat, celebrate and enjoy. These are the eateries that connect our cultures and our families—the ones featured in holiday parades or silkscreened on sports jerseys, the gems that attract all the tourists and generate all the buzz. They're the places that bring character and pride to our communities. And they've been suffering from unforeseen closures due to unexpected and seemingly unrelenting demands. Yet, through it all, they have never given up.

I'm sure we've all seen examples of this through our own communities: neighbourhood bistros redesigning menus for takeout; bars building patios to serve outdoors; restaurants packaging food for the sick and sheltered. They've gone above and beyond to serve the people of Ontario, often at a great cost to themselves, their employees and their families. When I look around my community, I'm humbled by their selflessness and inspired by their ingenuity.

The bill we're debating here today would help bring households together to share a chef-prepared meal in the safety of their own homes. It would build on the funding and supports we have just reviewed to respond to urgent needs at an urgent time. The Supporting Local Restaurants Act would help to bridge more of Ontario's independent restaurants through this second wave of COVID-19.

While strict measures have been necessary to protect public health, they've also meant that restaurants in Ontario's most populous regions must rely on takeout and delivery to make ends meet. With low consumer confidence and increased restrictions, digital food delivery services have become lifelines for these restaurants and their employees. In regions under lockdown, they have gone from an added revenue generator to their only revenue generator. At the same time, these companies have collected up to 30% in commissions from these restaurants, all while enjoying high sales and uptake. It is time now for us to take action to protect local restaurants from high fees and to compel delivery companies to do the right thing.

The Supporting Local Restaurants Act would reduce food delivery fees to help support independent restaurants, sustain the vitality of main streets and protect community jobs. Our proposed legislation would prohibit food delivery service providers—as identified in future regulations—from charging restaurants more than the prescribed amount for food and beverage delivery or related services. These caps would be in place for as long as indoor dining is prohibited. The act would apply to non-chain restaurants that are prohibited from permitting indoor dining by orders or directions under the reopening Ontario act or the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

Although the cap will be set through regulation, restaurants in areas where indoor dining is prohibited should expect a limit of 15% for delivery fees, similar to what has been put in place in cities like New York, with an overall cap of 20%, inclusive of all fees.

To develop this legislation, we reached out to restaurants to confirm that this is the right approach for them; we consulted with delivery service companies to ensure the proposed legislation is measured, focused and intended to be limited in time; and we worked with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services to ensure its enforceability. As a result, we expect food delivery companies will do the right thing and lower their fees. For those that don't, enforcement action will be taken.

Once the legislation takes effect, restaurants would be able to file an online complaint with supporting documentation to indicate that a service provider has not complied. Food delivery company employees or contractors will also be able to file complaints if their compensation or payments were reduced. That's because we've ensured that these savings won't be made off the backs of essential workers keeping us fed.

The legislation would provide food delivery service company employees or contractors who perform these delivery services with the protection that their compensation will not be impacted by these changes.

Now, more than ever, local restaurants need us in their corner. To reinforce our commitment to them, this legislation would provide for fines of up to \$10 million for non-compliance. It gives strength to our convictions and it shows restaurants—together with families, employees and communities that rely on them—that we will continue to fight for them.

Fellow members, I believe this proposal would encourage food delivery companies to act swiftly and fairly to reduce their fees in areas where indoor dining has been prohibited. We are all in this together, and I believe that food delivery service companies are part of the solution. I look forward to working with them to help Ontario's local restaurants survive this pandemic and emerge stronger than ever before on the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction for working so hard on bringing this forward.

On Thursday, I spoke to the House about many of the measures we are taking to support businesses. This piece of legislation is a prime example. I said we are not opposed to regulation. We are opposed to regulation that is unnecessary, outdated and duplicative.

1400

It is clear that support for this sector is desperately needed. We know that our local restaurants are working hard to stay open and are dedicated to following the rules and conducting business safely. But of course no amount of hard work and dedication can fully overcome the impact of a global pandemic. So even though they are doing their best, they can't do it all alone.

The Canadian Survey on Business Conditions from May tells us that compared to only a year ago, in the accommodations and food services sectors:

- 48% have laid off at least 50% of their workforce;
- 62% have experienced revenue declines of 50% or more; and
- more than 95% have seen decreased demand for products or services.

If we don't change course, the future of these businesses is bleak, particularly for non-chain operations without a parent corporation's resources to rely on. Restaurants Canada estimates that up to 40% of independent restaurants may not last beyond next March. Restaurant owners, employees and associations have told us they need more support to survive.

The minister has heard from them throughout the pandemic and has participated in over 100 round tables with industry from across the province. I have heard it too. Mississauga–Streetsville is home to many small local restaurants and eateries. Throughout the pandemic I have had the opportunity to hear from many of them.

I've also heard from many other types of businesses, whether they are gyms looking to continue operating while keeping their clients and employees distanced and safe, or small retailers who moved to appointments to limit capacity inside their businesses and allow for sanitization and cleaning. They're not looking for handouts; they're looking for help and the flexibility and freedom to run their businesses the best way they know how.

Moving regions between levels of this province's reopening framework is not something taken lightly. But we must do what we can to keep our schools safe and open, and ensure that we can continue to deliver the programs and services Ontarians rely on.

Our government has heard the calls of business to support their survival and to lay a foundation for their future. It is why our new budget—the first delivered during a global pandemic—is built on three supportive pillars: The first is to protect our health and safety; the second is to support our people and economy; and the third is to recover our economic standing and our way of life.

Our small business supports rest on these strategic pillars. They're providing critical funding and services to small restaurants and businesses to help them manage through the pandemic and they're putting in place modern resources and tools to help them recover and rebuild better than ever. These supports are part of the \$45 billion being made available over three years through the 2020 budget.

In keeping with our top priority of protection, Ontario's new COVID-19 Response Framework is supporting people, families and job creators in a safe and targeted way. In my home region of Peel, which is now in the lockdown stage, we're providing additional public health supports that include increased testing, case and contact management and hospital capacity.

As we work together with doctors, health experts and people all over Ontario to turn the tide on this second wave, we're standing by the businesses in these communities. To help small restaurants and businesses required to

close or significantly restrict services in areas categorized as control or lockdown, we're doubling our financial commitment to them, making \$600 million available to help cover fixed costs, including property taxes and hydro and natural gas bills.

We want these small restaurants and businesses to be able to keep the lights on through the worst of this dark period. We also want them to look forward to a brighter future ahead. So, beyond our support during the pandemic, the 2020 budget has proposed new tax measures to help small restaurants and businesses to recover and grow beyond it.

Starting in 2021, we would allow municipalities to provide a property tax reduction for their small businesses, and our government will consider matching those reductions to further reduce taxes on small businesses. Depending on how many of our municipal partners take us up, this could provide as much as \$385 million in relief to Ontario's small businesses by 2022. With both property tax reductions, a diner in Toronto with an assessment value of \$1.5 million could save \$10,500 in property taxes annually.

The budget also features a new employer health tax plan for small business employers. In March, we expanded the employer health tax—EHT—exemption for 2020 from \$490,000 to \$1 million. We heard from many business owners that this measure provided immense relief, and we are now proposing to make this change permanent. It would reduce the health tax on a restaurant with \$700,000 in payroll from about \$4,000 to zero.

We want our small businesses and main street restaurants to know that we will be there for them every step of the way, from protection to recovery. That's why we developed Ontario's Main Street Recovery Plan. It delivers a comprehensive package of legislation, funding programs and services that will help more of them to operate safely, adapt to new demands and pursue promising opportunities.

First, we've committed to exploring options to permanently allow licensed restaurants and bars to include alcohol with food as part of takeout or a delivery order. This would enable them to maintain the new revenue streams that the government has opened to them through the pandemic, and it would help them plan their business model beyond it. We've received enthusiastic feedback from the industry on making this permanent. They see it as another way they can compete and carve out innovative product offerings for customers well into the future.

Next, there's the Main Street Recovery Act, a cornerstone of the plan, and another way we're laying a solid foundation for the restaurant industry. It would modernize regulations to keep pace with current needs, while fostering new opportunities for them to build their businesses and grow. Through this act, we would permanently allow for 24-7 truck deliveries of goods to restaurants as well as retailers and distribution centres. This would reassure independent restaurants that they can maintain their operations during this very difficult time, and it would give

consumers greater confidence that their neighbourhood eatery will have the food they want when they crave it.

Speaker, to ease safety and cash flow concerns for Ontario's smallest eateries and main street businesses, our Main Street Recovery Plan is making \$60 million in funding available to help with the costs of personal protective equipment, or PPE. With small footprints in commercial kitchens, the need for PPE is high.

Ontario's Main Street Relief Grant offers up to \$1,000 in grant funding to help them with a variety of PPE costs, including gloves, visors and Plexiglas installation. We designed this one-time grant with neighbourhood restaurants in mind, along with small businesses in retail, food and accommodations, and parts of other service sectors with two to nine employees. The grant would address key problems identified by nearly every main street small business I've talked to: liquidity issues, affordable access to PPE, and low consumer confidence. Helping these businesses recover the cost of PPE—like the quality Ontario-made PPE that companies can find online at our workplace PPE directory—will protect the lives of employees and their customers, and it will support consumer confidence, bringing life back to our main streets over the long term.

Although these have been tough times for small restaurants, there remain areas of hope. That includes the rise in e-commerce and the power of digital marketing. To help small and main street restaurants attract customers in a crowded online marketplace, our plan has Digital Main Street squads going live across the province. The squads, composed of talented graduates and students with strong technology and marketing backgrounds, provide one-on-one help with social media, advertising, and e-commerce platforms.

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Speaker, the effect has been most devastating on small owners and operators who don't have the leverage of large chains to negotiate a break on commissions. Independent restaurants without sophisticated marketing machines rely on these apps to connect with patrons and to businesses, and patrons rely on them for access to restaurant-prepared meals when safety requires them to stay home.

Other jurisdictions across North America have introduced new measures to cap or regulate fees in the food delivery industry. In addition to New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington, DC and Jersey City have passed similar orders, and in the recent BC provincial election, both the Liberals and New Democrats promised capped fees as part of their campaigns.

Here at home, the city of Toronto has called on the province to cap predatory fees on independent restaurants as a means to sustain the vitality of their main streets. It's an issue that resonates with the public and reverberates around the world. A provincial approach would establish a clear set of rules for the industry to follow, providing greater clarity and certainty in a time of turbulence.

Speaker, COVID-19 has been with us for many months now. If we look back at the modelling presented at the beginning of the pandemic, we can see that we have avoided the worst, and this is because of Ontarians: people and businesses that are doing their part, complying with

public health measures and doing what they can to stop the spread. This period of time has not been easy, and as much as we would all like this pandemic to be behind us, we are not there yet. We will continue to listen to Ontarians and build on supports we have offered so far, and we will make it through this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'm honoured to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill 236, the Supporting Local Restaurants Act, introduced by my friend the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. I'd like to thank him and the members of his team for their hard work on this bill and on the main street recovery initiative. More generally, I know they have held a hundred virtual round tables with small business owners in Mississauga and right across Ontario.

Based on the feedback, we are providing more than \$10 billion in urgent relief and support, including a \$1,000 PPE grant for Plexiglas, masks, gloves and other equipment to keep staff and customers safe at over 60,000 small businesses; and \$2,500 Digital Main Street grants to help 23,000 small businesses with websites, social media, online advertising and e-commerce platforms. I know the minister and his team are working to get these grants out to our small businesses.

We also provided \$600 million for property tax and energy rebates during the latest lockdown in Toronto and in the region of Peel; and since March, we have made over 50 regulatory changes to help our restaurants adapt, from allowing deliveries 24/7 to allowing them to sell alcohol with food takeout and delivery orders. Through ontario.ca/smallbusiness, small business can request temporary rules or regulation changes to help them adapt to COVID-19.

I know that ever since the pandemic began, we have heard from restaurant owners about the high cost of food delivery app services. I've heard from my members from the Port Credit BIA and the Clarkson BIA, and I'm sure that many members have heard from their communities as well. Frank DeMedeiros, the owner of a small chain of Chorizo Fresh Mex restaurants based in Clarkson in Mississauga–Lakeshore for the past 15 years, was one of many small business owners who reached out to me recently and asked for me to help reduce the fees that the restaurants are paying for third-party delivery services like Uber Eats or SkipTheDishes. "Fees are typically in the 25% to 30% range," he wrote to me, but "many restaurants typically operate with a profit margin of only 5% to 10% during the best of times."

With the majority of customers placing orders through these third parties, many restaurants will evidently give up, as the fees will not make their business profitable to run. Frank asked for our help in temporarily reducing these fees to 15% during this crisis, as they have already done in New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago and many other US cities.

In these difficult times, with many restaurants struggling to stay open, every dollar counts, and this policy

could make a real difference between our restaurants making it through the second wave or closing down or being forced to lay off staff. In fact, I understand that Restaurants Canada suggested that without this kind of support, up to 40% of our independent restaurants could go out of business as early as March 2021.

Recognizing this, Toronto city council recently passed a motion by Councillor Michael Ford, seconded by Mayor John Tory, asking for the province to take action on this and place a temporary cap on the commissions taken by food service delivery apps. Councillor Ford said, and I agree, that this would be “one critical piece of the puzzle in supporting our local ‘mom-and-pop’ restaurants.”

I'm very glad to see the minister and his team have listened as well. Bill 236 would, if passed, allow us to limit rate charges by food delivery services to 15%, or an overall cap of 20%, in areas like Toronto and the region of Peel, where strict measures against indoor dining have been necessary to protect public health and stop the spread of COVID-19.

The minister has also reviewed the steps that other cities have taken across North America so that we can learn from the experience and follow best practices.

I also want to thank SkipTheDishes and smart phone app companies like Ritual for recognizing that our restaurant industry can't bear the burden of a second wave of COVID-19 all on its own and for acting voluntarily to reduce these fees or offer rebates and generally working with the restaurants that depend on them to charge fees that are fair. Ritual and DoorDash have also partnered with the city of Toronto to provide affordable food delivery options.

Speaker, just to be clear, food delivery companies are part of the solution here, and I'm glad to hear that the minister has consulted with them to ensure that the legislation will be reasonable and effective and that the consumer's choice will be maintained. At the same time, it is great to hear that the minister has worked together with the Ministries of Labour and Government and Consumer Services to ensure this law will be enforced, with fines of up to \$10 million for food delivery service companies that don't comply. Equally, it is important to note that Bill 236 includes protection for food delivery company employees and their contractors. Part II of the bill provides that this compensation cannot be reduced due to these changes.

Speaker, it's more important than ever that we act now to support our local independent restaurants, to help them stay in business through the second wave of COVID-19. Bill 236 would help to build on support we're already providing through Ontario's Action Plan and the main street recovery initiative because, as we know, there can be no recovery without the small and medium-sized businesses in our hospitality industry. These small businesses are the backbone of our economy and our province, accounting for about 98% of the businesses and employing close to 2.4 million people across Ontario. It is going to be up to us, local consumers and our local communities, to support them through this difficult time.

I want to conclude by highlighting a challenge from my friend in Mississauga the world-renowned chef Stephan Schulz to help our local restaurants and small businesses to survive this crisis. He challenges us to try new local restaurants in our communities that we haven't ordered from before, and when you're safely enjoying your meal at home, post a picture on social media with the hashtag #LocalRestaurant1000 or #ChefSchulz1000. I want to thank the members who have joined me in doing this already, and I invite all members to join me.

Speaker, I'm confident that Bill 236, combined with the existing support I've outlined, will help support our struggling local restaurants through the second wave of COVID-19 so that they can reopen and rebuild better than ever as soon as it is safe for them to do so.

I hope all members will join me in supporting Bill 236. Again, I want to thank the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction from Brampton for all his hard work on this bill.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to be able to participate in the debate on Bill 236. Underpinning where we are this afternoon is a robust consultation process led by Minister Sarkaria. He was often out to Whitby to engage virtually with the Whitby Chamber of Commerce and the business improvement association, and also with the leadership of the region of Durham's recovery plan.

You'll recall, Speaker, that in the region of Durham, we have eight municipalities that comprise the region of Durham, and the region of Durham is the largest in the province. As we debate this bill this afternoon, there are 700,000 people in that particular region and many business groups, some of which are comprised from the Whitby Chamber of Commerce and some of which are in the BIA.

This particular bill—what it's going to do in helping local restaurants through this particular legislation and regulations—is going to help cap fees charged by food delivery companies in areas where indoor dining is prohibited to help more small and independent restaurants stay in business. In my case, that could be the Royal Oak, it could be the Vault, it could be many others up and down the main street of Whitby—Brock Street is an example, and as you travel further north, the hamlet of Brooklin and Baldwin Street overall. The important thing, though, Speaker, in the context of discussing this legislation is that costs will not increase for the consumers who go into those restaurants.

Currently, fees placed on restaurants by food delivery companies can reach as high as 30% in the province, but after consultation with members of the restaurant sector, many of whom reside in the region of Durham, restaurants should expect a cap of 15% for delivery fees—similar to what has been put in place in New York City—with an overall cap of 20%, inclusive of all fees. This approach would ensure that delivery drivers' pay would be protected and delivery apps would not reduce service areas or restaurant selection—that last part is really important to

many of the people who are continuing to support restaurants.

Speaker, if passed, the legislation the government has before us today would cap the rates charged by food delivery service companies and apps in areas where indoor dining is prohibited, permit fines of up to \$10 million to food delivery service companies that don't comply with the law, and provide food delivery company employees or contractors who perform delivery services with protection that their compensation will not be affected by these changes. Importantly, restaurants would be able to file complaints online if they feel a food delivery company has overcharged them, and food delivery company employees or contractors who perform delivery services would be able to file complaints if they find their compensation or payments were reduced.

When you look at this legislation, you can see very clearly what the intent is. We want to give restaurants like the Vault and the Royal Oak that I mentioned earlier that can't serve people indoors a hand up—that's an important distinction, it's a hand up—so they can keep doing what they do best in Whitby and what they do best in other parts of the region of Durham: providing good food and great memories to hard-working Whitby families and their friends. With this legislation, Speaker, we'll get more food delivery companies to do the right thing and help the small businesses that mean so much to our communities across the region of Durham and indeed other parts of Ontario.

I know, Speaker, from speaking regularly to members of the Whitby Chamber of Commerce, along with the local businesses improvement area group, that Durham's small and independent restaurants have shouldered an outsized share of COVID-19's economic burden. I want to thank the executive director of the Whitby Chamber of Commerce and the executive director of the Whitby BIA for the work that they've done in supporting their membership. Through it all, they continue to serve communities like Whitby and hard-working families, and in the course of that, they've lifted our spirits.

With this legislation, the government is helping local businesses stay in business and providing a solution that would help our local restaurants when every little bit helps. To provide additional relief to local restaurants and other businesses required to close or significantly restrict services in areas categorized as "control" or "lockdown," Ontario has announced \$600 million to help them with fixed costs, including property taxes and hydro and natural gas bills. That funding is helping.

The government is also supporting small businesses and restaurants through its main street recovery plan by:

- committing to permanently allow licensed restaurants and bars to include alcohol with food as part of a takeout or delivery order before existing regulation expires;

- offering \$60-million main street relief grants that provide up to \$1,000 to help eligible small businesses with the cost of PPE;

- permanently allowing delivery companies to provide deliveries 24/7, providing the needed flexibility that these restaurants and businesses need;

- helping nearly 23,000 small businesses grow online with a \$2,500 grant through Digital Main Street; and

- offering free financial advice and online training to help small businesses make informed decisions and navigate the unprecedented economic circumstances brought on by the pandemic.

What's clear is that many businesses and restaurants across the region of Durham are being hit hard by COVID-19. I know that's the case in Whitby. And the Ontario government is doing everything it can to help them get back on their feet and recover, not just today—and this is important—but every step of the way. As I said earlier, Speaker, it's a hand up that they need.

In summary, Ontario's small and main street restaurants have borne an unfair share of COVID-19's economic burdens. The pandemic's impact on the restaurant industry, particularly on small, independent operators, has been unprecedented.

While strict measures have been necessary to protect public health, they've also overturned restaurants' business models, leaving many relying on takeout and delivery to make ends meet. Some food delivery companies, however, have collected up to 30% in commissions from restaurants that have, in many cases, seen their dine-in traffic plummet by 90%.

The Supporting Local Restaurants Act will reduce food delivery fees to help support Ontario's small and independent restaurants, sustain the vitality of our main streets—whether it's Brock Street in downtown Whitby, the Four Corners, or whether it's the main street of downtown Brooklin, the hamlet of Brooklin, and further north in Myrtle Station going forward—building up our communities as we should; protecting local jobs as we should. At the end of the day, this legislation will give the small businesses that are the core of our communities a hand up—the hand up that they deserve now and in the future.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I heard twice in the chamber this afternoon of the fine of up to \$10 million. That's not something we normally hear around here, a fine of up to \$10 million. I'm just wondering if someone on the other side could fill me in on what the conditions would be, what egregious violations we'd have to see, in order to justify a fine of \$10 million.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member across. I've been speaking with a lot of my small businesses in Port Credit, on Lakeshore there. I have good friends who own Posta—Marco. I have the Crooked Cue that is John's and I have Fired Up, which is Tony's. They really need this to help them.

The fines are for people who do not follow what we put in this bill. If they do not follow what we put in the bill, they will be fined up to \$10 million.

I think that is one step closer to what we need to help our small businesses through these difficult times in Toronto and Peel region, which have been struggling very hard during COVID-19. These are just part of the things

that we've put in, plus other initiatives that we have put in, like the \$600 million that is helping to fund our small businesses as well in these difficult areas.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I listened intently to the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore talking about what our government is doing with Bill 236. I know our government has made a lot of changes that support small business, be it helping with the main street program and helping to digitize small businesses, reducing taxes for small business, PPE grants for small business or, of course, Bill 236.

My question to the member is, what are the consequences of all these acts that the government is—what are the benefits for the small owner-operated restaurants throughout Ontario?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Oakville. We both have the same type of corridor. We have the Lakeshore corridor that runs through both of our ridings and we have a lot of small restaurants down there.

This is one part of the plan that we've put in place. We put in the \$600 million that I just mentioned earlier on, but even our PPE—\$1,000 for PPE. That would be for Plexiglas and gloves for our small business owners as well. They are suffering right now, especially down in our areas that we've seen.

I think we have to try to help them to make it through this second wave of COVID-19 because without our small businesses, without our mom-and-pop shops, they won't be around to help in the recovery after COVID-19, because they do produce a lot of our income for our communities.

These are just part of our initiatives that we have put in place, and that we're going to continue putting in place moving forward.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Question?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to talk about a couple of things. I'm sure most of you guys were here for question period this morning. I talked about Niagara. I'm sure you guys remember that. I talked about Niagara and the fact that we're not getting the help we need.

The one I really want to talk about—because I've talked about this for about a month now with your government and with your ministers—is that the insurance companies are still gouging restaurants right across Ontario, but I'm only going to talk about Niagara.

In Niagara, a small or medium-sized restaurant—I've got a small restaurant in Niagara; their insurance costs have gone from \$6,000 up to \$20,000, and your government hasn't done anything about it. If you look at our hotels, if you can imagine, they're sitting half empty, and their insurance has increased by \$150,000 to \$200,000.

What is your government finally going to do—if you care about small business, if you care about business in the province of Ontario, what are you going to do about insurance companies gouging?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Response? The member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: The member from Niagara Falls always brings a lot of passion. I recall he asked a similar question when we were debating another piece of legislation which has passed this far. What I said at that time is that there is ongoing consultation, led by the Minister of Finance as well as his parliamentary assistant, with the insurance industry on this particular topic. That process continues. As it crystalizes, we will be bringing it back to the Legislature.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Question?

Mr. Mike Harris: To the member from Whitby: Maybe he wouldn't mind providing a little bit more insight into some of the other things the government is doing in regard to helping small business. I know that through the Main Street Relief Grant, which was mentioned in a couple of the speeches here this afternoon, providing \$60 million to help businesses procure PPE and make their shops or restaurants a little bit safer, there's the deliveries being able to be extended 24/7, of course, and being able to allow alcohol on delivery. I was just wondering, when you take all the sum of those parts together, how something like this and capping fees can help sustain our restaurants, especially in lockdown zones.

Mr. Lorne Coe: The type of relief that we've been providing small businesses is really quite significant. I highlighted the \$10 billion in urgent relief and support provided through the COVID action plan, and the finance minister in his budget also outlined some other particular initiatives.

This morning, I had the opportunity to talk about a \$2-million investment in my riding. It was through a particular group that has long been established in Whitby as the business advisory group of Durham. The \$2 million is going to link 47 small business enterprise centres across the province, where small businesses can access tailored advice on local, provincial and federal programs. Added to that, there will be Digital Main Street Squads to help small businesses grow online as well. Taken together, these particular steps are going to strengthen the small business corridor in downtown Whitby—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm just going to take a short amount of time here, because we are very, very interested, of course, in wanting to have restaurants get relief from delivery fees, which is why we want to have the bill expedited through to second reading and put into committee as soon as possible so we can hear from restaurant owners from across the province. Last week, the government introduced this bill, on a Thursday afternoon, if I recall, and we didn't have time to review the bill. It was brought up, and then they wanted it to be hastily passed through the Legislature, and we didn't have an opportunity to look at it. I actually went on online; it still wasn't there at the time.

We've had an opportunity to review it, and there are some things in the bill that we should be allowing for committee, so people can come forward. For example, the

bill would not protect a single restaurant outside of Toronto or Peel, and even in these regions, only some restaurants would be eligible for the rate relief. The bill doesn't apply to franchisees, so small business owners of your favourite local chains get no help, and there's no timeline for when the government plans to make this relief available to local restaurants.

As well, restaurants needed relief today, and they've been asking this for months. The government could have done this quite some time ago. They had opportunities under different bills back in the spring. Restaurants were calling for this under Bill 218, which is named the Supporting Ontario's Recovery and Municipal Elections Act, 2020. That would have been a very good place to put it. Instead, the two areas that it covered were, of course, letting liability protection be watered down for for-profit long-term-care homes for class action lawsuits, and then removing the authority of municipalities to have ranked ballots. The other bill they could have used for the waiving of the fees is under Bill 215, the Main Street Recovery Act.

I understand that we want to make sure that we protect businesses from the fees, but we need to allow the committee to happen. I understand the government tabled a motion for time allocation which doesn't allow that process to happen, so we're not going to be able to hear from all the restaurants in Niagara, in Nickel Belt, in London, in Windsor and throughout the province as to why they would need this relief as well.

Again, Speaker, we don't want to hold this up. We suggested that we just have a 15-minute debate shared between the government and our side and some of the independents in order to expedite the bill. With that, I hope the government understands that when the bill is introduced, it does help everyone that we're able to review it, and it should really go to committee so that people who are affected by this legislation that we create are able to participate in the process.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions? Questions? Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Sarkaria has moved second reading of Bill 236, An Act in respect of food and beverage delivery fees. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? That is carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I refer it to general government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to general government? Agreed.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: In accordance with standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that there will be no night sitting this evening.

And, Madam Speaker, if you seek it, I'm sure you will find unanimous consent for a motion without notice regarding private members' public business this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The government House leader is asking for unanimous consent for a motion without notice regarding private members' public business this afternoon. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 9(a), private members' public business be considered at this time and that ballot item number 38, standing in the name of Mr. Tabuns, originally scheduled for November 25, 2020, be now called.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? That is carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

NO TIME TO WASTE ACT (PLAN FOR CLIMATE ACTION AND JOBS), 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA NÉCESSITÉ DE NE PAS GASPILLER DE TEMPS (PLAN EN MATIÈRE D'ACTION POUR LE CLIMAT ET L'EMPLOI)

Mr. Tabuns moved second reading of the following bill: Bill 224, An Act to enact the Climate Crisis Health Action Plan Act, 2020, the Ontario Climate Crisis Strategy for the Public Sector Act, 2020 and the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis Act, 2020 / Projet de loi 224, Loi édictant la Loi de 2020 sur le Plan d'action sur la crise climatique et la santé, la Loi de 2020 sur la Stratégie du secteur public de l'Ontario relative à la crise climatique et la Loi de 2020 sur le Comité spécial de l'action relative à la crise climatique.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, we need to take action on the climate crisis, and we need to take it now. I am very pleased to bring forward this bill, the No Time to Waste Act for climate action and jobs, with my co-sponsor, the member for Parkdale–High Park, Ms. Karpoche. We'll be splitting the time for this opening statement.

People want a future for themselves. They want a future for their children and their grandchildren. They know that that future depends on action being taken now to take on that climate crisis. People know how serious the climate crisis is and they want governments to lead. Ontarians want their government to protect them from the climate crisis by mobilizing resources as well as developing plans that all parties and sectors of society can buy into, and this bill does just that. The experience with COVID has shown

how vulnerable our society is to disruption, and we can't afford to repeat that lack of preparation with the climate crisis.

We don't have to continue the deny-and-delay program that this government is engaged in. The Premier dismantled Ontario's cap-and-trade program, which was funding climate-protecting energy conservation retrofits in schools and hospitals. He ripped electric vehicle charging stations out of the ground. He had a wind farm demolished that would have provided emission-free electricity, and he would have demolished a second one but lost in court.

Last week, the report of the environmental commissioner revealed that this government has wasted two years of its mandate when it comes to the climate crisis. It does not have a coherent plan and it's not even acting on the weak plan that it has in place. It could have changed the building code, the regulations that builders have to respect when they put up new buildings—which would have substantially cut emissions at no cost to this government—but it didn't do that. It could have directed the gas utilities to accelerate energy efficiency programs that would cut emissions and cut people's gas bills, but it hasn't done that.

Railing against the federal government and presenting plans that you ignore is not a way to take on a crisis. And as we've seen from the COVID-19 pandemic, preparing and planning in advance of a health crisis and listening to experts in science and in health are essential components of an effective response. This government has failed in both respects, and this bill would take steps to prevent a similar failure in the face of the climate crisis.

Speaker, we can do this. Ontario has risen to the challenge before. At the beginning of the 20th century, we set up an electricity system based on renewable hydro power and we set the foundations for an advanced industrial society. During both world wars, Ontario ramped up its industrial infrastructure so that we could provide the equipment and the ammunition necessary to win both those wars. We've built an economy that can provide a decent standard of living for the majority of people in this province, and frankly, Speaker, we can take the next step to provide a decent standard of living for all.

The bill has three parts. My colleague will speak to the need to prepare our health care system for the challenges to come. I'll speak to the two parts that could allow us to move forward now.

The government has effectively abandoned this issue with its so-called plan. It's time we convened a select committee of legislators to hammer out a plan that all parties in this Legislature can live with. We can have all three parties represented in a select committee to bring forward a plan that can mobilize Ontario. The government is always asking for ideas. Well, now is the opportunity to bring everyone in this Legislature together to develop a plan of response to actually protect us and make sure that we do have a future here in Ontario. At the same time, we can address the particular threats facing Indigenous, racialized and low-income Ontarians.

While we're doing that, Speaker, we need to use the powers that are already at our disposal. We can use the public sector to accelerate the response to the climate crisis and make that transition to a net-zero future. The retrofit of the buildings we use or own, the revamp of practices and equipment, the use of purchasing power to accelerate the adoption of low- and no-carbon products will allow us to ramp up our efforts and meet our targets.

Developing and putting in practice a climate crisis strategy for the public sector will encourage action on the climate crisis through society as a whole. We can encourage, through purchasing and specification, the development of innovative technologies. We can put tens of thousands of people to work, and within that, we can set short-term, immediate goals, capping emissions from the broader public sector within the year that this plan is adopted and, after that, reducing emissions by 5% a year until we reach zero. We can engage in the large-scale retrofit of public sector buildings immediately and we can set net-zero targets for new buildings built within five years. That would cut the cost of energy in this province for the public sector by over \$100 million a year. It would allow us to put tens of thousands of people to work.

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We have an unemployment problem because of COVID-19. We can address that. We have a climate crisis coming at us. We can get ready for it.

With that, I turn the floor to my colleague Ms. Karpoche.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'm honoured to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park to speak to this bill titled the No Time to Waste Act (Plan for Climate Action and Jobs). I will be focusing my remarks on schedule 1 of the bill, the climate crisis health action plan, and throughout I will be reflecting on what we've learned from the COVID-19 pandemic so far that makes this bill important.

Speaker, we've spent the last nine months dealing with a health crisis that has resulted in over 100,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and more than 3,000 deaths so far. It has caused a deep economic crisis as well. The virus and all that has resulted from it has revealed and exacerbated social, economic, racial and gender inequalities and worsened our collective mental health. It has required us all to fundamentally change the way we live, work, study and play.

While many hope that this pandemic will be the last crisis in a very long time, a significant increase in contagious diseases like COVID-19 is just one of many health threats that the climate crisis poses.

According to the World Health Organization, the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Public Health Association and many other health professional groups, "Climate change is the greatest global health threat of the 21st century."

The climate crisis will cause more disease, extreme heat incidents, danger caused by forest fires, flooding, severe

storms, and degradation of air and water quality. This will lead to direct harms of health, but it will also impact the core social determinants of health, including housing, food security, social supports and reliable, adequate income. The climate crisis will also cause more poverty and a lowered standard of living.

We must also be aware of the devastating impact the climate crisis will have on our mental health. Adverse experiences due to extreme weather events, forced migration and grief over the degradation of the planet and an uncertain future will inevitably lead to increased anxiety, depression and other mental health disorders. We have seen how a crisis like COVID-19 has caused a sharp rise in Ontarians reporting poor mental health—a demand that is not being met by the government. We must ensure that our mental health services are prepared to deal with the increased need that the climate crisis will cause.

We have seen, during this pandemic, that the largest burden will fall on the collective mental and physical health of those who belong to communities already made vulnerable. This includes Black, racialized and Indigenous people, who are forced to contend with the harms of structural racism. It also includes those who face food, income and housing insecurity, older adults, and members of the disabled community. All the people pushed to the margins of our society will suffer disproportionate harms to their health. We have seen an inequitable distribution of health impacts during this pandemic, and we must not allow it to happen again.

Speaker, there is consensus among climate scientists that the effects will be devastating and that it has already begun to significantly impact life on our planet. With the overwhelming evidence we have, there is no excuse to not be prepared. We must begin to put in place the structures and procedures necessary to address the health impacts of the climate crisis.

This bill would require the Minister of Health to develop a strategic action plan to ensure that Ontario's public health and health care systems are prepared to handle the health impacts of the climate crisis. The bill would also establish a climate crisis and health secretariat, composed of leading experts in health and climate, to help develop this plan.

Ontario's public health and health care have been overwhelmed by COVID-19, and we cannot let that happen again.

This bill would also establish a science advisory board to advise the minister with respect to climate change science and health sciences and the impacts of the climate crisis on public health.

One of the key lessons of COVID-19 has been that we rely on the advice of scientists and health experts to guide us through crises. The urgency of the climate crisis demands action and, crucially, dramatically reducing our carbon footprint. Unfortunately, the Ford government's record on climate change and the environment speaks for itself. Ontarians deserve better. But given the degree of certainty that we will experience negative health impacts from the climate in the future, we must also take concrete

steps to ensure the health of present and future generations.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, I hope that my colleagues in the Legislature will reflect on the urgent necessity to prepare for the health crises, and I strongly encourage everyone to support this bill. As Greta Thunberg said, "Our house is on fire." Speaker, young people across Ontario and Canada and the world are urging leaders to act on the climate crisis. We do not have the luxury of time. As the title of the bill states, we have no time to waste. We must move ahead with this climate action and jobs plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you to my colleagues for putting forward this urgently needed motion. Madam Speaker, it's always a privilege and an honour to rise on behalf of the constituents of Davenport. The people of Davenport understand that the climate crisis is already changing our lives, impacting our safety, our homes, and that it will only get worse without action. In neighbourhoods like Silverthorn, flooding is a constant reminder of this.

Two weeks ago, I convened a town hall on the environment and climate change in Davenport to hear from experts and advocates and to talk about a vision for a stronger, more sustainable economy. Sadly, this government's actions have dragged Ontario backwards in the fight against climate change, dismantling Ontario's cap-and-trade system, opposing carbon pricing and abolishing the Office of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. The list goes on and on.

Madam Speaker, my father, Dr. Geoffrey Stiles, is an energy conservation and climate change expert. I grew up with this. I remember so many years ago him working—gosh, 40 years ago—on programs to encourage the retrofitting of buildings. Our Green New Democratic Deal recognizes this. It recognizes that retrofitting buildings is the most cost-effective way to reduce emissions while creating significant economic benefits. In Canada, research shows that investing in energy conservation measures creates \$4 in economic activity for every \$1 invested. For Ontario, that could mean an additional \$15.2 billion per year added to our GDP between 2022 and 2030, creating at least 60,000 new good, green jobs.

Using our authority in the broader public sector to drive these large-scale retrofits would put people to work quickly and generate the practices and technologies to accelerate energy retrofits in the rest of the economy. That's why I'm so very, very proud that in the absence of leadership on this challenge facing humanity, New Democrats are leading the way. This motion sets out the structures we need to respond to the climate crisis and the health crisis that accompanies it. It would position the province as a leader in this fight, mobilizing the public sector to protect people and accelerate the transition to a net-zero future.

As we've seen from COVID-19, Madam Speaker, preparing and planning in advance of a health crisis and

listening to experts in health and science are essential components of an effective response. This government has failed in both of those respects. I am so grateful to my constituents who have been active in demanding a better future for our province and our world, and I am grateful to all the youth, my own daughters included, who have been demanding an urgent emergency response to climate change.

This bill would take us steps forward to prevent similar failures to what we've seen with COVID-19. I urge all members to support us in this generational effort against climate change.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Today I stand to speak to Bill 224. This bill is lengthy by private members' bills standards, and as I want to respect the limited time I have to debate it, I will focus my comments today on the proposed schedule 1.

Speaker, today I will be recommending against supporting this bill because most aspects are already in place and covered by existing public health legislation standards and/or the government's Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan. Aspects are also covered through the ongoing mandate of Public Health Ontario.

In particular, I will note that the Ontario public health standards requirements for programs, services and accountability published by the Minister of Health provide the public health standards for the provisions of mandatory health programs and services, according to section 7 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, HPPA. The standards identify the minimum expectations for public health programs and services.

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The foundational standards of public health assessment and health equity can be applied to determine and mitigate negative health effects of climate change, including those on vulnerable populations and at increased risk of poor health outcomes. The healthy environment standard directly applies to environmental health prevention and response activities to address the health effects of climate change on the population.

The Healthy Environments and Climate Change Guideline also provides direction on how to approach specific requirements identified in the standards. The Ministry of Health has developed the Ontario Climate Change and Health Toolkit to assist public health units in conducting health vulnerability assessments, develop adoption plans and raise public awareness about the health hazards and health impacts of climate change across Ontario and for local populations.

As a result, most of Bill 224's proposed contents and monitoring requirements are already being implemented by public health units as part of their requirements and responsibilities for delivering programs and services aimed at preventing the spread of disease and promoting and protecting the health of the people of Ontario under the standards published by the Minister of Health under the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

I appreciate the opportunity to raise these points today, and I trust my colleagues will address other portions of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm proud to stand here on behalf of the residents of University–Rosedale to show my support for the No Time to Waste Act, a bill introduced by the MPP for Parkdale–High Park and the MPP for Danforth.

Climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century—the biggest—from biblical floods that have hit Houston and Puerto Rico; from killer heat waves that are affecting so many parts of the world; from the fires that are devastating towns like Fort McMurray to whole states, like what has happened this summer with Oregon and Washington and California; to the increase in vector-borne diseases, like Lyme disease; to the massive increase in anxiety and depression brought about by people's very real fear for the future.

Climate change is fast becoming a health crisis and an economic crisis which will far exceed the devastating impacts that we are experiencing right now with COVID-19, a pandemic that has already killed over 3,000 people and has forced our economy into an economic recession.

That is why I support this bill today, the No Time to Waste Act, because this bill calls on the Ontario government, the Ford government, to prepare our public health system and our health care system to cater and to be ready for the climate crisis that is fast coming, because we cannot afford to not be prepared. If there is one thing that this pandemic has taught us, it is that there is no time to waste and we need to be ready for when this inevitable crisis will hit.

Now, I know this government is no friend to the environment. This government has closed wind farms, you have gutted the cap-and-trade process, you have gutted the environmental assessment process. This government is letting developers build where they please—doesn't matter if it's wetlands, doesn't matter how it will impact our transportation system moving forward. The latest Auditor General report shows that this government is treating its own environmental plan, its own climate change plan, with disdain. You're not even meeting your own very poor targets.

I get it that this would be a shift for you, but I also know that voters in every riding, including your ridings, care about the environment too. They care about the environment. They care about their kids' future. The youth in your ridings care about their future as well. Everyone wants our health care system to be there for us—it doesn't matter what crisis we face—because that is what Canada is all about, that it is the morally right thing to do.

That is why I am asking you to vote for this bill, in support of the No Time to Waste Act: because we literally have no time to waste.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I rise today to speak in opposition to Bill 224, particularly flawed schedule 2. The schedule

enacts the Ontario Climate Crisis Strategy for the Public Sector Act, 2020, which is simply unreasonable, unworkable and unrealistic. Schedule 2 of Bill 224 requires the “capping, within 12 months after the strategy takes effect, emissions of greenhouse gases from activities engaged in by the public sector.”

First, let’s take a look at how the proposed act defines “public sector.” The definition of “public sector” in the proposed act cross-references the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996, the PSSDA, and would cover a broad class of entities, including the crown and crown agencies, municipalities, various local boards, including school boards and boards of health, hospitals, colleges, universities, Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and provincial grant recipients that meet the provincial funding threshold in the PSSDA.

This is a prime example of how the NDP thinks bigger government can solve everything without actually thinking about the impacts. Relying on the definition of “public sector” within the PSSDA would impose new red tape and regulatory requirements on organizations with limited administrative capabilities. The PSSDA covers a wide swath of Ontario’s public sector, including non-profit organizations that receive significant government funding. YMCAs, YWCAs, health clinics, victim services centres, women’s centres, homeless shelters and Indigenous organizations are just a few examples of organizations that the PSSDA applies to and that this proposed bill would also impose its burden upon.

Last year, the PSSDA covered more than 1,700 different employers. This would mean, for instance, that in MPP Karpoche’s riding, the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre, which was on the sunshine list in 2019, would be impacted by this bill. Instead of focusing on providing health services, the clinic administration would be asked how they could reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to net zero.

To get a sense of how broad this proposal is, one need only to refer to whom the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act covers. The act covers the government of Ontario, crown agencies, municipalities, hospitals, broader public health, school boards, universities, colleges, Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and other public sector employers who receive a significant level of funding from the province.

Some of the non-profit organizations are required to disclose if they receive significant funding from the government of Ontario in that year. Generally, funding means transfer payments. It does not mean payments for goods and services used by the government or loans that will be repaid.

The province does not have direct operational control over most of these entities. While the province does have control levers in respect of many subsectors of the public sector as defined in the proposed act, those levers are diffuse and incomplete, and the proposed act itself does not provide centralized power that would permit the provincial government to ensure that the objectives in any plan made pursuant to the strategy would be achieved.

Similarly, the proposed act does not provide any centralized information-collecting authority, and it would be difficult to compel the production of the information necessary to satisfy the reporting requirements in the proposed act and to carry out any auditing of such reporting required by the regulations.

In summary, Speaker, schedule 2 of Bill 224 is simply unreasonable, unworkable and unrealistic, and I recommend we vote against it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Before I go into the remarks that I had prepared, I wanted to answer a little bit to the comments that were just made about the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre in the riding of my colleague from Parkdale–High Park.

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I want the member to know that as a community health centre—every single community health centre in our province is already working on climate change, is already working on how to decrease to net zero because they are part of health care. They know, just like the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Public Health Association or The Lancet medical journal, that climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century. We are in the middle of a pandemic, but this threat is even bigger, and every community health centre knows this.

Do you know what else those community health centres know? They know that the climate crisis will be exacerbated for existing social and economic inequality, meaning that those who are already marginalized in our society, including Black, Indigenous, people of colour, will be the ones who will be most adversely impacted by the climate crisis.

So I want to reassure the member, he does not have to worry about this bill’s effect on the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre. They are in support. They are already working in that direction, and they would welcome the government’s support of this bill, because they know full well that the people they serve will be impacted. Community health centres, no matter where they are, serve underserved populations, which often means the people who will be most impacted by what’s coming.

I also want to give a shout-out to Sophia Mathur. Sophia is a 13-year-old girl in my riding. She was one of the first students in Canada to take part in Fridays for Future, the Friday protests inspired by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. I want to let you know that I try to participate with them on as many Fridays as I can, and on Friday, October 30, myself and the member from Sudbury, we helped them mark the second anniversary of the Fridays for Future with a Halloween theme. If you’re ever in need of a good laugh, go have a look on social media of the pictures of what the MPP from Nickel Belt and the MPP for Sudbury look like as defenders of the environment on Halloween day.

But the youth are protesting against the government in action on climate change. Action on climate change is not

red tape. It is really a question of responding to the biggest crisis that our health care system has ever seen. You ask anybody who works in health care, whether they work in primary care, in public health, in our hospitals, in mental health, they all know that what is coming will have a dramatic impact on what they do, how they do it and their abilities to continue to provide the services that Ontarians need. That is why the bill is called No Time to Waste Act. There is no time to waste. We have an obligation to act right now if we want to prepare.

We are sort of in a situation right now where we look at the pandemic—and nobody can change the past, but we can influence the future. I'm sure that all of us are thinking back on the month of March and the month of April and the month of May where we were stuck in our house, where we couldn't go out and we thought, "Hmm, I wonder if we could have planned better for this pandemic. I wonder if we could have been more ready to take action so that the transition through the first wave, second wave of the pandemic would not have such a drastic impact on our lives."

We have an opportunity right now to create the right set of scientific minds within the public sector that will put in place whatever we can to protect ourselves. I think only good things come from getting ready when you know that the crisis is coming. Don't wait until the crisis is here. Don't wait until flooding has started, until our forests are on fire, until disaster has struck to start acting. Every scientific mind will tell you that the climate crisis is coming. Get our health care sector ready. This is what this bill is asking for, and I can guarantee you that every actor in our health care system is on board.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise to debate Bill 224. I want to thank the members from Parkdale–High Park and Toronto–Danforth for bringing this important bill forward.

While we know that our priority must be focused on the COVID crisis, we have another crisis, the climate crisis, bearing down on us like a runaway freight train, and there is no time to waste to address this crisis. In the same way that we can't wish COVID away, we can't wish the climate crisis away.

The window is closing on our ability to avoid catastrophic, irreversible climate change, which is why we must transform our economies, our communities and our energy systems rapidly to reduce climate pollution. In the same way that we must listen to the scientists and the experts in dealing with COVID, we also have to listen to the scientists and experts in dealing with the climate crisis. That is why it is so vital to prepare our health care system for the health risks caused by the climate crisis.

COVID-19 is showing us what a planetary health crisis feels like. Unfortunately, not only does a changing climate mean we're going to likely have more pandemics, but it's also going to increase the risk of asthma from forest fires, the risk of traumatic evacuations, deaths from heat waves, hunger from crop failures and so many other public health

risks. That is why the World Health Organization and many other health organizations called climate change the biggest public health threat of the 21st century.

Last week's Auditor General's report showed us how we were not ready for COVID-19. In the previous weeks, Auditor General's reports showed us that we're not ready for the climate crisis. The time to act is now. We can't repeat the mistakes of not being adequately prepared ever again. That is why our health care system must be ready.

In regards to schedule 2, I must disagree with the member opposite. I can't tell you how many people have come to committee, especially businesses, saying that government procurement provides an opportunity to help us emerge economically from the economic crisis caused by COVID, but can also help prepare our public sector to reduce energy costs, becoming more energy efficient and reducing the operating cost of public sector entities. I want to close by saying that having an all-party select committee to address the climate crisis makes so much sense, because one of the things we know is that climate action is job action. As we talk about emerging from COVID, we need an all-party committee to talk about how we can do it at the same time that we address the climate crisis.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I stand to talk about the private member's bill introduced by the member for Toronto–Danforth, the No Time to Waste Act. It's interesting he says that there's no time to waste, because on November 29, 2018, our government released our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan. The member introduced his private member's bill on October 27, 2020. The member waited 698 days, or one year, 10 months and 28 days, after our government already introduced our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan, which already echoes the actions that are in his private member's bill.

Bill 224 proposes modern-day requirements already being implemented by public health units as part of the requirements and responsibilities under—wait for it, Madam Speaker—the standards published by the Ministry of Health under the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

Furthermore, Bill 224 proposes scientific advice and expertise—been there, done that. Our government currently has an advisory panel on climate change consisting of experts on climate change resiliency as well as people from other sectors, like agriculture and insurance. Bill 224 proposes a climate crisis and health secretariat, but currently, Public Health Ontario already plays a major role in providing scientific and technical advice, as well as helping to focus on vulnerable populations that are at greater risk of exposure due to climate change.

1520

As a result of our efforts here in Ontario, greenhouse gas emissions have decreased significantly since 2005. In fact, Ontario has shouldered the largest share of Canada's progress toward its 2030 Paris agreement target.

Since introducing our plan two years ago—not a few months ago—we have been elected to create change, and

we acted on climate change swiftly when we first got elected. In our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan, we already implemented the first-ever climate change impact assessment. We created an Emissions Performance Standards program—recognized by the federal government—which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And we're giving Ontarians greater access to clean, affordable, low-carbon energy.

Just last week, the Minister of the Environment made Ontario the first province to require fuel suppliers to increase the amount of renewable content in gasoline by 15%.

And we introduced a discussion paper to talk about the hydrogen economy—both protecting the environment and the economy.

In addition to that, we provided, in our last budget, \$3.7 billion in green bonds to help finance public transit initiatives, extreme weather resiliency infrastructure and energy efficiency and conservation projects. Ontario remains the largest issuer of Canadian dollar green bonds in all of Canada.

We also announced the Ontario Job Creation Investment Incentive, which will make investments in clean energy generation and energy conservation equipment more attractive.

We announced a \$1-million pilot project for the Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance program to provide financial relief to communities.

In addition, we're making headway when it comes to our Canada-Ontario agreement for Ontario waterways, as well as our continued work for the Lake Erie action plan to reduce phosphorus loading.

What's more, we also put in a moratorium on water-taking permits.

We're also reducing the amount of waste in our landfills, and we're making progress, soon to come, on organic waste which ends up in landfills, causing methane gas, which is 25 times more potent than greenhouse gas emissions. Thanks to our policies, we will be reducing that waste from our landfills.

Speaker, the member says that there's no time to waste and the time to act is now, and we are acting. We will continue to deliver on our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan.

While we are taking action and making accomplishments on protecting the environment, the NDP did not have an environment plan, and they waited 198 days, or six months and 17 days, after our government introduced our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan to introduce their Green New Democratic Deal, which doesn't even mention conservation authorities. The member opposite waited 698 days, or one year, 10 months and 28 days, after our government introduced our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan.

So, yes, there is no time to waste, and we're not wasting time.

I will not be supporting this bill, as we've already done many of these things, and we have more to come. So stay tuned. We're on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'd like to begin by thanking the members from Parkdale–High Park and Toronto–Danforth for bringing forward this comprehensive bill. The measures outlined in the bill are thoughtful, prudent and forward-looking.

I think we can all agree that climate change is the most important and wide-reaching challenge of our generation and for all generations to come. COVID-19 has revealed many challenges in our society. However, it has also highlighted the importance of investing in public health infrastructure, and it has highlighted the impact of the government's cuts to public health in the first years of their mandate.

We can all agree that it's fundamentally important for us to understand the public health impacts that we are going to face as a society as a result of climate change. This bill would complement the overall provincial strategy to tackle climate change, if there actually was one.

The Auditor General came out last week confirming what we already knew: that the government doesn't have a plan to protect the environment.

Not only are they starving the ministry, under the cover of COVID-19, the government has virtually eliminated transparency and oversight.

And further, in the budget bill, the government has moved to reduce the fundamental role of conservation authorities, weakening environmental protections and local authority.

Simply put, the Ford government is bad for the environment. It has been that way since they came in and tore up the cap-and-trade system. As the Auditor General confirmed last week, they simply have no plan to achieve the results they've told us that they will.

Once again, I want to thank the members for Parkdale–High Park and for Toronto–Danforth. I particularly like the idea of having a select committee on this issue, and hopefully it's more robust than the recent select committees—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Further debate?

Back to the member for Toronto–Danforth for his two-minute wrap-up.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Davenport, University–Rosedale, Richmond Hill, Mississauga East–Cooksville, Guelph, Barrie–Innisfil and Nickel Belt—a very chatty bunch.

Speaker, it's unfortunate I only have about a minute and a half. There are a few things here. First, the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville and the member from Barrie–Innisfil effectively say that we've got everything in place to deal with the health threats today. Well, if that's the case, why weren't we prepared for COVID? Why weren't we prepared for the second round of COVID? Are we prepared for the emergence of dengue and malaria in Ontario? Because we've seen transmission of tropical diseases now in the northern United States. We'll be seeing it here if it gets hotter. Are our public health units ready for that? I don't believe that they are.

I don't believe, frankly, that we are in a position now to take on Lyme disease. I've talked to many of the rural members who have that issue. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin has been a champion on that issue. We're not even in a place to take care of that one, set aside the vulnerabilities of the health care system as we see more floods and fires. How are we going to deal with more trauma? How are we going to provide health care services to more and more displaced populations? The suburbs of Sydney, Australia, last year were threatened by climate fires. We haven't seen that in major cities in Canada yet, but we will, and we have to have a health care system ready for that.

The member for Richmond Hill said that this is a very broad-reaching bill. He's right, and I'm glad he read it and thought about it. But I have to say, Premiers Mike Harris and Ernie Eves were willing to shut down coal. And let me tell you, that was a big deal. It's something people have been dining out on for a long time. If you are going to actually take on this crisis, you have to reflect the ideas that were current with those governments over 20 years ago.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Tabuns has moved second reading of Bill 224, An Act to enact the Climate Crisis Health Action Plan Act, 2020, the Ontario Climate Crisis Strategy for the Public Sector Act, 2020 and the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis Act, 2020. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Pursuant to standing order 101(d), the recorded division on this item of private members' public business will be deferred to the proceeding deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

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

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

An Act to proclaim Magna Carta Day / Loi proclamant le Jour de la Grande Charte.

An Act to amend the Time Act and various other Acts / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'heure légale et diverses autres lois.

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

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Orders of the day? The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1528.

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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (IND)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

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

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

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

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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

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

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, 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 / Greffier: Julia Douglas

**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: Tonia Grannum

**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