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Wednesday
17 February 2021

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Mercredi
17 février 2021

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 February 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 février 2021

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I move that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario be amended as follows:

Standing order 10(c) is deleted.

Standing order 30(a) is deleted and the following substituted:

“30(a) When a voice vote has been taken on any question, a division may be required by five members standing in their places, in which case the Speaker shall then defer the taking of the vote to the next instance of the proceeding ‘Deferred Votes,’ at which time the bells shall be rung for five minutes.

“(a.1) Notwithstanding standing order 30(a), the following divisions shall not be deferred:

“(i) Divisions arising out of any routine proceeding;

“(ii) Divisions requested on motions to adjourn the House or the debate;

“(iii) Divisions where a standing order or other order specifies the time of the vote;

“(iv) Divisions on motions that the Chair of the Committee of the Whole House report progress and ask for leave to meet again or leave the chair.”

Standing orders 30(h) and (i) are deleted.

Standing order 37 is amended by deleting the words “standing orders 10(c), 30(h) or 101(d)” and substituting the words “the standing orders.”

Standing order 67 is amended by deleting the words “under standing order 30(h)” in the last line.

Standing order 101(d) is deleted.

Standing order 121 is deleted and the following substituted:

“121(a) Upon a written request signed by a majority of the members of a standing or select committee, the Chair of the committee shall convene a meeting of the committee within seven calendar days following the receipt of such request by the Clerk of the Committee.

“(b) The meeting request shall contain the text of a non-amendable motion proposing the consideration by the committee of a bill or other matter within the mandate of the committee.

“(c) If the motion is in order, 30 minutes shall be allotted to debate the motion, at the end of which time the Chair shall put the question.

“(d) For the purpose of this standing order, the committee may meet, and may continue to meet, during any adjournment of the House.”

That the following standing order be added for the duration of the 42nd Parliament:

“9(f.1) No later than 12:00 noon on any Tuesday, the government House leader may indicate in the House, or may deposit written notice with the Clerk of the Assembly, that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and in such case the afternoon routine on the Wednesday of that week shall commence at 1:00 p.m.”

That the Clerk be authorized to renumber the standing orders and to make such other consequential, editorial or other minor changes as may be required to ensure a consistent form of expression throughout the standing orders; and

That the terms of this motion shall come into force at 12:01 a.m. on the Friday of the week in which this motion is adopted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 101, “that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario be amended as follows:

“Standing order 10(c) is deleted.

“Standing order 30(a) is deleted and the following substituted:

“‘30(a) When’”—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Dispense? Dispense. All right. We’ll turn back to Ms. Khanjin to lead off the debate.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker. As we are debating motion number 101, it’s good to reflect on what we’ve done and to thank those who have helped this Legislature run as effectively as it has. I know it’s the first week back, so I did want to start by thanking everyone: the Clerk’s team and of course the Speaker’s office team, and everyone who makes this place run so smoothly, our interpreters and our translators. This really wouldn’t be possible without you present—and of course all members of the House, be they opposition or independent members. I mean, it’s one thing for the government to stand here and debate and talk, but if we have no one to debate with, it kind of defeats the purpose. That is what our great legislative Parliament democracy that we have today is so great for, and of course, respecting those who came before

us, who allowed and fought for the freedoms that we're upholding today in this Legislature and the debates we're having. So it's important to reflect on those.

Of course, we're working day in and day out to represent the great democracy that we have in Ontario, but there are other individuals who have been working day in and day out for this pandemic, and they do this every day. Over the holidays, we have our front-line workers who are constantly out there making sure that we're safe: our paramedics, our PSWs, those people working in the hospitals, our nurses. They're all on the front lines trying to do the best they can to make things work.

Oftentimes, in any profession, we've got technological advancements or any updates that make things run smoother. I look back to my area where we have Simcoe county paramedics. They changed some of the technology they use for dispatch. It's made them have a better response time in how they work. Similarly, when we talk about Parliament, we think of things that we can tweak and update to make things run a little bit smoother. Certainly, we've done that several times in this Legislature. I'm going to get into, later in my speech, about how successful some of those changes have been in terms of the standing orders that we have introduced.

But today, the current standing order proposals that we are talking about and debating—I'll list them—are the eliminating of the deferral slips, causing all recorded divisions to be automatically deferred to the next deferral vote. All of us, when we're sitting here and we're having debate and all of a sudden it's time to vote, we've got our whip or our deputy whip running up to the Speaker and they've got to file in that deferral form. Sometimes, it feels like a bit of a race. I've often noticed that maybe some tripping occurs or we're getting in the way and whatnot. This minor amendment will allow us to not have that particular slip, even though the actual intent of what we're trying to do, which is a deferral, will still exist. It's just that we're eliminating that paper process.

That kind of goes hand in hand with other things this government has done, which is trying to eliminate some of the paper, and which has worked out really well. It's not only saved the taxpayer lots of their hard-earned dollars, but it's also made this Legislature and government more effective and more efficient. I mean, we looked at our Minister of Government and Consumer Services, who put the top 10 services that we normally use for ServiceOntario—we put them online, which is really convenient. Again, it's less paper, similar to what we're doing here, to make it way more convenient.

0910

The other change, of course, is the ability for committees to recall themselves when the House stands adjourned. We saw that over the summer. I know many members opposite who are here today sat on the standing committee on finance throughout the whole summer even though, technically, the Legislature was in adjournment for a temporary period of time. But that committee sat day in and day out as well. Many times they sat until midnight

listening to various individuals, whether it's small businesses or people from tourism, about how COVID has affected them and what the government can do to really give them a hand up and allow them to continue on surviving through COVID, and just some of the struggles they've had, which obviously led to the budget that we, as a government, have introduced and, of course, the small business grant that we often talk about in this Legislature. We heard a lot about the need for small businesses to get that relief, and now they have that extra flexibility in the small business grant where they can apply and use that towards whatever they need.

But a lot of those ideas and things wouldn't have been possible if that committee had not sat all summer, and the amount of things we heard. Our minister of tourism, culture and sport continues to talk with her stakeholders. Certainly, we heard a lot from that community on the relief they need. Of course, we have those grants that are now available for the not-for-profit sector and our arts and culture groups. They're just as important, because we all know, after COVID, there is going to be some of that pent-up demand, and we're all going to want to get out and support our local businesses, our local cultural institutions, when it's safe to do so. But again, those ideas came out from that standing committee.

Now, with this particular change, the ability for committees to recall themselves when the House stands adjourned allows us to do more studies like the one we had throughout the summer with the standing committee on finance—again, all those wonderful ideas that we got from stakeholders which informed our budget.

The other change for the duration of the 42nd Parliament—this one is a little more specific. It allows the government House leader the ability to give notice that the House will meet at 1 p.m. instead of 3 p.m. on Wednesdays. Again, we're talking about getting a lot of things done for the Ontario people. There are a lot of people on the front lines working day in and day out. When we first got elected, this particular government, we recalled the Legislature very early. I think no one got to really breathe after the election. We came back in here right away and started introducing legislation. We recalled it many times in the winter. We recalled it many times in the summer. At one point, we came here on a Saturday. I don't know if people remember that, but we talked about the anti-animal-cruelty legislation. It proves to you that all of us, no matter what political stripe you're from, are really here to work as hard as we can for our constituents, for the people of Ontario, and leave this place better than when we found it. I think that's a common goal that we can all share.

This particular standing order allows us to extend that time of us introducing bills and working for Ontarians and being able to use that time we have on Wednesdays from 1 to 3 to be able to have the House meet, which is great. This allows us to do more work. I know many of us were here last session, and we sat many times until midnight passing different legislation. We had to extend Dr. Williams's term. I want to thank him for all his service that

he's done. We sat here for many hours into the late night—lots of coffee, definitely—to allow that to happen. Now, by having that extra period of time, we have that additional time to debate as to what's happening.

This motion that we're debating today really builds upon previous standing order changes that have really led to great successes, again, by everyone in this Legislature. It's an opportunity to talk about the private members' bills that we've passed in this Legislature—a historic amount of private members' bills, again, by all members of government or be they opposition or independent members. They've had direct impacts on people already, which has been wonderful to see.

Just before we recessed to be in our constituency offices over the winter, we did debate the Eating Disorders Awareness Week from the MPP from Toronto—St. Paul's, Bill 61, and the importance of that. We saw the impact that COVID-19 has had on eating disorders, with the recent report from SickKids. Everyone in this Legislature supported that piece of legislation. Again, that was made possible because we had a standing order change that allowed us more time to debate private members' bills. I'm newly elected, but for those who have served many years, you look back to what you have accomplished as an individual: What could you have done in the Legislature differently? What groups were you able to help in your own riding? What things were you able to move forward? Private members' bills are this really special opportunity for you to introduce something that is specific to your riding or specific to a cause or an issue that people really care about. It's a very empowering position to be in, to be able to talk to your constituents and say, "I have introduced a private member's bill that has now made this sort of impact on individuals."

Mine, for example—I'm grateful for the support. The day of action on litter, of course, has now empowered students and children all across Ontario to be able to do something to keep their environment clean, and it gives them something to do. Of course, this past year, it was during COVID for the first day of action, and we had to pivot a little bit, but Act on Litter, the whole campaign, was trending—top 10 in Canada and top five in all of Ontario—so it showed you that people really have a connection there to what they want to do in their community: keeping it clean and environmentally friendly, of course.

That wouldn't have been possible if we didn't have the ability to introduce private members' bills. But then, of course, now, with the previous standing orders changes we have made, we allow for more time to debate private members' bills, so it allows a lot more people to succeed, to be able to have their private member's bill passed.

For example, my colleague the MPP from Niagara West had Bill 3 passed, the Compassionate Care Act. Of course, that was before COVID, but certainly we see how even more important that piece of legislation is. Those who attended those committee meetings really saw the need from the various stakeholders and witnesses who appeared, and why this bill is so important.

We talk about, for example, Bill 118, which we debated just before the Legislature recessed temporarily: the Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act. While it sounds very technical and was introduced by the MPP for Parry Sound—Muskoka, I recall door-knocking sporadically during a summer. I knocked on someone's door and they said, "All I care about is: Are you supporting Bill 118?" And I'm thinking in my mind, "What is Bill 118?" and trying to scroll through the Rolodex of government bills we have introduced. Bill 118 didn't really come to mind quickly, so then I was like, "Sir, could you explain to me which bill this is?" He started talking about how he's a landscaper, and liability. I thought, "Oh, okay. Is this Norm Miller's private member's bill?" And I said, "Okay, is this the private member's bill you're discussing?" And he said, "Yes, that's the one."

That shows you that even if a member isn't from that specific riding, the impacts you can make with a private member's bill are across the province. Certainly, we had a lot of support for this particular bill and the Occupiers' Liability Act within the area of Barrie—Innisfil. There are a lot of contractors who would really benefit from this and it would allow their business to keep going.

But it also has great environmental impacts, as we see these commercial driveways with cubes and cubes of salt. Often, actually, the cubes of salt are more dangerous than not salting it at all. Of course, that has a direct impact on the environment, and in my beautiful riding, where we have beautiful Lake Simcoe, it has a direct impact there, as we have seen over the past few years. Our chloride levels have increased. We are part of the snowbelt; we may not be the buckle, but we are part of that belt. Certainly the use of salt adds tributaries to the watershed and to Lake Simcoe. That's certainly something we're monitoring, and the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka now also has a direct impact on those types of waterways. But again, this brings us back to the reason we have this: because of previous standing orders we have changed, allowing for more debate for private members' bills. That allowed for this to pass and the ripple effects that it caused, which is incredible.

I'm talking about a few private members' bills, but we also have our deputy whip, the MPP for Mississauga East—Cooksville, who introduced a very interesting bill, the Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day Act. Of course, now with everyone at home and more on the computer, everyone experiences different kinds of cyberbullying. Just raising awareness of that and the importance and the education is so important.

A bill that was supported by all sides of the House was Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act, from the member of Eglinton—Lawrence. I know that in my community, I had Chase McEachern in the city of Barrie. Unfortunately, when he was playing hockey, there wasn't a defibrillator close by, so we did lose him, and so, of course, the family has been advocating for more defibrillators in all hockey arenas, which we now have, which is great to see. But now, it's the step further of allowing them in more publicly accessible areas so that more people have that chance of life.

0920

Over COVID, in my riding of Barrie, we did open up another small business. It was actually really exciting that even during the horrible time that is a pandemic and what people have to undergo, new businesses were opening. One of the businesses that did open over the period of time was one that distributes defibrillators. They have them set up in very public areas, again, giving that ability to save lives, the importance of that. That was really good to see.

To commemorate one of my mentors, Julia Munro, we were also able to pass Bill 201, the Magna Carta Day Act, in memory of Julia Munro, the longest-serving female MPP in Ontario's history. The member from Burlington introduced that. We were also able to debate that for a long time here because every day, we have that hour dedicated to private members' bills, just like how yesterday we had the hour dedicated and today, we'll have the same thing. It was a great way to commemorate her.

I know the member for Burlington isn't in the Legislature today, but I want to thank her for introducing that private member's bill. That was a great way to commemorate the late Julia Munro—"Lady Munro," as we all knew her. It was just a very special moment in this Legislature. We can all reflect on accomplishments of our former colleagues, what they've done, the impact that they've made, and really reflect on what we want to do and the impacts we want to make in this Legislature. Many of those are done, of course, through private members' bills. That is, again, one that I wanted to touch upon.

That was just in 2020 that we had those particular private members' bills. There were others, like the Time Amendment Act by the MPP for Ottawa West-Nepean. That has gotten international praise, which was incredible. Now, our federal colleagues are looking at this particular bill, so that was really great to see. There's a lady at my synagogue, Am Shalom, who came up to me and said, "Andrea, you know what I would really like the government to do? I'd really love you to change this daylight saving time. It throws me off every time, and then I have to get back into the swing of it." I was able, over the High Holidays, to tell her that actually, one of my colleagues had introduced this bill. Again, that would not have been possible without the standing order changes that we had previously made, today debating the additional changes to the standing orders so that we can move forward, achieve more—like, for example, the ability for the government House leader to give notice that the House will meet at 1 p.m. instead of 3 p.m. on Wednesdays, giving that greater period of time.

If you think about all the private members' bills we've passed and how much we were able to accomplish, just think, in that period of time for the 42nd Parliament, of the additional things we can accomplish and go back to ridings and say, "We've done something," and really proven ourselves. But again, as I was saying, in 2020, those were some of those private members' bills.

Of course, there were others which would be very interesting for the Speaker to know. In 2019, we were able to pass Bill 6, the Poet Laureate of Ontario Act (In

Memory of Gord Downie). That was from the Speaker in the chair right now, but also the MPP for Windsor-Tecumseh. That was also a great moment to commemorate the great legend who was Gord Downie. We were all able to come together in this Legislature to debate that.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also mention our whip, who also co-sponsored a private member's bill with the MPP for Guelph. That was Bill 123, the Reserved Parking for Electric Vehicle Charging Act. I think a lot of us who may know friends or may drive electric vehicles ourselves are always in those plazas, and then someone blocks the spot where we need to charge our car and it becomes an annoyance, if you will. That, of course, stops it. That was another interesting way to pass a bill and have it co-sponsored by different members of this Legislature. Again, it shows you what can be accomplished.

There are other modifications we've made in the past that have really been a tribute to both the tradition that is this Legislature, but also minor improvements that make it an even better and richer experience. It gives me an opportunity to plug one recent change we've had, which is now, we have a new app in this Legislature. You can watch the Legislature any time you want. It can be on your phone; it can be in your pocket. That, of course, is Parlance. You can now download Parlance. We see it on all our screens. So I want to thank all those individuals who have worked on this app. Again, it's another additional improvement, and it speaks to the accountability and transparency, something that this government campaigned on quite vividly.

It also speaks to the fact that when people want to understand what's happening in the Legislature and what their elected officials are talking about, they now have this ability to download a new app and they can watch the live parliamentary proceedings. Of course, they can watch it any time. Also, there is closed caption available and whatnot, and it's available on all different phones. For those who did not know about this app, you can now download it. Many of our staff, who work so diligently in our constituency offices—it's something they can now have access to when they can't be with us here in the Ontario Legislature.

So, I want to thank those for working on it because it's another way to connect with youth as well. I think all of us, again, want to make the next generation better, and make this place a more effective place as well, as best as we can. This is another way to reach out to more young people who are constantly downloading apps—to be able to connect and have that ability to be engaged more in their government and what their government is doing.

Certainly, for our great teachers out there, it allows them to incorporate that into some of their classes. I know many of them, obviously, come to the Ontario Legislature. We see them on the steps; they're getting their tour. Now, with COVID-19, it's of course a little different. This still allows that level of access for them so they can still learn about the great parliamentary democracy that we all have in Canada, and we're so lucky to be the representatives in Ontario. It's very, very important.

But we couldn't all be in this Legislature without its actual creation. I just wanted to go through some of the history that is this Legislature that allows us to be in here to debate things like our current standing orders and the changes that we're making. Like I was saying, the deferral of the voting slips should be very interesting.

I don't know if they've reached out to you, but we have that OLIP program. Many of them are writing their papers right now. One of the OLIP interns who reached out to some of our offices is doing one on the modification of the different changes that have happened in the Legislature. This is one topic of interest to them because they can now talk about how we have improved it. How have we kept that tradition? It's that fine balance, right?

The fine balance is, of course, you want to commemorate history. For example, in one of the standing orders, not only do we sing O Canada in this Legislature, to commemorate the great country that we all represent—strong and free—but also we sing God Save the Queen as a commemoration to her Royal Highness and everything that she represents. This is very much an extension of that system and of that parliamentary democracy that we're upholding. There's that really rich, beautiful tradition that we have in this Legislature and other Legislatures across Canada.

Then there's obviously the other side of that, which is doing the minor updates to make it more efficient. For example, I think at one point we didn't even have microphones in here. So, it's those little technological advancements, and procedurally, things that can be updated to make things a bit better.

That brings me to, how do we make things more better? Sometimes committees—we were talking about one of the changes before us today, the ability for committees to recall themselves when the House stands adjourned. We talked about it a bit earlier, the ability to really be able to study more things in depth and recall them when needed. Again, when there are any economic effects out there in the world, a great pandemic, that we all need to gather together to solve, we can do that.

The one thing that I had experienced from the summer on the standing committee on finance is that people finally found Parliament successful. They can come to a committee; it's accessible. They can give their testimony. They really feel like they're heard. And there are many constituents in my riding of Barrie–Innisfil who came before the standing committee on finance and were able to pitch some of their ideas, how they're going to pivot.

Of course, Digital Main Street helped a lot of different people. They were able to pivot from that bricks and mortar store to be able to provide a lot of their services digitally. Our downtown BIAs that all of us connect with all the time, they're the ones that really benefited from this this new concept and idea, but a lot of these things we heard during that meeting.

We were able to have it because we recalled this particular committee during the summer. Of course, now we'll be able to do that at any point in time. If the House

stands adjourned, we can still do that very important business. Over the summer, we saw the importance of that.

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We got some great ideas on there for the restaurant sector, for example: the ability to do takeout for alcohol, to be able to extend our patios, all these things that our hard-working Attorney General for Ontario and MPP for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte worked very hard on. But a lot of this came from and originated from all of the work in the committee as well.

Like I said, it's a Team Canada approach that we've been taking this whole pandemic, and a lot of the work that we've done through that committee on all sides was being able to help a lot of those sectors, be it our tourism, culture and sports sector, our small businesses sector, helping them with rent relief by tweaking the rent relief program so that not only are landlords able to apply but tenants are able to apply. That was such a huge game-changer. I know in my community it was a breath of relief for many of the businesses that could finally uptake it.

I know one specific—her husband—they were actually on CBC and different stations. The husband and wife decided to open up a café. It's a half café, half printing shop called Creative Bean. Unfortunately, Rene, who is the husband who owns the business with his wife, quit his job to work at the café all the time because it was his passion. He really loved it. It would be closer to home, less commuting. I'm sure a lot of us know those types of people. He did get COVID. He was on a ventilator for many weeks. His wife was really worried. They have kids that are very young. Of course, it was every day just praying and hoping that Rene would come through, and he did. Now, Rene and his wife are back at the café fully. They've done takeout during the lockdown, and now that we're moving to the red zone in my particular community, they'll be able to have a few people sit in the restaurant.

But the amount of community support that came out for the family was incredible. It shows you that, yes, there is a role for government to play, but we're not the only players in society. When we talk about our parliamentary democracy and the foundations of demos and what it means, it's all the people. If you didn't have all the individuals in a community that are helping also, you wouldn't have that huge success. It is on government to do its part, but we also have our private citizens and individual citizens that can obviously take things up on their own and help their community as well. We can all set a good example of taking care of thy neighbour and making sure that everyone does feel supported and has what they need.

In the story of Creative Bean, we saw that. There was one gentleman who owns a transportation company—not any transportation company; it was actually a limo company. He offered for them to have a special experience when they were picking up Rene from the hospital after he recovered from getting COVID, allowing them to take that particular vehicle to the hospital to pick up their dad. For the kids, it was so special. Instead of being, obviously, a horrific experience, it allowed them to lift up their spirits. Of course, it was because of the gentleman that owned the

transportation service. So you saw that Ontario spirit come around. The amount of people that dropped off food and goods for them was also incredible to see.

But they benefited from many of these programs that we heard about and that we debated in that particular standing committee because it was able to be recalled during the summer, and that's something that we can now continue to do with the standing order change, to be able to have those committees discuss and debate different bills and different needs and, of course, be accessible to the greater public so they can come in and voice their opinion.

I know many of us have a lot of meetings we take in our offices. Of course that's very important, but sometimes there's also another platform that people want to be able to give their opinions and their ideas, so committee is certainly a really good platform, and it's rooted in a deep tradition that we still want to uphold—but again, the ability to tweak it slightly. For example, we can watch committee televised, which is a great thing to do.

That wouldn't have been possible without the actual creation of this building itself. As we look back to when this building was first built, there's really kind of a funny folk story about the first day that this building opened. On April 4, 1893, when the Ontario legislative building first opened, according to folk history, Premier Sir Oliver Mowat at the time is said to have ridden towards the new impressive provincial legislature for the opening and turned to the Clerk and remarked, "Well, Joe, we built it. How are we going to fill it with people?" Little did he know that within 20 years, the building would be filled and would endure as a symbol of the provincial government 100-plus years later. Now people can easily come to committee and testify, but there was a point in time in history when there was a fear that no one was going to come to this building. Of course, many are coming every year. I know different members do get elected and then we're able to come to this building and debate things like we are today—the standing orders that we are amending.

Just to repeat them: Of course, we're eliminating the deferral slips, causing all recorded divisions to be automatically deferred to the next deferral votes; the ability for committees to recall themselves when the House stands adjourned; and for the duration of the 42nd Parliament, the ability for the government House leader to give notice that the House will meet at 1 p.m. instead of 3 p.m. on Wednesdays. That is building on the success of the standing orders that we've changed, to make this a richer, fuller experience and really be able to talk to those constituents and those people who have elected us to do the role that we're doing and to be able to tell them we're doing the best we can, and delivering those supports that are needed for those businesses that made the ultimate sacrifice during COVID-19. They could not open their doors. Being able to let them pivot their business, whether it's providing a Digital Main Street platform for them, being able to do takeout, allow a bit more income, the small business grant, which allows them to use that towards any of their needs, the PPE grant—again, the PPE grant is something we

heard at the standing committee on finance, that they need help, to allow that.

When I had the finance minister come to my riding and we did a bit of a tour of different businesses, Stephanie from Discount Granite Plus in Barrie—one thing that she talked about was the cost of PPE. Again, that's something she was able to directly give to the finance minister at the time. There were other members from our Barrie chamber who were able to come to the select committee to also say similar things that they needed help and support with. It will be great to see that we are able to have more of that committee work take place if these standing orders do pass.

So I do urge all members to support these standing orders, as they do make this place a richer experience and allow us to do more, and then we can reflect on our many years—for those who served more than one, who have been here for many years, longer than I, on the great accomplishments and successes they've made, and they were able to contribute to Ontario being a better place.

On that note, I will conclude my remarks, and I'll pass it on to the next speaker.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise today to participate in the debate. It's my first opportunity to speak on this, other than yesterday, during question period—but it's my first opportunity to join in a debate.

Before I get into the substance of my remarks, I want to point out to any Ontarian who has tuned in to the legislative channel this morning to find out what urgent matters of policy are being debated in this Legislature that what we are debating this morning is a motion that was tabled yesterday, in fact—the first day back in the Legislature. It's a motion to change the standing orders to do a couple of things.

One is to no longer require a deferral slip, which, for those who are watching, is a piece of paper that has to be handed to the Speaker when there's a request for a recorded vote. We will no longer have to hand that deferral slip to the Speaker—as the member for Barrie-Innisfil said, risk tripping on the way to hand in that deferral slip. We will no longer have to do that, thankfully, because there is a proposed change to the standing order to eliminate that requirement. A vote will automatically be deferred without the need for a deferral slip.

The other thing that the motion we are debating this morning does is, it enables standing committees to sit while the Legislature is adjourned. Certainly, this is something that would have been important—to have allowed the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to conduct pre-budget consultations throughout December, January, the first three weeks of February. That would have been a good mechanism to have had in place so that the standing committee could have conducted pre-budget consultations.

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But, of course, this change to the standing orders wouldn't have been required for pre-budget consultations

to take place. All that would have been required was a motion from the government prior to rising in December so that there could have been an open and transparent pre-budget process. The people of Ontario, the small business sector that is being devastated by COVID-19, the non-profit agencies that are hanging by a thread as they try to deal with the urgent and growing community needs that they address, the people of this province who are facing eviction, the lack of affordable housing—these are all things that I'm sure the people of Ontario would have appreciated having an opportunity to participate in through an open and transparent pre-budget process. But the government, at the time, decided it wasn't going to enable that to happen and instead would have this closed-door budget consultation where they hand-select who they're going to listen to as they work to develop the budget for March.

But now, thankfully, we have a standing order change that will enable committees to meet while the Legislature is adjourned, if there is a majority of members who request it.

That's a good thing, Speaker. That is helpful to the way that we conduct business in this Legislature. There's no question about that. However, we are in the second day back at Queen's Park since the Legislature rose on December 8. What has happened over that time, since December 8: We were in lockdown. We were in a province-wide lockdown because COVID-19 cases were going through the roof. We were seeing unprecedented numbers of cases, which required the implementation of a provincial state of emergency.

We are nowhere near through the worst of this pandemic, and we know that. We know that because the government's science table advisers have been very clear. We are on the brink of disaster. That is what Dr. Steini Brown said last week. The data, the modelling, is showing that we are on the brink of disaster in this province, given the policy choices that this government has made.

And so, one would expect, when one hears dire warnings from esteemed, reputable experts like Dr. Steini Brown, that this government would bring in legislation to address the potential disaster that we are facing in this province. But instead—instead of legislation that is going to really deal with the issues that are facing our province imminently—this government has chosen to use time on the legislative agenda to bring forward a motion to talk about eliminating deferral slips and enabling legislative committees to meet.

To me, Speaker, that is shameful. It does a huge disservice to the people of this province, who elected us to come to Queen's Park and introduce policies, develop and move laws that are going to actually help people get through the crisis that we are facing.

I have to say, I did appreciate the comments from the member for Barrie–Innisfil during her remarks, when she talked about the impact of private members' bills. She spent a good part of her speech talking about, reminiscing about some of the private members' bills that have been introduced by Conservative members and have been brought forward and moved through the legislative process and implemented into law.

And I agree that private members' bills can provide an important contribution to public policy in Ontario. We should be doing more private members' bills. We should be moving more private members' bills through the legislative process and making them into law.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Like paid sick days.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes.

That is why, Speaker, last week NDP leader Andrea Horwath wrote a letter to the Premier, on February 11. She announced to the Premier and she announced to the Conservative government which private members' bills would actually be helpful to the people of Ontario and would address some of the major challenges that we are facing right now in this province. She indicated that the NDP, based on what we are hearing from the people of this province, based on the advice that we are getting from health care experts, from epidemiologists, from people who understand how this pandemic is affecting people in this province—based on that consultation and that knowledge that we were aware of, we sent a letter indicating that we had several private members' bills that we urged the government to bring forward through the legislative process and pass into law immediately, because these are private members' bills that are urgent. They are desperately needed by the people of Ontario to deal with the crisis we are facing.

In particular, I want to talk about Bill 239. That is my Stay Home If You Are Sick Act. That is a bill that has near unanimous agreement across Ontario, across business owners, labour leaders, workers, health care experts, boards of health—which represent communities; they represent municipal councils and community members who do a service on boards of health. We have the medical officers of health. All are saying that the one thing, the missing piece—among many missing pieces, but the most important missing piece in this government's response to COVID-19 has been the lack of paid sick days.

This government had an opportunity yesterday to immediately pass Bill 239 into law, but they chose not to do that. If they had agreed to the unanimous consent motion, we could have scheduled time today. Today we could have been talking about moving quickly and getting Bill 239 passed this week. It could have been passed this week. Instead, we're talking about eliminating the need for deferral slips and making some minor changes to the way that standing committees operate.

The other thing that the leader of the official opposition had communicated to the Premier as a priority for the people of this province was the Time to Care Act. That was legislation that was introduced by my colleague the member for London–Fanshawe that would guarantee residents of long-term-care homes a minimum of four hours of hands-on care per resident per day. When we look at how COVID-19 has ravaged long-term-care homes in our province, we just have to look at the member for Barrie–Innisfil's own riding, Speaker—Roberta Place, a long-term-care home in her own community, that was devastated by the new variant of COVID-19 that ripped through that long-term-care home in a matter of days—to

understand the urgency of the issues that we are facing here in this province.

The bill that was introduced by my colleague would recognize the importance of providing safe long-term-care homes for our seniors, of ensuring that that iron ring that the Premier likes to talk about is actually there to protect residents of long-term-care homes. But are we talking about how to move that bill, the Time to Care Act, through, how to ensure that it becomes law in the province of Ontario? No, we are not. We are talking about changes to the standing orders that do nothing to address the real priorities and the real concerns of the people of Ontario.

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The other thing that we could have been talking about this morning is a bill that was introduced by your colleague the member for Windsor dealing with the rights of residents of congregate care settings to have access to their essential caregivers. We have all, I think, heard stories from our constituents, from families who have loved ones in long-term-care homes and the trauma they have experienced by not being able to have access to their loved ones; the incredible fear and anxiety they are dealing with on a daily basis as they are denied the ability to go in and see their loved ones. The residents of those congregate care settings are being denied access to the people who communicate for them, who understand their needs. That is cruel. It is inhumane not to fix that issue right now, which we could do with the legislation that was passed by my colleague, the More Than a Visitor Act.

The letter from our leader, Andrea Horwath, also identified a number of other private members' bills that could be moved through this place and enacted into law very quickly that would actually help people in this province.

There is a need to have an equity strategy for the vaccine rollout plan. All of us, I fully expect, if your constituency offices are like mine, are being inundated by people who are 75 and 80 who live at home. They're 85, they're 90, but they are not in a long-term-care home and they're asking legitimate questions: When will I get the vaccine? How will I know that I am now eligible to get the vaccine?

Is there infrastructure in place to ensure that when the vaccine supply arrives, we are able to immediately get the vaccine into people's arms? We could be talking about legislation that deals with the need for that infrastructure to make sure that we have a vaccine rollout plan that is going to vaccinate as many people in those higher risk categories as possible, as quickly as possible. But do we see that today? No, we do not. We see some minor changes to the standing orders.

We could be talking about a strategy to keep schools safe. This is the first week that kids are back in school in the GTA.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Sorry to interrupt the member for London West. The government House leader has risen on a point of order.

The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the amount of latitude that the Speaker has been giving, but I would hope that the member would focus her comments on the important standing orders that are before the House today and not a review of all of the things that the member would like to see happen over the coming weeks. There will be time for debate on that specifically later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you for raising it. I don't recognize it as a legitimate point of order because I have been listening intently. The custom of the House is, if you introduce a motion, the opposition has an opportunity to say thank you and what you could have done in addition is this. She has been drawing it back to the private members' bills and different things that have been introduced. I thought it a brilliant segue at one point to what was raised earlier in the week. I'm being partisan in this, but I have been listening intently, and I believe she is within her right to be saying what has been said, and I'll rely on Hansard to back that up. Thank you.

Back to the member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciated your listening to my remarks because we did hear the member for Barrie–Innisfil embark on a trip down memory lane about all the PMBs that the Conservative members have introduced that have been passed.

Speaker, I wanted to emphasize that there are high-priority PMBs that have been introduced, that are ready to go. We moved unanimous consent motions yesterday—which the government chose not to support, but could have. Had they supported them, we could have been dealing with them this week. If there is empty time on the legislative agenda, those PMBs would have been very appropriately debated and passed this week. We know that because of what we are hearing from the people we represent.

I'm curious to know, since we rose on December 7, how many constituents contacted the members over on the government side to say, "I hope that the second day you are back in the Legislature, you are dealing with changes to the standing orders, you are dealing with eliminating the need for deferral slips, you are dealing with changing the way that standing committees can conduct business while the Legislature is adjourned." I'm going to go out on a limb here and say I don't think they got a single call, a single email about those issues. I think they heard the exact same thing that we are hearing, which is about the need for paid sick days. It's about the need to put an iron ring around our long-term-care homes. It's about the need to stop people from being evicted from their homes: How are people supposed to stay home and stay safe if they don't have a home to live in? It's about the need to provide meaningful supports for small businesses.

It's about the need to ensure that kids are able to remain safely in schools. We haven't seen any meaningful action from this government. In fact, today, we heard epidemiologist Dr. David Fisman talk about how his modelling, his analysis had been twisted and used inappropriately to justify changing March break from March to April. Dr. Fisman has been very public about his

concerns about what this means when Dr. Steini Brown, to go back to my initial comments, warned of 5,000 to 6,000 cases by the end of March.

So I'm not going to help the government out by filling legislative time, dealing with such inconsequential pieces of public policy as these minor changes to the standing orders, when we should be dealing with so much more important things, issues that are priorities for people in Ontario and that would actually help to deal with the crisis that we are facing. Eliminating the need for a deferral slip? Why not? Changing the way that standing committees can conduct business while the Legislature is adjourned? Yes, that would be good going forward. We support that. Allowing a change in when the Legislature is going to come back in the afternoon on Wednesdays so that we can return at 1 o'clock instead of 3 o'clock? Sure, let's do it.

The standing orders are not a problem; the changes to the standing orders are not a problem. What is a problem is the fact that we are being negligent in our duty, in our responsibility to represent the people of Ontario and talk about issues that are really going to make a difference in people's lives.

With that, I am sharing my time with the member for London–Fanshawe, who will have her own comments to make. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): For further debate, I turn to the member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I want to make some quick comments on this, because, really, the motion before us has nothing to do with COVID and the pandemic and what people are experiencing.

People are tired; they're fatigued. They want some hope. They want solutions to some of these problems. One of the problems that we have seen—and the member from Barrie–Innisfil, as the member from London West said, touched on many private members' bills, but one thing she forgot to mention was long-term care. It's one of the worst things that is happening in this whole pandemic. When there's an outbreak, it just runs through the long-term-care home and affects so many of our loved ones. People are dying under horrible, horrible conditions. We saw it with the Canadian Armed Forces report. Apparently, that's when the government realized how bad things were. But things were bad before the pandemic happened, and we had proposed many changes. One of the private members' bills that we should be passing in a package that we introduced yesterday under the unanimous consent is the Time to Care Act, Bill 13, which guarantees a standard of care of four hours per day. Also, it legislates a standard of care so that long-term-care homes are held accountable.

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I can say that what the government did prioritize during the pandemic was passing Bill 218, which lets long-term-care homes—profitable long-term-care homes, which have the worst record in COVID-19—off the hook from being sued. It makes it so difficult for families to get justice.

I ask this government, why are we talking about deferral slips and tripping over each other to get a deferral slip to the table when we could actually be talking about the Time to Care Act and mandating that four hours that's so desperately needed for our loved ones in long-term care, for the workers who are delivering that care that we all want to see happen? Nobody wants a loved one to suffer. What's the solution? Pass the four hours in the Time to Care Act. Get those workers the dignity and respect that they need to do their job, to look after our loved ones.

With that, Speaker, I want to pass my time to the member for Ottawa Centre to comment on this motion before us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for London–Fanshawe said she would be sharing her time, so I turn to the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to add to what my colleagues have mentioned by pointing out to my friends in government what's also missing from their prioritization of administrative measures for how we debate in this House, and that's the rights and the living standards of people with disabilities.

As Ontario's critic for disabilities, I am contacted on a daily basis—sometimes an hourly basis—under the hash tag #ODSPoverty, about the living conditions people are suffering through. All of us in this chamber walk into this place making \$116,000 a year. We work hard for it. There are a lot of people at home suffering through this pandemic who are still pulling down good salaries, and that's good for them. But somehow the province of Ontario thought it was appropriate, decades ago, to legislate poverty for people living on the Ontario Disability Support Program—with a maximum benefit for individuals of \$1,169 a month. Most people don't get that much.

What have we done for those people in this pandemic? For four months, we gave them \$100 a month extra, if they could chase their ODSP worker to apply for it, and then we took it away in early August. People have been languishing without access to proper food, without access to the services they need. The way in which we have treated the disabled in this province in this pandemic is insulting. And I am upset with my friends in government that there is nothing on the second day of the resumption of this Legislature to help people with disabilities.

In the province of British Columbia, there was an immediate \$300-a-month top-up to people's disability incomes—immediate—to everybody on the caseload. Nothing was clawed back for the small amount of people who qualified for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, the federal response benefit. There has been something for people in British Columbia; there has been absolutely nothing for people in Ontario.

So I am waiting with bated breath to see a single dollar released to people who are suffering, who are made marginalized by legislation in this province.

I'll just name one person who contacted me this morning. Her name is Michele Proulx. Michele recently was taking a Para Transpo ride in Ottawa. Because of the

way the system is overtaxed, the driver told Michele, “On the way to your destination, ma’am, we’re going to pick up another person to sit in the back seat of this modified van with you.” Can you imagine, Speaker? Someone who is immunocompromised, on ODSP, is being told, “We’re going to pick up somebody else.” Of course, she refused, and she was put out in an Ottawa winter to wait somewhere for OC Transpo to rectify the matter. That is unacceptable. It would never happen to somebody without a disability.

We have to make sure that funding comes from the province of Ontario for people’s transportation needs, for people’s meal needs, for all of the increased costs. I want to see a stop in fiddling around from this government and money to people with disabilities now.

I’d like to share my time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): No, we’re not going to do that. You sat down without saying that.

I’m just going to call for further debate on this side first.

I recognize the member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: It’s an honour to be able to speak on the motion amending the standing orders. These changes, as some of the other members have talked about, are going to streamline the voting process and establish a straight-forward system that will allow committees to meet year-round—we’ve heard that request from many of the constituents we have the privilege of representing—and provide more time in the chamber for bills to be debated. That particular amendment is certainly not inconsequential.

Speaker, as you know, the standing orders govern the business of the House, and they are procedures that guide the legislative process. I talk about that for those who might be either watching or listening today, because it’s not generally a topic that our constituents would understand, generally—about what the standing orders guide going forward.

Under the current standing orders, a vote can only be deferred if the chief government whip presents a written deferral slip—or the official opposition does—at the conclusion of a debate. At the moment, when there are limited members at the Legislature, it’s prudent to ensure, I believe, that all votes take place in a safe and controlled manner. With votes being deferred to a set time, we’ll be able to more reliably limit the number of members and staff in the building. This way, we’ll be able to vote in a predictable manner that will keep everyone safe and not compromise the ability of the government to pass its legislation.

Secondly, under the current standing orders, there’s no clearly defined mechanism that would allow the members of a standing committee to convene following the adjournment of the House. We heard in the earlier debate the interaction that we would have with our individual constituents and what their expectations are. One of the expectations I hear in Whitby—and the privilege I have of representing Whitby—is that where there’s a possibility for our standing committees to continue to consider pieces of legislation, we should do that, because that allows members of the public and other representatives from

sectors to provide their particular perspectives on the legislation within the standing committee process. These changes would allow a majority of the members to convene a sitting of a standing committee for the purpose of undertaking committee business.

The other amendment that I think will add particular value to the legislative process is coming back at 1 o’clock on Wednesday instead of 3 p.m. Once again, that’s going to allow extra time to debate bills in the House. We’ve heard that request from the official opposition, we’ve heard that from the independents, and we’ve heard that from constituents.

Speaker, you’ll know that over the past several months of COVID-19, we’ve opened up in a way that I don’t think any other government has done in the history of the province. At the same time, as I’ve said on a number of occasions, the opposition and the independents worked with us closely to ensure that we were able to address the very important needs of the people of this province during the COVID-19 pandemic. Going forward, I would anticipate that level of co-operation will continue. I think two of the amendments that I’ve referred to, coming back at 1 o’clock on Wednesdays and allowing standing committees to meet when we’re adjourned, speak to that.

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Speaker, the amendments embedded in today’s motion continue the process that was initiated by the government House leader several months ago, the Honourable Paul Calandra. I believe that we followed through on the intention in a manner that has exceeded all expectations. We’ve not only ensured that business is conducted in a safe and responsible manner, but we have also followed through on our commitment to pass legislation that improves the lives of Ontarians, despite this challenging pandemic. That is one of the expectations of our constituents, whether it’s those who are living in the town of Whitby or those living in the other parts of the region of Durham or other parts of Ontario. That’s why we were able to pass bills, Speaker, through this House with the unanimous support of all of our colleagues in this place.

I want to spend a little bit of time from whence we’ve come to where we are today, because I think it’s important context. In 2020, we successfully integrated the COVID-19 emergency legislation into a package of government bills and private members’ bills which were designed to strengthen our economy and improve the lives of everyday residents. Our government passed 54 separate pieces of legislation in the last year while remaining committed, absolutely committed, to openness and transparency. By allowing the committees to meet when this House is adjourned, it speaks to those particular components, doesn’t it? Openness and transparency, the continuum of that.

But what we accomplished in the last year necessitated a lot of different processes. We changed the way voting was done in this place so that people could come into the Legislature and vote in a different fashion. All of this and some of the other work I’ve alluded to was done so that our work would be able to proceed safely, responsibly and efficiently in this modern age and, yes, in this unprecedented time we’re all living in.

Speaker, I think it's appropriate that we thank the Clerks and the staff of the Legislature for facilitating such a seamless transition towards safer systems and processes. Without their tireless work, commitment and flexibility, none of this would have been possible.

No one watching, listening or here today should be under no illusion that this government, led by Premier Ford and his strong cabinet, is ever going to give up on its mandate before the next election. We have important priorities that we want to do, and as convenient as it would be for the opposition to have us stop and do nothing, that's not convenient for the people of the province of Ontario who are relying on us to get things done. Speaker, my constituents and yours are relying on us.

I see that I'm running out of time, Speaker. If you like, I can take this particular moment to just finish up and allow you to move into statements.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We have reached the point on the clock where we end the debate momentarily and we go to members' statements.

Debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: For months now, the Premier has been exhorting Ontarians to stay home as the answer to rising COVID numbers. But our front-line workers can't stay home. Our essential workers can't stay home. The folks who stock grocery shelves or work at the drugstore, convenience store or deliver things that we now all order online, they can't stay home. Many of them know that they will lose their homes if their income drops, so they have no choice but to go to work sick, even if those are COVID symptoms they have, even if they have tested positive. People can't stay home if they're going to lose their housing as a result, and now the Premier is refusing to ban evictions.

New COVID variants are frightening, and it will be months before most Ontarians get their shots. But people can't stay home if it means they can't pay their bills. We need paid sick days so that our front-line heroes, the same ones we banged on pans for and celebrate, can keep a roof over their heads and food on the table.

People are sick and tired of lockdowns and angry with the Ford government that blames individuals for flouting rules but won't put in place the supports that people need to keep everyone safe. If our schools and small businesses are going to open and stay open, we need people who are sick to be able to stay home without losing theirs.

Paid sick days, now.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to rise today and announce another critical health care investment in

Lambton county by the government of Ontario. Today, our government is investing over \$2.8 million to expand the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care program in Lambton county. This initiative builds on Lambton county's successful paramedicine program that also received full annualized provincial funding last summer.

The new Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care program will help seniors on long-term-care waitlists to stay safe in their own homes by providing them with direct access to non-emergency support 24 hours a day, seven days a week by paramedicine practitioners like the Lambton county EMS.

This program is another way our government is collaborating with our health care system partners to provide innovative services in support of our goal to end hallway health care in Ontario and to build a 21st-century long-term-care system while also responding to the impact that COVID-19 has had on this sector.

The program works alongside home care, primary care, community care, and leverages the skills of community paramedicine practitioners to provide non-emergency support, such as home visits and remote monitoring. The program is fully funded by the provincial government, operated in partnership with our municipal partners.

Mr. Speaker, this is another terrific example of how the government of Ontario is investing in things that matter most to the people of Ontario and in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jeff Burch: People across this province and in my riding of Niagara Centre continue to do their part in the fight against COVID-19. Ontario is seeing a rapid increase of the COVID-19 variants of concern. Public health measures are lifting, and people across this province still do not have access to paid sick days. The federal sick leave program does not replace full income and is not adequate for people to stay home. Academic studies have found that workers who lack paid sick leave are 1.5 times more likely to go to work contagious.

Every local public health agency has urged this government to implement paid sick days. Ontario mayors and their councils, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Ontario Medical Association are all telling the Ford government that there is an urgent need for guaranteed paid sick days for the duration of the pandemic.

Although it is clearly a provincial responsibility, this Premier continues to place the burden on the people of this province, instead of showing real leadership and ensuring that people can stay home when they're sick. The people who stock our groceries, ensure our food supply in our warehouses, who care for our seniors in long-term care need paid sick days to stay home. They take care of us and are counting on us to take care of them. Today, I'm urging the government to listen to the science, respect the experts and pass Bill 239.

CALEDONIA

Mr. Toby Barrett: This month marks the unfortunate 15th anniversary of the occupation of Caledonia's Douglas Creek Estates subdivision—February 28, 2006, to be exact—marking 15 years of road blockades, detours, confrontation and intimidation. More recently, on February 24 last year, provincial Highway 6 was blockaded at Caledonia in support of the Wet'suwet'en Coastal GasLink pipeline protest, part of the Shut Down Canada movement.

As with railroads across Canada, last February also saw the shutdown of the CN line that runs from Caledonia down to the Nanticoke industrial park. This followed police action to clear the Deseronto railway blockade, following a statement by Prime Minister Trudeau that blockades “must ... come down” and that court “injunctions must be obeyed and the law must be upheld.”

1020

Premier Ford echoed these sentiments: “Enough is enough. The illegal blockades must come down.... The federal government must coordinate action to take down these illegal blockades across the country.”

On July 19, last year, another subdivision was occupied: McKenzie Meadows. In August, destruction ensued. By October, Highway 6, the Caledonia bypass, the CN line, McKenzie Road and Argyle Street were all blockaded. Highway 6 reopened February 10. Argyle repairs finished up today, McKenzie Road will be repaired in two days, and they are inspecting the CN rail, I'm pleased to report, as of today.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Joel Harden: On February 12, 2021, a note came out from the government of Ontario that was called, “Guidance for Facilities for Sports and Recreational Fitness Activities During COVID-19 Province-wide Shutdown for Persons With Disabilities.”

I want to say to you, Speaker, and I want to say to the people at home who will be watching this clip, this advisory didn't happen by accident. It happened because two fantastic people from Ottawa, Melanie Coughlin and Mary Jane Clinkard, people with disabilities who need aqua therapy to live decent, meaningful and fulfilling lives, took action.

I want to note for everyone watching this clip, Speaker, that when we ask people in Ontario to stay safe and stay home and we push the province into a lockdown for the right reasons, we can't think that one size fits all. We have to remember that people with disabilities need access to crucial therapies to live, because what is the alternative? The alternative is people have breathing problems, respiratory problems, health problems, and they end up in the very hospitals we are trying to keep open.

So I want to thank Melanie Coughlin. I want to thank Mary Jane Clinkard. I want to thank Michael Thomas, the chief of staff in Minister Cho's office, for taking a particular interest and pushing this in the government. I

want to thank CBC Ottawa Morning. I want to thank Joanne Laucius, from the Ottawa Citizen, who raised this story.

And folks watching at home, never forget that organizing in your community and pushing a government to do the right thing can make a difference. We got this win. We need more wins. Thank you, Mel. Thank you, Mary Jane.

ABIGAIL LEU

Mr. Michael Coteau: It's great to be in the House today representing the wonderful people of Don Valley East.

Throughout this pandemic, I have seen some incredible constituents step up and really make a difference in the community. I want to talk particularly about a young woman named Abigail Leu, who did just that. She's always been passionate. She's always looked for ways to help her community, and through her leadership, she set up a not-for-profit organization that was student-run, in the community, to address accessibility needs. She partnered with many different organizations over the holidays, like Inner City Outreach, the Pregnancy Care Centre and Matthew House in Toronto, to collect baskets, to provide them to people in need. These were new parents, expecting mothers and new Canadians.

I'm just so happy that we have someone like Abigail in our community making such a difference, especially as a young Ontarian, a young Canadian, stepping up and really looking for ways to improve our community and take on challenges during this challenging time.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF BRANTFORD

Mr. Will Bouma: I am happy to rise in the House today and talk a little about the Boys and Girls Club of Brantford–Brant. More than 50 years ago, visionary members of the Rotary Club of Brantford recognized the need for quality recreational opportunities for youth. Today, the Boys and Girls Club serves thousands of children across Brantford and Brant, and operates in multiple locations to serve our diverse communities.

The Boys and Girls Club of Brantford has grown into one of Brantford's most effective youth service organizations, and is looking forward to enhancing their services to even better serve our community. The Boys and Girls Club of Brantford is all about levelling the playing field and providing opportunities for youth to reach their full potential by supporting their healthy physical, educational and social development.

Being a leading provider of after-school and critical-hours learning programs, the Boys and Girls Club has been recognized for significantly contributing to healthy lifestyle and development of youth when they need encouragement the most. With families and other partners in the community, the Boys and Girls Club will help youth to be healthy, confident, responsible and successful in life.

Once again, I am happy to celebrate this outstanding organization in my home riding of Brantford–Brant, and don't be surprised if you hear lots of good news coming in the days and weeks to come.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Ms. Suze Morrison: Nestled in the Corktown neighbourhood in my riding in Toronto Centre, you will find the Dominion Wheel and Foundries buildings. Built between 1917 and 1928, the four buildings were heritage designated by the city of Toronto in 2008, but in early January, local residents called my office in a panic, as they saw demolition equipment assembling on the site. After speaking to construction workers, it was revealed that the provincially owned buildings were, in fact, being demolished. This was the first that my office, the city councillor's office or the local community had even heard that our heritage buildings were being put at risk.

In the middle of a pandemic, this government took a wrecking ball to my community, but in Toronto Centre, we are no stranger to a good fight. A new group called Friends of the Foundry formed to defend our local heritage. The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association and the city mounted a legal challenge, and, at a hearing for an injunction, the justice presiding over the case agreed that the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing had broken Ontario's heritage laws.

My community has a vision for that site: to see it repurposed as affordable housing and desperately needed community use space, like an arts complex, as proposed by the IRCPA. But this vision is not mutually exclusive to maintaining heritage. We can have and deserve to have both community-oriented development and heritage preservation.

To the Premier and to the minister: Respectfully, get out of Corktown, and hands off our foundry buildings.

WILLOWDALE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

Mr. Stan Cho: I'm excited to share some long overdue news from my riding. On December 16, the Willowdale business improvement area, or BIA, was officially approved by Toronto city council. This is comprised of local main street businesses. And I'm proud to say that the BIA will work to carry out important improvements, like promoting economic development, financing revitalization projects, improving streetscapes, restoring building facades, organizing events like the Taste of the Danforth—perhaps the taste of Willowdale—and much, much more.

When COVID-19 hit our province, there became an immediate need to accelerate plans to establish a BIA in Willowdale to give critical assistance to local businesses, and on January 18, I was proud to attend their inaugural annual general meeting.

Willowdale is one of the most culturally diverse neighbourhoods in Canada and one of the highest population densities in the country. It's also home to more than

1,800 businesses, many of which are restaurants, which have been hit very hard by this pandemic.

When COVID-19 is behind us, I invite everyone to take a stroll along Yonge Street north of the 401 and visit one of the many shops and restaurants that make our community special. Try some bibimbap, pho, pork bone soup, halohalo, sabzi polo ba mahi or a juicy hamburger.

Congratulations to the Willowdale BIA on their founding, and I look forward to working closely with them to promote and improve the Willowdale business community.

CHARLES H. BEST DIABETES CENTRE

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to highlight this morning the work of the Charles H. Best Diabetes Centre in Whitby. For Durham residents coping with type 1 diabetes, these current conditions make dealing with this potentially fatal disease that much more difficult. This is where the Charles H. Best Diabetes Centre steps in to help. The nurses, dietitians and social workers work with thousands of patients, helping hospitals meet the growing needs in Durham region. The Best centre is saving lives, and now, during the pandemic, their programs and services are needed more than ever.

Due to the rapid residential growth in Durham region, the Best centre will need to double its size by 2026, with an estimated future growth of 93% over 10 years. To address this growing demand, the Best centre is undertaking a \$5-million fundraising campaign to add to its current facilities. That campaign will be led by Dr. Gary Polonsky, one of the leaders of our community, to ensure that the one-of-a-kind centre will continue to provide direct care, education and support to the growing number of patients and families living in the great region of Durham.

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

1030

FARMERS IN INDIA

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I rise today to call for unanimous consent for a moment of silence to remember the more than 200 farmers in India who have died peacefully protesting for their livelihood.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton East is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for a moment of silence to remember the more than 200 farmers who have died in India while peacefully protesting for their livelihood. Agreed? Agreed. I'll ask all members to rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'm seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding the immediate passage of Bill 244, the No COVID-19 Evictions Act, 2021, to help keep people from being evicted during COVID-19.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto Centre is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding the immediate passage of Bill 244, the No COVID-19 Evictions Act, 2021, to help keep people from being evicted during COVID-19. Agreed? I heard a no.

The member for York South–Weston, I believe, may have a point of order.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I seek unanimous consent to immediately pass private member's motion 135, calling on the Ford government to implement a COVID-19 equity strategy for racialized communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member is seeking unanimous consent to immediately pass private member's motion number 135, calling on the Ford government to implement a COVID-19 equity strategy for racialized communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Agreed? I heard a no.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I seek unanimous consent to immediately pass private member's motion 137, calling on the Ford government to implement a back-to-school plan with improved funding for classroom caps, better ventilation and a safety committee made up of experts, parents, students, education workers, unions and boards.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to immediately pass private member's motion 137, calling on the Ford government to implement a back-to-school plan with improved funding for classroom caps, better ventilation and a safety committee made up of experts, parents, students, education workers, unions and boards. Agreed? I heard a no.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my first question this morning is for the Premier. The Premier is determined to rush into a reopening of this province, regardless of the expert advice that he's receiving from his own experts. In fact, yesterday, Dr. Yaffe very clearly said that ideally the government would wait before reopening, and that is at the same press conference where she identified the fact that the emergency brake that apparently the government is relying upon has no criteria; it's not defined as yet—

Interruption.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I apologize. That should have been off.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The House will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The House will come to order.

Restart the clock. I recognize the member.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again, my apologies, Speaker.

The bottom line is Dr. Yaffe did say that there is no criteria in place for this emergency brake that apparently the Premier is relying upon. In fact, Global's Alan Carter, as a result of this, said, "For better or worse, political leadership has overruled health advice." So here we are. The Premier is literally hitting the gas when he doesn't know how to use the emergency brake.

This is extremely disturbing, Speaker. Why is the Premier overruling the advice of his experts, the advice of doctors and continuing on this journey to reopen Ontario to—

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I've always followed the advice of the chief medical officer, and we're going to continue doing this while we make a transition into the framework. The Leader of the Opposition knows very well that at any given time, the local medical officer of health can put out a section 22 and put a stop to any opening.

Again, we're doing this very cautiously. We still have the vast majority of the population in Toronto and York and Peel determining if it's going to go for another couple of weeks, based on the advice from their local medical officer of health, and we're going to listen to that. I'm not too sure who the Leader of the Opposition is listening to, but I'm listening to the doctors, and I always will.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it is disturbing to see the lengths to which this government is prepared to go in order to justify the rushed reopening in our province. Last week, we saw the Minister of Education use data that was raised by the modelling table to justify the government's reopening plan. In fact, just yesterday, Dr. Fisman, who is responsible for that data, that modelling, told QP Briefing that his work was "twisted and misinterpreted to justify bad policy choices."

How can anyone believe that this government's plan is safe when the experts are saying that their data, on which the government is apparently relying, is being twisted and misinterpreted?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The Chief Medical Officer of Health has provided guidance to the government to delay, not cancel, March break. If it is the position of the member opposite that we should be following the science and the medical experts, how can she undermine confidence in the medical leader of this province, who is trying to ensure every day we are able to recover and able to protect the

public? I think that does a great disservice to our institutions. Honestly, I'm quite shocked that the Leader of the Opposition would undermine confidence in a leader who has provided guidance to this province to get us through the worst of this pandemic.

Our priority, Speaker, is to ensure that every day we follow that guidance. It's why we've delayed it. And yes, the modelling did suggest that this new UK variant will become the dominant strain in and around the period of March break, which is why we deferred it, based on that medical expertise. In fact, the chair of the medical officers of health council provided that guidance. The public health measures table unanimously recommended that, and this Premier will follow that advice every step of the way.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister can rest assured, it's the Premier whose information I don't trust. It's the Premier who I have no confidence in whatsoever. Why? We have seen 3,800 seniors lose their lives in long-term care to COVID-19 under this Premier's watch. We've seen 6,700 Ontarians lose their lives to COVID-19 because of this Premier's decisions. And what are those decisions? He is not listening to the experts. In November, he claimed that the experts were good with his framework, his new framework that he unveiled, only to find out almost the very next day that in fact they hadn't even seen the framework. That, Speaker, is very troubling.

Now, their experts are saying that the information that they are providing to the government is being twisted and is being misinterpreted. When will the Premier actually start listening to the hospitals, to the doctors, to his own experts and prevent this province from going into yet another third wave and lockdown?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I've obviously listened to the chief medical officer from day one. I've never wavered from that. I've listened to all of the CEOs. Maybe if you talk to some of the CEOs of the hospitals, Leader of the Opposition, you might get some input—rather than sitting there and constantly criticizing from day one, putting confusion with the public about paid sick days.

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Rather than sending inaccurate information out to the public and hurting the public, why don't you come and join us to support the people of Ontario for once, rather than just sit there and criticize and criticize? It's like listening to nails on a chalkboard, listening to you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind all members to make their comments through the Chair and not directly across the floor.

Next question.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this Premier always goes to the worst, worst places when he doesn't like the

questions that the opposition is asking. But we're going to keep asking them on behalf of Ontarians, on behalf of the people of this province.

Here is another one for him: We know very clearly that when people lose their homes, they cannot self-isolate. When they don't have a place to live, they can't actually do what they need to do and follow the public health advice when it comes to staying home, because they no longer have a home.

And yet this Premier, after just a couple of weeks of having an eviction ban in place, has lifted the eviction ban so that he's going to push people onto the streets, he's going to push people into couch-surfing, when everybody knows that that's the wrong thing to do. Again, his experts have even identified that this is the wrong thing to do.

Last August, when that eviction ban was lifted, thousands of people ended up on the streets. Why is the Premier prepared to do that again?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks for the question. Our government has been clear right from the start: During the pandemic, the Attorney General applied to the court and we had an eviction ban. When the stay-at-home order came forward late last year, our government moved forward with an eviction ban. And as some of those areas move out of the stay-at-home order—for example, my riding moved out this week—the eviction moratorium will be lifted. Again, it's a situation that we'll continue to monitor. The Attorney General and I will continue to have conversations.

But make no mistake, Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition, we've stood up for tenants. We've tried to help with our municipal partners. We've provided over half a billion dollars to our municipal partners to help keep our most vulnerable housed, and we'll continue to support them.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier's own experts, his own advisers, have said the right thing to do is to maintain an eviction ban during a worldwide pandemic. Dr. Brown, the head of the science table, supports the eviction ban, saying, "Supporting people so that they can do what's right for public health" is what is the right thing to do.

Unfortunately, once again, the Premier is not listening to the advice of the experts. In fact, a US study that was done following the lifting of an eviction ban there showed that the COVID-19 virus hit 150,000 more people, specifically because they lifted their eviction ban.

So why is the Premier not listening to the experts and prepared to force people out on the streets during a worldwide pandemic?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, again, to reiterate my previous answer, our government continues to work with

our municipal partners to ensure that our most vulnerable are housed in this situation.

In fact, to take a page from the Premier's playbook, when he talked about things you can do to help us, I recently wrote to my federal counterpart, the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, to point out that our share of the National Housing Strategy, compared to the amount of houses in need, lacked 6%. While that might not seem like a big number, it works out to \$490 million. So, you know what I'll do, Speaker? I'll send that letter to the Leader of the Opposition and I'll call on her to help support us so that we can have additional monies from the federal government to help our most vulnerable.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I would never support a government that throws people out in the cold during a worldwide pandemic. I would never do something like that because it's the wrong thing to do.

In fact, this government continues to disregard all of the advice that they're getting from all experts on every front. The evictions ban is one example. The lack of paid sick days in this province is another example. The premature lifting of lockdowns and not doing anything to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in terms of extra health measures is yet another failure of this government.

Why is this government continuing to silence the experts, continuing to ignore the advice they're getting and continuing to head down on this wrong-headed road of opening too soon, without proper measures in place?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about hypocrisy at its best—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You're going to have to withdraw.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw. Sorry. I apologize.

If you want to hear people talking out of both sides of their mouth, Mr. Speaker, that —

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask you to withdraw.

Hon. Doug Ford: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please conclude your answer.

Hon. Doug Ford: Let me cut to the chase. Let me cut to the chase, here. The Leader of the Opposition is saying that I'm not listening to the experts, but the Leader of the Opposition and the whole party voted against extending the chief medical officer's term. What gives there? You can't have it both ways. You can't vote against the chief medical officer and say, "We don't want this chief medical officer anymore," and then accuse us of not actually listening.

You know, the NDP and the Liberals are the party of "no." They're the party of pessimism. We're the party of the people. We're the party of "yes." We can get it done and we will get it done. That's the difference.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order.

The member for Waterloo will come to order and the Premier will come to order.

The next question.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Parents, students and education workers are doing incredible work to stay safe and stop the spread of COVID-19, but they cannot go it alone. Kids are back in person in schools today in areas like Peel—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I'll give you extra time.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Schools are back—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government side, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The government side will come to order.

I'm going to give the member for Davenport adequate time to place her question. Start the clock.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Keeping it classy over there.

I'm going to start again, because I think what's important to acknowledge is the incredibly hard and important work that our education workers, our students and our staff are doing to keep our schools safe in this province, when we are seeing kids having to return to school today in hard-hit areas of this province like Toronto and Peel.

Today, the Premier has a chance. He can change his failed approach to safe schools by fast-tracking my motion to cap class sizes, expand asymptomatic testing and improve ventilation. Instead of more half measures and hoping for the best, will the Premier finally stand up for students, school staff and their families and pass our motion without delay?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, this government was standing up for students when we safely reopened schools, contrary to the position of the opposition parties, who have called on the government to extend the stay-at-home order and, therefore, keep our schools closed, offside from the public opinion of working parents, who want their children in class for their mental health and for their development.

We are proud that our schools are open, that every child is learning in class in this province, supported by 3,400 net new teachers and an additional 890 more teachers to reduce class sizes. But it's not just about that, Speaker. It's that 95% of our ventilation systems have been improved. It's the fact that we have 1,400 more custodians working in our schools and an additional 400 to be hired. We have adopted all advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, who has fully approved our plan, fully funded by

this government, because we are committed to keeping our schools open and keeping them safe.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, the minister's so-called plan won't see broad testing until at least five weeks after most boards have reopened. Once again, they're downloading all the responsibility onto school boards because they can't make a decision. Frankly, it is a mystery why this loose plan for testing is only beginning now.

The Premier may recall that the Ministry of Education memos that were obtained by the Toronto Star in January showed that staff were prepared to announce in-school surveillance testing last summer, but we didn't see any testing until November.

1050

Speaker, can the minister explain why, despite recommendations from experts, from ministry staff, he chose to water down and delay a testing plan that could have detected more cases, informed a stronger response and, yes, saved lives?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The members opposite have spent the past six months suggesting that schools haven't been safe. The Leader of the Opposition commenced her questions today suggesting we should listen to the experts. The Chief Medical Officer of Health has suggested that schools have been safe. The medical officers of health in the regions we have reopened have given their green light to do so because they know it is safe, because we have personally consulted with them to ensure that we build confidence.

The fact is, within our schools, we had a low rate of transmission, according to the CMOH. In fact—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce:—over 90% of cases came from community into our schools. Eight out of 10 schools didn't even have a case of COVID when we closed them ahead of the holidays, at the peak of transmission in 2020.

The fact is, leading medical experts have suggested schools have been safe, and that's going to be supported by expansion of asymptomatic testing. In public health regions across the province, they can deploy it where they need it, to make sure we identify cases and we keep the schools safe and, ultimately, keep them open in Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Davenport once again to come to order.

The next question.

NATURAL GAS PIPELINE

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in late December, my riding received some truly devastating news: The government of Michigan, through its governor, Governor Whitmer, announced that they

would be revoking and terminating the Enbridge line 5 easement agreement in the straits of Mackinac.

Line 5 has been safely in operation for over 68 years, transporting western oil and natural gas liquids from Superior, Wisconsin, through Michigan to Sarnia as part of Enbridge's pipeline system. Line 5 is a key energy conduit artery. Its continued operation is necessary to meet the energy demands of Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Ontario and Quebec.

In Sarnia-Lambton alone, over 5,000 people are directly employed by the petrochemical and fuel industry. A further 23,500 jobs in my community are directly related to providing services and supporting the refining and chemical industry. Speaker, can the Premier please share what the cancellation of line 5 would mean to the rest of the province?

Hon. Doug Ford: I thank the member from Sarnia.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I put a call in to Governor Whitmer. I'm waiting to hear back. We put letters in there. I don't think the governor understands the destruction she is creating, along with their Attorney General, down there. I know the member has been working around the clock as well with his counterparts in the US. We're communicating back and forth to congressmen, senators—anyone who wants to listen down there.

The decision, again, by the governor of Michigan, to terminate the easement agreement is totally unacceptable. The decision will directly impact 5,000 jobs in Sarnia and surrounding areas, not to mention all the indirect jobs throughout the province—thousands—and not to mention our great neighbours south of the border, that that's going to create absolute chaos down there, tens of thousands of jobs.

I'll give you an example: Pearson airport, the largest airport in Toronto. It's in my riding, surrounded by other ridings as well. It's going to be shut down. How are we going to get from point A to point B? How are going to get goods from point A to point B when they want to cut off this line? It's—

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Premier, for that answer. I would like to make my supplemental question back to the Premier as well.

Premier, federal Natural Resources Minister O'Regan said it best: The only way to address this issue will need a "Team Canada approach."

For more than six decades, Enbridge's line 5 has meant good-paying jobs for Ontario and Michigan workers. It's hard to overstate its significance to our shared economies and to good union jobs and non-union jobs. Line 5 safely delivers fuel that powers our job sites, that heats our homes, that makes so many thousands of jobs possible—like at the airport, for the fuel. Over the last six-plus decades, it has meant consistent, reliable work for the union labourers and businesses who work on and with the infrastructure and the industry that supports it.

As our province recovers from COVID-19, these kinds of jobs are more important than ever. Speaker, can the

Premier please share with my constituents and this House about his concern for the cancellation of this project and how we will support the working men and women of my riding?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, we're fighting for the people of Sarnia and the people of Ontario. We're here to fix the problem collectively, not separately. I implore the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Liberals—it doesn't matter if you're green, purple, pink—whatever party you're from, we need to fight for Ontario jobs. I'm encouraging her, again, if the Leader of the Opposition is listening, to join us to fight for jobs.

Let me quote from Scott Archer, UA Local 663 pipefitters' union, which are big supporters, about the effect of ending line 5: "Basically, it would kick the legs out from under every refinery in town. It would have a devastating effect on employment in Sarnia."

I ask the Leader of the Opposition, are you pro-worker? Are you pro-union? Then join us, because we're the party for the working class, not the NDP and not the Liberals.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I will ask members to make their comments through the Chair.

The next question.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is for the Premier. Three months ago, I stood in this Legislature and demanded that this government take action on COVID evictions and to protect tenants. This Legislature passed my motion to ban COVID evictions with unanimous consent. We agreed that this issue is a priority of this House. But months later, this government has once again failed tenants. Thousands of tenants are at risk of losing their homes as this government resumes evictions while we are still in the middle of a pandemic.

Why is the Premier putting corporate landlords ahead of the health and safety of tenants who are being tossed out of their homes?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: To prevent the spread of COVID-19, our government implemented a stay-at-home order. While that stay-at-home order was in force, we had our second residential eviction moratorium. As I said earlier in the House, in response to the Leader of the Opposition, that stay-at-home order is being removed in a number of areas. As they're being removed—the last one will be Toronto, Peel and York, on February 22—we'll move back into the framework.

Again, Speaker, through you to the member: Yes, this item was debated in the House; yes, our party supported it; and yes, we implemented it during the stay-at-home order.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: Respectfully, Speaker, to the minister, the pandemic's not over yet.

Since this pandemic started, I have heard from tenants across the province. People have lost their jobs, they have

lost their income, they have lost their small businesses—all through no fault of their own. Many of these tenants believed this Premier when he said that no one would lose their home during this pandemic. But instead of having any compassion for people in their time of need, this government rammed through thousands of eviction hearings over the last few months.

I have just received news earlier this morning that a member of my community in Toronto Centre died in a tent fire in a homeless encampment in my riding, in Toronto Centre. Lives are literally—quite literally—at risk here.

My bill to stop COVID evictions will be voted on today. Will the Premier and his government vote for this bill to save lives and help stop the spread of COVID-19 and give folks the help and the hope that they need to get through this?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the members to take their seats.

Minister of Municipal Affairs to reply.

Hon. Steve Clark: My thoughts and my prayers go out to the person who lost their life, and to their family.

Since the pandemic, our government has delivered more housing dollars to municipalities to help our most vulnerable than ever before. Again, I want to reiterate that, based on our core housing need, our government is being shorted. And I know it doesn't sound like a lot—it's only 6%—but the difference between 38% and 44% of core housing needs equates to \$490 million that I believe the federal government owes Ontario. I believe they owe it to those homeless—I believe they owe it to those people who are struggling to be housed.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Steve Clark: We will continue—no matter whether the member opposite wants to shout me down—to stand up for our most vulnerable, we will continue to tell the federal government we need our share, and we will continue to build housing that helps people in this province.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Roman Baber: My question is to the Premier. As early as May of last year, we began to understand that almost 80% of Ontarians who tragically died from or with COVID died in congregate living settings. According to ministry data, almost 60% of all fatalities are seniors in long-term-care homes. Now, not only did this government fail to make that meaningful distinction and focus protection where it's required, the government utterly failed to protect our long-term-care seniors.

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Dr. Gary Garber, the former medical director of infection prevention and control at Public Health Ontario, recently testified before the long-term-care commission that bureaucratic concerns prevented a highly trained team of infection prevention and control experts at Public Health Ontario from helping in Ontario's long-term-care

homes. Professionals specifically trained for this very situation were told to maintain a low profile in order to avoid being subsumed by the newly created Ontario Health.

My question to the Premier: When did the government learn that this IPAC team was not deployed? Second, when was this team fully deployed? Finally, and I ask that the response be precise, how many out of Ontario's 636 long-term-care homes have an approved and implemented infection protocol and control in place today?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The response: the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question. I will, of course, note that the member opposite voted in favour of every single measure that this government has taken in order to bring this pandemic under control. We're certainly grateful for the support that he gave in order for us to take the measures that we've taken to combat the pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to make important investments, not only in health care but in long-term care, to ensure that our communities remain safe. I certainly hope that the member opposite will reflect on how important it is to take all the steps necessary to keep the people of the province of Ontario safe, as this Premier has done, as the members of this caucus have done, and quite frankly, for a number of months, as all members of this Legislature have done. We should be proud of the work that we've accomplished. I hope the member will reflect on that, Mr. Speaker, and continue to support all of the measures that he has supported throughout the pandemic.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: Speaker, I have not heard a response to how many of Ontario's long-term-care homes have an approved and implemented infection protocol and control in place today.

My follow-up question is to the Premier. The tragedy in long-term care is the responsibility of this government. Since the first declaration of emergency 11 months ago, and having had more than four months this summer to prepare for the second wave, the government still cannot fix the crisis in long-term-care homes. One of the main reasons for the crisis is a chronic shortage of staff, leading not only to deplorable conditions but failure to implement a proper infection protocol. Temporary and agency workers are still allowed to work at more than one home. While this government is continuing to lock down the province, all it takes is one—one worker—to bring COVID into a long-term-care home, resulting in disaster.

On January 13, the Prime Minister offered the Premier military assistance, qualified personnel to help with staffing. In response, the Premier said, "I never refuse help." My question to the Premier: Why hasn't the Premier accepted help from the Canadian Armed Forces? Why do dozens of homes remain short-staffed when this government can help the situation today by accepting help? Is it because the Premier does not want another military report on the conditions he and his government—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Again, the government House leader to reply.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I guess I'm somewhat surprised to hear that the member opposite, who for many months voted in favour of all of the measures that we took to protect the people of the province of Ontario with respect to COVID-19—I'm surprised to hear that now he has had a significant change of heart and that he apparently, I guess, voted in a way that he didn't want to vote, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that he will reflect on that and reflect on the important role of members of Parliament to do their duty and their jobs effectively. I know that that's what this Premier, this Minister of Health, this Minister of Long-Term Care and all members of the governing caucus have done, and quite frankly, all of the members of this Legislature have done in helping Ontario be one of the leading jurisdictions in North America in terms of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Is there more work to be done? Absolutely, there is, Mr. Speaker. But I can tell the member opposite that we will not be taking his new advice, which is to stop all of the protocols that have kept the people of the province of Ontario safe. We won't be doing that. We will continue on the path that we have that has kept people safe and kept our—

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

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Ms. Jane McKenna: Recent projections suggest a significant increase in the global hydrogen production market, from an estimated \$103 billion in 2017 to an expected \$207 billion by 2026. The current trends also indicate that for Ontario, adopting hydrogen at a high rate could generate \$2.5 billion of spending per year, promoting long-term economic recovery, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Under the previous Liberal government, environmental progress stalled. Instead of implementing effective and pragmatic policies, the Liberals ignored expert advice that could have saved Ontarians billions of dollars in green energy spending. Mr. Speaker, putting Ontario on a more sustainable path should not come at the expense of the hard-working people of this province.

Can the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks please share with the members of this House how this government plans to utilize innovation to address climate change and reduce emissions in Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks to the member from Burlington for a great, great question.

Our government's vision for a low-carbon hydrogen economy will help to advance the progress that we have made over the past two years with our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan. Supporting the growth of this sector will ensure that we are helping to lower Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions over the long term, that we are supporting a reliable and affordable energy system in

Ontario, and that we are reducing regulatory barriers and supporting partnerships with the private sector, academia and other governments.

Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity to make it easier for private investors to deploy their low-carbon technologies and infrastructure and ramp up the production of this energy source. This means Ontario will have more electric, hydrogen and other low-carbon vehicles without government subsidies or increased costs to consumers.

We recognize the important role that hydrogen can play in the future of this province, and we view it as an important path forward to addressing climate change and lowering our greenhouse gas emissions.

We're standing with this strategy; we hope the members opposite get on board.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: The impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak have been felt across Ontario by families, workers, businesses and communities. During these challenging times, it has never been more important to encourage new industries to contribute to Ontario's economic recovery while addressing climate change in new, strategic ways.

We know Ontario is well positioned to drive growth in a low-carbon hydrogen economy. Our location within the Great Lakes region is beneficial for trade with the US, and we have supportive provincial policies and programs in place to help us grow the hydrogen market.

Supporting innovative energy sectors can be done without creating skyrocketing energy prices—something the previous Liberal government ignored when they enacted their failed Green Energy Act that cost Ontarians billions of their hard-earned dollars.

I know this government recently released a hydrogen discussion paper. Can the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks tell us more about how this paper will inform the creation of Ontario's first hydrogen strategy?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks again to the member from Burlington for that question.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is not alone in its interest in hydrogen. But we do have a competitive advantage to drive growth in a low-carbon hydrogen economy, unlike any other region. Our natural gas infrastructure and low-carbon electricity has allowed the province to avoid up to 30 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

Our discussion paper sets out our vision for our new hydrogen economy that will build on our existing strengths, where we can create more local jobs and attract investment while helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions using low-carbon hydrogen, especially in the transportation sector.

There is great potential in the low-carbon hydrogen economy. By using this domestic hydrogen, we would import less natural gas from countries such as the United States. This would keep energy dollars in our province, leading to spinoff benefits such as the creation of more

jobs. More importantly, this will improve Ontario's trade balance by \$3.2 billion per year.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: While the COVID-19 crisis has hit our province hard, we know that some families are feeling the pain more than the others. Black, Indigenous and racialized Ontarians; low-income families; and women—these Ontarians are the ones who have been left to suffer while this Premier chose to stand by and watch.

My question, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier: Why, when you know your decisions have hurt some Ontarians more than others, would you vote against my motion to adapt a COVID-19 equity strategy?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader to respond.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm sorry, Speaker; principally, as the member knows, quite honestly—and we've seen this over the last day—these are issues that are brought forward at the House leaders' table. Typically, we don't like to be caught by surprise by motions that are brought to the table. As we have done the entire time since I've been House leader, and before me, motions that are brought to the table by surprise are going to be voted down. That's just the way the process works.

I encourage the honourable member, if he wants to bring forward a motion for debate that this whole House can consider, he should use his time that is available to him. The member will know he had a lot of time to pass a private member's bill. I was happy to work with him to pass his private member's bill by following the process.

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I would encourage the member, when the member has a spot available to him, to do it in the proper fashion so that all members of provincial Parliament can have a say in that. If it's something that is appropriate for us to pass, we'll pass it. If it's not, we'll vote it down.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: You got the letter last week.

We know what happens when we don't have an equity strategy: Some people suffer more than others. We're seeing it in York South-Weston. Many families in my community are now on the front lines of this crisis because this government chose not to support them or help them stay safe at home.

Mr. Speaker, again through you to the Premier: Will you commit to ensuring that your government's pandemic response, from vaccine rollout to financial recovery, has a plan to help those who have been hurt the most?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, just to talk a little bit about the process, the House leader teams have met on three separate occasions, and at no time were any of the motions the member or the Leader of the Opposition talked about or the unanimous consents that we have seen

ever brought to the table for priority consideration by the NDP.

The letter in question that they talk about was actually sent to my constituency office. I didn't receive it until yesterday. But as I say to the honourable gentleman through you, Mr. Speaker, this House considers private members' motions and private members' bills. There's a process in place to do that, and the appropriate way to do that is the same way as his private member's bill which passed earlier, which was a good bill. I was proud to support it, and all members were proud to support it.

If you have a quality piece of legislation, if you have a quality motion, this House will give it its due consideration and will pass it, but surprises will always be voted down by this side of the House because we have to give it consideration in the appropriate fashion.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I want to address a question to the Minister of Education and talk about mental health supports for our children. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been seeing an increasing number of children with mental health problems at the elementary level and at the high school level. The constant changing of rules and the need to adapt to multiple teaching experiences that actually vary in their effectiveness are making it more difficult for students to stay motivated and to get support when they need it.

Now the government has invested \$42.5 million as part of its fall preparedness plan to support students with special needs and provide students with mental health supports, and that's great, but my question to the minister is, can the government explain how it is actually monitoring the implementation of this investment and how it monitors the effectiveness of the supports?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I think we all share a deep concern about the mental health impacts of the pandemic on all students in the province and country. It is why we enhanced funding in June, likewise in the summer, and again in the early winter of 2021, an additional \$10 million.

We worked with School Mental Health Ontario to create an action kit for all classes to be provided within our schools with respect to building up mental health resiliency, discussing these topics and encouraging our teachers working with our school board mental health leads, as well as the additional 200 mental health workers within our schools, to implement that plan, to measure that plan.

The area of focus within our discussions with SickKids, likewise the Chief Medical Officer of Health and a variety of other medical entities, is to understand, to measure and to ultimately take action to remediate impacts on mental health while working in conjunction with the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to continue improving investments in schools

and, likewise, in their cases, within our communities to provide a continuum of care for these kids.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: The March break has been postponed and the impact is being felt by everyone in education, frankly. Teachers and education workers have been trying to keep up with changing rules while also trying to support the students as best they can.

Teachers have a privileged relationship with students, and they are well placed to identify the children who are struggling with mental health issues and to direct them to appropriate resources. However, they cannot do this alone. Our teachers also need resources, training and support so that they are better equipped to effectively support these students.

What resources and training is the Ministry of Education providing to our school boards, our teachers and other education workers to support them as they work to manage the increase in children struggling with mental health challenges?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Indeed, many educators and our education staff are on the front lines and really play a critical role in supporting our children.

The \$1-million additional investment to School Mental Health Ontario was designed to provide useful information to our educators and our front-line education staff to implement within our schools. The additional 200 mental health workers funded by the province—leveraging all dollars to hire more staff—are making a difference on the front lines to reduce wait times. Additional psychologists and psychotherapists and social workers are supporting that end.

We obviously acknowledge that there are mental health impacts, which is why the Ministries of Education and Health are working together to make sure that children, be it in schools or in their communities, get access to the care they deserve.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is for the Attorney General.

Ontarians have been calling out for modernization in the justice sector for years, if not decades. Successive Liberal governments let Ontario's justice sector stand still and fall behind.

Only since the election of our government have we seen leadership in fostering innovation and change in the province's justice system. The Attorney General has risen on a number of occasions in this House to speak to the changes that our government has made to bring the justice system into the modern era. There is finally strong momentum in Ontario's legal sectors, but we need to know that this change is going to continue.

The government introduced new legislation yesterday which aims to speed up access to justice here in the

province. Can the Attorney General please explain how this bill will benefit the countless Ontarians who access our justice system every day?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you to my friend and colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga for the opportunity to speak to the work our government is doing to accelerate access to justice in Ontario.

I've worked closely with our justice sector partners to urgently establish new and innovative ways of supporting Ontarians in their need to access justice. In response to COVID-19, we took decisive action. We knew that we had to maintain the administration of justice, and we achieved a number of breakthroughs. In fact, we changed the system decades, in a matter of months. We now have a change of culture. We've created muscle memory on how to collaborate, how to identify barriers, how to break down barriers. And we're not going back to the old ways of doing business.

We're building on the breakthroughs, and we've introduced reforms through legislation to address delays. We're going to let people resolve their disputes in front of a judge faster, beyond the courtroom. We're going to help them in rural, northern and Indigenous communities and francophone communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'll speak more to the changes we're doing to Ontario's courts, tribunals, estates law, family law, child protection. I look forward to the supplemental.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the Attorney General for the answer. I know my constituents will be pleased to hear about the government's continued work to create a justice system that has fewer obstacles for them.

These are welcome changes, but Ontarians also need to know that the government is acting to address elements of the justice system that slow down the resolution of their legal matters. This is essential, especially now, as we deal with the impacts of COVID-19.

To the minister, through you, Speaker: What is the government doing to help people resolve their legal matters in few days?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you again for the chance to talk about the Accelerating Access to Justice Act that was introduced just yesterday. No matter where you live in our province, the growth and well-being of our communities are top of mind. They demand easier and faster access to justice. Our government is committed to continuing our work for Ontarians across the province.

As part of our work, we're committed to strengthening the capacity of the system. That's why the proposed legislation will fill judicial appointments faster and reduce delays, to let people have their day in court.

We've also come forward with a single tribunal for land tribunals—to allow people with applications to move faster, to get answers faster, to allow things to move forward more efficiently.

We're also making permanent the virtual signing of wills and powers of attorney. That's something that we brought in during COVID-19, and it has been well

received, and it's something we're going to make permanent, saving people time and money.

We're determined to continue demonstrating, through groundbreaking innovation and collaboration, that justice accelerated is justice delivered.

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SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier. When students in the Thames Valley District School Board returned to class this month, they were told to stop washing their hands in their classroom sink. That's because the board found that extensive handwashing created mould in two classroom sinks from too much water damage. In total, the TVDSB discovered that 400 sinks suffered from water damage, and a total of 13 sinks had to be removed from classrooms entirely.

For almost a year, our public health experts have told us that handwashing is essential to stop the spread of COVID-19. This government categorically refuses to address the billions in school repair backlog. Why isn't this government making vital investments in our classrooms so that London students can stay safe by following this essential public health advice?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We are obviously encouraging all students to continue to follow public health advice. The guidance by the Chief Medical Officer of Health as provided in the school guidance documents to educators, staff and families is to obviously wash hands and sanitize often, which is why we provided PPE as well as an additional enhancement in funding for the cleaning of schools, as well as more custodial cleaning within the schools. Within the Thames Valley District School Board, for example, COVID funding is up \$43 million net new to ensure we can do that.

Obviously we'll continue to follow the medical advice of the local and chief medical officer, Dr. Mackie, in your case, really ensuring that students and parents know they can play a role in combatting COVID-19 in the classroom and in their communities.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The backlog in repairs in schools has gone on under this government's watch for the last two years and they've done very little to address it. London families are trying their hardest to keep their kids safe, but they need the government's support to do so.

I've heard from parents in my riding like Rachel, who told me her kids returned to school to find that "the sinks in both of my children's classrooms are missing." She told me, "It is extremely disappointing and frustrating that the provincial government has been telling us there are 'tougher health and safety measures' put in place for the return to school, when in fact nothing is different and actually things are worse since there are now no sinks!"

Speaker, parents in my riding want to know: When will this government stop sitting on their hands and start helping our schools move forward, not backwards, in the fight against COVID-19?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It is this government that is investing \$1.3 billion in maintenance funding to reduce the backlog we inherited from the former Liberal government—billions of dollars, \$15.5 billion. That is a matter of fact that is very concerning, that the state of our schools was undermined by the former Liberal government.

The truth is, under this Premier, we've allocated a capital investment every single year of \$550 million. In London alone, I was proud to join my colleague the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to announce multiple net new schools in the south and northeast of London, if I recall correctly—new schools for the people of London, who deserve it after years of neglect by the former Liberal government.

We're going to continue to invest in maintenance and continue to invest historic investments in capital funding, and I assure you those dollars will reach the ground to ensure those families have confidence that their schools are safe every day.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, here in the Legislature, if any one of us becomes ill, we have the opportunity to stay home to limit the risk of spread and to look after ourselves. And, Minister, we still get paid to stay home. That means we can continue to pay the bills, support our families and do what medical experts are suggesting: Stay home.

The Premier likes to say often that we're in this together. Well, how can that be when, if any of us becomes ill, we can actually stay home, but an everyday person can't?

Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question to the minister: Does the minister believe it's okay to deny workers the right to paid sick leave, a luxury that he has himself?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: The very first piece of legislation that this Legislature passed, that our government introduced, was to protect jobs across the province. No one can be fired in Ontario because of COVID-19. If you're home in self-isolation, if you're in quarantine, if you're a mom or a dad that has to stay home and look after a son or a daughter because the schools were closed, you can't be fired for that. Furthermore, I also eliminated the need for sick notes here in the province of Ontario.

But, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Premier of Ontario, in partnership with all of the other provincial and territorial leaders across Canada, who worked with the federal government to ensure that \$1.1 billion, two weeks of paid sick days is available to every worker in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: Minister, the majority of Ontarians support paid sick days. Your government got rid of the two sick days that were here immediately as you formed government. No one in Ontario should have to choose between paying bills or staying home while sick. As Minister of Labour, you have the opportunity to stand up with workers here in Ontario, to show them compassion and to simply do what is right in the middle of a global pandemic.

Later today, I'll introduce a private member's bill that will ask this House to support 10 paid sick days. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Will you stand behind hard-working Ontarians and support 10 paid sick days so workers can better protect themselves, their workplace and their loved ones?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, so the member opposite understands, thanks to the leadership of the Premier of Ontario, working in partnership with the Liberal Prime Minister of Canada, we've delivered two weeks of paid sick days to the people of this province and to all Canadians. There is still \$800 million left in the bank account for workers to apply for and to receive sick pay.

Furthermore, I'd like to let the member opposite know that as of two weeks ago, more than 110,000 workers in the province of Ontario have either begun receiving paid sick days or have applied for paid sick days. It is the responsibility of you, sir, of every MPP in this Legislature, every municipal and federally elected representative in this province, to let workers know that there are two weeks of paid sick days available to them.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is for the Premier. This week, I am sitting in Landlord and Tenant Board hearings that are deciding the fate of dozens of families in Beaches–East York, families that lost income to COVID, moms and dads working their tails off to pay rent and arrears but who are being evicted by corporate landlords who don't care that they've used all their savings trying to keep a roof over their heads, who don't care that evicting them will push them into homelessness. These corporate landlords have refused to meaningfully negotiate with their tenants, as they are required to do by law. Instead, they've tried to force the tenants to sign onerous repayment plans that the tenants can't afford and which amount to signing their own evictions if they're a day late or a dollar short.

When is the Premier going to follow through on the promise he made way back last March that no one would be evicted in Ontario because of COVID?

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

Hon. Doug Downey: I don't know the details that the member is talking about in terms of her appearing in front of the board. I hope she clears it with the Integrity Commissioner, but that's between her and the Integrity Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that the independent Landlord and Tenant Board, the independent tribunal system, has gone through unprecedented times, unprecedented challenges. Tenants and landlords need to have their hearings for whatever the issue is, and we've worked very hard with the tribunals to make sure that they're properly resourced and that they can do the work that they independently need to do.

We need to make sure that we have hearing officers in place to hear the important matters that tenants bring forward and that landlords bring forward. It's really important that we have the system working efficiently, that it's functioning. They've transitioned amazingly to online and alternate ways of having hearings to keep it moving through these unprecedented times.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: This isn't about the LTB specifically. It's about the fact that we need a ban on evictions.

Zinnat Jahan is a single mom. Her husband died of cancer in January last year, and two months later, she lost her job in the first wave of COVID. She got an eviction notice from Pinedale Properties, one of the biggest evictors in Toronto, after she missed just one month's rent. They wouldn't negotiate in any way that could be called meaningful. They tried to bully her, just as corporate landlords are bullying tens of thousands of tenants across Ontario. Just yesterday, their lawyer argued at the LTB that the fact that we're in a pandemic should have no bearing on whether a tenant like Zinnat should be evicted.

Last March, the Premier promised that no one would be evicted in a pandemic, but tens of thousands of families like Zinnat's are on the verge of homelessness through no fault of their own.

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When is the Premier going to do his job and protect them?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Like the Attorney General, I'm not going to comment on any case that's before the tribunal, but I do want to reiterate some of the measures that our government have been able to do. I want to take members back to April of this year, when our government made a historic program offering with the federal government. We were the first province or territory in Canada that signed on to the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit, and Speaker, we've already been able to help over 7,000 of our most vulnerable stay housed through that housing benefit.

This is in addition to the other measures that I talked about earlier in question period: the \$510 million through our social services relief fund. In fact, we've allocated over \$189 million to the city of Toronto through the SSRF, making the total homelessness allocation for the city of Toronto over \$395 million. That's in addition to the rent freeze that our government has put forward for 2021. There are many, many measures that our government has provided and continues to provide.

Again, to this member, as I've done to the other two, please stand—

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

The next question.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health. Vertex Pharmaceuticals, the manufacturer of cystic fibrosis modulator drugs, has submitted an application to Health Canada for Trikafta to be accepted for priority review. The minister's federal counterpart has agreed to fast-track this life-enhancing drug through the Health Canada approval processes. This suggests a review timeline of 180 days.

As the minister knows, negotiations for other cystic fibrosis modulators have dragged on in many cases for many years, particularly at the level of the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance, which negotiates prices.

So my question is, what is this government doing to ensure that Trikafta is approved by both Health Canada and the pCPA on a priority basis so that Ontarians with cystic fibrosis can begin enjoying longer and healthier lives immediately?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question. I know this is an issue of great importance to you and many of your constituents.

The fact is that Trikafta has shown great promise as an effective treatment for Ontarians living with cystic fibrosis, so it is very welcome news that the manufacturer, Vertex, has applied to Health Canada for its approval. But it's also really important to note that at the same time, simultaneously, Vertex has also applied to the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, or CADTH, for a review. This is not normally done; normally, they're done sequentially. Having them both being applied for simultaneously should lead to a shorter timeline for a review so that hopefully this product can get on the market to assist people with cystic fibrosis in leading happier, healthier lives.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Minister. Yes, it is good news that there are simultaneous processes going on at the federal level for Trikafta; however, the other Vertex CF drugs have been sitting in the pipeline, particularly at the pan-Canadian pricing alliance, for a long, long time now. All of the provinces and territories and the federal government are members of that alliance, and so, I'd ask the minister to once again do everything she can, once Trikafta gets to the pricing board, to use her influence there to speed that process up.

And secondly, once it gets through the pricing board, will the minister commit to putting this on the Ontario formulary so these modulators are accessible to cystic fibrosis patients? Because in the past, once it comes out of the pricing board, it can take many months and years to go through the formulary process here in Ontario. So I'm

wondering if you can speed that process up, to the minister.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for that. As I'm sure the member well knows, there is a three-step process for the approval of new drugs in Ontario. It has to be approved by Health Canada, then go through CADTH, then go through the pCPA. This process is important to make sure that any new drugs coming onto the market in Ontario are effective, safe and provide value for money.

I recognize the concerns that have been expressed with respect to the other two drugs produced by Vertex, Kalydeco and Orkambi, that hopefully will be—Trikafta will join them. That is something that we have been waiting for.

This is very important to the ministry as well, because as you have received notes and letters from many of your constituents, we hear from people across Ontario that Ontarians living with cystic fibrosis are very anxious for these products to be available on the market. I can assure you that as soon as the final approvals are obtained, we will move quickly to make sure that all three products get onto the formulary.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Brampton is one of the worst-hit cities by COVID-19. There have been more than 40 outbreaks in our schools, yet this Conservative government refuses to bring in a 15-student class-size cap. There have been almost 100 outbreaks in our workplaces, yet this Conservative government refuses to bring in permanent paid sick days. Almost 400 people have died in long-term-care and retirement homes throughout the Peel region, yet this Conservative government refuses to properly fund our health care system. More than 220 people have died in Brampton from COVID-19. More than 36,000 people have been infected with COVID-19 in Brampton.

This Conservative government has failed Brampton, and they must be held accountable. Will the Conservative government act now to properly fund Brampton so we can fight COVID-19?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. This is an important issue. Since the beginning of this pandemic, our government has focused on protecting the health and safety of all Ontarians, regardless of where they live.

Now, as it happens, in Peel region, this has been an issue where there have been higher levels of COVID-19 than in some other parts of Ontario, so that York, Peel and Toronto have been placed into a later date for entering back into the framework. As we do this, it's not a reopening; it's a transition to move those areas that are higher areas into lower areas.

Peel is doing great work right now. Hopefully, very soon, they will be able to transition back into the framework, but that is something that we are paying attention to

across the entire province, including Brampton, to make sure people are safe and healthy there as well.

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

DEFERRED VOTES

NO COVID-19 EVICTIONS ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 INTERDISANT LES EXPULSIONS PENDANT LA COVID-19

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 244, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic / Projet de loi 244, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation à l'égard des expulsions pendant la pandémie de COVID-19.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 244, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I'll ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1209.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 244, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, has taken place.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 26; the nays are 37.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. John Fraser: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs leave to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr34, An Act to revive Apollo Shawarma and Grill Inc.

Bill Pr37, An Act respecting the Parya Trillium Foundation.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PAID PERSONAL EMERGENCY LEAVE NOW ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À ACCORDER SANS DÉLAI UN CONGÉ D'URGENCE PERSONNELLE PAYÉ

Mr. Coteau moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 247, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to personal emergency leave / Projet de loi 247, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé d'urgence personnelle.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Michael Coteau: There is no question in my mind that the government has failed when it comes to protecting workers here in Ontario during this pandemic. I want to put forward a bill that's aligned with many medical experts, chief medical officers and politicians right across this province who believe that 10 paid sick days are essential for success here in Ontario, and I would ask all members of this Legislature to join me in adopting this bill.

COVID-19 PUBLIC INQUIRY ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 CONCERNANT UNE ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE SUR LA COVID-19

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 248, An Act to require the establishment of a public inquiry respecting the response to the COVID-19 pandemic / Projet de loi 248, Loi exigeant l'ouverture d'une enquête publique concernant la réponse à la pandémie de COVID-19.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I now recognize the Leader of the Opposition to explain her bill.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This act requires that the Lieutenant Governor in Council establish a commission under section 3 of the Public Inquiries Act, 2009, to inquire into and report on the government of Ontario's response to the COVID-19 crisis and to make recommendations respecting the minimization of future harm, including loss of life and similar circumstances. The act provides that the commission shall hold hearings in public. It also sets out

timelines for the commission to begin its work, to issue an interim report, to issue a final report and to make those reports public, and also enables the commission to determine whether in fact they may need more time for the work to be done to help Ontarians for the future.

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER ACT (CUTTING MPP SALARIES TO CERB EQUIVALENT), 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DU TRAITEMENT DES DÉPUTÉS À L'ÉQUIVALENT DE LA PCU PAR MESURE DE SOLIDARITÉ

Mr. Baber moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 249, An Act respecting the salaries of members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario / Projet de loi 249, Loi concernant le traitement des députés à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member for York Centre to briefly explain his bill.

Mr. Roman Baber: The bill amends the Legislative Assembly Act to reduce the salary of all members of the assembly to \$500 per week until all emergency orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic, except those orders relating to hospitals and long-term-care homes, are revoked.

The bill also amends the Executive Council Act to eliminate all salary for members of the assembly under the act until all emergency orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic, except those orders relating to hospitals and long-term-care homes, are revoked.

Speaker, if I may, at this point I'd like to seek the unanimous consent of the House that the orders for second and third reading of Bill 249 be immediately called and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bill be put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Baber is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that the orders for second and third reading of his bill, Bill 249, be immediately called and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bill be put immediately without debate or amendment. Agreed? I heard some noes.

MEMBER'S COMPENSATION

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I hope you'll indulge me just a moment.

Not having seen the bill, read the bill or heard anything about the bill—it's hard for us to pass something that we haven't seen. But given how important this seems to be to the member for York Centre, I do seek the unanimous consent of this Legislature to reduce the salary of the

member for York Centre to the equivalent of the CERB, which is \$500, I believe, as stated in his bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to reduce the salary of the member for York Centre to \$500 per week. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I seek unanimous consent to ensure that the member's salary reverts back to normal when the city of Toronto exits from the grey lockdown zone.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to have the member for York Centre's salary revert to normal when the city of Toronto exits the grey lockdown. Agreed? I heard a no.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, in addition to the regularly scheduled meeting times, the following committees be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair for the duration of the spring meeting period and any extension thereof: the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; the Standing Committee on General Government; the Standing Committee on Justice Policy; the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills; the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly; and the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

1510

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that, in addition to their regularly scheduled meeting times, the following committees be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair for the duration of the spring meeting period and any extension thereof: the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; the Standing Committee on General Government; the Standing Committee on Justice Policy; the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills; the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly; and the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled "Protect Water as a Public Good." It reads:

"Whereas groundwater is a public good, not a commodity; and

"Whereas the United Nations recognizes access to clean drinking water as a human right; and

"Whereas local ecosystems must be preserved for the well-being of future generations; and

"Whereas the duty to consult Indigenous communities regarding water-taking within traditional territories is often neglected, resulting in a disproportionate burden on systemically marginalized communities during a period of reconciliation; and

"Whereas a poll commissioned by the Wellington Water Watchers found that two thirds of respondents support phasing out bottled water in Ontario over the course of a decade; and

"Whereas a trend towards prioritizing the expansion of for-profit water bottling corporations over the needs of municipalities will negatively impact Ontario's growing communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to prioritize public ownership and control of water over corporate interests."

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

LIBRARY SERVICES

Mr. Joel Harden: I would like to thank Janet McCrimmon from Dunvegan, Ontario, my neighbour in the Ottawa Valley east, for signing this petition, as well as many others.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, according to the statement of public library funding dated Thursday, April 18, 2019, by the" then "Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the Honourable Michael Tibollo, we appreciate that base funding for public libraries will be maintained, we call into question the statement that the Ontario Library Service agencies 'have no involvement in day-to-day operations of Ontario's public libraries';

"Whereas Ontario Library Service—North and Southern Ontario Library Service provide the support for inter-library loan, staff and board training, bulk purchasing, collaborative programming, technological supports, our shared electronic book collection and our shared catalogue database itself;

"Whereas we question how involved the agencies need to be in order to be considered crucial for the day-to-day operations of all provincial libraries, but even more specifically for small, northern and rural libraries;

"Whereas value for money and respect for taxpayer dollars are the umbrella under which the agencies operate—allowing libraries to share resources and expertise in an efficient and cost-effective manner—while also allowing them to best serve their individual communities;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“—for the reinstatement of funding to the Ontario Library Service (north and south) agencies to, at minimum, the” 2019-20 “funding levels, in order for these agencies to continue the day-to-day support of Ontario public library services;

“—to continue to maintain base funding for Ontario public libraries.”

I completely support this petition. I thank Janet and other neighbours for sending it to my attention, and I will pass it to the Clerks’ table.

MEMBER’S COMPENSATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for orders of the day, upon reflection, I have to inform the House that the matter of members’ compensation and salaries is a matter of statute; and notwithstanding the fact that the House has just now, through unanimous consent, agreed to reduce the salary of the member for York Centre to \$500 a week, and because this falls into the matter of the statutes of Ontario, I will have to consider this overnight and provide a ruling tomorrow on the orderliness of what the House has done.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 17, 2021, on the motion to amend the standing orders.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I’m continuing my remarks from earlier this morning. For those just joining the debate right now, government motion 101 falls into three areas, one of which is deferred votes, meetings of standing committees of the Legislative Assembly once the Legislature is adjourned, and adding two more hours of debate on Wednesdays.

Speaker, when I go into my riding and others in the region of Durham, it’s apparent to me about the successes of the government’s hard work. Without a doubt, this has been one of the most difficult and challenging times in the province’s history, and what has come out of it has been inspirational for a lot of people: communities like the town of Whitby and other parts of the region of Durham coming together and, yes, Speaker, MPPs working across party lines to get things done for the people that they have the privilege of representing. Those have been the outcomes.

I’m also proud of the fact that now we’re starting to get the economy going. The economy’s recovering and has been led by the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, the Minister of Economic Development and, of course, our Premier, Premier Ford.

What’s clear and apparent not only to the members here in the Legislative Assembly this afternoon but the resi-

dents across the province of Ontario is that our government has consistently made changes to the standing orders to improve the quality of debate. I know you appreciate that, Speaker, the quality of debate and accessibility within the chamber.

Even before COVID-19, we had set the precedent for embracing technological solutions—another way of enhancing access; another way of people within our province being able to watch what we’re doing and listen to what we’re doing. Under the epidemic restrictions, this trend has continued to mature, improve and allow for better and broader engagement. Some of us who have been here for a period of time know that better engagement informs policy development, program development and service delivery. That’s underpinning what we’re doing.

Last year, we expanded the opportunity for the participation of independent members, both in the House and within standing committees, and that was a good thing. I know that the members opposite would speak to that as well. We also made changes that would allow us to sit longer days and more often, and the proposed changes we’re talking about today are a continuation of that forward thinking. Having the potential of an extra two hours of debate each week would give more opportunity for members to voice their support and, yes, the concerns of their constituents. But we’re not just expanding the hours that the House can meet; we’re also making it more efficient for standing committees of the Legislature to sit when the House is adjourned.

I’ve heard that request from my constituents in the riding that I represent of Whitby and in other parts of the region of Durham. That happens to be the largest region, geographically, in the province.

Speaker, you know from your time before assuming the Chair that there is much important work that happens within standing committees of the Legislative Assembly. We believe that committees should convene whenever there is business that needs to be addressed. One of the amendments to the standing orders that are before us today addresses that. This way, we can have more public engagement, more discussion and more work completed in a timely manner on behalf of the people of this province.

I’m proud to say that despite the obstacles laid before us in the past year, we’ve ensured that individuals, businesses and community groups from across Ontario had the opportunities to make their voices heard, and that’s important: to make their voices heard by this government and amplified, as they should be, by the members in this chamber.

As I stepped back and prepared for this debate today, it was apparent to me there should be no reason to oppose a motion that would allow for a smoother, more efficient and responsive Legislative Assembly. I believe that all members in this House should support a motion that strengthens the transparency and accountability of bills as they go through first, second and third reading in the Legislature.

Once again, Speaker, we’re demonstrating that we welcome more debate and examination, both in the House

and within the standing committee setting. We welcome accountability—as I know you do, Speaker, because you've often spoken about the importance of accountability. We're all committed to being transparent at every step of the legislative process.

From our pandemic response, our economic recovery plan and our other legislative bills, we have ensured that there has been more than ample time for each action to be scrutinized by the opposition and, yes, hard-working Ontario families.

I would also like to point out that by having all votes automatically deferred, we'll be providing clarity and predictability for members for when the votes are scheduled.

The motion that has been put forward by the government House leader has been given considerable thought towards the safety of everyone in this building, as it should—both members of provincial Parliament, staff at the table and security staff as well—while ensuring that the absolute integrity of the legislative process is maintained.

Make no mistake, Speaker: Clearly, the health and safety of Ontarians remains our number one priority, particularly for staff and for MPPs, as well as those outside the doors of the assembly. While we're cautiously and gradually transitioning some regions out of the shutdown, with the risk of new variants, this is not a reopening or a return to normal. We know that; all of us in this assembly know that. Until vaccines are widely available, it remains critical that all individuals and hard-working families in our great province continue to adhere to the public health measures and listen to Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and other local health experts like Dr. Robert Kyle, who's the medical officer of health in the region of Durham, to protect themselves, their loved ones and their communities.

Since the 2020 budget, Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover—and that recovery process is under way—significant additional investments have been made as part of the Ontario government's COVID-19 response, including \$1.4 billion to launch the Ontario Small Business Support Grant to help small businesses that are required to close or significantly restrict services under the province-wide shutdown, with grants starting at \$10,000 and up to \$20,000; \$869 million in additional investments for the hospital sector; \$609 million to support the procurement of additional personal protective equipment; and \$235 million in additional supports to protect children and staff in child care and early years settings.

Speaker, I'm running out of time; there's 22 seconds left there. Let there be no doubt this afternoon that our priority remains protecting lives and defeating COVID-19 and the new variants. The intent of this motion speaks to transparency and accountability—the key pillars of the motion before us.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from Niagara Falls.

It's a pleasure to rise and give some brief remarks on the standing order changes, which are really a kind of tinkering with the standing orders, with all respect to the members opposite. I mean, if we were really serious about doing something about increasing transparency and increasing accountability, the government wouldn't have had a budget consultation process that essentially was without the opposition, without any kind of follow-up and without documentation. Those are the actions of the government, and so to stand up and talk about how they want accountability and transparency—the actions have to match the words, and that's simply not happening.

Look at all the things we could have done with the proper consultation and with proper standing orders. Some of the things that we've just been talking about in the last couple of days with our PMBs and unanimous consent motions: making sure our constituents in Niagara and across Ontario have paid sick days; making sure they have isolation pay, which they still don't have, hospital workers going into isolation and not being reimbursed. Small business—through the budget consultations, we heard from them. These things have to be parlayed into actual actions, and tinkering with standing orders doesn't do that. Real action that matches the words would do that.

If the government is really serious, they should be giving our team proper notice for things, they should be collaborating with the opposition, they should be including the opposition in their decisions and not tinkering around with standing orders as some kind of a facade that they're actually listening to people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member did say he would be sharing his time with the member for Niagara Falls, so we turn to the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House, but I'm really surprised that what we're talking about are the standing orders here today. With what I've been going through in my riding over the course of the last two months, you would think we'd have more important things to talk about. So I'm going to talk about something that's really important for Niagara.

They mentioned how they want to save lives. Well, I want to save lives too. Everybody in the House wants to save lives. Yet in Niagara, when we were a hot spot, we had Moderna vaccines that were coming to Niagara for our long-term-care facilities, our retirement homes, so we could save lives. And you know what the government did? They took 5,500 Moderna vaccines and they gave them to somewhere else. And do you know what's happened, Mr. Speaker? I talked about this yesterday. I wrote a letter to the Premier, I talked to the health minister yesterday, and I said, "Where did our Moderna vaccines go?" Of course, since we didn't get our vaccines—do you know what happened? We had people die in our long-term-care facilities. We had people die in retirement homes. We had people die in the hospital. So I said to them, "Where did they go?" I think it's fair. I think it's reasonable. Quite frankly, I think they owe that to Niagara—I think they should tell the residents of Niagara where they went.

Maybe they needed them somewhere else—I don't know—but they didn't tell us. I've got letter after letter from this government saying all kinds of stuff about how hard it was to get the vaccines from the federal government, but nothing saying to the residents of Niagara, "I'm sorry you didn't get your 5,500."

1530

We're in grey today because our medical officer, Dr. Hirji, who was threatened over the weekend, is saying we have a crisis. We're a hot spot in Niagara. I'm saying to this government that we can be talking about that. We can be saying very clearly that Niagara deserves to get vaccines. I'm saying here today as clear as I can to everybody—and I don't know if you're listening. I know you're not listening about sick days and deeming and all the other stuff. But you should be listening about the vaccines for Niagara, because you guys won't tell us where they went.

We're going to get more vaccines next week—so they're telling us. I'm begging you: Send some of those vaccines. Give us our fair share in Niagara. Make sure the residents of Niagara are taken care of by getting their fair share of vaccines. The doctors are calling for it, the regional councillors are calling for it, the mayors—everybody is saying, "Send us our vaccines." Do you know why we want our vaccines? Does anybody know? Help me out. Because we want to save lives in Niagara. You said it here 10 minutes ago—you want to save lives. You want to save lives? Get our vaccines into Niagara.

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

Mr. John Fraser: As the member from Niagara said, we are tinkering. I don't have a problem with these changes. But if we're going to talk about transparency and accountability, I want to say a few things about vaccines.

I sit on the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. It's a committee that's very restricted. We don't get any written reports. That's actually written right in the motion. I made a request that the vaccine task force give to us in writing the priority list for phase 2 of the vaccine. It's a really important list. It's important because the phase 1—and I'm going to talk about that in a second. There was no deadline—"We need this immediately." It was just a simple request: Provide us with the list. It's important information, especially for public health units, who don't know yet. Well, the government voted it down. It was a written request with no deadline.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It wasn't in the mandate.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I think if we're looking at emergency management oversight and we're talking about vaccines, I think it's in the mandate, whether it's written in the motion or not, because that's what Ontarians expect. The reason that it's important that we got that information—and we're not going to get it right now—is because, in phase 1, it took us close to half a million doses, 60 days, to vaccinate all of the residents in long-term care in Ontario. The member from Niagara is right: Vaccines didn't get to long-term-care homes in Niagara on time.

They didn't get to Roberta Place. They didn't get to Timiskaming—

Mr. Robert Bailey: They didn't get to Sarnia either.

Mr. John Fraser: They didn't get to Sarnia either. I'm glad the member mentioned that, because the questions that we have here I know they have over there.

It's important that Ontarians know what their government is doing for them—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Talk to Ottawa.

Mr. John Fraser: Except Ottawa—because Ottawa actually took the advice of Pfizer, and then Ottawa acted quickly to move into long-term-care homes.

What happened here is the government actually took a holiday over Christmas on vaccinations. We took a break on vaccinations over Christmas while Quebec and BC were vaccinating people in long-term care. Then, when Ottawa said, "We want to move," the government said, "Okay, we'll make you a pilot." We're in a pandemic. We don't need pilots; we need actions.

So while BC, Quebec, Alberta, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island all finished in January, we finished Sunday, and there's still some question about that. What that meant is, it put people at risk, vulnerable residents in all of our communities, maybe not in downtown Toronto or in Ottawa, but in many of the communities that members on all sides of this House represent.

So transparency and accountability are important, and even though it's not written in the mandate of the committee, I think the committee should have the purview to say, "We need this information because we have oversight over the emergency management measures," of which vaccination is probably the most important one right now.

When I hear numbers like, "We've given \$600 million for PPE," or people fire out numbers, the numbers that matter to me are, did Mrs. Smith's mom get a vaccination on time? If she didn't, why didn't we get it to her? Because what's going to happen is, Mr. Brown's dad in phase 2 will be one of the priority vulnerable populations, and I want to know when it's going to get to Mr. Brown's dad and all the moms and dads and grandparents in this province, all the front-line workers who need it. We need to know that information.

If we're going to talk about transparency and accountability in talking about the standing orders, I think the thing that's at the top of the list right now is, how are we managing vaccinations in Ontario? That's what we should be talking about. That's what the information should be provided for. That should be the highest priority of every member in this House and the government.

When we took a break over Christmas, the response from the lead of the task force was, "Well, you know, we got spanked." Well, I'd expect that in a locker room after a beer league hockey game. That's not a good enough explanation for Ontarians or any member of this House. We need to know. We need to know what the priorities are, how it's going to be executed, so that we will ensure that the mistakes that happened in phase 1 do not happen in phase 2.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: It is a privilege to rise today and speak before the House on motion 101, introduced by the government House leader, the Honourable Mr. Calandra. Finally, I would like to thank the dedicated and hard-working staff of the Legislature. Honestly, their commitment to making sure that we can do our job effectively throughout this pandemic and to continue to represent the voices of our constituents is truly commendable. Thank you so much to each and every individual.

In addition to our hard-working staff and security, I want to give a huge shout-out to the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme, which has continued to run on a work-from-home basis since the emergency orders were declared last year. My team and I were definitely privileged to have one of the OLIP interns who joined us back in November, and her name is Monica Mann, who immediately, I would say, became an asset to our team. Tomorrow is her last day as an intern with my office, so I just want to say thank you, Monica, for all the great work you have done, especially during this pandemic. I just wanted to wish you all the very best and huge success in your future endeavours.

I want to talk about the changes that we are discussing here, especially the standing order changes. The proposed current changes to the standing orders include elimination of deferral slips. I think, Mr. Speaker, you and I have had many, I would say, dance moves that we have done here in the past where we would be rushing to you with a deferral slip because we had decided to have a recorded vote.

1540

I know at times we would be running around trying to get the slip, but it's not about the slip. The way I look at it, it's the environment. You know how we always talk about protecting our environment. Maybe reducing a few pieces of paper I think would be really good for our environment as well. This way at least we have something to, as the whips—the chief government whip, he always is running to sign the document. We are trying to find him at times. So I think that this would be something really good so we can just continue to focus on what we are elected for, and that is to come here, have good debates on bills, introduce bills and not to worry about deferral slips.

The next thing, definitely, is the ability for committees to recall themselves when the House stands adjourned, for the duration of the 42nd Parliament. Now, Mr. Speaker, you and I both know that when the House is not sitting and we haven't had permission from the House to have the committees meet, then unfortunately we cannot meet and discuss on a bill, or maybe if you want to have—I was part of the finance committee and we used to have many committee meetings.

Just on that point, I want to say thank you to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, who is doing a great job, definitely, with our budget consultation. I had one last Friday. I think there were more than a hundred stakeholders who came to that meeting, and

everyone came up with such great ideas. I know the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance and the parliamentary assistant to the President of the Treasury Board—both PAs—along with the Minister of Finance are proactively working on these consultations.

I think, if I'm not mistaken, we have heard over thousands and thousands of stakeholders across the province. Each one of them has such great ideas. Definitely, during our Mississauga consultation, I said on record, "You know what? Rest assured that your suggestions, your input, your feedback will be something that, on a personal level, I will be bringing to the Minister of Finance, and not only the Minister of Finance, but to the PA to the Minister of Finance." And I did actually give him some of my notes on a piece of paper that I was writing during the consultation, because we are the government that listens to the people. We are here to listen to the people.

So when we talk about the ability of committees, I think that allowing the committees to meet on short notice should be possible. There are times where we don't have to sit and wait for the House or to get the approval from the House or wait for the House to come back and then we have the committee meetings. I remember, during the summertime, when we had, I think, over 400 or 500 hours of committee meetings. But now, let's say, for example, during our winter break, when the House was not sitting, we couldn't have any committee meetings because we didn't have the approval.

I think this would be something really good that we can do moving forward.

So I think these are some really positive changes that we are trying to bring forward and continue the debate—because this is what democracy is. You come to this wonderful Legislature, and you have debate, and you represent the people of this province.

Also, one of the points that the government House leader's team is working on as part of the standing order changes—honestly, when I became an MPP, I couldn't understand why we have a gap on Wednesdays between 1 and 3; we have a long break. I think during this session, the 42nd Parliament—if we want to come back at 1 o'clock on Wednesdays instead of at 3, we should be allowed to. The government House leader can just present a request slip, and we can come back at 1 so that we can continue our debate, rather than just waiting for 3 o'clock for us to come back. I think this would be a really good tool for us to use in case we want to have debate on a bill that is being discussed.

Mr. Speaker, these proposed changes to the standing orders will create more efficiencies and will help us serve the great people of this province more effectively. Giving committees the ability to recall themselves will mean that important committees don't have to wait until the House returns to meet to discuss important matters. Additionally, giving the House the ability to meet earlier on Wednesdays means that we have more opportunities to discuss important issues.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House of some of the standing order changes that this government has

adopted in the spirit of serving Ontarians more effectively and being able to adopt to the constraints that have come as a result of this pandemic.

In the fall of 2020, we enhanced the focus on private members' public business by considering one item per day on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, we are now doing private members' bills. It is appreciated, I think, by all members that at least they are able to present their bills. I was very fortunate to present both of my private member's bills, and I'm looking forward to third reading of my private member's bills—and similarly, my colleagues on both sides. We are setting a good example of how this Legislature should be operating because, again, going back to having some healthy debates, conversations—we may not agree on everything, but at least it gives us an opportunity to have a good debate on bills. Definitely, the PMBs have brought good value—when we are having these four PMBs, one every day instead of three of them on one day.

We started allowing opposition members, along with the independent members, to ask more questions of the government. This was something that was changed in the last standing orders. As a whip, sometimes we track the questions and now I see that members of the opposition and the independent members are asking more and more questions, which shows that our government is open to hearing the concerns of the opposition members. This also shows how transparent we are. We are saying, "Please ask us questions." I think this shows our commitment, that we are answerable to the people of this province and each individual here representing their riding.

1550

Also, one thing that made our lives a little bit easier as whips is that now we have some understanding—when it comes to voting, we now know that, for example, all members of the House have the opportunity to vote on PMBs. There were times when not every member was able to vote on PMBs, because some members were not here on PMB day, but now with these changes, after question period we have the members come and vote. I think this shows that each member now has the opportunity to vote on PMBs.

I think these positive changes, Mr. Speaker, are something that we as a government are working on, and we will continue to work on them and improve the way the House operates, because I think at the end of the day the people of this province want to see this.

Also, my colleague from Whitby talked about members' statements. Previously we used to have members' statements in the afternoon. Now we are having them in the morning, just before question period, when the people of this province are watching us. Sometimes it gives us a great opportunity, when we are honouring an individual, for more individuals to see or hear the members' statements being presented.

Again, I'm going back to the point of us being here, representing the people of this province but also allowing people to see what these members' statements are. I think

this is another great way to show the people of this province the great work each one of us is doing here.

Very quickly, I just want to take a little bit of time on what we as a government have been doing in the last few months, especially when we talk about small businesses. I really want to thank the small businesses in our province. Definitely a lot of them have been impacted by COVID-19. Just yesterday I was on a call with one of the small businesses in my riding, and they were really happy about the \$20,000 grant for small businesses that they received when they applied.

We had a good debate here in the Legislature. Now, if we give more time and opportunity by allowing members to start debate on Wednesdays at 1 o'clock, I don't think there's anything wrong with that. Right, Mr. Whip? Chief whip, am I right to say that, on Wednesdays? Then we can bring more of these programs by having a good debate in the Legislature.

So that's one of the reasons, and it allows, especially, our members here with their private members' bills to thank the members of their riding. I have thanked many businesses, some through my member's statements, and at least they say, "Oh, thank you, Kaleed. We saw you appreciating the small businesses in the riding." So it shows some positive changes, some positive changes and—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Definitely, there is, I will say, a lot that needs to be done here. I'm really excited about this spring session. I'm hoping to continue to do some great work for the people of this province, this riding, and continue to come up with some great programs that can help not only the people, but our businesses during this pandemic.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is good to see you, my friend. Even though we are in neighbouring ridings, I haven't seen you this close in a long time, so it's really nice to see you and nice to see all of my colleagues in the House. Hopefully everybody is in good health.

I have two thoughts around the bill that is proposed. This is a bill that makes small changes to the standing orders—I believe I can use this because it is a document of the House. These are the rules that govern the operation of this room and of this building. There is nothing in this bill—there's nothing that exists today that would prohibit the majority government in fulfilling its legislative agenda. There's nothing that stops them from doing whatever they want to do today, without the bill on the table today.

They can, and we have seen them, ram through legislation in this House at lightning speed. We saw them ram through legislation to cut workers' salaries, those essential workers that are in our communities, to cap their

salary, their wages at 1%. One per cent, in fact, is what the Bank of Canada pegged inflation at this year. Interestingly enough, that is no longer a raise. That is status quo. So you haven't rewarded or thanked our essential workers at all.

What I'm struck with is that this is not so much a bill to get things done; it seems to be a bill to not get some things done, some important things that we believe, as members of the opposition, this government should be focused on. Ensuring that our schools are safe: We have still not seen a comprehensive plan followed through or laid out to protect our children and education workers, who are vital to our communities and our economy. We haven't seen anything of the sort. We see a bill that proposes some minute changes.

In this province of Ontario, in the riding in Windsor, a company called JD Norman locked out 67 of its workers, without any notice, just last week, providing them no notice on the future of their jobs, just telling them that, effective immediately, they were terminated. No severance pay, no pay for their pensions, no protection for benefits, just gone—shut the door. Why don't we see a bill from this government to protect workers?

I heard the Premier claim today that the PCs are the only party of the working class—laughable when we see this is their initiative in this House, some small changes to the order paper.

Speaker, you know what's funny as well is that if they actually cared about getting things through this House, they would have heeded and accepted the opposition's offer to return to this House in early January, when we knew that the pandemic was reaching incredibly dangerous numbers for our communities, when we saw death in long-term care as we have never seen before, our small businesses crumbling under the weight of this pandemic.

There was no urgency on the part of the government to get into this House. In fact, they recessed two days earlier—two vital days in December. We could have done more; we should do more. We want a government that wants to do more but, in fact, we're not seeing that today in this legislation. This is a government that wants to do less, that is working to do less. It's really unfortunate, Speaker, because our communities deserve so much more.

1600

Speaker, I am sharing my time with the member from Humber River–Black Creek. I believe I have 30 more seconds.

If this government actually was concerned they would have heeded our advice as New Democrats to pass the Save Main Street bill that would have delivered money, direct cash infusions, to those small businesses that we know have already collapsed—in April of last year, not in January of this year. So the sincerity around their rationale around this bill has to be called into question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member did say he was sharing his time, so we turn to the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocvic: Thank you for sharing your time. In the couple of minutes that I have today, I want to talk

about the fact that we're here once again debating standing orders. Certainly, throughout my time as an MPP, we've seen changes by this government to modify standing orders. Each and every single time, it's always been to consolidate power or weaken the opposition because they can't face criticism.

But I'd like to talk about some of the changes that members of my community want to see. They want to see paid sick days. They ask, "Why is it that this government is putting to us to make a very difficult decision when we're sick? Stay home and not pay the bills but keep our community and keep those around us safe, or go to work?" They want to see change; they want to hear an answer from the government on that.

Long-term care: For the fourth time during this session of the Legislature, the NDP have called for change in long-term care because the people living there—our parents, our grandparents, all of the people there—deserve dignity and respect. Giving them at least four hours of direct care would do that but we don't see that change. I really hope the government will bring that legislation back so that we can make a final vote and not do like the Liberals did, which was ignore it.

Packed buses: In my community and the Premier's community, with high rates of transmission, the people there are forced to pack onto buses—essential workers, people working at minimum wage—to go and put food on their table. They are concerned because, in many cases, they're standing shoulder to shoulder with people. We're not seeing direct help on that issue from this government.

Isolation centres: Many members of my community are tenants living in multi-generational homes. If someone gets sick, or there is that possibility, is there a place where they could self-isolate safely? We need to hear from the government on that—more help on that.

The list continues to go on. Auto insurance relief: Again, we've seen auto insurance companies and all sorts of insurance companies pocketing billions in profits, and yet it's not being turned back. They are one of the few businesses that are really doing great for themselves during the pandemic, but not for drivers. It continues.

Finally, more information and a better plan on the distribution of vaccines: All of our offices are getting questions from seniors, some of the most vulnerable people, saying, "When are we going to get more information so that we could be safe and protected?"

I guess we're here discussing standing orders and members of my community want to hear better and real change.

Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Hamilton Mountain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I turn to the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: It is always a privilege to be able to stand in this House and have the opportunity to address the issues that are put before us. I came back to the Legislature with great hope that we were going to be debating some fantastic bills that would truly help my community and communities across the province. New

Democrats have put forward several bills and asked for unanimous consent that would truly make a difference in people's lives, things like paid sick days, essential caregiver rights, seniors' advocates and a raise for PSWs.

Think of the PSWs across our province, and particularly in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. I'll speak first-hand for them. They went through what they called a war zone at Grace Villa. What they've seen and what they had to work through without management, without proper quality inspection control, was just devastating and led to so many preventable deaths and illnesses.

Those are the types of things that, when people turn on their TV, they want to hear us talking about. They don't want to hear us talking about these measly standing order changes. Standing order changes—I mean, the government has put forward—how many times have we stood in this House and had changes to the standing orders? They could have been rolled into that. This is the government dragging the puck. That's exactly what these are—dragging the puck. Not to have to hand a deferral slip to you, Speaker, to stop a vote? It's unbelievable that that's what we're debating in the middle of a pandemic. People have travelled across the province to get to this House to make real means and changes for the people of this province, and we are debating whether we hand you a piece of paper or not. That is absurd, absolutely absurd.

They want standing order changes to be able to have committees sit. The pre-budget consultations have happened historically in this province forever, where no government has seemed to have trouble making sure that the committees were able to sit through our break sessions, and yet this government failed to do so and now has put this standing order in front of us. If the government wants to make it happen, they can make that happen in a blink of an eye. We don't need to be wasting this valuable time to make that happen.

The House sitting between 1 and 3 on Wednesday—that's fine. Nobody is disagreeing with this stuff, but really, the government House leader can do that, again, with a snap of his fingers to make these measures happen. To be wasting this valuable time—we're back in the Legislature on day 2 of our first week and this is what we're talking about: nothing. Dragging the puck for what?

People want sick days. People want their seniors to be taken care of. People want mental health help. People want help for opioid and addictions issues—overdoses that are happening at rapid speed. And we're talking about standing orders. This government should be ashamed of themselves. Every member who stood on that side of the House and supported these measures—really, how they do it—is this why they travelled back here? Is this why they knocked on all of these thousands of doors during elections to get elected, to come here to change standing orders for their government? It's shameful, Speaker.

We'll be voting for this. We won't be voting against this, but really, this government needs to get its real priorities in order, which are the priorities of the people of Ontario, and pass and put some real legislation forward that truly helps every single person in our communities.

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

Debate deemed adjourned.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): On a point of order, I recognize the member from Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find that we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Agreed?

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

TRESPASS TO PROPERTY AMENDMENT ACT (PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM PACKAGE PIRACY), 2021 LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ENTRÉE SANS AUTORISATION (PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS CONTRE LE DÉTOURNEMENT DE PAQUETS)

Mr. Crawford moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 243, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act to establish minimum fines for specified types of trespass /
Projet de loi 243, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'entrée sans autorisation en vue d'établir des amendes minimales pour certains types d'entrée sans autorisation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

We turn back to the member from Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's always an honour to rise in the Legislature, and I'm glad to see all my legislative colleagues here on both sides of the aisle staying in good health as the COVID-19 pandemic persists in our province. I hope that as the vaccines continue to arrive, we will get back to our pre-pandemic lives very soon. This week more regions move back into the colour-coded framework.

1610

Before I begin, I wanted to mention that we need to remain vigilant in continuing to adhere to the standards put forth by the government: washing your hands, social distancing etc. I know it's been a challenging couple of months, but there is light at the end of the tunnel, and I think good things are coming soon.

Having said that, I did want to talk a little bit about my bill, Bill 243. Speaker, I've always been an advocate for protecting consumers. I've always felt very dear in my heart about protecting the consumers here in Ontario. My first private member's bill, Bill 55, the Safeguarding our Information Act, was designed to prevent government

institutions from accessing the private financial data of Ontario residents without their consent. Tonight I am proud to stand for the second reading of my private member's bill, Bill 243.

Before the winter recess, I introduced the bill, the Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2021. Specifically, my bill proposes to amend the Trespass to Property Act to provide minimum fines where a person trespasses for the purpose of taking, holding, concealing or destroying mail addressed to another person with the intent to deprive the other person of the mail or defraud them. This proposed bill, Speaker, is significant because it would introduce the first provincially issued fine in Canada for package theft. While other provinces have policies for protecting consumers, no other province issues fines for parcel theft.

I truly believe that this bill is timely and necessary for our province. One of the consequences of COVID-19 was that retailers in our province had to adapt very quickly. Because of the public health measures that were imposed to keep Ontarians safe and prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed, retailers had to increase their online presence rapidly. Small businesses that previously did not have a website transitioned and adapted quickly by establishing a retail website.

The e-commerce data clearly shows that this method of sale has exponentially grown and will continue to grow. In fact, from February to May 2020, total retail sales fell by approximately 18%. However, retail e-commerce sales nearly doubled, increasing more than 99%. Additionally, in May 2020 alone, e-commerce sales reached a record \$3.9 billion. Retailers are relying more and more on this method of sale. It was a lifeline during the darkest days of this pandemic, but even after we emerge from our current state, we know that e-commerce is going to be critical to the economy of Ontario.

It should also be mentioned that our government is helping Ontario businesses increase their online capabilities with the Digital Main Street grant. This \$57-million investment will add to the increasing number of businesses building online retail capabilities. In my riding, I'm proud that numerous businesses in Oakville have been a recipient of this grant.

It needs to be acknowledged that with the convenience that online ordering provides consumers, there is a significant threat from package pirates. With the dramatic increase in online retail, it is all too often that we read headlines in newspapers such as "Porch Pirates Target Homes," "Ontario Police Warn of Increase in Porch Pirate Package Thefts," and "Porch Piracy on the Rise Due to More Online Shopping Amid Pandemic." For Ontarians, ordering packages online increases the risk of that potential theft.

Speaker, since the pandemic, there have been some reports released on package piracy. In the spring of last year, it was reported that 165 packages have been taken from the porches in Toronto's 55 division alone. In fact, on November 23, 2020, the Toronto police put out a public safety alert to warn Torontonians about a recent increase in package theft in the city. The spinoff of an increase in package piracy results in higher crime rates for an area.

The Waterloo regional police have said that online shopping has led to a 200% increase in package piracy. Recently, the Hamilton police launched Project Ama-gone to search for package pirates in December, and at the conclusion of the project in January, the Hamilton police laid 56 charges. Speaker, this is not a concentrated problem in one or two regions of the province; this is endemic throughout Ontario.

Statistics also demonstrate that the problem is growing throughout Canada. FedEx conducted a survey late last year that reported one in three Canadians had experienced a stolen parcel. This is an increase from one in four in 2019. And of course, the holiday season always has a large spike in package thefts. These statistics represent valuable goods that were taken from individuals in our province.

The threat of a stolen package has caused consumers to lack the confidence needed to shop online. The negative implication of package piracy is that it decreases consumer confidence. In 2019, a FedEx survey showed that 70% of respondents worry about package piracy, while one in 10 do not shop online because of that lack of confidence.

In the United States, a survey in 2019 showed that package theft is a growing problem across America, as 36% of the people there have reported having had a package stolen at least once. Moreover, 49% of Americans fear package theft and 32% say they'll actually limit their online shopping due to porch piracy fears, and 27% of Americans will only shop in-store. Some of the people are reluctant to shop, and it's for that reason that I introduced this bill. I believe firm action is needed now.

The purpose of this bill is twofold. The first goal is acting as a deterrent, and the second is to raise awareness of the issue and educate consumers and delivery companies and small businesses about the issue so that they can take proactive steps to keep their packages, parcels and deliveries safe.

In my portion of the debate today, I would like to discuss the first purpose, which is acting as a deterrent. Speaker, tough fines are needed to give consumers more confidence when they order online. My bill proposes minimum fines that increase for each offence to a set maximum. The fines are proposed as the following: The first offence is no less than \$500, to a maximum of \$10,000; the second is no less than \$1,000, to a maximum of \$10,000; and the third offence is no less than \$2,000, to a maximum of \$10,000.

Ontarians need to know that package piracy is a situation we are not taking lightly. Speaker, there are many stories currently on the prevalence of package pirates. I was reading the news, and in January—many of you may have even seen it on TV or on the web—there was an individual caught stealing a package in Mississauga. When he was trying to get away, his car backed up into a snowbank. With this proposed bill, the individual would receive an automatic fine for his actions.

While Canadian provinces currently do not have bills similar to this proposed legislation, jurisdictions in the United States are working hard to combat package piracy. To name just a few examples, in Michigan, a first offence

is a misdemeanour punishable by up to a year in jail. A repeat offence is a felony punishable by up to five years in prison. In California, a lawmaker recently introduced a bill to increase the penalties for people who steal packages from the porch or entryway of someone's house. Additionally, Oklahoma passed a package piracy act in 2020.

Speaker, I recognize the United States' criminal system is different than Canada's justice system. However, package theft continues to run rampant, with the rise in home deliveries during this pandemic in particular. More doorsteps and porches are piling up with parcels than ever before, making package piracy a reality for many. Unfortunately package theft incidents have caused jurisdictions in the United States to realize the growing problem and pass laws to protect consumers, while being tough on those who take valuable goods from other people.

The proposed fines in the bill are substantial. I believe that these fines will dissuade would-be porch pirates or cause package pirates to think twice if they've already been convicted. Package piracy not only hurts the consumer but it causes a headache for the delivery companies and small businesses in our constituencies. These occurrences are extremely frustrating to everyone involved because of the resources and time it takes to solve the situation. Package piracy is a growing phenomenon, and we need to look after the consumer and all individual parties.

I want to mention the cost of package piracy. The cost to consumers is staggering. A 2020 survey documents that \$784 million is the approximate value of package piracy stolen from Canadians. Additionally, it is estimated that porch piracy is a more than \$5.6-billion epidemic in North America. When the unreported numbers are added in, the numbers are actually much higher.

Speaker, with the cost to consumers and the time to investigate the stolen parcel, my proposed bill is needed now. I am grateful to have supportive quotes from diverse communities, including the Halton Regional Police Service, the Oakville Chamber of Commerce, local BIAs, businesses and residents' associations in my riding.

1620

Chief Steve Tanner of the Halton police had this to say about my proposed bill: "All Ontarians deserve to feel safe in their homes, and to have a sense of security when they have packages delivered to their homes, particularly during COVID-19. Any steps such as this bill can only assist in this regard." I could not agree more with this quote. Trespassing to interfere with a person's mail delivery is an invasion of privacy and it is wrong. The only person who should be opening the mail is the individual whose name is listed. Online shoppers need to have a sense of security when they order goods online. I'd like to thank Chief Tanner for his supportive quote.

To finish my time, I want to say that if you experience a package stolen, please report it to the police. It is hard to get statistics on package piracy because many crimes go unreported. Believing the situation is rectified, there is often no call to police given many people talk to companies and don't report, so the statistics on this are definitely much higher than were reported.

Our entire system needs two ingredients to function properly: trust and confidence. I believe this bill will help ensure trust and confidence in this rapidly growing area of the economy. Speaker, I believe every member of the Legislature can agree that we as consumers and businesses need to be protected. Many people today now rely on online ordering for our own necessities, such as groceries, medications and baby supplies. I hope everyone in the House will think of these people and vote in support of Bill 243.

With that, Speaker, I look forward to the comments from both sides of the House.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to rise today and add the voices of the great members of my constituency of London North Centre.

Package theft is an issue many of us have heard about throughout the pandemic. It's true especially because the pandemic has made us much more reliant on our postal and delivery services than we were before COVID-19. Many Ontarians have turned to online shopping as a way to shop safely and to support their local businesses. We've been told to stay at home as much as possible, which has led to an increase in getting our goods delivered to us rather than going physically to stores. It's been the right thing to do. It was particularly true this last holiday season, with many Ontarians doing their Christmas shopping almost entirely online. But our reliance on this package delivery has meant that package theft has become a much more important issue in Ontario.

Ontario families are already dealing with financial struggles because of this pandemic. Many have found themselves with reduced hours of work or out of a job completely. Thanks to the hard work of my colleagues, government members are all too aware of the financial struggles Ontarians are facing at the moment. Many residents are struggling to pay their rent. Many residents are facing eviction. Too many workers are making the difficult choice whether to go to work sick or stay home and lose their pay. There's no question that Ontarians are facing financial struggles like never before, and the last thing they need to worry about is that their property will be stolen.

It's especially difficult to be a victim of any type of theft right now. This was even more true during the holiday season. After such a difficult year, we all needed something to look forward to. A stolen package is just simply not an additional stress Ontarians need in their lives right now, especially over the holidays.

It makes sense that we as elected officials come up with solutions to help families that need protection and that are struggling financially during this difficult time. But while families are looking for additional support and protection from this government, it's not clear that they're going to receive that from this bill.

This bill proposes providing minimum fines when a person trespasses onto someone's property to steal their mail, including ramping up fines for repeat offenders. But

trespassing and theft are already both illegal. Trespassing already carries a fine of up to \$10,000, and theft is punishable by both jail time and fines. And so, since trespassing and theft are already criminalized in our province, it's unclear to me whether this bill will really make any meaningful impact in preventing package theft. Fines and jail times for these crimes already exist as deterrents, and yet these crimes occur anyway. Will these new minimums really stop package theft if the existing fines and threats of jail time have not already?

Speaker, this bill is very emblematic of the Conservative approach to crime. It's a reactive bill, not one that proactively aims to address this problem, to address its root causes, to try to understand why this is happening in the first place. Instead, it's punitive.

Preventing crime and protecting communities doesn't start after a crime has been committed, when it's too late, when the damage has already been done. These fines will punish the thief who stole a package, but it doesn't help the family who has had their package stolen to begin with. We aren't going to solve this issue or other pandemic problems by responding to them after the fact, after it's too late.

We see this time and time again with this government's pandemic response. They sit on their hands, they wait, they watch and then they finally act. We have to be, instead, proactive in our approach, get ahead of the train, and this bill simply seeks to address the problem after it has happened, after the train has already rolled by. It's time that we looked at preventing problems before they happen.

As a New Democrat, I believe our justice system should focus on keeping people safe and that we should fight crime by addressing its causes. We've seen many initiatives suggested on this side, such as Save Main Street and providing rent relief for homeowners. That's something that this bill does nothing to address.

If the members opposite want to address package theft and to truly help Ontario families struggling financially, they need to introduce broader support systems to ensure people's needs are being met, not simply imposing more minimum fines on crimes. It's almost, dare I say, double dipping to offer yet more fines for the same crime.

I hope the members opposite consider why package theft might be on the rise in the province. Ask yourselves the question why. I'll give you hint: It has to do with the lack of supports people are facing. Ontarians are struggling to pay their rent. Ontarians receiving meagre social assistance rates, such as Ontario Works and ODSP, are being deliberately kept below the poverty line by this government and by the government prior to them. Are Ontarians who have experienced job loss able to feed their families? When the government tells Ontarians to stay home, is the government doing all it can to make this a realistic option for families who are struggling financially? These types of questions deserve to be answered by any member of the House seriously contemplating how to help families financially and looking to lower crime rates.

Ultimately, I will be supporting this largely symbolic bill. No Ontarian deserves to have their property or packages stolen, especially during a pandemic. I hope this debate has provided the members opposite some food for thought, and I hope we will see a decrease in package theft in our province.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak in support of a very important piece of legislation that has been put forward by my good friend the member for Oakville. This bill, the protecting consumers from package piracy act, is the first of its kind in Canada and it addresses a growing problem my constituents are facing, which is so-called porch pirates.

As the member mentioned earlier, in Waterloo region, police reported a 200% increase in the theft of packages in 2020. It seems like almost every day there is a new report of someone stealing a parcel off a family's front porch. I just read about a homeowner in Cambridge who called police to report the theft of a package, and, luckily, officers were able to use a video to quickly catch the suspect, but it's not always that easy. That's why it's important when officers do catch the thieves that they are able to hold them accountable and send a message that package theft is a serious offence.

Say you order a sweater from a local business, but you're at work when it's delivered and by the time you get home the porch pirates have already struck. Now more than ever it is important we get out there and support our small businesses. By sending a strong message that there are stiff penalties for porch thieves, consumers can have confidence that their package will be there when they get home.

Supporting this bill means supporting a firm stance against porch pirates and protecting my constituents back in Kitchener-Conestoga and all of our constituents across the province.

Now there are penalties under the Criminal Code of Canada for the theft of mail, and these include maximum punishments of a \$5,000 fine or six months in jail. Passing this bill would add to that maximum fine and also set out a mandatory minimum of fines so that victims of these thieves can be assured that no matter what, the thief will be punished. The minimum fine of \$500 for the first offence and \$2,000 for three or more subsequent offences proposed in this bill would send a clear message that our province takes the theft of packages seriously. After all, this is a crime that is taking place quite literally outside of our front doors.

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I want to also recognize the member's work to raise awareness of this issue. The member from Oakville has put an enormous amount of effort into spreading the message of what you can do to protect yourself when you make your purchases in the future. This includes routing your package to a store for pickup or using a side door at your house as a drop-off location.

Before I wrap it up, I just wanted to once again highlight some of the staggering statistics that demonstrate how big of a problem porch piracy really is. A FedEx survey found that one in three Canadians who shop online has had a package stolen. Across North America, this is a \$5.6-billion problem, and it's only getting worse. So again, thank you to the member for Oakville for his important work. I really hope my colleagues here will join me in supporting this bill so that Ontario can take concrete action and do something to address this growing problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this private member's bill. I know the MPP for Oakville and I know that he wants to solve a problem here. We've heard about this problem in Ottawa Centre.

What I want to offer in the time I'm speaking to this bill, building upon what my friend from London said, is some potential amendments I would invite the member to consider, because I fear we're only looking at one side of this problem.

No one in this chamber, Speaker, will allege that this isn't a real issue. I just heard the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I've been told one in four recipients of parcels has been a victim of this particular problem. It's a serious problem. But the question I want us to ask is, in an age when, as the member has pointed out, people are using e-commerce more and more for essentials, why aren't we looking at the well-being of the person who delivered the parcel, too, or the people back at the Amazon warehouse who stocked those parcels?

Why do I ask that question and why do I think it's germane to this private member's bill? Because what we know from the pandemic in our province so far is that 7,600 people have contracted this virus in a workplace situation. As the member for Brampton East said this morning, there are four different Amazon fulfillment centres where 23 people have even died of the pandemic. But the people of Ontario aren't entitled to know when a workplace outbreak happens. The people working in these facilities aren't entitled to know. And what we know about Amazon as a company is that this is a company that absolutely cares very little about the great Canadian value of speaking up for your rights in the workplace. This is a company that ritually has harassed and bullied and fired people in the United States seeking union representation.

I heard the Premier earlier today get up and declare himself an ally of the working class. I know some of my friends on this side of the Legislature chuckled. Do you know what? I'm happy to hear anybody say that, because workers in the 21st century need allies. But what I don't see in this bill, Speaker, is anything that will help the woman or the man working as the deliverer of the parcel or working in the warehouse.

What do we know? We know some quite startling things beyond the spread of the pandemic in some of these places. Savi Sidhu, who used to work at one of those Brampton fulfillment centres, said to the National Post recently that the working conditions in the warehouse

where he worked were conducive to hell. People weren't allowed bathroom breaks. No social distancing rules were observed in the facility. There was no serious infectious disease protocol. But as he said, the vast majority of the people who worked in the place where he worked, for Amazon, didn't have a choice. They needed that job. They needed that job to put bread on the table. And if they were sick, they were afraid to even mention that they were sick.

I want you, as we think about how serious this is, about what we are doing on the other side of the parcel, about what we aren't doing, to think about the amount of wealth that Amazon as a company represents. The owner of Amazon—you want to talk about pirates? Let me tell you about a pirate. His name is Jeff Bezos. If you count to 10 and say "Mississauga" between the numbers, Jeff Bezos will have made the median wage of an average Amazon worker in this country. That is greed on a scale the world has never seen. What have my friends in government done to ask this company and so many other Internet-based companies to share some of the wealth that they have accrued in this pandemic with the workers who make their companies successful? What have they done? That's why I ask my friend from Oakville: In all sincerity, I'm glad you're protecting consumers, but what are we going to do as we spend our time in this place to stand up for the workers who make these companies successful?

Here's what I know, Speaker: I know that 44 billionaires in Canada have increased their collective wealth by \$63.5 billion since this pandemic hit in March. I know small businesses have gone bankrupt, and I know people have lost livelihoods and, sadly, people have lost lives. And I know this company that I'm talking about, Speaker—Amazon, one of the biggest deliverers of the parcels that my friend is worried about being lost—has showed up time and time again as an ugly employer. And sadly, when I went to the YouTube page of the Premier today, because I took what he said to heart, that he's a champion of the working class, I saw—ads, almost, Speaker; it looked like an ad—crowing how wonderful these Amazon fulfillment centres were and how happy he was that Amazon is in Canada. But I didn't hear a word reflected about the ritual amount of abuse this company metes out on its workforce on a daily basis. I'm concerned about that, Speaker, and I would like this private member's bill to reflect those concerns.

We have to look at all sides of the parcel. We have to be asking ourselves which pirates we are focusing on. Are we going to be focusing on the petty theft of parcels only, which is a serious problem? Are we going to be asking companies like Amazon, pirates like Jeff Bezos, to finally pay their fair share in taxes so Canadian workers, who everybody in this place purports to care about, get a fair shake in life and have an opportunity to feed themselves and their families?

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I am so pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to the Trespass to Property Amendment Act, a bill that was brought forward by my friend the member from Oakville, a bill which will combat the increasingly

pervasive problem of package piracy. This amendment is intended to be a deterrent to thieves, and it is intended to offer more protection to consumers and small business owners.

The incidence of package piracy has exploded with the increase in online shopping. Through this pandemic, there has been an exponential growth in e-commerce. In 2020, online shopping doubled in Canada, and with the increase in doorstep deliveries, there has been an increase in opportunities for thieves. Package pirates are on the prowl more now than ever.

A recent survey conducted by shipping giant FedEx indicated that one in three online shoppers in Canada say they have had a package stolen from outside of their home. The criminals are brazen. They swipe packages in broad daylight, often when the homeowner is inside their home. They target homes that are closer to the roadway, and the package size, visibility and whether the box has a brand label on it appear to matter to thieves. According to a recent study, one in three Amazon Prime shoppers has fallen victim to package theft during the pandemic.

It's called "package piracy" because not every consumer has a porch. This kind of theft happens in apartment buildings and condos as well as single-family homes. With the explosion in online shopping, more packages are being dropped off in hallways, on doorsteps and in driveways. In May 2020, e-commerce hit a record \$3.9 billion; 10% of Canadian household spending has been online, and it's growing. Package piracy has become an epidemic in North America.

A survey conducted by FedEx in 2019 indicated 70% of respondents who shop online were concerned about package theft, and one in 10 of those surveyed said they avoid online shopping for that very reason. Home surveillance cameras and video doorbells help, but they do not stop thefts.

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Women accounted for 51% of the thieves seen in the videos. We've all heard stories about criminals following the delivery truck through a neighbourhood, scooping up packages as soon as they've been dropped off. Courier company drivers usually keep an eye out to see if they're being followed, and they will report suspicious activity if it involves them or they see suspicious activity in the neighbourhood.

While consumers are concerned about stolen packages, online shopping is often unavoidable. In one survey, two thirds of respondents said that they have been targeted by package bandits more than once.

In my hometown of Hamilton, resident Laurie Pringle told CBC News that she has had a dozen packages stolen over the past few years. Frustrated by being targeted multiple times, Laurie finally had enough. So just before Christmas, she decided to dump cat litter, with the waste, into a box and put an Amazon label on it, and she left it sitting on her doorstep. Within 40 minutes, an unsuspecting thief picked up the cat litter box, waste and all, and walked off. Merry Christmas.

Police are stepping up enforcement in response to the rise in thefts. They're staking out neighbourhoods and

placing decoy packages on porches to lure the pirates into their trap. They're also trailing delivery trucks that appear to have unwanted company. Recently, Hamilton police laid 56 charges against suspected package pirates during a sting operation.

Porch piracy has become a costly burden for consumers, for retailers and for the courier industry, and that's why our government is taking action. Up to now, no province has had legislation allowing it to impose fines for package theft. This bill would make Ontario the very first province in Canada to impose provincial fines for package piracy.

This bill proposes to amend the Trespass to Property Act to impose fines where a person trespasses for the purpose of taking, holding, concealing or destroying mail addressed to another person with the intent to deprive the other person of mail or to defraud any person. This legislation will establish minimum fines, and the fines will increase for each subsequent offence. What are the penalties? For a first conviction, there's a minimum fine of \$500; for a second offence, a minimum fine of \$1,000; and for each subsequent conviction, a minimum fine of \$2,000.

The only relevant protection right now against package or mail theft is contained in the Criminal Code of Canada. Prosecution can proceed as a summary offence or by indictment. However, the maximum fine for such an offence under the Criminal Code is \$5,000.

South of the border, a growing number of US states are enacting laws for package piracy, with very stiff penalties attached. In Texas, fines of between \$4,000 and \$10,000 are imposed for a package piracy conviction. In Michigan and Oklahoma, a first offence could land a thief in jail.

With the massive shift to online shopping and a subsequent spike in package thefts, it's time for Ontario to stiffen the penalties as a deterrent to thieves.

I applaud MPP Crawford for taking the initiative to introduce the first provincially issued fines in Canada for package piracy. If passed, this bill will make Ontario the leader in Canada for protecting consumers, retailers and couriers from the costly crime of package piracy.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand up and support my colleague from Oakville on Bill 243, protecting consumers from package piracy. You only have to look to my riding of Barrie-Innisfil, when a poor couple on 25th Side Road and Leslie Drive, as well as a couple on Angus Street, saw their packages stolen in April. This bill is going to send a clear message to those pirates who decide to prey on those who are taking up e-commerce and supporting their local businesses, and that message is clear: If they do the crime, they will pay the fine. This bill will now be making Ontario a province that actually issues fines for parcel theft and sends that clear message. So the next time there's a couple who decides to support their local businesses and have a package delivered to their door, they'll know that justice is on their side and that those people will be held accountable.

I want to thank the member for introducing his bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'll now recognize the member for Oakville to respond.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to take the opportunity, as well, to thank the members who spoke to the bill: the members from Kitchener–Conestoga, Flamborough–Glanbrook, Barrie–Innisfil, London North Centre and Ottawa Centre. I appreciate all the input. It sounds like the opposition is going to support this.

Having said that, I know the member from Ottawa is a great gentleman, but your focus on Amazon, I think, is a bit misguided. Amazon is a company that is affected by this, but there are so many other companies, so many other individuals, that are affected by this. There are folks in my riding who can't get out of their house to buy food. They cannot get out because they're either disabled, or they're older folks who can't get out because of the pandemic. They may be new mothers who are getting baby supplies. Those are the types of people we're trying to support by passing Bill 243.

This is an important bill, and I want people to remember that the goal here is to protect consumers. Having talked to a lot of people in my community, the consumers, individual people, the police, business groups, the chamber of commerce, local restaurants—believe it or not, people are stealing hot meals. They're stealing food. We need to stop that. That's hurting a lot of our local businesses. So let's remember that when this is an issue that's to be thought of.

I hope this bill will reduce the number of negative headlines. There's been a lot of negative headlines on COVID over the last year. This bill is not going to stop package or porch piracy, but could it have a small dent in decreasing the quantity and the amount this is occurring? Perhaps, and if it does, we're doing a good thing. Getting an automatic ticket is different, too, than something being thrown out of court, which is happening all the time right now: going to court and nothing happening. Getting a ticket and a fine every single time, that may discourage people. I can tell you that there are gangs roaming around, probably in your neighbourhoods—in my neighbourhood I know there are as well—where they literally follow trucks: UPS, FedEx, local delivery and restaurants. They're following them with the intent to steal. You give them a ticket right away—\$500, \$1,000—and I'm willing to bet that will discourage some porch piracy.

As we prepare to vote, I hope that the members opposite and the members on this side will all be supportive. I think this is something that affects every riding. It sounds like the opposition is in support. I hope you were, and I thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Crawford has moved second reading of Bill 243, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act to establish minimum fines for specified types of trespass.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 101(i), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless—the member for Oakville?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I would be pleased to see it go to regulations and private bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Agreed. The bill is therefore referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

MEMBER'S COMPENSATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I adjourn the House for the day, I wish to make the following statement:

Earlier this afternoon, on a request for unanimous consent, the House purported to agree to reduce the salary of the member for York Centre.

Members' compensation in Ontario is a statutory entitlement governed by the Legislative Assembly Act. Any amendment to this statutory entitlement would require a legislative change and cannot be effective via any other instrument—including a unanimous consent motion in this House.

Therefore, I have to advise the House that its earlier agreement does not constitute sufficient authority for me, as Speaker, to direct assembly payroll staff to make any adjustments to any member's salary and is, therefore, of no force or effect.

I note that the member for York Centre has already requested unanimous consent for the House to pass the bill that he introduced this afternoon, which would have been a correct way to cause a salary change for members of the assembly. While unanimous consent is a perfectly acceptable mechanism in this House, and it gets used frequently, I think this episode demonstrates that it's worth considering the unintended consequences that can arise when spontaneous decisions are agreed to with unanimous consent, and I ask all members to keep that in mind.

I understand the government House leader has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Just on a point of order: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the ruling. It was quite clear right from the beginning that this would be the ruling of the House, that there would be no authority for members to change another member's salary in that fashion. What it does do, Mr. Speaker, as you rightly point out, is highlight the need for members to have the opportunity to review legislation—certainly all legislation or motions, whatever be the case—before they vote on those motions.

This, in particular, was a motion that would have reduced the salary of members of provincial Parliament, which is something that can be debated in the fashion in which you said it, Mr. Speaker, but not through unanimous consent when three quarters of the members of this assembly are not here.

I will conclude by saying this: I will always stand up for all members on both sides of this House. I will never diminish or devalue the work that each of us do in this

place. Motions like that that devalue the hard work that everybody has done in this chamber, whether you agree with everything or not, are certainly not the way to go, so let's do things properly. We have done so well together. Let's do things properly. Let's do what the people of Ontario have asked us to do.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the ruling. I think it was the right ruling, obviously, and I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to—

Mr. Roman Baber: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I am going to allow the member for York Centre to respond with a point of order. However, I would remind members that we are not

debating the second reading of the bill that the member for York Centre introduced this afternoon. But he can respond. The member for York Centre.

Mr. Roman Baber: Mr. Speaker, the procedure that I've invoked today is the proper parliamentary procedure. It is explicitly prescribed by the rules. As such, I suggest that the comments of the government House leader ought to be ruled out of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm not sure either point of order was in order, but nevertheless, it is time to adjourn the House for the day. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1652.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short,
Peter Sibenik, William Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

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Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
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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
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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
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Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
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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
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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	

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Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
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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
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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
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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	
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Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
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Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
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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	
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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
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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	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire 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	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Randy Hillier, 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
Catherine Fife, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Jeremy Roberts
Amarjot Sandhu, 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
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Guy Bourgouin, Stephen Crawford
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Vacant
Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Will Bouma, Lucille Collard
Parm Gill, Daryl Kramp
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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Michael Mantha, Jim McDonell
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Kaleed Rasheed, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
France Gélinas, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Taras Natyshak
Michael Parsa
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Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
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Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche
Natalia Kusendova
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
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Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell