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of Ontario



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 March 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 mars 2021

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. We're going to begin this morning with a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

REPORT, FINANCIAL
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following document has been tabled: a report entitled the Cost of Subsidizing Green Energy Contracts for Industrial and Large Commercial Ratepayers, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

AWENEN NIIN ACT (WHO AM I)
RESPECTING IDENTITY
DOCUMENTS, 2021

LOI AWENEN NIIN (QUI SUIS-JE)
DE 2021 CONCERNANT
LES PIÈCES D'IDENTITÉ

Ms. Monteith-Farrell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 256, An Act to amend the Photo Card Act, 2008 and the Vital Statistics Act respecting access to identification documents / Projet de loi 256, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2008 sur les cartes-photo et la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil en ce qui concerne l'accès aux pièces d'identité.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I want to begin by thanking all the health and front-line workers of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and throughout northwestern Ontario. Right now, Thunder Bay is in a crisis because of a pandemic, and I would remiss if I did not do this before I speak to my bill today. We absolutely need for Thunder Bay to be declared a COVID-19 hot spot. Equitable recovery is a goal we all have, and this bill is about equity.

The bill's name is in honour of the work done by Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic and their ID clinic in Thunder Bay. It will amend "the Photo Card Act, 2008, to provide that no fee shall be charged to an applicant for a photo card. The bill also amends the Vital Statistics Act to provide that no fee shall be charged in connection with registering a birth,

adding to or changing a birth registration, having a search made for the registration of a birth or obtaining a birth certificate. No fee shall be charged in connection with obtaining a certified copy of a registration of birth, change of name, death or still-birth.

"The Vital Statistics Act is also amended to require the Minister of Government and Consumer Services to establish an advisory committee. The committee's mandate is to make recommendations to end systemic procedural and systemic barriers to obtaining personal identification documents in Ontario. The committee is required to consult with all relevant stakeholders, including, at minimum, the stakeholders specified in the bill. The committee is required to report its recommendations to the minister. The minister is required to inform the assembly of the recommendations the minister will implement."

This bill, if passed, would allow access to the information that people require in order to participate in programs and services in this province and of their rights to status under the Indian Act. Without this documentation the roadblocks are daunting, with bureaucratic red tape and fees.

I went into politics because after years of advocating for individuals, I realized that making things better involves changing the systems. The problems with this process became clear when I became an MPP. For those who cannot afford fees, they become a daunting obstacle and yet another way the systems in place let them down and block their way to prospering in this province.

Past governments have acknowledged that these fees are a barrier, especially to those with fewer financial resources. In response, they put in place complicated service systems and grant programs to legal aid clinics, shelters and other community groups to access money to pay the fees. That approach needs to be recognized as a barrier in itself. These service systems and supports do not exist in all communities and their limited funding is coming to an end, and many don't know that these helps even exist.

In my own riding, the Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic has an ID clinic. People working in the clinic have told me that many of their clients who face barriers are Indigenous people who lack access to social services. Mr. Speaker, user fees like these prevent already marginalized groups with limited financial resources from getting something as simple as identification. Forcing them to seek it through intermediaries only reduces their ability to live independently and with dignity.

The average cost to obtain one of these identifications ranges from \$25 to \$75. While this may seem like a small

sum, it is a prohibitive expense for many who are barely getting by, who rely on social services and have a low income. For example, a resident in my riding is an avid volunteer in her community. She struggles with MS and has difficulty moving without assistance. A few weeks ago, she was robbed and all her identification was stolen. The cost to replace her ID was beyond what her ODSP cheque for the month would cover after she finished subtracting her monthly expenses. To make matters worse, the ODSP system she relied on for support denied her request for funding assistance to help her cover the costs of replacing her stolen identification. While she was fortunate enough to receive financial and legal assistance from Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic, the fact of the matter is it would have been much easier for her to obtain the ID herself at no cost.

The small amount of revenue these fees generate for the provincial government have a much bigger impact on the lives of those already in difficult circumstances. It would be a clear benefit to Ontarians to see them waived. They force people living at their means to make difficult choices. As John Pateman, the chief librarian of the Thunder Bay Public Library, told me in his letter of support, “If one had to chose between obtaining and paying for ID or ensuring that a hot lunch is provided for your children, what would you choose?”

Two stories from my riding represent the disproportionate impact these identification requirements are having on young and underprivileged Ontarians. A woman in Thunder Bay was about to age out of care and was in need of a birth certificate to begin the process of signing up for her support programs. Without money of her own, her social worker needed to scramble to obtain these documents for this young woman before she was left without financial assistance or access to government resources she required.

0910

Cost is not the only barrier to obtaining identification either. Often, the time and energy and commitment to negotiate with the bureaucracies can be an overwhelming demand for people’s schedules. This was the case for the family of a newborn in Thunder Bay, whose adoptive parents could not get access to birth registration or a certificate because the original copy had not been signed by the birth mother. With no way to contact the mother, the baby’s family were forced to go to court to have a judge give them legal custody of the child just so that they could move forward on the process of actually registering the baby. A newborn child shouldn’t be caught in a legal limbo because of administrative barriers that are within our power as elected representatives to remove.

The identification of other obstacles to obtaining identification by a special committee is a priority of this bill so that no Ontarian faces unnecessary barriers in accessing their own ID. Numerous representatives from my riding have recognized the need to remove the barriers associated with identification documents, and they have expressed their support for my bill.

Sara Williamson, a representative for Poverty Free Thunder Bay, has told me that her organization supports

the removal of these fees as a means of poverty reduction that will benefit the least well-off among us. She believes that the removal of financial requirements in exchange for ID will help individuals access services they are entitled to with greater ease.

The Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group also supports this bill and its proposal to remove fees. They acknowledged, “No one should be denied access to identification documents because they do not have the financial resources to pay the government fees required to obtain them.”

Lakehead University community legal clinic has seen first-hand how these financial barriers have prevented many of their clients from getting access to legal documentation in northwestern Ontario. They recognize that this bill will provide a direct means of helping Ontarians gain identification to access support systems while also investigating other ways to remove barriers.

All of these supporters realize the struggle faced by many Ontarians in need of assistance who are confronted by exploitative financial barriers at service desks. This bill will remove those barriers and identify others that also need to be gotten rid of.

Madam Speaker, I am aware that a program to waive user fees for birth certificates already exists, thanks to the Office of the Registrar General, but it is insufficient for many reasons: First, this program only applies to birth certificates and does nothing to alleviate the financial burden for those in need of an Ontario photo ID card; second, it only applies to those who are homeless or at the risk of immediately becoming homeless; and third, this program requires external organizations to apply for funding ahead of time before they can act as representatives on behalf of Ontarians who need ID.

In 2019, the Globe and Mail reported that fewer than 20 organizations qualified. The Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic was one of the only programs who qualified in northern Ontario. Relying on these organizations to administer funding takes away autonomy from our citizens and makes them reliant on someone else to apply on their behalf, rather than empowering them and removing barriers.

All the challenges that I have presented today are not new, Speaker. The co-founders of Kinna-aweya were both aware of how prohibitive identification requirements were—and still are—for so many people when they started their legal clinic. If I may, I would like to share some of what Helen Brizard, the surviving co-founder and the wife of Louis Brizard, had to say on the matter: “My late husband, Louis, and I both understood the importance of how difficult it could be to access birth certificates due to location, transportation and affordability.... When Louis was asked to help name Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic’s ID clinic, I helped my husband. While brainstorming, we finally decided to use Awenen Niin because it expressed the true meaning of identification. To translate, Awenen Niin means ‘Who am I.’ Having a birth certificate confirms your identity and helps to obtain other ID cards to access health, social services, employment, and education.”

My bill seeks to honour the importance of one's identity and will replace the program offered by the Office of the Registrar General. It will improve on it by expanding its scope to all Ontarians regardless of housing status and by helping them access additional pieces of personal identification without the assistance of a third-party agency. This bill will help empower Ontarians, especially marginalized Ontarians, by removing the barriers they face in obtaining ID documents that are necessary. Ontarians deserve the right to their own identity. This bill will help them exercise that right.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I rise today to speak to the bill brought forward by the member opposite from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. The member opposite has introduced this bill with good intent. However, this bill represents a misunderstanding of the process for issuing identity documents and the costs associated with providing them to Ontarians.

Currently, the Ontario government charges modest fees that offset the real cost it takes to produce identity products. These are real costs related to real operational expenses that go into registering an adoption or a change of name, obtaining a birth certificate, death certificate or change-of-name certificate, or obtaining a copy of any number of identity records. The fees for these products range in price from \$15 to \$50, and are collected to offset the cost of delivering vital events services. Other vital events registrations occur at no cost, such as the registration of the birth of a newborn during the first year of life.

We have all had the experience of losing or needing to update an identity document. We go to a ServiceOntario centre and go to the ServiceOntario website, we provide our information and we pay a fee. We do that because, whether in person or digitally, we respect that it will take time and resources to produce the product we are requesting.

Now, our government, and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services most specifically, has been working hard to get these costs down. We are a Conservative government after all, and we have a goal of saving Ontarians money wherever possible.

In my role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I was excited when our government introduced French accents to drivers' licences and Ontario photo cards. And we made it free to replace these products. Ontario is now among the first provinces in Canada to offer French-language characters on drivers' licences and photo cards, let alone make it so easy and affordable. This is just the first step in our province's plan to make these and other characters available on all Ontario government products.

Earlier this month, the minister rose in this Legislature to announce an easier and cheaper process for correcting errors on birth certificates. Registering the birth of a child on our phones leads to all sorts of typos. We are the first government to make it easy to correct these mistakes when they happen.

The bottom line is we are always working to make the fees charged to produce and provide copies of identity products more reasonable. We are making sure that for low-income Ontarians fees can be covered. A fee-waiver program is available to not-for-profit corporations that have a mandate to assist homeless and marginally housed individuals to overcome barriers to obtaining a birth certificate. There are 27 corporations currently participating in the program. In 2019, the Ontario Registrar General issued 6,056 certificates with waived fees.

It is important to recognize that the fees Ontario does have in place for vital events documents and services are in line with the fees charged by other Canadian jurisdictions. No other jurisdiction in Canada provides these documents and services for free. It takes the team at the MGCS Office of the Registrar General to register all births, deaths, marriages, stillbirths, adoptions and changes of name in Ontario. The office, and our government, is in the business of providing helpful, high-quality service to individuals and families at some of the most emotional and infrequent times of their lives. To eliminate the fees that support the work of the Office of the Registrar General, the opposition may not be saying it outright but they are proposing to either hamstring the hard-working employees or send taxpayers the bill. As we look to recovery from COVID-19, it is critical that we keep the money in the pockets of families and individuals that need it.

0920

In closing, Madam Speaker, I want to make clear that broadly eliminating all fees is not likely to achieve the bill's intent of increasing access to vital events documents, as it doesn't account for other known issues such as lack of Internet access. I'm certain our recent announcements on investments in broadband expansion will have a much greater effect. In the meantime, as we have from day one, our government will continue to work with its partners and interested parties to ensure fair and equitable access to identity documents in Ontario, and we will do it without creating hardship.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It's an honour to stand and support the bill that my colleague from Thunder Bay has put forward. When I walked in this morning, I was excited to support her bill because it is so crucial for people experiencing poverty—and I'll talk about that in a minute—but after having listened to the member opposite, my blood is boiling.

I think that it is outrageous for somebody earning upwards of a \$100,000 a year to talk about modest fees when it comes getting something as basic as an identity document that is your gateway towards being able to access the services that you often need to stay alive. As my colleague from Thunder Bay was explaining, the barriers that exist at the moment, the doors that people have to get through in order to be able to have those fees waived, are themselves prohibitive.

I think it's really important. The thing I have been banging on about ever since I took a seat in this chamber

almost three years ago is the way that systemic barriers exist that make it really difficult for people who are experiencing poverty. People don't choose to be poor. People don't choose to not have the means. They are driven into poverty, extreme poverty and homelessness, by exactly the kinds of systemic barriers that we're talking about here today. This means particularly Indigenous people, Black people and folks who are disabled.

If you look at the ranks of the homeless who are in encampments today, for instance, the vast majority of them are Black, Indigenous and/or disabled. ODSP is not enough to pay your rent. It's not enough to keep you housed. And often, at the end of the month, people who are on ODSP don't even have enough to eat. People on ODSP are applying for medically assisted death. These things are things that this government has to understand so that when somebody says, "Here's a way that we can actually reduce these barriers so that we can allow people to get their identity documents in such a basic way that will allow them to get the services they need," we could approach it in a more compassionate way.

I am, as I've mentioned a number of times, a very proud mother of a trans daughter. I know the difficulty that my daughter had to go through in changing her ID. It was an extremely emotionally difficult process, in part because of the way that she was dealt with at every step of the way. She had me to backstop her financially, so that was not an issue for her, but I know that for so many trans people, it is. And the government needs to be more compassionate.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House. I rise today to speak on the bill brought forward by the member opposite from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Before I start, Madam Speaker, I want to start by sharing what I miss today: the hustle and bustle that we used to have before COVID-19. I remember the time when Queen's Park used to be full of members, their staff, stakeholders and visitors—for example, the new Canadians; the visitors from Ontario; the visitors from Canada, coast to coast; the visitors from the world, coming here, visiting us, watching us working together collaboratively.

And what I miss the most is the visitors from school—the school students. I do remember when they would come here. They would see us in action. They'd get inspired. Those young women, when they look at the members or the ministers—or, many times, they have seen the Leader of the Opposition, they have seen the former Premier. They get inspired. That's what I miss here.

But I want to say one thing: As we know, we're in a tough time. I want to say thank you to those heroes who on the front line who have supported us so far, and those who are hidden, their families, who have supported us. But the hope is here. The vaccine is coming. We are ready, and I would say to everyone in Ontario: Please get ready to get your vaccine as soon as possible.

Now, speaking about the bill, Madam Speaker: The member opposite has introduced a bill, and I believe it is with good intent; however, I'd like to echo the same

sentiment as my colleague the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park, that the bill represents a misunderstanding of the process for issuing identity documents and the costs associated with providing them to Ontarians. Our government is already taking action to improve access to vital event and identity documents and reducing the fees along the way, so this bill is duplicative.

The bill is not proposing any efficiencies. It is not proposing how we can work together to reduce the cost. All it is saying is to move the cost. It's not fair in that it would increase the burden on taxpayers by shifting the cost of the individual identity products, such as birth and death certificates, to the broader tax base. I'm sure it is not lost on anyone in this Legislature that this would be happening at a time when families and individuals are recovering from the challenges of the pandemic.

This bill also adds risk to our society. Considering that there is no cost, many individuals may choose to order additional unneeded copies of critical identity documents that could be lost or stolen, or choose to misuse those products. Law enforcement may not support this approach, as the increase in the number of documents in circulation may lead to an increase in fraudulent activities as well. Fees deter this type of behaviour. We have seen it in the past. When there is no cost, you will see the number of documents increasing, and that in turn can result in fraud, creating false identities.

Although only entitled individuals may obtain a birth product, anyone may apply for a change-of-name certificate or birth certificate and anyone may apply for a search for any vital event registration. Again, if the fees were to be removed, fraudsters could see this as an opportunity for phishing of personal information to a larger scale across the board. These implications would undermine the goal of increasing access to identity documents. Our current fees help eliminate bad actors and reduce the number of documents in circulation and that, in turn—this way, we're able to help the vulnerable, from fraud.

Again, I want to say—I want to echo again—I'm not questioning the intent of the member's PMB, but we have to look at the overall picture. It is the reality of fraud management for any government, and it must be considered. As my colleague shared, our government continues to work with partners and interested parties towards fair and equitable access to identity documents for the individuals who need them.

We understand this money could be a huge amount for some. That is why a fee-waiver program is available to not-for-profit corporations that have a mandate to assist homeless and marginally housed individuals to overcome barriers in obtaining a birth certificate. There are 27 corporations currently participating in the program. Madam Speaker, I want to share the data: In 2019, the Ontario Registrar General issued 6,056 certificates with waived fees.

0930

I understand the PMB calls for the formation of a statutory advisory committee on efficient identification document services. I want to share with the member that

the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services is already engaged with numerous partners, such as the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, to address community-specific barriers to accessing identification documentation.

The ministry has consulted with stakeholders to develop to remove sex information from Ontario health cards and allow Ontarians to select M, F or X on their driver's licence and Ontario photo card. The ministry is also conducting a ServiceOntario fee review, which includes fees for vital event services, to ensure that registration-related fees of certain services provided by ServiceOntario are set at the level that appropriately recovers the cost of providing the service.

In terms of accessibility, the minister and her team have been working hard to make sure that they're already there for everyone, and doing excellent work to increase the access to—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier la députée de Thunder Bay–Atikokan d'avoir présenté le projet de loi « awenen niin act (who am I), (qui suis-je) ». Je peux vous dire que pour les francophones de l'Ontario, les barrières face aux cartes d'identité sont multiples.

Si on commence avec des pétitions que j'ai présentées à l'Assemblée législative plusieurs fois, on n'est pas capable d'avoir les accents sur nos cartes santé. Je remercie le gouvernement : on les a maintenant sur nos permis de conduire. Mais ce n'est pas tout le monde qui a un permis de conduire. Tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes ont une carte santé. Sur ma carte santé, ça dit toujours « Gélinas ». Je ne suis pas une « Gélinas »; je suis une « Gélinas ». Pour une francophone, ça fait une grosse différence, et ça fait que tu ne peux pas utiliser ta carte santé comme carte d'identité ailleurs.

Une autre grosse barrière, c'est que plusieurs francophones sont nés et on leur a donné un baptistaire, pas un certificat de naissance. Donc, maintenant, ils doivent appliquer et payer les frais pour avoir un certificat de naissance. Savez-vous, madame la Présidente, que sur tous les baptistaires, les noms de femmes commencent avec « Marie »? Donc, Cécile Brouillette, par exemple, son nom c'est Marie Bertha Cécile Brouillette. Ça commence par Marie, et Bertha c'est le nom de sa marraine, mais son vrai nom c'est Cécile Brouillette.

Pour M. Camille Gauthier, lui, il s'appelle Joseph Albert Camille Gauthier : « Joseph » parce que tous les noms d'hommes commencent avec « Joseph ». Albert était le nom de son parrain. Son nom à lui, c'est Camille Gauthier, mais pas sur aucune des cartes émises par le gouvernement. Pourquoi? Parce que le gouvernement ne reconnaît pas que les baptistaires sont faits comme ça. Le gouvernement fédéral le reconnaît, les autres provinces le reconnaissent, mais pas l'Ontario. En Ontario, il s'appelle sur ses cartes « Joseph Albert », que personne ne connaît comme son nom. Son nom, c'est Camille. Cécile s'appelle Marie Bertha. Personne ne connaît Marie Bertha. C'est qui? On connaît tous Cécile, par contre. Ça, ça doit changer.

Le projet de loi de la députée de Thunder Bay–Atikokan va changer ça, va mettre en place un comité pour regarder aux barrières—les barrières financières, parce que tout ce monde-là avec des baptistaires doivent payer pour avoir un certificat de naissance. Pour plusieurs d'entre eux, si leur nom est trop long et ne peut pas être sur leur carte santé, ils doivent payer pour faire un changement de nom.

Le nom du projet de loi est tellement bon : « Qui suis-je? » Sa mère l'a appelé Marie Bertha Cécile, et elle doit faire un changement de nom pour annuler tout ça pour venir à bout d'avoir son nom correctement sur ses cartes d'identité de l'Ontario. Ça doit changer. J'appuie le projet de loi.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning, Speaker. Meegwetch. This morning, it's an honour to rise and speak on behalf of the private member's bill being put forward by the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

The Awenen Niin act—“who I am” in our language—is an important step towards improving access to health care. For many, the cost of obtaining identification, such as a birth certificate or an Ontario photo ID, is a major barrier in accessing programs and services in Ontario.

I know for me, the most important of these is health care. The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health in 2016 stated that access to health care is recognized as a very important determinant of health. However, for many Ontarians, health services are not equally or universally available where they live. An example is when we talk about fly-in First Nations in Far Northern Ontario. You will not find a ServiceOntario office. So when a family has a child to be born, they will have to fly down to Sioux Lookout, Thunder Bay or sometimes Winnipeg. The cost of that, where that person is born in Sioux Lookout, Thunder Bay or whatnot, to the parent or the father is very—return, probably \$1,000 to \$1,500. And you have to go back, and then how do you register? I think people do not understand how the systems treat people.

This is just one of the challenges that we experience in the fly-in communities. I think there's an opportunity where Ontario has the ability to make change in these areas, to step up and show the people in Kiiwetinoong and the rest of the north that they can do better. Again, I'm really, really proud to support the Awenen Niin Act this morning, as it is an important step toward improving access to health in the north. Meegwetch.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's certainly an honour to rise and speak in favour of the Awenen Niin Act (Who Am I) Respecting Identity Documents. I'm so grateful to my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for tabling it.

Every day we know there are folks in our communities who are making difficult decisions about what they can and can't afford, and that's only gotten worse since COVID-19 has started. As I've sat in the chamber this

morning, I'm really quite stunned by the members opposite who I just really don't think understand how much money \$75 is to the majority of the people in this province. I think specifically of folks in my community in Toronto Centre who are making difficult decisions every day about what they can afford and can't afford to spend \$75 on.

That piece of ID that we're talking about is a gateway to services. It's a gateway to being able to access housing if you're moving out of homelessness. It is a gateway to being able to access income supports and social assistance. And if you do not have that ID, you cannot navigate through our communities. Where are folks supposed to come up with that \$75? It is not a modest fee; it is a lot of money for people in poverty.

Speaker, I specifically also want to speak to the difficulties that people who are trans in Ontario are facing in terms of accessing ID that matches and confirms their gender. The process of transitioning in Ontario is not an affordable one. There is so much of that process that is not covered. There aren't supports for it. To access gender confirmation surgery—a lot of those procedures are not covered by OHIP. A lot of the times, you have to travel to one of the handful of health centres in Canada that even perform those procedures, and there's a great expense to that. I myself have contributed in the last year to several GoFundMes. People are resorting to crowdsourcing just to confirm their gender.

If you're debating between spending \$75 on your ID or putting that \$75 towards your surgery or your binders or your hormone therapies or clothing so that you aren't getting misgendered in public—it's an expensive process, and it's not fair, Speaker. That piece of ID that matches your gender and matches your chosen name is something that prevents you from being deadnamed when you're accessing services. It prevents you from being misgendered. It allows you to live fully in our communities as your true self. I think it's incredibly shameful that this government isn't willing to give people a break on the \$75 fee to access the ID that they need to navigate their communities, to navigate the services they need and to exist as their true selves with their true names and their true gender identities.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Now we will return to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for a reply.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I am very disappointed with the members opposite. I thank you for your comments and thank you that you realize that this was a well-intended private member's bill, but your lack of understanding of poverty and your lack of understanding of bringing the voice of people who are in poverty to this House is stunning. User fees are a regressive form of taxation with disproportionately negative impacts on First Nations, women, youth in care, LGBTQ+ people, the homeless and the underhoused. It's regressive to new parents, people dealing with the justice system, disabled people and senior citizens.

These fees that will appear in government revenue spreadsheets are not faceless, passive income. This money

comes partially at the expense of those who identify as LGBTQ+ who need to pay the government to change their name and gender on their identification. It comes at the cost of new parents living in northwestern Ontario who need to pay for their children's long-form birth certificate, but have limited access to government services because of their community's location. I don't think you understand that. It comes at the cost of the homeless who, if they lose their identification, need to spend precious money to get a replacement.

The small amount of revenue these fees generate for the provincial government have a much bigger impact on the lives of those who already live in difficult circumstances. I urge you to support this bill.

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

Ms. Monteith-Farrell has moved second reading of Bill 256, An Act to amend the Photo Card Act, 2008 and the Vital Statistics Act respecting access to identification documents. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Pursuant to standing order 101(d), the recorded division on this item of private members' public business will be deferred to the proceeding of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Orders of the day?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: No further business.

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

The House recessed from 0943 to 1015.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: This past weekend, we opened patios and built a field hospital in Toronto, and residents of Beaches–East York are incredulous—and not in a good way. They're fed up with the chaos that this government has created with its refusal to keep them, their families and their children safe. They're tired of cycles of premature openings and lockdowns that leave small businesses on the edge of bankruptcy, schools in danger of closure again, jobs and income evaporating again, evictions and housing precarity, a growing homelessness crisis, a third wave of increasing numbers of variants that cause more severe illness, a health care system in danger of overwhelm and a vaccination rollout that is mired in confusion and mayhem and that does not prioritize the most vulnerable communities.

When the most vulnerable among us are not protected, all of us suffer. The Ford government needs to begin by caring for the communities that have been hardest hit by COVID, communities of Black, Indigenous, working-class, immigrant people and people of colour. They need to ensure that people have paid sick days and rent relief, so that income loss to COVID doesn't result in arrears and rent debt, and that they can't be evicted into housing precarity or homelessness. They need to ensure that people working front-line in any capacity are also given priority access to vaccinations.

Care for the most vulnerable among us is ultimately the most cost-effective, kindest and most compassionate way to end the lockdown cycle and get the pandemic under control. The chaos needs to be ended, and the government needs to act now.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION

Mr. Deepak Anand: Speaker, five Ontario airports located on federal land, including Pearson in my riding, make payment in lieu of property taxes, or PILT, to their host municipalities. PILT is calculated based on the number of passengers, paid two years in lag and capped at a 5% increase each year, and there is no limit on decreases.

COVID has impacted all of us. Here at home, the number of passengers has reduced to 27% of pre-COVID levels. As the aviation industry is projected to recover slowly, the GTAA is expected to recover in five to seven years. However, due to the 5% increase cap, PILT will not return to pre-COVID transfers for another 35 years, resulting in a massive loss of revenue for the city of Mississauga for 25 years.

At this time, it is worth noting that the GTAA is also going through a tough time. Despite the devastating impact of COVID, it has paid \$40 million in 2020 and will be paying \$42 million in 2021, and has fulfilled their commitment so far—and I thank them for that. In addition, all the airport tenants paid \$25 million in 2019 to the city on top of PILT.

Mr. Speaker, COVID has taught us one thing: When we work together, we can overcome the greatest challenges. Tough times call for tough action. That is why I support the removal of the 5% cap, and I look forward to co-operation between the government and the GTAA, to work together and overcome the challenging time ahead.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. Today is World Water Day. The theme this year is “Valuing Water.” The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us again how important water is to our health.

1020

Many of us are lucky. We can wake up in the morning and turn on the tap and have clean water. Across the Far North in Ontario, this is not the case. Too many First Nations in Kiiwetinoong live under long-term boil-water advisories. We have lived with them for so long that they

have become normal to us. In Neskantaga, there are now generations of people who have never had access to clean water in their homes.

How can this happen in one of the richest countries in the world? There are lots of reasons, but indifference and a lack of political will have brought us to where we are today. It is also disappointing that the ongoing racism, the ongoing oppression, the ongoing colonialism of governments mean that so many live without clean water, and we know that these three things are alive and well today—I know that, because I faced it two weeks ago—and we live with it on an everyday basis.

But words are words. Actions speak louder than words. I hope you will use this day to think about what water means to you and to remember those who don't have clean drinking water. Meegwetch.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Aris Babikian: During these challenging times, there are many positive co-operation stories between the provincial and federal governments to help our citizens. One such successful initiative is the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program to stimulate the economy.

I was proud to join Premier Ford and many of my provincial and federal colleagues on March 12, to announce the historic \$3 million of funding to the Armenian Youth Centre under the ICIP's community, culture and recreational stream. This unprecedented co-operation will help Canadian Armenian youth fulfill their potential and contribute to the well-being of our society and province. I am confident that many Scarborough–Agincourt residents will benefit from this funding.

Similarly, our residents are eagerly waiting for the Bridletowne community and medical hub funding announcement. After 12 years of delay, finally, this project will become reality.

I am delighted that my relentless efforts on behalf of Scarborough–Agincourt residents on these two projects have paid off. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Premier Ford; Ministers Laurie Scott, Monte McNaughton, Peter Bethlenfalvy, Paul Calandra, Stephen Lecce; and MPPs Rod Phillips, Vincent Ke, Stan Cho and Christina Mitas. I am confident that similar future co-operation between the two levels of government will be beneficial to Ontarians. Promises made, promises kept.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Today, in Thunder Bay, we are in the midst of a COVID-19 crisis. Over the weekend, we saw over 50 new cases diagnosed by our public health unit. We continue to be in the grey zone and our schools are only virtual, which we know leave many behind. We have outbreaks in retirement homes, long-term-care homes and our hospital.

As many predicted, our hospital needed more resources and was not able to meet the demands. ICU patients are

being sent to southern Ontario, away from their families; elective surgeries are being cancelled; and vital tests are being cancelled. What we have seen in the last months is a lack of clear, proactive measures from this government, time after time—for jails, for shelters, for schools and for vaccines. The people of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario are left waiting. I was happy to hear of more resources and the promise of more vaccines, but we need to do a lot more. We need to declare a COVID-19 hot spot now, with all the resources to end this crisis as quickly as possible.

Northwestern Ontario often feels neglected by our provincial government, and this slow and insufficient response by this government has not helped people feel that this situation is under control. Once again, I'm calling on this government to immediately declare Thunder Bay a COVID-19 hot spot and get us the necessary help and vaccines to get the situation under control and our sick family members back home.

JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Samedi, les francophones et les francophiles du monde entier ont marqué la Journée internationale de la Francophonie, et cette semaine, nous continuons à célébrer la langue française et la richesse de la diversité de la culture francophone. Chaque année, le mois de mars est un temps important pour réfléchir à notre histoire de résilience et de succès. Mais c'est aussi l'opportunité de réfléchir au travail qui reste à faire pour s'assurer que les francophones puissent pleinement contribuer à la prospérité de la province.

Cette inclusion commence dans nos écoles, mais aujourd'hui, la pénurie importante d'enseignants francophones menace de freiner tous nos efforts. Des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes ont du mal à accéder à des services essentiels de justice ou de santé quand ils ne sont disponibles qu'en anglais. Pour les aînés francophones, ne pas pouvoir communiquer leurs besoins les place en situation vulnérable et d'isolement.

Donc, oui, c'est une semaine et un mois de célébrations. Mais nous, les francophones de l'Ontario, vivons tous les jours avec les défis auxquels nous sommes confrontés.

L'Ontario compte le plus grand nombre de francophones au Canada à l'extérieur du Québec. Il est donc grand temps que le gouvernement adopte les stratégies nécessaires pour permettre à la communauté francophone de contribuer pleinement à la prospérité de l'Ontario.

NOWRUZ

Mr. Stan Cho: This past Saturday, Iranian Canadians celebrated the 3,000-year-old tradition of Nowruz, the Persian New Year. Nowruz celebrates the day of vernal equinox and marks the beginning of spring in the northern hemisphere. As the sun crosses the celestial equator and equalizes day and night—fact of the day—families gather

to celebrate the new year with ancient rituals. Celebrations usually include Chaharshanbe Suri, a prelude to the new year celebrated on the Wednesday before Nowruz and is marked by jumping over bonfires and lighting fireworks.

Pre-pandemic, I enjoyed attending many of these events and celebrating Chaharshanbe Suri with my Persian friends and neighbours at Mel Lastman Square in my riding of Willowdale. This year, I certainly missed the singing, amazing food, the fire-jumping and my terrible dancing as we ushered in New Year at what would have been the 16th annual Iranian Fire Festival.

Willowdale is home to many Iranian Canadians, as well as the neighbourhood often referred to as Little Tehran or Persian Plaza, a great place to enjoy traditional Persian cuisine, pick up exciting ingredients from stores like Khorak Supermarket or shop for stunning jewellery and hand-crafted gifts.

This Saturday, of course, was a Nowruz like no other, but I still enjoyed ordering some takeout sabzi polo ba mahi and celebrating the new year by Zoom with my Persian friends and neighbours.

To everyone who celebrated in Willowdale and around the world, Nowruzetan Pirouz.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Jamie West: I want to share a poem from a Sudbury ETFO member. It's called 100 Days. The member says:

"We recently celebrated the 100th day of school in my classroom.

"While the students were quick to pick up many new routines, more than 100 days have gone by without proper ventilation in the classrooms.

"100 days of open windows.

"100 days.

"100 days of trying to be safe with proper paper-handling routines.

"100 days of students eating lunch, barely one metre apart.

"100 days of being in the classroom while students eat a morning snack. You cannot eat with a mask on.

"100 days of no one caring that the Ministry of Health guidelines tell us to maintain a distance of two metres.

"100 days of repeatedly telling the same students to pull their mask up over their nose.

"100 days of trying to maintain a safe distance but needing to get within a foot of a student just to hear their shy, soft voice under their mask.

"100 days of tending boo-boos or teeth falling out while trying to be safe.

"100 days.

"100 days of multiple squirts of sanitizer ... the same sanitizer that is dripping onto one of the heaters in the school and wearing away layers of paint from it.

"100 days of fogged up glasses.

"100 days of sweating under a mask and face shield.

"100 days.

“100 days of hearing from the Ministry of Education that teachers were all trained to teach remotely.

“100 days of teaching a vague new math curriculum without any training.

“100 days of hearing about no transmission in schools.

“100 days of not listening to the people who work in the schools.

“100 days.

“... of stress

“... of anxiety

“... of tears

“... of sleepless nights

“... of worrying about my own health and that of my family.

“100 days of teaching and caring for my students.

“100 days of disappointment!”

1030

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to share that our government is providing \$7.1 million to Durham College and \$4.8 million to Ontario Tech University to help them address the financial impacts of COVID-19. This investment will support their sustainability and ensure Durham region students continue to get the skills and education they need for the in-demand jobs of today and tomorrow.

The post-secondary sector is critical—absolutely critical—to the region of Durham's prosperity as a key source of job creation, skills training, research, innovation and commercialization. We need to make sure that students continue to receive high-quality post-secondary education and get the skills they need to get good jobs. That's why we're establishing a fund for severely impacted colleges and universities to help address the financial impacts of COVID-19 and to maintain Ontario's position as a global leader in higher education.

OAKVILLE HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

LIGHTHOUSE PROGRAM

Mr. Stephen Crawford: As always, it's always an honour to be able to speak here in the Legislature. This morning, I have the pleasure to speak about a couple of upcoming charity events here in my riding of Oakville.

In every part of Ontario, our not-for-profit organizations and charities have been hit hard by COVID, and charities have had to pivot to new virtual events in order to fundraise. The Oakville Hospital Foundation is bringing a one-of-a-kind virtual adventure around the world. Oakville's Own: The Expedition is filled with fun, impact and delicious food and drinks from the comfort of your own home. The adventure begins with a three-course dinner for two, provided by Oliver and Bonacini and led by a professional chef. Funds raised, most importantly, will be supporting the cancer care program at the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital. This will help support those living with cancer. Your neighbours, your friends, your loved ones will need to look no further than their own

backyard for access to world-class community health care. With one in two Canadians expected to develop cancer during their lifetime, the hospital foundation is committed to growing the cancer care program to ensure more patients will receive the care they need close to home.

Another important organization in the community is the Lighthouse Program for Grieving Children. They rely on community fundraising events and donations in order to offer grief support services for grieving children. A virtual event on April 30 with world-famous tenor John McDermott will be taking place, and I encourage everybody to participate.

These are just two great examples of charitable organizations pivoting and working hard through the pandemic.

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

Before I invite oral questions, the member for Humber River–Black Creek has a point of order.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: 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 and to ensure that essential workers in hard-hit communities like northwest Toronto, Scarborough and Peel have equal access to the vaccine.

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

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is for the Premier. It's really apparent that we're now in the third wave of COVID-19, and folks are pretty worried that this Premier and the government are sleepwalking us into another massive lockdown.

Late on Friday, we all know that the Premier loosened indoor restrictions for COVID-19 precautions and didn't put in any of the measures that would help people stay safe in those situations. So the question is, why does the Premier seem to be doing exactly the opposite of what his own experts and front-line health care providers are suggesting he should be doing?

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you for the question. Through you, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're doing: We're following the advice of the chief medical officer, along with the local medical officers in Peel and Toronto. We had a great discussion. That was their direction, we followed the direction, and we're going to continue following the direction of the docs.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, in fact, the government hasn't been following the experts' advice, and now we're in a third wave that was preventable.

On February 11, the science table warned that rushing the reopening was going to lead to disaster. They were telling the Premier and this government that they needed to put measures in place to keep people safe, like paid sick days. The very next day, the Premier reopened indoor eating in restaurants, basically sending restaurant workers into an environment where the spread was likely to happen without even the basics, like paid sick days, to rely upon.

The question is, why is this Premier refusing to spend the money necessary to keep people safe, to make sure that we don't end up in another massive lockdown in our province, notwithstanding that he keeps getting advice on how to do exactly that?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: We have the toughest restrictions in all of North America. That's an actual fact. So far, we've vaccinated 1,553,000 people. The total vaccines are at about 1.79 million. We've ramped up the vaccination centre. As the majority of the people have heard, now we're doing age 75-plus in mass vaccination centres. We've increased the pharmacies from 350 to 700.

The problem is we still need more vaccines, because we're just a fraction of the way on the full capacity. If we just had all the vaccines we needed, we would be at about nine million people a month. But we're looking forward to getting more shipments this week from the federal government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Dr. Brown, the head of Ontario's COVID advisory table, said this: "If public health measures are lifted, cases could rise dramatically." Dr. Peter Jüni said this: We're heading for another lockdown.

This is what the experts are saying. These are quotes directly from the experts. So my question to the Premier is, why does he continue to ignore these repeated pieces of advice from the experts and instead seem to be just walking us straight into another massive lockdown in our province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, through you, Mr. Speaker: We listen to the experts. We have the panel of docs who give us advice every single day. We appreciate the great job Dr. Williams and his whole team have done, and the other experts.

Once they give us the green light, we go to thorough discussions on when we open up, how we open up. They give us a direction and we follow that direction. That's exactly what we've done.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. This is about warnings from the hospital sector.

In fact, about a month ago, Anthony Dale from the Ontario Hospital Association said this: "The warning" to the Premier "could not have been clearer. An exhausted, overextended hospital sector is likely going to have to deal with a 3rd pandemic wave...."

"Ultimately the consequences of, and responsibility for, today's decision to reopen on Feb 16 rests with the government of Ontario."

Will the Premier admit that, in fact, he refused to listen to this warning from the Ontario Hospital Association and those front-line exhausted and overworked health care providers and is now putting at risk the capacity of these hospitals to keep people well in Ontario?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, I can advise the leader of the official opposition that we have been building up hospital capacity since the beginning of this pandemic. We have created over 3,100 more hospital beds across the province of Ontario, which is the equivalent of six medium-sized hospitals.

We've also recently received approval to spend up to \$125 million to create more intensive care beds and medicine beds in case there are any increases in our numbers, so that we will be able to make sure that we can admit and treat any patients with COVID-19 or who have to be admitted to hospital for any other reason.

This is something that we have dealt with from the beginning of this pandemic and we're continuing to build capacity today.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Right now, today, doctors in ICUs are actually desperately transferring patients that they cannot care for.

1040

Unbelievably, the hardest-hit communities in our province have been left behind by the Ford government. They're getting the least support of all. As you probably all know, Dr. Brooks Fallis, a critical care physician from the William Osler hospital, said this: "This government is either completely incompetent or has no regard for the health and lives of Ontarians. Or both."

My question is to the Premier: These front-line health care workers are exhausted. They feel abandoned by their government. Why will the Premier not admit that he made the wrong call? The third wave is upon us. He needs to put in measures to tamp it down. Will he do it?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: It's funny; the Leader of the Opposition mentioned Anthony Dale. I'm not going to divulge private messages but basically, on Tuesday, "Good afternoon, Premier. I want to thank you very much for the comments you made about being vigilant." I won't go on with the rest of the message.

The Leader of the Opposition can point out the great doctors, because even docs disagree—and they disagree, by the way, with our Chief Medical Officer, a lot of local medical officers and God knows how many other doctors.

But guess what, Mr. Speaker? I talk to endless doctors every single week. I talk to endless CEOs and public health unit docs, and they're all saying, "Hey, we're moving as quickly as we can to crush this curve, to knock off the third wave, and we appreciate the work that you're doing." My comment back to them: "I appreciate the work you're doing." We have a great relationship with the docs. Out of 15,000 docs, you're going to find a few that may not agree, but they're still doing a great job.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is, this Premier and this government were warned by many, many experts that a rushed reopening was going to lead to disaster and that the government could avoid a third wave by putting some basic things in place, like paid sick days, like making our schools safer with lower class sizes, better ventilation and other measures. But they didn't want to spend the money. The Ford government did not want to spend the money, Speaker.

My question is: Why did the government think it was all right to ignore the advice of experts and instead put people in the line of fire when it comes to the spread of the virus? And why does he still, at this moment, refuse to acknowledge that he can stop another massive lockdown in Ontario by doing the right thing, investing the money and keeping people safe in Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: I think all the front-line health care workers have done an incredible job. When the Leader of the Opposition is criticizing me, she's criticizing all the docs and the front-line health care workers, which is not helpful at all.

I'm not proud of this figure, but the NDP say, "Spend money, spend money, spend money," and I'm not proud of this, but I said right from the get-go that I will not spare a penny, and we haven't. We have a \$38-billion deficit. I can't wait to get the economy going. We've spent tens of billions of dollars to protect the lives and the safety of every single resident here in Ontario, along with protecting the livelihoods of small businesses right across this province. Overall, I think the people of Ontario have done an incredible job.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. Speaker, as of Friday, the end of what would have been March break, one in five of all schools in this province have COVID outbreaks. Forty-four schools are closed, including 10 in the Dufferin Peel Catholic board alone, where an outbreak at one school sent three education workers to hospital. We have 140 new cases in our schools today. Schools are closed in Woodstock, in Hamilton, in London, in Sudbury and in Mississauga. The list goes on and on and on and it grows every day.

Speaker, the Premier and the Minister of Education have said repeatedly that they want schools open. Why, then, are they standing by while so many are forced to close?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond for the government, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: In this province, 99.2% of schools are open as we contend with the variants of concern. In this province, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the foremost medical authority in Ontario, has suggested schools have been and continue to be safe places to go to. In fact, I spoke to the Chief Medical Officer of Health this past week, to Dr. Loh in Peel, to Dr. de Villa in Toronto and to Dr. Etches in Ottawa between Friday and the present. All of them have confirmed that the program, the infection prevention protocols in place, have helped to keep schools safe. They are working, notwithstanding the necessity for vigilance, which is why the province invested \$1.6 billion. It's why we lead with the most comprehensive protocol to date. It's why we'll continue to follow the medical advice to ensure schools, yes, remain open and remain safe in Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the minister doesn't get here, but this situation is very serious.

Back to the Premier: We are seeing more than 500 children catching this virus every single week. Faster-spreading variants are running rampant and front-line workers in our schools are telling us again that they aren't seeing any new supports. This government is already warning that there are more cuts coming. The asymptomatic testing program has never met its 50,000-tests-a-week goal and hasn't even reached half of that over the life of the entire program.

Speaker, the time for half measures is surely over. What will the Premier do today to keep every student, every teacher and every education worker safe from a third wave?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The Premier will continue to follow the best medical expert advice to ensure schools can remain open, which is a contrasting position to the members opposite, who have sided with other interests, who wanted us to keep them closed in September and in October, certainly not reopen in February, and would have kept them closed for a stay-at-home order into March.

This government is on the side of parents who believe very strongly that schools must be open for the mental health and the development of a child. That is consequential to their life, and we are on their side.

We are going to continue to invest \$1.6 billion, which has yielded over 3,000 net new teachers; 1,400 more custodians; 800 more being hired in the teacher realm, temporary hires; and another 400 custodians. We've improved air ventilation in well over 95% of schools, as reported by the school boards themselves publicly. We will continue to follow the advice, providing PPE to every educator and to every student because, yes, we understand it is serious, and we are committed to rising to the challenge of keeping these schools open and safe in this province.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. The long-term-care wait-list has been a growing problem for decades. As of December 2020, it

was reported that there are 40,000 people waiting for care they need in long-term-care homes.

The Financial Accountability Office found in an October 2019 report that the previous government increased the number of long-term-care spaces by only 0.8%, while the population over the age of 75 grew by 20%.

In my riding of Durham, we have long wait-lists and I often hear from constituents the frustrations they have trying to get their loved ones the care they need. Ontarians deserve to have confidence that they can receive the care they need when they need it. Minister, my constituents want to know, what are you doing to shorten the long-term-care wait-list?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member for Durham for all the good work that she does, not only on behalf of constituents, but for residents in long-term care and the long-term-care-home sector. She really is a tireless advocate for her constituents.

We lost a lot of runway while the previous government neglected long-term care, building only 611 net new spaces between 2011 and 2018. Our government has been working hard to fill that gap that the Liberals left behind.

Last week, I announced 80 new projects across the province. We are investing \$933 million in these projects on top of the \$1.75 billion already committed to building 30,000 new spaces over 10 years.

One of those projects is Port Perry Place, which will lead to 192 new and 32 upgraded long-term-care spaces in the member's riding. That's in addition to a project in Bowmanville that will build 125 new and 99 upgraded beds. That totals 1,970 net new beds in the Durham region. Our government—

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the minister for the response and the investment in Durham region.

I agree that building new beds is essential to filling the gap in capacity that was allowed to build up under the previous government. But there are also homes built to design standards from the 1970s, and we need to upgrade those to modern standards, eliminating ward rooms, for example.

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We saw the effect of crowded older facilities during the pandemic. Port Perry Place was one of the homes that had a serious outbreak. Tragically, Speaker, 13 residents lost their lives during that outbreak. It really underscores the need to redevelop and upgrade existing spaces to modern design standards.

Can the minister please tell this House what she is doing to upgrade and modernize existing homes that need it?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Once again, thank you to the member from Durham. It is crucial that we acknowledge and learn from the tragedy that unfolded during the pandemic at homes across the province—at Port Perry Place and at homes like it. It underlines the urgency of upgrading older homes.

This latest round of allocations prioritized upgrading older homes in response to those lessons learned around improved IPAC measures, particularly eliminating those four-bed ward rooms. Port Perry Place has been allocated 96 new spaces and 70 upgraded ones, and that's on top of the 53 beds previously allocated. This project is going to mean a new home in a totally new building built to modern standards in Port Perry, with spaces for 224 residents.

Our government is repairing and rebuilding long-term care after decades of neglect by previous governments.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My question is for the Premier. A recent CBC News report highlighted a map of all of the pharmacies administering vaccines in Toronto. It revealed that some of the wealthiest communities with the lowest transmission rates also had some of the most pharmacy vaccine locations. Alternatively, communities full of essential workers that have had some of the highest transmissions were noticeably bare. For instance, out of the 39 pharmacies in my community, just one is administering vaccines.

Premier, this is an example of how pandemic response does not equate to risk or need. The science advisory table has said that a vaccine rollout strategy targeting not just age but also risk of contracting COVID-19 could save many lives. Communities like mine in northwest Toronto need more vaccine locations immediately. When will you add more of these sites in at-risk communities?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, our vaccine rollout system will allow Ontarians to receive vaccines at hospitals, mobile clinics, mass vaccination clinics, pharmacies and, of course, primary care offices, particularly for people with pre-existing health conditions.

With respect to the pharmacies, we had started the project in Toronto, in Windsor-Essex and in Kingston and Frontenac, with approximately 325 or 330 pharmacies. But those are going to be rolled out across the province in neighbourhoods everywhere, to 700. We'll be doubling it within the next two weeks and then doubling that again between now and the end of April so that everyone, regardless of where they live in Ontario, will be able to receive a vaccine, if they wish to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine, at any pharmacy close to them. We started off with 325, but it will be moving across the province very quickly.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, I would ask the minister and this government to stick to the facts, like they have always stated. The fact is this government has failed to prioritize hard-hit communities. My community of Scarborough is one of the hardest hit in the province, just like my colleague's riding as well. But when it came to putting an equitable strategy, this government has failed.

Just this morning, this government voted against a motion to implement an equitable vaccine strategy.

Speaker, when it came to COVID testing centres, this government failed, and our community had to fight for more COVID testing centres. When it came to COVID relief, our communities had to fight for more support. When it came to more vaccines now, yet again we're fighting for more vaccines for our hardest-hit communities.

With the lack of access to clear communication and more vaccines, our communities are left in the dark. So I would ask again, will this government commit today to more equitable vaccines for our hardest-hit communities, like Scarborough, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, the short answer is yes. But, Speaker, I would say, through you to the member opposite, speaking about the facts, we have created a very equitable plan for the distribution of vaccines across the province, including a bioethics specialist on the vaccine task force. This was created with a lot of thought, with a lot of effort, with a lot of looking at areas across the province that have been hardest hit. While our distribution of the vaccines is based primarily on population size, it also builds in factors relating to the situations in each community and communities that have been the hardest hit. In those communities, they will be receiving more vaccines, because they need to in order to get the level of transmission down. So we have paid attention to that from the beginning and will continue to do so in the future.

And I'm saying, specifically to this member, your area will be receiving more vaccines because they have been more badly hit by COVID-19.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: My question is to the Premier. I want to speak specifically about Peel region, which has consistently seen the highest rates of COVID-19 infection in the province and has been in lockdown since November 23. As of today, there are a total of 312 active cases in the Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, with 221 closed classrooms and 13 closed schools. The infection rate has impacted the region to the point of shutting down schools, workplaces and transit. My question is, what is the government doing to reverse this very concerning trend and protect the residents of Peel?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. There are several areas that have been very badly hit by COVID-19 and, as the member will know, Peel and Toronto are still in grey. They are still in the most significant area of lockdown because of the levels of transmission. We are working very hard in both of those areas to help get the numbers down, which is why many services still remain closed. We are going to continue to work on that.

Again, as I indicated earlier, in those areas that have been particularly badly hit by COVID-19, they will receive additional levels of vaccines in order to ensure that the people that are transmitting it, because we know that

there are significant concerns in parts of Peel as well as in Toronto—to get those levels down so that those areas can then transition into a different part of the framework. But those concerns are very evident to us and we are working on them daily.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Again to the Premier: On March 15, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Williams, stated that it is appropriate to prioritize sectors at higher risk of infection in lockdown zones. Peel was already left out of the first round of pharmacy vaccination appointments, despite having the highest rates of infection in the province. So my question is, can the government commit today and tell the residents of Peel that they will be prioritized to get the vaccination—and for the 300,000 at-risk essential workers in Peel?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Absolutely, they will be. We are rolling out the vaccines across the province in the mass vaccination centres, but of course many people wish to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine in pharmacies, which is now available. Anyone over 60 years of age can receive that vaccine. That's recently been changed by Health Canada and by NACI, that it is effective for people over age 65. There are more openings than ever that are coming in.

We haven't received a significant volume of vaccines up to date, but I can advise—this is on the federal government's website—that we will be receiving 1,194,000 and so on vaccines from Pfizer, of which Ontario will receive 466,000 in the next two weeks. So we will be able to expand that. We are going to be expanding the pharmacies where the AstraZeneca vaccine can be obtained as well. That is going to be extended across the province, including in the region of Peel.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M^{me} Robin Martin: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Affaires francophones. L'Université de l'Ontario français ouvrira les portes au mois de septembre prochain. Comment cette université contribuera-t-elle à l'épanouissement de la communauté franco-ontarienne?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie ma collègue pour sa question. L'Université de l'Ontario français sera un pôle d'attraction pour les francophones de la région du centre sud-ouest de l'Ontario, qui souffrent d'un manque d'établissements d'enseignement supérieur de langue française. La région du centre sud-ouest de l'Ontario regroupera bientôt la moitié de la population francophone de l'Ontario.

J'ai toujours cru au projet de l'Université de l'Ontario français, un établissement qui préparera les étudiants aux besoins du marché du travail et qui aidera à combler la pénurie de la main-d'oeuvre francophone et bilingue en Ontario.

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Je suis très fière d'avoir conclu une entente avec le gouvernement fédéral pour que l'Université de l'Ontario français puisse voir le jour. Cette première université

gouvernée pour et par les francophones représente l'aboutissement d'un rêve de longue date.

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

M^{me} Robin Martin: Je remercie la ministre pour cette importante réalisation.

La Semaine internationale de la Francophonie était célébrée à travers le monde la semaine dernière. Comment le gouvernement a-t-il souligné cette occasion?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie encore une fois ma collègue pour sa question.

Lundi, nous avons annoncé que nous finançons une formation accélérée pour les préposés au soutien personnel aux collèges Boréal et La Cité.

Mardi, nous avons souligné notre investissement de 1,5 million de dollars pour intégrer les nouveaux arrivants francophones qualifiés au marché du travail.

Mercredi, le drapeau franco-ontarien a été hissé dans 29 sites de ServiceOntario.

Jeudi, nous avons annoncé l'ajout de 777 nouvelles places dans les foyers de soins de longue durée francophones et bilingues et l'amélioration de 236 autres.

Vendredi, nous avons souligné un investissement de 2 millions de dollars pour soutenir le tourisme francophone et un investissement de 800 000 \$ dans le Collège Boréal. Cela se rajoute à nos investissements de 500 000 \$ dans les entreprises et les entrepreneurs francophones et notre fonds de secours de 2 millions de dollars pour les OBNL francophones.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question is to the Premier. Brampton is a city of over 600,000 people, yet we only have one hospital. Years of underfunding by Liberal and Conservative governments have put Brampton in a health care crisis that was declared before COVID-19. It is so bad at our single hospital in Brampton that patients are often transferred outside of Brampton because there's not enough room. Despite this, the Conservative government actually voted against investing in our health care system.

Brampton deserves better. Enough is enough. Will the Premier commit today to investing to fix our broken health care system, which starts by building another hospital in Brampton?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I can advise the member opposite that, over the last year, since the pandemic started, we have created an additional 3,100 beds in hospitals across Ontario, which is equivalent to six community-sized hospitals. This has happened across the province, including in Brampton, including across Peel.

This is something that we're continuing to build because, anticipating further hospitalizations as a result of the variants of concern—the UK variant, the Brazilian variant and the South African variant—more people are hospitalized. That is why we recently received \$125 million in funding to create an additional 500 beds across

the province. That serves the entire province, including the region of Peel, including Brampton.

This is something we continue to monitor and we continue to reinforce. We continue to put more money into more beds so that if people need to be hospitalized in the province of Ontario, there will be space for them.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Brampton is a city full of essential workers who risk their lives every single day going to work to move our economy. Last week, we learned about a devastating outbreak at a Brampton Amazon fulfillment centre where hundreds of workers were infected with COVID-19—many, new Canadians.

Speaker, this is what health care experts have been warning about since this pandemic started. Workplaces are one of the largest areas of spread for COVID-19, and it's why paid sick days are so important. Will the Premier finally accept the facts? Will he bring in paid sick days so workers don't have to choose between going to work sick or paying the bills, or will he continue to put workers and communities at risk?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As he knows, we of course have 20 paid sick days. I can confirm for him that, of course, we will not be following the NDP's advice. Now is certainly not the time to be reducing sick days from the 20 that are existing to the NDP proposal of 14. I wish they would reconsider that, Mr. Speaker.

We have said right from the beginning that paid sick days are important. That's why the Premier negotiated with his colleagues the other Premiers and the federal government to ensure that not only Ontarians but all Canadians have access to 20 sick days.

But again, to confirm for the member, there is absolutely no way that this government would reduce sick days from the current 20 to the NDP proposal of 14.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. Premier, when you sent thousands of students back to packed classrooms in the fall, you promised that you would do everything in your power to keep them safe. Now, on top of the chaos your government created in schools, hotspots like Scarborough have classrooms empty due to outbreaks of COVID-19, and these schools are now closed. Donwood Park Public School is not in session today.

Speaker, the Premier is cutting \$1.6 billion from classrooms next fall, while Ontario Liberals would invest \$8 billion in schools for our children's safety and their future. Ontario's students, teachers, staff and education workers have faced and overcome enormous challenges during this pandemic, as well as their families and parents. Is the Premier going to saddle them with a funding cut in this week's upcoming budget for education funding?

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

To respond on behalf of the government, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Let me remind the member opposite: It was her government that saddled students and the next generation with a \$15-billion repair backlog. It was this minister specifically and her government that in fact closed 600 net schools in the heart of rural and suburban parts of the province. The most expensive child care was under her leadership, the most expensive hydro—the data points continue; I think it's rather concerning.

What our government is doing, and what our Premier is doing most specifically, is investing in school safety by ensuring that, yes, we've provided \$1.6 billion unlocked for school safety. Part of that is to hire more staff, to ensure our air ventilation systems are improved—of which, 95% of schools have reported improvements in those schools themselves—and PPE extended to staff, extended to the students themselves.

The fact is, Speaker, that 99.2% of schools are open today. Recognizing, as the member opposite has acknowledged, that we do face challenges in Ontario and in the world, we'll continue to remain vigilant and continue to invest in our students.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I would ask the minister to get his facts straight. The FAO has set the school repair backlog at \$14.4 billion as of last fall, so what have you been doing these last two and a half years? Organizations like Fix Our Schools estimate the backlog to be at \$16.3 billion, so it is even growing under your watch.

Instead of pouring money into unneeded highways that nobody wants along that corridor, the Ontario Liberal action plan would invest in rebuilding schools and focus on upgrading HVAC systems, boilers, plumbing and windows. Under our plan, we would have a system for publicly reporting standards of good school repair, as well as investing in new child care spaces.

Speaker, why is this government investing in infrastructure like Highway 413 instead of the priorities for Ontario families, such as schools?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, I stand corrected. The member opposite is correct: It's only a \$14-billion deferred maintenance backlog in our schools in the province of Ontario—only \$14 billion. That's the legacy of the Del Duca Liberals, and I think the people of this province know better not to reward them with four years of government at a time when we need a government focused on the priorities of working families and parents, which includes more investment in health care and education, and tax relief for working people. That is exactly what our Premier has done.

In the context of our schools, we're very proud that, yes, we invest over \$1 billion per annum in maintenance, to ensure that we keep these schools safe and modern. It's why we are investing in broadband expansion to all schools, which will be complete this coming September. It's why we invest half a billion dollars to build new

schools, many of which—an expansion in Scarborough, in my colleague Aris Babikian's riding.

The fact is, Speaker, that we are going to continue to invest more in Scarborough, in Toronto, in every region of the province, because we recognize, after 15 years of neglect by the former government, that there's much more work to do in Ontario.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Speaker, there are increasing concerns among my constituents in Durham about the ongoing issues around opioid addiction and overdose, which I know is not an issue unique to the riding of Durham. Every day, we know that men and women across the province are becoming victims to various deadly substances in our communities. As the minister has said in this House before, they could be brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and friends.

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Recently, some estimates say that overdose rates in Ontario have increased by 59% since last year. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly impacted the mental health of too many Ontarians.

Speaker, could the minister please update the members of this Legislature on what the government is doing to address opioid addiction and overdoses across the province?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'd like to begin by thanking the member from Durham for her great advocacy on behalf of her community and the great work she does here at Queen's Park.

Before the pandemic even hit us, our government committed to doing something about the ongoing issues around substance abuse, including opioid addiction and overdose, that have impacted the lives of Ontarians and, in some cases, entire communities from the Far North.

We know the COVID-19 pandemic has only presented us with more complex challenges. That's why our government took immediate action to provide \$194 million in emergency funding to further expand the many mental health and addictions services which are already being accessed by 62,000 Ontarians. This is in addition to the \$15.5 billion we invested through our Roadmap to Wellness, for additional addictions supports across the province.

We are doing what the past Liberal and NDP governments ignored, and that is investing in a system that will give benefit to all of the people in the province of Ontario when it comes to the health—

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: I know our government is continuing to make investments so Ontarians of all ages can have access to the high-quality mental health and addictions supports they expect and deserve. I want to thank the minister on behalf of the thousands of Ontarians

who are receiving direct support during these difficult times.

As this pandemic continues, there's more work to be done. I know the minister will continue to stand up for those impacted not only by addiction but by mental health challenges as well.

Speaker, would the minister please explain what other investments our government has made to help support Ontarians while on their road to recovery and what investments have been made in those more remote and northern communities?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: We've made many investments throughout the entire province, from the GTA all the way to Ontario's Far North, including many of the remote communities. In fact, we've invested \$32 million in funding specifically to address the needs of those living with mental health and addictions challenges in northern Ontario.

The investments include new funding for in-patient mental health beds, mobile crisis services, both in-home and mobile detox services and opioid addiction services in municipalities like Timmins, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Manitoulin. But that's not all. Recently, we announced a significant investment in Ontario's northwest, including the hiring of up to six psychiatrists. This investment will help around 1,800 unique patients each year through these resources.

Mr. Speaker, I can keep going on about the investments that we've made, but the bottom line is that we're going to continue standing up for mental health and supports for those suffering with addictions. It's our government that is finally going to build a mental health and addictions system that works for everyone in this province.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Ms. Jill Andrew: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Last Monday, when it was revealed that the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Education, the MPP for Niagara West, would attend an anti-choice event where organizers compared legal abortion to the Holocaust, the Premier promised only to talk to his member. It appears this talk was more of a pat on the back than a slap on the wrist, because not only did the member happily join organizers who trivialized the atrocities of the Holocaust, but he spoke in strong opposition of the right to choose.

My question to the Premier is this: Will the Premier tell Ontarians exactly what he said to his member and why he was allowed to attend this event at all?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond for the government, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think the Premier was very clear with respect to his displeasure with the member. But by the same token, I must say I'm equally troubled by the member opposite suggesting that somehow a Premier or a leader would order members or tell them what they can or cannot do as members.

Look, we are in full agreement of how important the issues are that the member across has just raised. We have spoken to the member about it, Mr. Speaker, and hopefully

the member will give a great deal of consideration on attending events like that in the future.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Speaker, to the people of Ontario and my community in St. Paul's, the House leader just rambled for a minute, and I did not hear a single word—nobody in this House heard what the House leader had to say. This is an important issue.

Again, Speaker, through you to the Premier: Even the Premier's colleagues in the federal party are willing to take a stronger stance than he is. In the face of some Conservative Party members attempting to put abortion policy on the convention agenda, the federal Conservative leader came out to publicly state that he is pro-choice. While the federal leader is staring down party members who seek to threaten abortion access, the Premier of Ontario is right here cheering them on with pompos.

Why is the Premier allowing harmful anti-choice sentiment to grow in his Conservative caucus? Can we please get an answer from the Premier of Ontario?

Hon. Paul Calandra: That's absolutely incorrect, Mr. Speaker. We have said right from the beginning, and we continue to be—this Legislature has voted with respect to a woman's right to choose, Mr. Speaker, and we will of course defend that as a government, as this Legislature has on many occasions reaffirmed. There is no wavering on that.

With respect to the member's direct question, yes, we will continue to support a woman's right to choose until this Legislature chooses to do something differently. We will support that and we will defend that at every instance.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: My question is for the Premier. Last week, after months of watching owners of restaurants and bars have to close down their businesses, the government made changes to increase the capacity limits for restaurants, bars and other food and drink establishments in the red and orange zones. For months, establishments in the red zone could only allow 10 people in their premises, and in the orange zone, 50.

The government had the power, due to Bill 195, to make these changes earlier, without requiring a vote in this Legislature, and before many went out of business. What took the government so long?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, I would say to the member opposite: the need for public health measures. We have to keep the level of transmission of COVID-19 under control as much as we can. That's what we've been working towards. The variants of concern have considerably upset the direction that we were headed in, because the variants of concern—the UK, Brazilian and South African—are much more transmissible. They end up in more hospitalizations, more severe cases of COVID and, sadly, more deaths.

That is what we've been following all along. We've been listening to our public health experts, Dr. Williams and the public health measures table, and we had to wait until they felt that changes could be made for the health and safety of all Ontarians, and that's exactly what we did.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Despite their pious claims to the contrary, it doesn't appear that the government is following much science in its decision-making. On the same day last week that capacity limits were increased in red and orange zones, total COVID cases in Ontario spiked to over 1,700 daily for each of the last three days. Last November, when these red and orange capacity limits were set, COVID cases on that day were just over 1,300.

What part of the science is the government following when it decides after months to let restaurants operate even when daily COVID cases are increasing? Couldn't this same decision have been made months ago, before thousands were forced to close down the restaurants due to the government's questionable decision-making?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Once again, we follow public health measures. There were changes that were made, particularly in areas in grey—in Peel and Toronto—to allow for outdoor patios to open as long as the physical distancing measures were followed. But the difference, of course, is the variants of concern. With the original COVID cases moving downward, we could see, and Dr. Brown and his table told us that in their modelling we could see the variants of concern taking over from the original COVID, which we are now seeing.

We are watching that very carefully. We're watching what's happening in our hospitals. We're watching to make sure that our ICU beds are not going to be overwhelmed. All of the work that we're doing is in accordance with the advice that's being given to us by Dr. Williams and the public health measures table, because our first and foremost priority is the health and safety of all Ontarians.

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LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Seniors in long-term-care homes have been in isolation for over a year, many confined to their rooms, separated from their designated caregivers and without meaningful access to the people that love them and provide the support they need to stay mentally and physically healthy. Sitting alone in their rooms, their health rapidly declining, with no stimulation, no exercise, some have lost the will to live. Some die from isolation. Most have not felt fresh air or been out in the sunshine since the beginning of the pandemic.

The majority of long-term-care residents across the province have been vaccinated against COVID-19. Designated caregivers are being vaccinated too. Meaningful access can happen in a safe manner, with proper PPE, testing, and infection prevention and control measures in place. Speaker, why won't the Premier take concrete

action to ensure these families are immediately reunited, that no one is denied meaningful access to their caregivers and that residents in care homes can leave their rooms to enjoy the outdoors?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Back in March of 2020, we had to take the very, very difficult decision to restrict access to visitors into long-term care. That was done with very little understanding of what COVID-19 presented. We now have vaccines, as you mentioned. We now have testing. We have additional measures. However, the science is still evolving. We must continue to be vigilant. If we look at BC, we see homes that were vaccinated, staff and residents, are having outbreaks. This is something that we have to be very, very vigilant and cautious about with these new variants.

We took the action of allowing residents to meet with their essential caregivers. This was an important step in that direction. We know how hard it is on residents and families. There's no doubt about that. The essential caregivers were a step in that direction, including for homes in outbreak. We're continuing to review this with our experts in public health and with the medical and scientific knowledge. I appreciate your concerns.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The minister is saying that caregivers are allowed in even during an outbreak. Yet 90-year-old Heinz Ziebell has not been outside the home in six months, and his family has only ever been allowed window visits with him.

Many long-term-care residents have been locked away and denied meaningful access to their designated essential caregivers for over a year. Policies implemented by care homes across the province differ greatly when it comes to caregiver access or residents going outdoors. The government's guidance means nothing to these homes. Mental and physical decline in care home residents is increasing as isolation takes a devastating toll. For some, it leads to simply giving up, and death.

Vaccines have been the light at the end of a very long tunnel for many residents in long-term care. Medical experts say the vaccines are working. They're reducing the cases of COVID-19 in care homes. We're down to 11 active cases across the entire province.

It's over one year into the pandemic, yet this government continues to allow care homes to deny residents meaningful access to their caregivers and fresh air. The Premier has had a legislative solution before him since September—something they supported—so why won't he immediately pass my More Than a Visitor Act and reunite families once and for all?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Once again, thank you for the important question. There is no doubt that the well-being of residents and their families requires a level of

visitation. That is what we've been trying to do by having the essential caregivers.

If we look at the science, we know that the vaccines are not 100% effective at stopping the transmission. They are not. We have to look at BC and learn from the experiences elsewhere. We are working with our public health units, our medical officers of health. For homes in outbreak, one essential caregiver is permitted for each resident. That is the nature of public health. The medical officers of health do have the ability to restrict that, and we have seen that happen. Public health units may temporarily limit visitors in situations with outbreaks as a precaution.

This is something that we are working on with our partners to understand how we can move forward with the very, very difficult situation when outbreaks occur in homes and deaths occur. We do not want to go back to where we were with wave 1.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last week, the FAO reported that expensive green energy contracts are part of the problem of Ontario's high electricity rates, and with this government's subsidy of rates for large businesses, "the costs are being moved from ratepayers over to the taxpayers" to the tune of \$2.8 billion for the first three years, totalling \$15.2 billion of subsidies by 2040.

Instead of subsidizing big business on the backs of the taxpayer, why won't the government do what is necessary: defend the taxpayer, use the legal power of this Legislature and terminate those green energy contracts for wind and solar early, saving ratepayers and taxpayers billions in the process?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member is quite correct. The former Liberal government's green energy program was implemented in a very disastrous way for the people of the province of Ontario, as the member will know. She campaigned on the promise that was fulfilled by this government to ensure that the Fair Hydro Plan was open and that people could understand the costs of the Fair Hydro Plan. It's very correct on how expensive it has become. It is a multi-billion-dollar expense to the people of the province of Ontario.

That's not to suggest that green energy isn't an important part our energy mix in the province of Ontario; it is, Mr. Speaker. Where the mistake was made by the previous Liberal government was in contracts that we could not afford at a time when we did not need those energy systems put in place. We will continue to ensure that it is open and that people can see it. We followed the advice of the Auditor General, Speaker.

I am confident in the fact that we continue to keep those rates low for all of the people of the province of Ontario, and that energy will continue to be something that is an important driver of economic activity.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Despite promising to cut rates by 12%—another promise made, promise broken—this government has been subsidizing, not cutting, electricity rates, but only for the largest businesses in the province; not, I might add, for residential, farm or small business.

This government has the power to shut down expensive green energy contracts through legislation and to cut rates, but they choose not to. It is the same legislative power the government has used to tell restaurants how many people they can serve.

Additional expensive electricity by wind turbines in the Nation Rise wind project is being constructed in the riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry that will cost ratepayers \$400 million over 20 years for electricity we don't need and that is in surplus.

Why doesn't the government defend the taxpayer, use the power of this Legislature the same way it uses its power on restaurants, and legislate an end to these green energy contracts, and decommission surplus wind turbine projects, starting with the Nation Rise project?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course the member will know that we have reviewed all of the contracts, Mr. Speaker. Those contracts that could be terminated were terminated early on; one of the first things that we did as a government.

We have continued to keep rates low for the people of the province of Ontario. In fact, when compared to what the costs of energy would have been had the Liberals been re-elected, we've been able to reduce those by 18%.

We've gone even further during the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, by reducing rates for all of the people across Ontario, including businesses: small, medium and large job creators. They're an important part of the economy, whether it's restaurants or whether it's our large job creators. They are an important part of keeping this economy going so that we can continue to pay for safe schools, long-term care and health care.

I certainly make no apologies for helping individual Ontarians, and certainly no apologies for helping small, medium and large job creators, which are so important to the economic recovery of the province of Ontario.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. A 64-year-old St. Catharines resident, Rick McCallion, is living with cancer. Rick recently called in to public health. He was asking when he could expect to get his vaccine in Niagara. Mr. McCallion was told it could be June. This would be slower than other regions. Since Niagara has the second-highest concentration of seniors in Ontario, it will take longer to vaccinate our seniors, given our allotment of vaccines.

I stood in this House and I said it before: Our pharmacies have the capacity; our dense senior community has the need. Will the Premier recognize that Niagara has one of the oldest populations in Ontario? In addition, will the Premier guarantee we top the list for immediate inclusion in the pharmacy vaccination rollout?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. We are in the process right now of expanding the number of pharmacies that will be able to administer the vaccine. That will be done within the next two weeks. We expect to double that to approximately 700 pharmacies across the province, including in Niagara, and then doubling that again within the next month.

1130

However, given the situation that the member just suggested with respect to this gentleman who has a pre-existing condition, this is a situation where, likely, he will receive a call from his primary care provider, who will also be receiving the vaccines. He will be able to then go to his primary care provider to receive his vaccine, whatever type it may be. That is what has been planned by the vaccine committee and the vaccine task force. For people with pre-existing conditions, because the primary care provider is aware of those specific conditions, the primary care provider will be reaching out to them and making appointments for them to receive their vaccinations within their primary care provider's office.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I just want to start by thanking Niagara public health. They're doing an incredible job on our vaccines.

As my colleague mentioned, Niagara has one of the highest concentrations of seniors in the country. Those seniors were put at risk in January when this government diverted over 5,500 doses of Moderna vaccine away from Niagara. The only way to keep them safe and save lives in Niagara is by ramping up the vaccine efforts.

Pharmacies in my riding are ready to do what they do best, and that's save lives. A great local partner, Simpson's Pharmacy, has 3,500 people on a wait-list. They just need the supply of vaccines so they can do their job.

Will you move immediately to include Niagara in the areas in which pharmacies can administer vaccines? A simple yes or no would do.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, all of the public health units in Ontario, all 34 of them, are doing an amazing job getting the vaccines out. We have administered over 1.5 million doses thus far and protected our residents of long-term care, retirement homes and other areas, and we're working through. We've got the majority of people over 80 vaccinated in most if not all of the public health units, which is why we've been able to move that down to age 75. That's where they are receiving applications and times to receive the vaccines.

But before I get into the substance of my answer, I think it's time to dispel a myth that has been circulating in Niagara that Niagara is not receiving their fair share of vaccines. That is not so. Vaccines are being distributed fairly in Niagara. In fact, Niagara is receiving above their fair share of vaccines. We will continue to allocate vaccines based on population and based on particular circumstances, but Niagara is receiving the vaccines that they're entitled to.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the associate minister of health responsible for mental health and addictions. The Kirkland Lake opioid task force is meeting on a regular basis to deal with the increased opioid addiction problem in Timiskaming. One of the things that has come to our attention is that during the COVID epidemic, Timiskaming has been left—it's basically a treatment desert, because the treatment centres are all in our major centres, in northern Ontario. If you are addicted or want help, or quite frankly need mental health services, Timiskaming is not the place to live, because we're being excluded.

The minister just said in one of his responses that the Tory plan should work for everyone in the province. I question and ask whether he would work with the opioid task force and work himself to make sure that the people in Timiskaming have equivalent services as the rest of the province.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: As the member opposite I'm sure is aware, our government was the government that implemented the Roadmap to Wellness about a year ago. The Roadmap to Wellness is a foundational document based on work that goes back to 2010—which, I might add, nothing had been done with until our government came to power.

We made a commitment of investing \$3.8 billion in mental health and addictions in the province. We've started by laying the foundational work that needed to be done. In addition to looking at the lifespan and the age groups within the lifespan of an individual, from birth to death, we looked at how we will implement and develop a scale in each constituency where individuals will have the supports they need closest to their homes. That is a fundamental part of what we're doing.

In addition to that, we're also developing a strategy to ensure that culturally appropriate services are delivered—whether it's farmers, whether it's Indigenous communities, we are building a model. Of course, with COVID-19, we have had to speed up the things that we're doing with respect to virtual care. But we are building that model, and we're looking after every person in the province of Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROTECTING ONTARIO ELECTIONS ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ÉLECTIONS EN ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 254, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to elections and members of the Assembly / Projet de loi 254,

Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les élections et les députés à l'Assemblée.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We now have a number of deferred votes. We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 254, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to elections and members of the Assembly.

On March 3, 2021, Mr. Downey moved second reading of Bill 254, and on March 11, 2021, Mr. Gill moved that the question be now put.

The bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes on Mr. Gill's motion that the question be now put. I will ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1207.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 254, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to elections and members of the Assembly, has been held.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 41; the nays are 32.

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

Pursuant to standing order 51, I am now required to put the question. On March 3, 2021, Mr. Downey moved second reading of Bill 254, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to elections and members of the Assembly. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, the bells will now ring for 15 minutes, during which time—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 41; the nays are 32.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have another deferred vote. On February 17, 2021, Ms. Khanjin moved government notice of motion 101, referred to in government order number 60, regarding amendments to the standing orders.

On March 11, 2021, Mr. Calandra moved the following amendment to government notice of motion number 101, that the motion be amended as follows:

That the words "for the duration of the 42nd Parliament" be deleted; and

That the following be added:

"Standing order 77(d) is amended to add the words 'the government House leader,' before the words 'the minister';

"Standing order 120 is amended by adding the following clauses:

"120(d) Where the Chair of a standing committee is a member of the party forming the government, the Vice-Chair shall be a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government or an independent member; and where the Chair is a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government, the Vice-Chair shall be a member of the party forming the government.

"120(e) Failing the appointment of a Vice-Chair pursuant to clause (d), any other member of the committee may be appointed as a Vice-Chair."

On March 11, 2021, Mr. Hatfield moved the following amendment to the amendment to government notice of motion 101: that the amendment be amended by adding the following words after "government" at the end of clause 120(d):

"And that the appointments made under the standing order must be agreed to by the party assuming the vice-chairship."

The vote is on Mr. Hatfield's amendment to the amendment to government notice of motion 101. The bells will now ring for 15 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I will ask the Clerks to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote, in reverse? Same vote, in reverse.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 32; the nays are 41.

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

Motion negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Are members now ready for the question on the amendment to government notice of motion 101? No?

Members not being ready for the question, the debate may resume now at another time.

TENANT PROTECTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on private members' notice of motion number 143, as moved by Ms. Berns-McGown. The bells will now ring for 15 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I'll ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1213 to 1228.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on private members' notice of motion number 143 has been held.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 27; the nays are 39.

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

Motion negatived.

AWENEN NIIN ACT (WHO AM I)
RESPECTING IDENTITY
DOCUMENTS, 2021

LOI AWENEN NIIN (QUI SUIS-JE)
DE 2021 CONCERNANT
LES PIÈCES D'IDENTITÉ

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

Bill 256, An Act to amend the Photo Card Act, 2008 and the Vital Statistics Act respecting access to identification documents / Projet de loi 256, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2008 sur les cartes-photo et la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil en ce qui concerne l'accès aux pièces d'identité.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of An Act to amend the Photo Card Act, 2008 and the Vital Statistics Act respecting access to identification documents. The bells will now ring for 15 minutes, during which—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 27; the nays are 39.

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

Second reading negated.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1229 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

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

Bill 238, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 238, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

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

Report adopted.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 245, An Act to amend and repeal various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Ontario Land Tribunal Act, 2021 / Projet de loi 245, Loi modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois, abrogeant divers règlements et édictant la Loi de 2021 sur le Tribunal ontarien de l'aménagement du territoire.

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

Report adopted.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WHITTRICK N D T SERVICES LTD. ACT, 2021

Ms. Fife moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr50, An Act to revive Whittrick N D T Services Ltd.

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): Pursuant to standing order 89, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

2560462 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2021

Mr. Crawford moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr41, An Act to revive 2560462 Ontario Ltd.

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): Pursuant to standing order 89, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Linda Hachez, who collected these petitions during the pandemic in a very safe way. They read as follows:

Ban "Retirement Home PPE Charges...."

"Whereas Ontario's retirement homes are largely privately owned corporations; and

“Whereas these ... businesses have a responsibility” for providing “personal protective equipment (PPE) to their employees; and

“Whereas many retirement homes are adding PPE charges to the residents’ monthly bill, but the PPE is not for the residents but for the employees of the ... home; and

“Whereas residents of some Sudbury retirement homes have effectively organized letter-writing campaigns and actions to have the PPE charges to residents cancelled and recognized as a retirement home’s cost of doing business;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Treat our province’s seniors with respect and ban any additional COVID-related fees, including PPE, to retirement home residents.”

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

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Stephen Crawford: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas since the start of the pandemic, the growth of e-commerce has exploded and online shopping has doubled in Canada;

“Whereas with the dramatic increase in doorstep deliveries, thieves have more opportunities than ever before to steal packages addressed to consumers;

“Whereas one in three online shoppers in Canada say they’ve had a package stolen from outside their home;

“Whereas, if passed, the Trespass to Property Amendment Act would:

—make Ontario the first province in Canada to impose provincial fines for package piracy;

—impose a minimum fine of \$500 for a first offence, \$1,000 for a second offence, \$2,000 for each subsequent conviction, up to a maximum of \$10,000;

—create a deterrent for package pirates while offering more protection to consumers, retailers and couriers from this costly crime;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario vote on and pass the Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2020.”

I support this petition and will sign it and give it to the appropriate person.

INTERNET ACCESS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition to support affordable Internet access for those on the Ontario Disability Support Program and those on Ontario Works.

“Whereas the CRTC states it is important for all Canadians to be able to connect to quality Internet services at affordable prices;

“Whereas Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients live significantly below the poverty line, a gap that continues to grow;

“Whereas our dependence on the Internet has increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic;

“Whereas free public WiFi access—from libraries to coffee shops—has been severely reduced or completely eliminated due to the pandemic, and even when they are operating in full capacity, these places are not appropriate for confidential or private meetings;

“Whereas lower-cost Internet options may exist in some urban areas, in northern Ontario, Internet prices skyrocket to \$100 a month or more;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately amend the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program directive to include financial support for the cost of ongoing Internet access.”

I fully support it. I’m going to affix my name and make sure it gets put into the record.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Joanne Larocque from Val Caron in my riding for these petitions.

“Till Death Do Us Part....”

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

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Christine Hogarth: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas since the start of the pandemic, the growth of e-commerce has exploded and online shopping has doubled in Canada;

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“Whereas with the dramatic increase in doorstep deliveries, thieves have more opportunities than ever before to steal packages addressed to consumers;

“Whereas one in three online shoppers in Canada say they’ve had a package stolen from outside their home;

“Whereas, if passed, the Trespass to Property Amendment Act would:

“—make Ontario the first province in Canada to impose provincial fines for package piracy;

“—impose a minimum fine of \$500 for a first offence, \$1,000 for a second offence, \$2,000 for each subsequent conviction, up to a maximum of \$10,000;

“—create a deterrent for package pirates while offering more protection to consumers, retailers and couriers from this costly crime;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario vote on and pass the Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2020.”

I support this petition. I'm happy to sign it and bring it over to the Clerk.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Brian and Sue Lepage for these petitions. They read as follows:

“MS Specialized Clinic in Sudbury....”

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good afternoon. I'd like to thank Alison Ellwoods, Durham District School Board grade 7 virtual class for sending me this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the city of Pickering wants to develop a warehouse and parking lot on a protected wetland in Pickering; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry designated this wetland provincially significant and therefore the TRCA” should “not allow it to be zoned for this type of development; and

“Whereas the city of Pickering, region of Durham and the provincial government avoided consultation by using a” ministerial “zoning order ... to approve the development; and

“Whereas wetlands protect our homes, businesses, roads and infrastructure from flooding and provide a natural filter for our drinking water free of charge; and

“Whereas wetlands are important habitat for plants and animals including migratory birds, endangered species, and native plants; and

“Whereas this is part of the territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, who have not been consulted as part of their treaty rights; and

“Whereas there are three other locations proposed by the TRCA where the warehouse and parking lot can be built that won't have such a negative impact on this important watershed;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to revoke the MZO and stop the warehouse development on provincially significant Duffins Creek wetland.”

I fully support this petition, will sign it and send it to the table.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: These petitions were collected by Sarah, who lives in Brant, but represent youth from all over Ontario.

“Whereas:

“—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

“—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on screen;

“—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

“—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

“—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated” for children;

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act...;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

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

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. John Fraser: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Stop Highway 413; Invest in Our Schools.

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal Party will stop” the Ford government’s “reward for” their “billionaire friends and invest \$8 billion to build and repair our schools instead;

“Whereas an Ontario Liberal government would make killing ... sprawl-spreading Highway 413 its first act, and instead use the funds that would pay for it to invest \$8 billion over five years to build and repair publicly funded schools in every corner of the province;

“Whereas Ontario Liberals will work relentlessly to improve the lives of people who call this province home by investing in schools and creating jobs;

“Whereas” the “Conservatives are content to destroy ... wetlands, farmland and greenbelt while handing out freebies” to “their billionaire friends;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... to support building schools, not Highway 413.”

I agree with this petition, and I’m going to affix my signature to it.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Nancy Bélanger for this petition.

“Pandemic Pay....

“Whereas the pandemic pay eligibility needs to be expanded as well as made retroactive to the beginning of the state of emergency; and

“Whereas Premier Ford stated repeatedly that the workers on the front lines have his full support but this is hard to believe given that so many do not qualify; and

“Whereas the list of eligible workers and workplaces should be expanded; and

“Whereas all front-line workers should be properly compensated;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To call on the Ford government to expand the \$4-per-hour pandemic pay to include all front-line workers that have put the needs of their community first and make the pay retroactive to the day the state of emergency was declared, so that their sacrifice and hard work to keep us safe is recognized.”

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

DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier les gens de Thunder Bay qui m’ont envoyé ces pétitions.

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

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

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

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

Ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario « qu’elle s’assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur tous les documents et cartes émis par le gouvernement de l’Ontario, » et ce, le plus tôt possible.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I move that, pursuant to standing order 50 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 257, An Act to enact the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021 and to make other amendments in respect of infrastructure and land use planning matters;

That when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, at such time, the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

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That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Thursday, March 25, 2021, from 9 a.m. until 10 a.m. to receive a 20-minute opening statement on the bill, jointly, from the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, followed by 40 minutes of question and answer divided into two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of five minutes for the independent member of the committee; and

That the committee be authorized to meet for the purpose of public hearings on Friday, March 26, 2021, from 9 a.m. until 12 noon and from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m.; and

That the Clerk of the Standing Committee on General Government, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to the bill:

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 12 noon on Wednesday, March 24, 2021; and

—That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear; and

—That each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters, by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24, 2021; and

—That witnesses shall be scheduled in groups of three for each one-hour time slot, with each presenter allotted seven minutes for an opening statement followed by 39 minutes of questioning for all three witnesses, divided into two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent member of the committee; and

—That the deadline for written submissions be 7 p.m. on Friday, March 26, 2021; and

—That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 noon on Monday, March 29, 2021; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Tuesday, March 30, 2021, from 9 a.m. until 10 a.m., from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m. and from 6:30 p.m. until midnight for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That on Tuesday, March 30, 2021, at 6:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto; and at this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, if requested by a member of the committee, pursuant to standing order 132(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, March 31, 2021, and if the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed passed by the committee and shall be deemed reported to and received by the House; and

That upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on General Government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day; and

That when the order for third reading is called, four hours shall be allotted to debate with one hour and 45 minutes for members of the government party, one hour and 45 minutes for members of the official opposition and 30 minutes for the independent members as a group; and

That except in the case of a recorded division arising from morning orders of the day, no deferral of the second reading vote on the bill shall be permitted. Filed March 11, 2021.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion 104. Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: We heard the unanimous support in the communities about the importance of the Supporting Broadband and Infrastructure Expansion Act. When I was able to speak to this bill in the House, I talked about Glenn and Cheryl Todd, a couple who live in Innisfil. They are really happy that the government is accelerating the infrastructure and red tape elimination that is necessary to build broadband faster. They're a retired couple, so it's not about them, but it's about the next generation.

As we saw through COVID-19, having equal access to the Internet and proper broadband is an imperative all of

us need so that all of us have fairness and we can all work from home.

Many individuals I have talked to in my community are working from home or doing other charitable things and need proper access to broadband.

For example, Pastor Howard Courtney is the founder of Innisfil Community Church. They've been there for 40 years, in the town of Innisfil. For many of those years, they've struggled with their Internet. They've had a very difficult time finding any kind of formal way to be able to do some of the services they provide over the Internet, but with time, they were very hopeful that they would be able to have proper broadband access.

So with this particular bill that we need to swiftly pass—pun intended there, Speaker, because there is no time to wait. That's why we're trying to pass this as quickly as possible.

Let me bring it back to why it's so important to pass this as quickly as possible.

Pastor Howard Courtney does incredible work at Innisfil Community Church. He runs the food bank for Innisfil out of his church. He runs a clothing drive out of his church. He runs many different programs—for example, for those who are coping with addictions or need some help with family matters or marital matters. He provides this all from the church. Normally, people would go in and be able to get the services, but during COVID-19—like many in our community, he wants to make sure the community is safe, so he started pivoting and providing a lot of those services online. He quickly discovered that he didn't have the swiftest Internet connection. He called my office and said, "Andrea, I plead with you; is there anything you can do?" After several calls I made, we were able to find an interim solution for his Internet connectivity issue. So he's up and running, very quickly. He's very happy with the service. He has reached out to me and thanked me for my work—but I couldn't do that without the support of my colleagues here in the House, who are all supporting this bill. They recognize the importance of nation-building and connecting our communities from coast to coast to coast.

Speaker, we've been here in history before: We've been here with the telephone, when we embraced the telephone; we've been here with the railway, when we built our railway back in the 18th century and 19th century—all things that connect Canadians from coast to coast together. They allow them to do business better. They allow them to connect with their families.

Now we're at a pivotal moment in history, again, when Ontario can make its step in the ground—as they did with the railway, it can put that nail into the railway and start real progress here.

If our federal counterparts are watching, I really urge them to also get on board and to help us with expanding broadband Internet connections throughout our community—because as I've talked to my community, what they've told me is that this is needed now.

For example, someone I talk to quite often is the former mayor of Innisfil, Barb Baguley, a great, involved

Rotarian. She helps with countless charities: the YMCA—I can name many more, but it would take up much more of my speaking time to dedicate everything that Barb is doing.

Barb, if you're watching: Thank you so much for everything you're doing, and of course, your companion in crime, your husband—for everything you guys do in our community.

She said to me that for years they had existed on dial-up and then very slow Internet. They could not watch YouTube videos or download any documents of significant size. When she was on town council, she would have to drive from her home to the town hall, 15 minutes away, to download agendas and support material. Now they have slightly faster Internet at home, but it's costly, of course. She says she can't imagine being able to keep employment during the pandemic if she had to rely on rural Internet to do her job at home. She said, "If I had students trying to do 'home-schooling' in our home—it could not happen." This really gives you a perspective as to why it's so important to pass this very quickly.

But it's not just the former mayor of Innisfil—the current mayor, Mayor Lynn Dollin, former president of AMO, has done really great things in our community. She said, "Access to reliable Internet has long been an issue in Innisfil. In fact, it is a key component of our strategic plan to ensure our community is connected. We have been working hard to strengthen our digital connectivity by encouraging high-speed Internet service and community WiFi for some time now, but it is more important now than ever before. With everything turning digital overnight due to COVID-19, residents who do not have reliable access to the Internet are being left behind. Our community has shared the social, economic and health impacts they are suffering as a result—even likening access to high-speed Internet to other essential services such as water and electricity. The broadband and infrastructure expansion act will help our community stay connected and ensure that all of our residents can work, learn and communicate on an equal playing field."

1330

If we didn't have proper and equal access to broadband, it would stymie many of the projects we're working on in Innisfil. For example, many here may know of the DMZ at Ryerson, the Digital Media Zone. We have a satellite campus in Innisfil that we've worked hard on, and the town has really stepped up to the plate with their economic development department. If we're building all these apps, if we're building a start-up community in Innisfil, of course we're going to need proper broadband to do that—for work, not just to watch our favourite shows after work.

Those who also work within the social media zone and who work on the Internet quite a bit, like Sarah Taylor, an active member in the Barrie community, both on the chamber and various BNIs, and someone who does countless things—she helps with Rainbows for kids. She also understands why better access for broadband is really needed now and why we need to pass it swiftly. She recognizes that this funding—obviously some of the

funding that we've delivered to my area through the Minister of Infrastructure—is going to be able to help businesses throughout the community, and she has worked with members all over, from Thornton to Cookstown and Innisfil, as well as Barrie. When she's in her BNI meetings—there was a time when there were about 22 people in the BNI meeting, and they were having issues; WiFi was cutting in and out. To her point, she said, "How are you supposed to have a productive meeting when the WiFi keeps going down and disrupting the conversation?" I couldn't agree with you more, Sarah Taylor, so if you're watching—we're acting swiftly, trying to get this broadband bill passed as quickly as possible, so that you can have a proper connection to Internet.

Speaker, we also have a college in our area. As many know, Georgian College connects all of Simcoe county and areas. I was talking with MaryLynn Moynes, the president and CEO of Georgian College, and she's glad that this bill is going to be swiftly passed, as well. She said, "With seven campuses across central Ontario, access to reliable broadband is a critical issue for Georgian College, our students and employees. Georgian has demonstrated incredible agility to pivot and be digitally innovative during the pandemic, but many of our students and employees are challenged by the lack of reliable broadband in their rural communities. To support the future success of our students, workforce and communities across Ontario, we need equitable access to broadband to bridge the gap and close the digital divide."

There are several campuses of Georgian College across Simcoe county area.

Over the weekend, I joined my colleagues to announce record-breaking funding for Georgian College to help students with mental health and really help Georgian College bring more students up so they can achieve their full potential. A lot of that is going to be through this bill, which is another reason why we need the Building Broadband Faster Act passed quite swiftly. I know that many people in this Legislature support that, and I urge the opposition to join us to swiftly pass this, because people cannot wait. Whether it's the CFIB, whether it's the different chambers of commerce, whether it's the Glens of the world—and, of course, his wife, Cheryl—they can't wait. So I do urge that everyone support us today to pass this. Slow Internet affects many people's day-to-day; it affects their personal life and their work life. So I ask everyone to stand up right now, in this pivotal part of our history, for broader access to Internet. Stand up with this side of the House and join us to connect people much quicker, much swifter, because this is a nation-building opportunity, and I don't think anyone wants to miss out.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, today is World Water Day, and we are here debating a bill that will enable the government—one minister of this government—to issue ministerial zoning orders to allow the paving-over of provincially significant wetlands. That is a problem for those of us on this side of the House, for the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who have spoken out against this wrongful and reckless misuse of government authority.

Wetlands are critical to our ecosystem in this province. They provide flood mitigation. They prevent soil erosion. They provide habitat for wildlife. They prevent flooding. We have seen the impact of severe weather events in this province because of climate change. We need wetlands more than ever to prevent flooding. Yet this government is prepared to go ahead with legislation that allows the government to continue to issue ministerial zoning orders that would enable the paving over of wetlands.

I listened to the member across the way and she did not once mention schedule 3 of this bill in all of her pleas to fast-track this bill through the Legislature. She talked about broadband. And yes, one would expect that a bill that is called the Supporting Broadband and Infrastructure Expansion Act would address the broadband needs of people in the province of Ontario. It's unfortunate, and a concern, Speaker, that at the same time the bill allows the government to designate broadband projects of provincial significance, at no time, anywhere in the bill, does it refer to the needs of northern or rural communities.

I want to recognize some of the people who live in the London area who have been very public about their frustration about lack of access to broadband.

Thames Centre deputy mayor Kelly Elliott talked about one of the first meetings that her municipal council had to have right after the pandemic was declared in March 2020. She couldn't connect to that meeting. She tried to log in from home. She lives just outside Thorndale, which is only a couple of kilometres away from London. She couldn't connect to the very first meeting that that municipal council needed to hold to deal with the dire impacts of the pandemic on people in her community. She said that the problem wasn't with her home computer or faulty software; it was the lack of reliable high-speed Internet in the rural area where she lives. She went on to say that this highlights a long-standing issue that, in the midst of a pandemic, has blossomed into much more than a mere annoyance. She sees the lack of broadband access as a health and safety issue, with most Canadians locked down at home in need of online access to the latest COVID-19 news.

Speaker, we agree. That's why we think that rural and northern communities should have been mentioned in this bill. They should have been acknowledged as places where the need for broadband is particularly important.

Interestingly, Kelly Elliott posted again, just a couple of months ago—in January, so eight months after she had first gone public with her frustrations. This time, she wrote:

“Tired of Waiting

“Today, rural children are struggling to access their virtual education, rural Canadians cannot access resources and programming when it comes to health care—including mental health resources.

“Municipalities are struggling to market themselves for investments when a business cannot operate without basic Internet.... In the year 2021 where our lives are dependent on a virtual world, what do you say to rural Canadians who are struggling and are being told ‘just wait [nine] more

years,’ when they have already struggled and waited for so long?”

Speaker, people like Kelly Elliott, people who live in small and rural and northern communities in this province, deserve to have expanded broadband access. They deserve to have legislation that will address that need, instead of legislation that includes a poison pill like the expanded ministerial authority to issue MZOs, which is completely going to taint any process of public input that this government wants to proceed with under the terms of this time allocation motion.

1340

The other caution that we would raise on behalf of the official opposition is to acknowledge recent events that have happened since this bill was last debated in this place on March 11. The bill was being debated through second reading. A debate was held on March 11. Two days later, there was an announcement that Amazon had decided against building its next warehouse on the provincially significant wetlands that were the subject of the ministerial zoning order. The mayor of Pickering called for a pause on wetland development after the news came out of the Amazon deal. Speaker, this would have been the opportunity for the government to remove schedule 3 from this bill so that the bill could go forward in a meaningful way, and invite consultation on the very important broadband provisions of the bill. Instead, this government has stood firm behind MZOs.

In fact, we heard the Premier, during question period, talk about how much he loves MZOs. He said he's “proud to announce that we have MZOs” and “will never stop issuing MZOs, for the people of Ontario.” The government has chosen to double down on its insistence to ram through MZOs at a speed that is astonishing, when you look at the use of MZOs over the last decade. I note that this government has issued 43 MZOs in the last three years, and 33 of those MZOs have been issued just since April, so in less than a year.

This government is using ministerial authority to override the provincial policy statement, to override the Planning Act, to override municipal planning documents, to override municipal bylaws. These are the powers that the government wants to embed in a bill that should be focused on expanding broadband access. The government's refusal to revoke the MZO that is currently the subject of a court case, its refusal to pull schedule 3 out of Bill 257 flies in the face of what the people of Ontario are actually saying.

I want to acknowledge London West constituent Jane Edwards, who sent me an email on the weekend. The title of her email is, “Don't become Ontario's Bolsonaro: Remove schedule 3 from Bill 257.” She wrote:

“I love this beautiful province of Ontario. The calming green forests, the water flow of brilliant rivers, wetlands which are home to many interesting animals make this province one of the most beautiful places on earth.

“Minister Clark”—she was writing to the minister—“why would you and your fellow Conservatives want to destroy these beautiful spaces? This government has

quietly destroyed many of the environmental regulations we had to protect our province. Your government will be remembered for removing protections on our watersheds and therefore putting our drinking water at risk, paving over wetlands and forests, damaging rivers and destroying watersheds so developers can make a buck. Or millions of bucks.

“It smacks of the rampant destruction of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil.

“The preservation of beautiful and environmentally important spaces is important to the mental health and physical health of all the people of Ontario.”

I appreciate Jane’s comments.

Jane is not the only person who has reached out to MPP offices to raise concerns, to sound the alarm about Bill 257. I know that all MPPs have been receiving a flood of emails over the last couple of weeks from people who are very, very concerned about schedule 3 in Bill 257.

Speaker, for a government that claims to want to be responsive to the needs of all the people of this province—I think they should listen to the words of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, which has also expressed significant concerns about this government’s frequent use of MZOs to undermine the long tradition of land use planning and the laws around land use planning that exist in this province. And it’s not just the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—a letter that was jointly signed by the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, the National Farmers Union—Ontario, Ontario Farmland Trust, Ontario Nature and Environmental Defence also talked about the risk to farmland, drinking water and natural areas from the overuse of minister’s zoning orders.

Anyone who is listening today might wonder, why would the government be putting our natural resources, our precious wetlands in such jeopardy?

I have to acknowledge my colleague the member for Waterloo, who rose in this House and asked a question of the government, pointing out that many of the developers who are benefiting from the MZOs are actually donors to the Progressive Conservative Party. I know we don’t want to impugn motive—we would never want to impugn motive—but it does raise the question of why these ministerial zoning orders are being issued. At least 19 of those MZOs that have been issued by this government has benefited PC Party donors and insiders, and that is so deeply troubling. It’s beyond belief that this government would be putting precious agricultural land—and my colleague the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, who is the agriculture critic for our party, talks about the rate of loss of farmland in this province. Ontario is losing 175 acres of farmland a day. With these MZOs, we are now at serious risk of losing not only more farmland but also other provincially significant areas, like wetlands and resources that should be protected.

Speaker, I have to say that we do not support fast-tracking Bill 257 through the legislative process. We’re very concerned about the fact that people have until Wednesday—today is Monday. People have until Wednesday to sign up to appear before the committee. There’s

one day of hearings for the public, at which point only 24 individuals or organizations will be able to speak.

My own experience, when I was on the committee that dealt with the question of absolving long-term-care home owners of liability, and it had thrown in a completely unrelated provision about ranked ballots in London, is that you can’t do justice to a bill that is in the process of public input when you have such a contentious and controversial provision that’s included in the bill.

The people who might want to come to this committee to speak about the importance of broadband—people like the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—might want to be coming to speak about broadband, but they’re also going to want to address the threat that is posed by schedule 3 and the changes to ministerial zoning orders.

The final thing that I would like to address is the fact that in addition to MZOs benefiting developers who are Conservative Party donors, this government is also currently subject to a lawsuit that was filed by a number of environmental organizations over the decision to grant the original MZO for Duffins Creek.

1350

Speaker, schedule 3 of Bill 257 may be a convenient way to avoid legal action and it may be a convenient way to help to continue rewarding Conservative donors, but it is an affront to the people of this province who care about our environment, who care about climate change and who care about maintaining Ontario as that green and beautiful place my constituent talked about.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to speak on the time allocation motion for Bill 257. I found it interesting, listening to the debate, and particularly the member from Barrie–Innisfil, who led off this debate for the government side, not mentioning schedule 3 once in her remarks—and I understand why: because this time allocation motion fast-tracks a frontal assault on environmental protections, farmland protections and land use development in the province of Ontario.

What does making an MZO exempt from the provincial policy statement actually do?

First of all, we have to understand what the provincial policy statement is—and I know land use planning can get a little technical and boring for folks. The PPS outlines a vision for how we’re going to manage our limited resources, and particularly our limited land resources, in the province of Ontario. It outlines how we can plan appropriately to not only protect ourselves but future generations.

Schedule 3 says that one person, the minister, has the power to, essentially, override all of that land use planning that has been put in place to protect farmland.

Speaker, do you know that only 5% of Ontario’s land is suitable for growing food and that less than half of 1% is prime farmland? If we bulldoze and pave over all of it, how are we going to feed ourselves? Do you realize that we’ve already paved over 75% of the wetlands in southern Ontario? If we pave over any more, we’re putting people’s

lives at risk, people's property at risk, our communities at risk, our public infrastructure at risk. There's a reason these rules are in place.

What I find so ironic about this particular one is that right now, as we speak, the city of Toronto is spending well in excess of a billion dollars to try to repair the lower Don Valley wetlands that were all paved over because of all the flooding that's happening in Toronto now—and we have to try to fix that. Now they want to do the exact same thing in Pickering-Ajax by paving over the Duffins Creek wetlands. That's what schedule 3 is all about. But it goes beyond that, because it essentially says the minister can just override the PPS anywhere in the province of Ontario.

Let's dig into the timeline on this. On October 30, the government issued an MZO that would allow the destruction of the lower Duffins Creek wetlands—and I actually asked a question about this that day, because it was so obvious that this was an egregious attack on significant environmental protections. When the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, or TRCA, said, “Whoa, we're probably not going to approve this,” the government doubled down in their budget bill, passing amendments to schedule 6. That schedule was already highly controversial because it was gutting the ability of conservation authorities to protect our drinking water, to protect us from flooding. The government said, “We're going to double down on that and actually say that the minister can force a conservation authority to override science and evidence and what all the experts are saying about protecting us.” So it took the government—December, January, February, March—about four months to use this extreme and extraordinary power they gave themselves. Then they issued a directive to Toronto and Region Conservation Authority that they had to issue a development permit in Duffins Creek, which TRCA has made very clear they did under duress. Then, the exact same day, they introduced Bill 257—a bill that some of us were pretty excited about, because we need to expand broadband and Internet access in the province of Ontario. But then we open it up and we find schedule 3, which, essentially, overrides the PPS and does it retroactively, because they had had a lawsuit against them for violating the law around the provincial policy statement.

Environmental Defence said this schedule is “an attack on the public's constitutional right to seek judicial review of unlawful decisions.” I would think that people would want to come to committee talk about that. I would think that people are going to want to come to committee and talk about that. I would think that people are going to want to come to committee and talk about blowing up the provincial policy statement and, essentially, land use planning in this province.

I want to quote Chief Kelly LaRocca of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation regarding schedule 3 of Bill 257: “The province's efforts to change the rules to help a developer demonstrate an absolute disregard for our Indigenous and treaty rights.” I'm thinking some people are going to want to come to committee and talk about that in relation to schedule 3 of Bill 257, as well.

The bottom line is, the government has an opportunity to remove this schedule. Amazon has pulled out of Duffins Creek. The developer has said, “Let's pull out of this.” Pickering now is saying, “Put it on pause.” Clearly, nobody wants this warehouse on Duffins Creek because they recognize the risk associated with doing it.

Likewise, people don't want the government to have that power for numerous MZOs that could come in the future that violate the provincial policy statement. People need time to come to committee to talk about that issue, in addition to all the people who definitely will want to come to committee and talk about broadband and expanding broadband access in this province.

So I encourage the members opposite to think about the legacy they want to leave behind and remove schedule 3 from this bill.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House and speak about issues. Some are tougher than others.

Today, there's a time allocation motion on Bill 257. What the Conservative government likes to talk about is the broadband issue of the bill. What the opposition likes to talk about is the part—the broadband part is very good for rural Ontario, but schedule 3 could be extremely detrimental for the people of rural Ontario. To mix the two together is an affront to them.

What a time allocation motion does is, basically, it condenses the legislative process. The most dangerous part about it is that it condenses the part where people can actually insert themselves in the political process, because people often have legitimate viewpoints that perhaps we don't think of as legislators, or that political staff, who draft the legislation, don't think of or don't want to think of.

That's why committee is so important, and that's why the most important part of committee is having people come to committee to depute. That is being restricted in this time allocation motion. Specifically, the time that they have to prepare and the overall time that they can make a deputation is very short, so you're automatically going to exclude a lot of people.

1400

I don't think anyone who has been here for any length of time—no debate regarding time allocation is complete until you quote the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and his description of time allocation. He would come down—and it was a guillotine. I don't want to hit it really hard, because for Hansard, if you hit it too hard—it was the guillotine of democracy. All his colleagues, who were, at that time, on the opposition bench, agreed. All of a sudden, the tables have turned now. Those members are on the government side, and all of a sudden, the guillotine of democracy doesn't look so bad. I'm questioning: Is it the ethics that have changed, or were they never serious—because it is; I agree. I respect the member from Nipissing—he has a long riding name. He is now the Minister of Natural Resources; that's much easier for me

to remember. When he was in opposition, he was very, very opposed to time allocation.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Times have changed.

Mr. John Vanthof: Times are a-changin'. That's Bob Dylan, I believe.

The government wants to talk about broadband. I would love to talk about broadband, too. In northern Ontario, broadband in many areas sucks big time, and it's not hard to figure out why. The companies that provide broadband want to make money doing it, so they concentrate on places where there are more customers. That makes sense. If I was investing in a broadband company, I would do the same thing.

When we see bills like this—we approve of the first two schedules, but we get nervous when there is no mention of rural or northern, because we know that those are the hardest places to make money for a broadband company. There are all kinds of places in Ontario that could have better broadband. This bill could make subdivisions that were created by MZOs have very good broadband because of this bill. But people in rural and remote northern Ontario who think they're going to be helped by this could very well be ignored. That's one part about the broadband part of this bill that is troublesome.

The part of this bill that is more than troublesome, that is detrimental, is schedule 3, where the minister of the day—the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I take it—has the right to supersede the provincial policy statement and just decide, based on whatever criteria the minister of the day has, to supersede it. By doing this, the government is basically saying that they don't believe in the provincial policy statement; they don't believe that planning has a purpose. Anyone who has been involved in planning—it has a purpose.

I'll give you a couple of farm examples. I'm a farmer. We used to have a lot of problems when someone would have a chunk of land and they'd subdivide and they'd put a couple of houses on the corner. That's great; you sell a couple of lots, but all of a sudden, the owner of the land is extremely restricted in what they can do agriculturally because of those two lots on the corner. They never should have allowed those lots to be sold. That's bad planning. Paving over wetlands is extremely bad planning.

The idea of planning—you should be able to address all concerns without damaging one at the expense of the other. We are going to need more development in this province. We are going to need more housing. Do you know what else we're going to need? We're going to need food, and we're going to need farmland, and we're losing it now at 175 acres a day—with planning in place. Should we be having a planning discussion in this House? Yes. We should be having an in-depth planning discussion. Should MZOs be hidden in a broadband bill? No.

When this government was elected—I have some Conservative friends, believe it or not—

Mr. John Fraser: Family, too.

Mr. John Vanthof: I have some Conservative family. I actually have a lot more Conservative family than I have NDP family.

What I'm about to say doesn't come from my Conservative family—he would never say this. When the current government was elected, some people said, “The Premier is certainly no Bill Davis,” and no one shook their head, because, yes, the Premier is not Bill Davis; neither am I.

The Premier and his government—they're not even Mike Harris. Mike Harris did things that people didn't like, but he didn't try to hide them in the backroom. If Mike Harris was coming for you, you knew it.

With bills like this—“It's all about broadband, but actually I'm coming for your land, and I don't care if it floods 10 years from now.” Even Mike Harris wouldn't do that. He would tell you he was coming for your land. That tells me that even some of the members on that side are very, very worried that this isn't the right thing to do.

I have proof of this. I'm going to quote, once again, someone I really like and really respect and have opposed on many issues: the Minister of Natural Resources, who is actually responsible for a big part of the flood planning in this province. When he spoke on Bill 257, I asked him a question about schedule 3, and he said, “If you don't like it”—and he tore it out of the bill—“just pretend it's not there.” So 10 years from now, if your basement is flooding because they've paved over wetlands, folks, just pretend the water is not there. When they're paving over class 1 farmland at such a rate that we are not going to be able to be self-sufficient in foods and we're going to have big problems, just pretend that we couldn't have stopped it. “Just pretend it's not there”—I was shocked when he said that. I am sure that wasn't in their talking points, but I'm wondering if that's actually what they think, behind the scenes.

It's not just people who vote NDP or vote for the other guys, who shall be unnamed, who are going to be impacted by this. The provincial policy statement protects everyone, and you need good planning for everyone.

I never thought I would use this in the Legislature—and I am not going to clip this, and no one is ever going to quote it. Do you want to know the ultimate example of totally failed policy? Have you ever heard of a place in the Pacific called Easter Island? They kept building statues until there wasn't a tree, until there was nothing left, and their civilization died. They created lots of jobs building those statues, but in the end, there was nothing left.

We can create jobs in this province and we can foster development in this province while protecting the beautiful province we have. We can do this, and the fact that the government of the day doesn't seem to want to is a tragedy.

I hope they pull schedule 3—we've asked that from the start, the first time I spoke to this. Pull schedule 3, and we will support this bill. Schedule 3 is not going to help people.

1410

Interjection: Some people.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, it's going to help some, but we want to help everybody.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Developers.

Mr. John Vanthof: We want to help developers too.

Interjection: Donors?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

Big business and developers want stability. If you talk to big companies, they want stability. They want to know what the rules are going in—that the rules don't change halfway through. That's what they thought Conservatives were, and that's what they're finding out they're not.

I hope that they pull schedule 3 and they really rethink how they are looking—I don't know if any of the members across the way or their riding associations went to the federal policy convention on Zoom. They don't even think climate change is a problem. Again, quoting the Minister of Natural Resources—“Just pretend it isn't there.” We're all past that point.

I hope that 20 years from now, 30 years from now, 40 years from now, someone isn't standing here and talking about environmental degradation and saying, “Who knew? Who knew this was going to happen?” On that trajectory—we all know, and right now we can go a little ways to stop it, and so can you.

Pull schedule 3.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's always hard to follow the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

My first statement is, what's your hurry, guys? What's the rush? Why aren't you bringing people to committee? Bill 257 does a good thing. It helps expand broadband. It doesn't do it all, but it does some good things to make that happen. The next thing it does is, it grants the power to the minister and the Premier of the government to allow building anything anywhere, against provincial policy statements—something that we've all agreed on—and then on top of that, it says, “And it's retroactive.” Who does that?

Broadband: What is it about? It's about creating opportunity, economic opportunity for the many: rural, urban, rich, not-so-rich—everybody, education, the economy.

What is granting absolute MZO powers to the minister all about? That's about creating wealth for the few. That's what it's about, bottom line. That's why nobody on the other side wants to talk about that—because they know.

You always bring this up and say, “You guys did 17 MZOs over 15 years.” You've done 33 in a year.

Here's the other piece that really galls me: There's kind of a cleverness—because what you're doing is called a poison pill. It's a smart thing, where you're going to jam the opposition and make us vote against something we fully support—for something that nobody could possibly support, and that you shouldn't be supporting, because it is about your communities 10 years from now. You know there's a poison pill in here—and we're going to deal with that; that's what we do. You're creating a poison pill for wetlands. You're creating a poison pill for the environment, a poison pill for families, a poison pill for communities, a poison pill for the future. That's what's happening here. That's what's wrong. So 10 years from now, when a lot of us won't be here, when someone is doing something in your community that you don't like

because they're in another government, when they're not following any of the rules, the people who elected you are not going to be happy, and likely, you're not going to be happy either.

The first thing this government did when they got here was to end the plan for climate change and put nothing in its place. Then they axed the Environmental Commissioner. They've essentially neutered conservation authorities. And now the Premier's big priority is building Highway 413, a highway that will cost billions of dollars—\$8 billion—and will save commuters 30 seconds.

On top of all of that, take a look around that highway and what's happening there. Who's going to do well by that? We all know who is going to do well. It's about your friends, and that's what the problem with that is. So—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Fraser: There is no need to ram through this legislation.

Schedule 3 is a poison pill for families, a poison pill for communities, and a poison pill for the environment. You need to pull schedule 3, because just like the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane said, 10 years from now, something is going to happen, and your community is not going to be happy about it.

And the water in the basement? Well, it's there. You can pretend it's not there, but it will be there.

Or that piece of green space that was critical to your community, that provided quality of life—if some future government decides, “Hey, we're just going to pave that.” For God's sake, even Amazon knows it was a bad idea.

Do the right thing. Do the right thing and actually get up and debate this afternoon. Do the right thing and pull schedule 3 out of Bill 257, and debate it here. Let's have a debate, where you have to stand up and talk about it and tell us why it's important to do that—because no one has done that, so far, on that side of the House, and that's a shame.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just in case you haven't heard it enough already today, section 3 of this bill is a poison pill. It's an undesirable section in an otherwise supportable piece of legislation.

I say this with all due respect to the members on the government side of the House: Those of you who were here before in opposition would never stand for this, just as we're not standing for it now.

Allow me to dip into Hansard, Speaker. My friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the gentleman from Barry's Bay, in opposition, on October 21, 2014, was explaining why he couldn't support a Liberal budget, even though he liked a few things in there, because there were other little things he couldn't support in principle. He said, “However, I only get one vote. On any bill, there may be some components of a bill that I would like to vote in favour of, but if the bill in its entirety is not one I support, then I have to vote against the bill. It's a little game that gets played by the government.” Well, who's playing games now?

As the man who now serves as the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry went on to say back in 2014, “They try to inject the poison pill into this, or take it out of that, kind of thing, Speaker, and hope that they’ll box the members of the opposition into feeling they’re forced to go one way or the other, depending upon the need of the government at the time.”

Speaker, my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke had some sage political advice for the Liberal government of the day. He was giving them advice on how to stand on principle. Do you know what he said? I’ll tell you what he said, and I’ll quote it directly from Hansard. My friend suggested to the Liberals—and I find it most appropriate, as it certainly fits what section 3 is all about in Bill 257. Instead of the poison pill clause—the member said, “It would have been great if the government would have had a separate piece of legislation, as has been the practice in the past.... It would have been good if they had done that. It would have given us an opportunity to debate specifically on that issue.” Who can disagree with that? That’s sound political advice from the member, when he served in opposition. How soon they forget.

Similarly, back to Hansard, from November 28, 2016: My friend the pharmacist from Elgin–Middlesex–London, speaking to a bill with the title of Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act, was saying how an NDP member—we all used to work closely back in those days, Speaker, as you well know—was to be recognized for his sage comments. He said, “The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane hit it on the head: Every one of these bills that this government has come up with over the last 13 years ... every little piece of legislation always has the poison pill in there to cause the opposition to vote against it so that they can hold it in their face when it comes to their promotions with the media and/or question period. If this government truly wanted to work with opposition members, they’d cease with these little tidbits they throw inside the bills to throw the opposition off.”

1420

Speaker, we’ve heard from the environmental community and those who are considered experts in environmental matters that wetlands protect us all and we should therefore do everything we can to protect them from development.

It reminds me of that Joni Mitchell song, Big Yellow Taxi, with those famous lines “They paved paradise / And put up a parking lot”:

You don’t know what you’ve got
Till it’s gone
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot

They took all the trees
Put ’em in a tree museum
And they charged the people
A dollar and a half just to see ’em

Let’s move along to Hansard, April 17, 2016, and Bill 31, the Plan for Care and Opportunity Act. My friend from Huron–Bruce, who now enjoys a seat at the cabinet table—according to Hansard, the now Minister of Government and Consumer Services, was attacking the Liberals on Bill 31: “This government talks about evidence-based policies, but that is almost laughable, as is the idea of a stretch goal. It pains me to say this, but this government doesn’t represent Ontarians. They represent Liberals and their friends, and the rest of us get pushed out of the way.”

The member for Huron–Bruce then made the reference to the need for a better hospital plan in Kincardine: “This is a poison pill, Speaker. I can see the headline now that the Liberal kids will spin out—‘Thompson Votes against the Kincardine Hospital’—when I vote against the budget coming down the pipeline.”

One final set of lyrics from a song made famous by Frank Sinatra, New York, New York—his vagabond shoes wanted to leave the small town and move to the big city that never sleeps. Ol’ Blue Eyes sang, “If I can make it there / I’ll make it anywhere.”

If the Conservatives get away with these MZO’s, as they tried with the Duffins Creek wetland in Pickering—if they get away with that, if they can pave over paradise there, they can do it anywhere in Ontario. No wetland, no area of natural and scientific interest is safe as long as this government holds power and continues its attack on our natural environment.

Speaker, on this side of the House, as you know, we’ve always supported the expansion of broadband services in Ontario. I’ve only been here for seven and a half years, but rarely a month has gone by when I haven’t met with or spoken with someone calling for better broadband services. The Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus, the Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, AMO, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Good Roads Association—you name it; broadband has been an agenda priority.

It’s a matter of principle; everyone in Ontario should have the same access to reliable high-speed Internet and cellphone service. This is Ontario and we are in 2021, and thousands and thousands of our constituents are living in a technological Dark Ages.

The former Liberal government, propped up by the Conservative opposition, did little or nothing to improve the situation. Sure, they talk a good game over there, but little or nothing was done to improve the service. In fact, the Liberals made it worse. In the north, an Internet provider named Ontera was owned by the government of Ontario. It served small communities and didn’t make a lot of money, but it was worth \$61 million. The Liberals gave it away for \$6 million to Bell seven years ago. Ontera was supposed to upgrade its service and expand it, and it didn’t happen. That is a legacy of the Liberal government, propped up by the Conservative opposition.

As I said, Speaker, it’s a matter of principle. All politicians should have principles. In principle, when we introduce a bill calling for the expansion of broadband, we should keep it to that principle. What concerns me—and it

should concern all of us—is, why does this government feel the need, in section 3 of this bill, to embed a provision calling for the ability to strip protected standing from an environmental protective wetland? What on earth does that have to do with the expansion of broadband services in Ontario? Where is the principle in this section of the bill?

Sandra Postel is a world expert on freshwater-related ecosystems. She served for six years as Freshwater Fellow of the National Geographic Society. She's the founding director of the Global Water Policy Project. She said, "For many of us, water simply flows from a faucet, and we think little about it beyond this point of contact. We have lost a sense of respect for the wild river, for the complex workings of a wetland, for the intricate web of life that water supports."

Speaker, a lot of people are concerned about these MZOs and the key provisions of the Planning Act that are being attacked by this government.

That brings me to a quote from Wendell Berry, a well-known writer, poet, farmer, academic and environmental activist: "The 'developed' nations have given to the free market the status of God and were sacrificing to it—that farmers, farmlands, and communities, their forests, wetlands, and prairies, their ecosystems and watersheds. They had accepted universal pollution and global warming as normal costs of doing business."

Speaker, "normal costs of doing business"—it didn't used to be that way prior this section of the bill, a bill that's supposed to be about expanding broadband service in Ontario.

George Carlin said, "Environmentalists changed the word jungle to rainforest, because no one would give them money to save a jungle. Same with swamps and wetlands."

Wetlands mean so much to some of us and so little to others.

You may not be familiar with Richard Darman, a Republican who worked in the White House with four different Republican Presidents and administrations. He's the guy who convinced the first George Bush to backtrack on his promise on taxes. You may recall Bush's famous quote, "Read my lips: No new taxes." Well, Darman helped him get rid of that. He's also the man who explained to the media why President Bush didn't keep a campaign promise that there would be no loss of wetlands. Darman said, "He didn't say that. He was reading what was given to him in a speech."

We've heard a lot of speeches in this House. Words are important, and I say to you that clauses in a bill are important. If you're standing up for broadband, stand up for broadband. Don't use a clause to strip away environmentally protected wetlands under the guise of standing up for broadband. I say to you: Stand on your principle. Stand on what you said in opposition. Stand on where you should be standing for everyone in Ontario, not your big developer friends.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate today.

For those of you who are just joining us, the government has moved time allocation on Bill 257. It's called the Supporting Broadband and Infrastructure Expansion Act, which is a great title for a bill. It doesn't do that much for broadband or for expanding infrastructure, especially in the north and in rural communities—but perhaps we will get to that in a few minutes.

I want to start with schedule 3. The speakers thus far, including the independent members, have spoken quite eloquently about how dangerous schedule 3 is to the people of this province. To date, aside from the opening comments from the government, the government has chosen to not address some of these concerns in this House—and we will see once it gets to committee.

I will tell the government that there is a huge amount of interest in this piece of legislation. I just met on Thursday with the local chapter of the Waterloo nature club. They are, of course, very much connected with Ecojustice, Environmental Defence Canada and Ontario Nature. They are so concerned about the pace with which this legislation is moving and why schedule 3 is embedded in a so-called piece of legislation about expanding broadband.

Just to remind you: Schedule 3 exempts the minister's zoning orders retroactively from the requirement to be consistent with the provincial policy statement, which is a foundational set of planning rules for the province. I don't think any government has actually gone this far with regard to provincial policy statements. This is basically an honour agreement that we have, where we have solidified the best practices. The research has been done. People put aside their partisanship and their differences and agreed on some very core principles about how we move forward in the province of Ontario with regard to progressive planning. This government has essentially put in a get-out-of-jail-free card on that, which means that they don't have to adhere to those guidelines, those agreed-upon values that we have as a province.

Previous speakers have referenced other Conservative Premiers who have been in this House and spoken about the importance of a sustainable planning practice going forward. To date, none of those PC Premiers have chosen to go down this road, so that is why it has the attention.

1430

The retroactive piece is very interesting to us. It obviously ties very much into the Duffins Creek legal action that is before this government. You've heard me say this before in this House, Madam Speaker: No one has employed more lawyers in the province of Ontario than this PC government. Perhaps it's their jobs strategy; I'm not sure. They've gone to court on almost every issue, from climate change to gas stickers to the sex ed curriculum in the year 2019. Can you imagine? The lawyers are doing just fine by this government. It has really forced groups like Ecojustice, which uses the power of the law to defend nature—it has really had to ramp up activism for the environment in Ontario in a very interesting way.

This actually just happened shortly after this piece of legislation had been introduced—I'm going to read from

the press release: “Environmental Groups File Urgent Motion to Stop Destruction of Lower Duffins Creek Wetland.

“Ontario government is trying to run roughshod over its own planning laws.” If you are bypassing the provincial policy, you are actually not adhering to your own guidelines, and in this instance, to the law which guides the land around environmental planning.

It goes on to say—and this was just from March 8—“Traditional territories of several First Nations including the Huron-Wendat, the Anishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Chippewas, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation—Environmental groups have applied for a motion to stay to prevent developers from destroying provincially significant wetlands at lower Duffins Creek in Pickering, Ontario.

“Ecojustice, on behalf of Environmental Defence and Ontario Nature, filed the motion to stay with the Ontario Divisional Court following an application from a developer to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) for a permit to begin construction on the wetlands.”

I just want to say why the timing of it is so questionable. When we ask questions in this House about this—this comes from all opposition members—the Premier, in his great wisdom, will say, “Don’t you want affordable housing? Don’t you want long-term-care homes?” Well, it is such a false choice that the only place to build long-term-care homes, the only place to build affordable housing or to build a warehouse happens to be on environmentally sensitive land. It’s not true, and to their credit, the people of this province are certainly not buying what this Premier is saying.

The press release goes on to say, “On March 4, the Ontario government issued a regulation requiring the TRCA”—now we know that they feel that this was under duress—“to issue a development permit to Pickering Developments by March 12. In effect, this permit will give the developers permission to destroy a protected, rare coastal Great Lakes wetland. Not only instrumental for water filtration and flood mitigation, the wetland is a critical refuge for wildlife.

“Last year, the Ontario Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs issued a minister’s zoning order (MZO) to allow the construction of a warehouse and distribution facility on the wetlands. Environmental Defence and Ontario Nature, represented by Ecojustice, filed a judicial review against the Ontario government for this unlawful use of an MZO.

“The Ontario government,” in response, “has now tabled the Supporting Broadband and Infrastructure Expansion Act”—the very piece of legislation we have before us, which you are fast-tracking through this House—“in an attempt to give retroactive cover to their illegal actions.

“On March 5, the environmental groups filed an urgent motion to prevent the TRCA from allowing the developer to destroy this provincially significant wetland.

“Even as the Ontario government appears determined to ram through development on Duffins Creek, the project

faces strong opposition from local communities, who value its ecological and cultural benefits, and from the TRCA’s board of directors.”

I do think it’s very important to recognize that the Toronto conservation authority has basically said, “We do not approve of this move.” Of course, this doubles down on the last schedule 6 which undermined conservation authorities, so for very good reasons—the people of this province have seen those local protections undermined and overridden by this government, so there is no wonder that this will bring further legal action to the province.

Ecojustice lawyer Laura Bowman said, “This case is crucial to ensuring limits to MZOs across Ontario. If the government is allowed to ignore protections for important coastal wetlands at Duffins Creek this threatens the environment and good planning across Ontario.

“The Ontario government has ignored its own planning laws by approving this development. The legality of the zoning authorization should be tested before the wetland is destroyed forever. This is why our clients have applied for an urgent motion to stay the work on the site.”

Tim Gray, executive director for Environmental Defence, said, “It is a sad day when we have to go to court to force our own government to obey Ontario law. It is even more shocking when the government seeks to gut those same laws to avoid being held accountable in court.” So the people of this province and the respected associations that are trying to protect the environment have a very clear picture of what is going on in this province.

I think it is important for government members to hear this: “Lower Duffins Creek wetland is rare, precious and valued. Its destruction would be a disaster on its own but its loss would also signal that all wetlands, forests, and river valleys are beyond the protection of the law and at risk from rapacious developers.”

Finally, Caroline Schultz, executive director for Ontario Nature, said, “There’s an insidious and accelerating pattern of undercutting environmental rules to facilitate reckless development projects in Ontario. These are done against the will of communities and against the long-term interest of Ontarians. As we grapple with the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, it’s unconscionable to drain the Duffins Creek wetland complex.”

One point that is very salient to this debate—which actually isn’t turning into very much of a debate, because there is silence—is that when governments undermine local municipalities, we have heard municipalities have felt a great deal of pressure when the province introduced one of these MZOs. Some of us served on school boards. Some of us served on council. There’s a deep connection to community when you talk about the environment and about progressive planning. Quite honestly, if the government is so intent on overriding local municipalities, you must understand that that is seen by communities as overriding their interests, of undermining the local democracy, of disrespecting the wishes of the people we serve.

We have learned some hard lessons in Waterloo region. We are very dependent on groundwater and on the Grand River, and in some parts where we have seen well

contamination—any politician who is affiliated with that irresponsibility or lack of taking action and being responsible for the cleanup and for the prevention of that pollution has paid a serious price.

I have said this in this House before, because I remember that entire House being Liberals for years, and as soon as they violated that trust that the people had in them—and in this instance, it was on the selling off and the privatizing of Hydro One and how that came to have a very direct and personal impact on them.

The MZOs that have been issued are seen by the communities as a huge overstep by this government—a big, heavy step. That is actually how this government is being seen—that you are willing to do anything and everything for those developers who, in some instances, as we now know because of disclosure rules in the province of Ontario, happen to also be donors to your party. Why is this so concerning for people? Because they recognize that you are willing to do almost anything to undermine those values and, in this instance, the provincial policy statements, which have never truly been violated in this province. So you are going down a road which the people of this province have exclusively said to us causes them to question your motives and your values as individual MPPs and as a government as a whole.

1440

What we know for sure is that regardless of how Bill 257 makes its way through that committee, the people of this province will stand up and fight against it. They will fight against it just as they did with the gas plants. I would put these two issues on equal footing—because it is personal, and it exposes the government for their intentions on a go-forward basis, which is not in the interests of preserving environmentally sensitive land.

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

Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 104, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 257, An Act to enact the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021 and to make other amendments in respect of infrastructure and land use planning matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, unless I receive a deferral slip, the bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes.

I received a deferral slip. Therefore, the recorded vote will happen tomorrow after question period.

Vote deferred.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 101(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that

Ms. Triantafilopoulos assumes ballot item number 69 and Ms. Fee assumes ballot item number 72.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 11, 2021, on the amendment to the motion regarding amendments to the standing orders.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise, I guess, to participate in the debate on the changes to the standing orders that were brought in last month, as we returned to this House in February after a second province-wide lockdown, and as we sit on the brink of a possible third province-wide lockdown.

The amendment that we are debating today deals with the Vice-Chairs of standing committees. I have to question whether this really is an urgent priority for people in this province—who are the appointments of these Vice-Chairs for the standing committees of the Ontario Legislative Assembly. Respectfully, Speaker, I would say that this is likely not a priority for the people of this province.

The vaccine rollout is a priority for the people of this province. Equity in the vaccine rollout is a priority, certainly, for the members on this side of the House who represent people in some of those communities—Scarborough, Brampton, some of those GTA communities that are really struggling in terms of access to vaccines. My colleagues from Niagara have talked about the challenges they are experiencing in their communities. In London, I get emails every hour or so from somebody who is having difficulty accessing the vaccine. They are identified as somebody who should be a priority and yet can't get access to their shot. We really are in a race between the variants and the vaccines at this critical moment in the course of the pandemic, and we need to ensure that everything possible is being done to get the vaccines out.

But is that what we're talking about this afternoon? No, it is not. We are talking about an amendment to a package of standing order changes that were introduced, as I said, when MPPs first returned to this chamber after the lockdown in January.

Speaker, when the government House leader introduced this amendment, he went on at length in his speech about his commitment to building bridges, his commitment to working with the official opposition and the other parties to make democracy function. To bring forward an amendment, the amendment that we're debating this afternoon, without any notice, without any advance discussion, without any consultation, without any attempt to collaborate or get input, is not conducive to building bridges—even if it was a priority for the people of this province, but it's not. But if you are going to claim that what Ontario really wants to see right now is changes to the standing orders, changes to some of the routines and practices that we engage in in this House, then what should happen is bringing the different parties together, bringing

MPPs together to say, “Can we talk about making some changes to improve the way we do things, to maybe free up space on the legislative agenda so that we can really focus on some of the issues that are priorities for the people of this province?”

I do acknowledge the government House leader, because he talked to me as the official opposition House leader and to the members of our House team, and he talked to the member for Ottawa and the member for Guelph about a proposal to allow standing committees to meet when a majority of members of that committee make that request to the Chair of the committee. Of course, we said at the time—this was prior to coming back to the House—“That is a change that makes sense. If you want to bring forward that change and seek unanimous consent to make that change happen, we will give you that consent, because that’s a fairly straightforward thing that would help the business of the House move forward more smoothly.” So we said, “Yes, let’s do that.”

The other change that is being proposed in this package of changes is the need to eliminate deferral slips. We just saw an example of a recorded vote being requested and there was a need for a deferral slip to be delivered to you so that that vote could be deferred. The standing order change eliminates the need for that deferral slip to be presented to the Speaker. This was not something that the government House leader asked us—what we thought about making that change—but certainly, we would have said, “Yes, make that change. If you ask for unanimous consent to eliminate deferral slips, we will support that. We don’t want to waste people’s time by standing in this Legislature and having a debate about those changes. Let’s just eliminate the need for deferral slips, and let’s do it by unanimous consent.”

The third piece of this package of standing order changes that the government introduced is to allow Wednesday hearings of the chamber to begin at 1 o’clock instead of 3 o’clock. This is something that the government already has the ability to do at any time. They can, at any time, bring in a motion that says, “This Wednesday, we’re going to meet at 1 o’clock instead of 3 o’clock.” But to make this part of the package of changes—we would have said, “Yes, let’s do that,” if we had had an opportunity to engage in discussion. But the government decided not to go that route, not to go with the bridge-building, consensus-making kind of approach.

1450

They decided to bring in these changes to the standing orders and then, on Thursday, to bring in an amendment, a further change to the standing orders, dealing with the appointment of Vice-Chairs. We opposed that amendment when it was brought in on Thursday. We opposed it because it does not provide for the opportunity of the person who is going to be appointed as a Vice-Chair to accept or decline the appointment. All it does is that it enables the majority of members of a committee—who are always a majority of government members—to move a motion appointing the Vice-Chair. We had examples on this side of the House where—the member for Kingston

and the Islands was appointed and declined the nomination. He declined the nomination, for very good reason, and the government went ahead and made the appointment anyway. He therefore resigned from the position. We had another example where the member was appointed to the position of Vice-Chair and wasn’t even at the committee meeting, wasn’t even there to either accept or decline the nomination or the appointment, but the majority of the government members of that committee decided to go ahead and make that appointment anyway. That’s why, when this amendment was last debated, we opposed it. We made an effort to improve it by moving an amendment to that amendment, which, unfortunately, was voted down today.

This is not the way to respect the role of members. The government House leader talked about empowering members, respecting the independence of members. This is not the way to do that—to make a change to the standing orders that allows a majority of government members to appoint MPPs into the position of Vice-Chair when those MPPs who are being appointed don’t have any kind of say in whether that appointment should go ahead. That is the reason we did not support that amendment.

It’s interesting, Speaker: At the same time that we see the government fast-tracking really, really important bills—we just concluded a debate that’s fast-tracking a bill that will have a very damaging impact on planning in the province of Ontario, on environmental protection, on wetlands preservation. We just saw that bill fast-tracked, because the government couldn’t clear off any more time on the legislative agenda to continue the debate on that bill.

We’ve seen this government, multiple, multiple times, shut down any opportunity to have a debate on paid sick days. We are, as I said, on the brink of a third wave in this province, where paid sick days—at a minimum, paid time off to get vaccinated—could change the course of the pandemic, could have the potential to avert that third wave that the health care experts have identified as the moment that we are in right now. And yet, this government—we heard it clearly from the House leader this morning during question period—has absolutely refused to countenance any time on the legislative agenda to deal with that issue of paid sick days, which every board of health in the province, every medical officer of health for all 34 health units across Ontario have all agreed is a really critical tool to help curb workplace transmission of COVID-19.

We’ve also seen this government refuse to consider debate on a rent relief program for tenants in this province to put that moratorium back in place on evictions, which so many people in this province have faced. It means that they are not able to follow the public health advice to stay home, to stay safe, because they are being evicted from their place of residence.

I think, Speaker, of my community of London where a report just came out that said London tenants owe a total of \$7.6 million in rent arrears. London is second only to Toronto in terms of the total amount of arrears that tenants have found themselves in as a result of the impact on

employment and wages during the pandemic. This is in a community where we have one third—one third of all tenants in the city of London are living in substandard housing, because there is such a dire shortage of affordable housing. They can't afford to move into a better maintained rental unit. At the same time, they are continuing to fall behind in their rent payments and now face the very real prospect of eviction because of this government's decision to remove the moratorium on residential rent evictions.

But, Speaker, we could also be talking about measures that we could take to support small businesses in this province. We know that the lockdown has had a particularly difficult impact on small businesses, those small, local main street businesses that keep our communities thriving. Those businesses have seen their incomes dry up. Some have been able to pivot to curbside pickup and delivery, but some have not. Some businesses, like hair salons, can do minimal curbside pickup and delivery in terms of hair products, but they can't do curbside haircuts. So those businesses have really struggled throughout this pandemic.

I have to say that we are waiting to see that bill that the government is supposed to be working on dealing with supports for small businesses. Prior to the return to the House in February after Family Day, we read media reports stating that this government was planning to bring in a bill that would deal with some of the hardships that small businesses have faced in Ontario as a result of the pandemic, but we have yet to see that. We will certainly be looking for that when we hear the budget on Wednesday. That will definitely be one of the priorities for the NDP in ensuring that there is real support for struggling small businesses.

But of course, the number one thing that we will want to see in that budget when it is introduced on Wednesday is a response to the horrifying conditions that have been revealed in long-term-care homes, not only in that report from the Canadian Armed Forces, but more recently what we heard in the testimony before the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission.

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That commission has revealed that this government was well aware of the steps that needed to be taken to protect vulnerable residents in long-term care and was well aware of the cost of those steps that needed to be taken, but chose not to make those investments that were necessary, not to strengthen the infection prevention and control, not to invest in hiring the army of PSWs that are needed to provide the kind of quality care that long-term-care residents deserve.

We continue to see this government refuse to value the work that PSWs provide to residents of long-term care and other home and community care agencies. They have extended the pandemic pay a couple of months, but that is not going to create the long-term, stable workforce that we need in the long-term-care sector. It is not going to do anything for the long-term retention of PSWs. I'm sure we've all heard from PSWs in our community who have

experienced PTSD, frankly, from the conditions that they lived through at the height of the pandemic, both in the first wave and in the second wave, which we saw the statistics from. The second wave has been much more deadly than the first because we didn't learn—or this government didn't learn—the lessons from the first wave and apply them to prevent that tragic loss of life that we saw in the second wave.

Speaker, we wish that we were talking about other issues, that we weren't here today debating the standing orders, that we were looking at some of the actual priorities of people in this province, like paid sick days, like long-term care, like support for struggling small businesses, like rent supports.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm always pleased to join in debate such as we're discussing today, particularly a motion that will make government function more smoothly and meet more often—the underpinning of democracy.

Speaker, you will know that the standing orders govern the business of the Legislative Assembly, the House, and they're procedures that guide the legislative process. At the moment, when there are limited members at the Legislative Assembly, it's prudent to ensure that all votes take place—and I know you'll agree with this—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 controlled and 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 the standing committee to convene following the adjournment of the House and undertake specific business of that particular committee. This proposed change would reduce the need for organizational meetings and allow committees to proceed directly with the business at hand, as they should. I know those members who have been in this chamber for a while, both in opposition and otherwise, would agree with that. Speaker, these changes would also allow a majority of members to convene a sitting of the standing committee for the purpose of undertaking committee business.

The final change would be to allow the House to sit at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, instead of 3 p.m. as it is currently scheduled. This would allow extra time to debate bills in the House.

Given what we've gone through over the last number of months with COVID, I think no one would dispute that we've opened up in a way I don't think any other government has done in the history of this province. At the same time, as I've said on a number of occasions, Speaker, the opposition has worked with us, whether it's the official opposition or the independents. They've worked with us very closely to ensure that we're able to address the very important needs of the people of this province—the people we have the privilege of representing—during the

COVID-19 pandemic. I anticipate, and I'm always the eternal optimist, that this level of co-operation will continue.

Speaker, clearly this time has not been easy for anyone. It has always been our intention to ensure that the voices of all government, opposition and independent members be heard and expressed fully.

The amendments, when you analyze them, you see that they continue the process that we started a few months ago. I believe, Speaker, that we have followed through on that 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 all Ontarians, despite this challenging pandemic. That is why we are able to pass bills through this House with the unanimous support of all of our colleagues in this place.

Speaker, you'll remember in 2020 we successfully integrated 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 in this great province. Our government passed 54 separate pieces of legislation in the last year, while remaining committed—absolutely committed—to our commitments of openness and transparency.

In order to accomplish that, it 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, because the House leader, supported by our caucus, didn't think it was appropriate that House leaders should decide who should be in this House and who should be voting on something that's important to them. All this was done so that our work would be able to proceed safely, responsibly and efficiently in this modern age and in these unprecedented times. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Clerks and the staff of the Legislature for facilitating such a seamless transition towards smarter and safer systems. Clearly, without their tireless work, commitment and flexibility, none of this would have been possible. Thank you so much.

Speaker, the official opposition and the independents might not like everything that we've done over the last number of months, but, the fact is, again, the people in the province of Ontario, this Legislature, all the members of this Legislature, stepped up to the plate and did what they had to do to make sure that government continued on; that the Legislature continued on; that the people in their ridings continued to be represented; that our health care needs were being met; that the economy was still moving forward; that we represented small, medium and large enterprises; that those restaurants that were being challenged to have patios opened so that they could bring more money in and get people back to work—Speaker, we did that.

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No one watching, listening or here today should be under no illusion—absolutely no illusion—that this government 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. My constituents and yours, Speaker, are relying on us.

I encourage the honourable members opposite to continue to fight for the things that they believe in.

Interjection: We will.

Mr. Lorne Coe: And we will as well. We will as well, not only because we were elected to do so and because that's the mandate that the people of this province have given us; we will continue to do that because that's what's in our hearts to do for the hard-working Ontario families we have the privilege of representing, as I do in the town of Whitby.

Speaker, when I go into my riding, as you and others do, in the region of Durham, I clearly see the successes of our work. Without a doubt, this has been one of the most difficult and challenging times in the province's history. 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, members of provincial Parliament working across party lines to get things done and completed for the people of Ontario over several months.

But Speaker, I'm also proud of the fact that now, we're starting to get the economy going, led by the Minister of Finance and the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Our government has consistently made changes to the standing orders to improve the quality of debate and accessibility within the chamber. Even before COVID-19, we had set the precedent for embracing technological solutions. Under the pandemic restrictions, this trend has continued to mature, improve and allow for better and broader engagement.

Being able to return to the House early on Wednesday would allow us to have more time to have bills debated in the chamber. That's a good thing, and that is an aspect that the opposition has been asking for as well.

Our actions continue to show a strong level of engagement. Last year, we expanded the opportunities for the participation of independent members both in the House and on standing committees of the Legislative Assembly. We made changes that would allow us to sit longer days and more often, and the proposed change in this motion is a continuation of that forward thinking. Having the potential of an extra two hours of debate each week, Speaker, would give more opportunity for members to voice the support and concerns of their constituents. I know you would agree with that, because you speak often in the chamber, and you speak well.

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 Legislative Assembly to sit when the House is adjourned. Speaker, you'll know that there is so much important work which happens within the standing committees of the Legislative Assembly. We believe committees should convene whenever there is business

that needs to be addressed. 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 have had opportunities to make their voices heard by this government and amplified by members in this chamber. Any debates on motions like these should never be taken lightly, especially during these times when the safety of members and staff are our utmost priority.

There should be no reason to oppose a motion that would allow for a smoother, more efficient and responsive Legislature. I believe that all members in this House should support any motion that improves the transparency and accountability of bills as they go through first, second and third reading in the Legislative Assembly.

We're demonstrating once again that we welcome more debate and examination, both in the House and within standing committees. We welcome accountability and we are committed to being transparent every step of the legislative process. From our pandemic response, our economic recovery plan and our other bills, we've ensured that there has been more than ample time for each action to be scrutinized by the opposition and everyday, hard-working Ontarians.

I'm running out of my time, so I'm going to sum up at this point. The motion that has been put forward by the government has given considerable thought to the safety of everyone in this building while ensuring that the integrity of the legislative process is maintained. While we are 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.

Today's motion speaks to allowing the business of the Legislative Assembly to continue safely, as it has for several months and should go forward.

In conclusion, let there be no doubt—no doubt at all—that our priority remains protecting lives and defeating COVID-19 and the new variants. The intent of the motion speaks to that and the pillars in supporting it.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to today's motion.

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

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

Today we're here talking about government order 60, or the standing orders changes. I would say that this is not a tremendous priority for people in the London community. Our offices have been inundated with people who are concerned about when they're going to get their vaccines, people who are furious that this government let vaccines languish in freezers over the holidays, while yet more are arriving in Ontario and are still sitting in freezers. We should have a government that is planning on having shots in arms 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but here we are

talking about modifying the rulebook that governs this House.

Constituents in London North Centre are concerned about paid sick days. They're concerned about their little ones in schools, with the variants of concern now hitting the London area. Instead, this government is making noises about democracy and providing more time for debate. Yet, Speaker, just moments ago we were talking about Bill 257 and time-allocating that piece of legislation, that piece of legislation with section 3, the poison pill that would allow them to create ministerial zoning orders in order to override local democracy. So on one hand, they're talking about protecting democracy and engaging in the democratic process, and yet only an hour ago, it was being subverted.

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People in the London community have reached out in a really tremendous way in their opposition to section 3 in Bill 257.

We have to take a look and we need to follow the money in order to understand why that legislation is crafted and structured such as it is. When we take a look at the Duffins Creek wetland, there were studies that were questioning the function or the properties of that wetland itself. To you, Speaker, I can tell you that the people who paid for that study were Triple Properties. They were the ones who commissioned the study and they are the ones who are intending to benefit from the ministerial zoning order. The lawyer for Triple Properties actually is on the record as saying that there is no need for a public hearing; that most importantly there should be no opportunity for appeal for the warehouse. That means no appeal by anybody. Yet this government wants to fast-track that legislation and now talks about standing orders changes in the same breath. Those two things do not make sense.

Further, we heard the chief government whip standing and speaking about the improvements to democracy that these standing orders changes would allow. However, we also see the quite ironically titled Bill 254, Protecting Ontario Elections Act, which is yet another cash grab. You follow the money with this government, and here we have cash-for-access: increasing donation limits by private individuals such that this government can allow their developer friends to fill their coffers.

When we take a look at donations that were received by the member from Pickering-Uxbridge from the Apostolopoulos family, that was \$1,222. The Apostolopoulos family who, I should mention, are in control and ownership of Triple Properties, donated \$1,000 to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. They donated the maximum amount to our Premier. Shocking, I know.

Now, we see a government that is hell-bent on fast-tracking this development. Meanwhile, in the riding itself, there are hundreds of acres where that warehouse could be located within the city limits. There are thousands of acres outside of the city limits where that could be located. And yet, here we have this government.

They talk about the improvements to democracy. We have heard government members actually talk about how

these standing orders changes would prevent slips, trips and falls in handling in deferral slips. Well, to that I would indicate that we saw the chief government whip delivering a deferral slip just earlier and he did so quite ably and quite nimbly.

Interjection: It was graceful.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It was indeed. It was indeed. He was light on his feet, in fact.

So, to this government, we need to focus on what are priorities for the people of Ontario—that is, getting shots in arms 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without exception—and not talking about bills that actually trample on local democracy and trample on the process.

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

Thank you. Do you want me to read all of this?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Relax. We're here for a while.

Division on the amendment to government notice of motion number 101, government order number 60, respecting standing order amendments: On February 17, 2021, Ms. Khanjin moved government notice of motion number 101, referred to in government order number 60, regarding amendments to the standing orders.

On March 11, 2021, Mr. Calandra moved the following amendments to government notice of motion number 101:

That the words “for the duration of the 42nd Parliament” be deleted; and

That the following be added:

“Standing order 77(d) is amended to add the words ‘the government House leader,’ before the words ‘the minister’;

“Standing order 120 is amended by adding the following clauses:

“120(d) Where the Chair of a standing committee is a member of the party forming the government, the Vice-

Chair shall be a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government or an independent member; and where the Chair is a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government, the Vice-Chair shall be a member of the party forming the government.

“120(e) Failing the appointment of a Vice-Chair pursuant to clause (d), any other member of the committee may be appointed as a Vice-Chair.”

On March 22, 2021, the following amendment by Mr. Hatfield to Mr. Calandra's amendment to government notice of motion number 101—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Hold on one second. My apologies; my mistake.

The question is on Mr. Calandra's amendment to government notice of motion number 101. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those of those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded division being requested—it will be deferred if I have a deferral slip.

“Pursuant to standing order 30(h), I request that the vote on the amendment for government order 60 be deferred until deferred votes on Tuesday, March 23, 2021.”

Signed by Lorne Coe, chief government whip of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Orders of the day. I recognize the member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker. No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1528.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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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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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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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	
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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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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
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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
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna Skelly
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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
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
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Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
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**

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
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
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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

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Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
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**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutla Karpoche
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutla Karpoche
Natalia Kusendova
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Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park
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Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
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