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Jeudi
15 avril 2021

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 15 April 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 15 avril 2021

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers/Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCELERATING
ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT, 2021
LOI DE 2021 VISANT À ACCÉLÉRER
L'ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2021, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today and add my comments to the third reading debate of Bill 245, the Accelerating Access to Justice Act. I had the opportunity to join the debate on Bill 245 during second reading so I'm pleased to see that this important bill has continued to advance through this legislative process.

I want to reiterate something I said during the second reading date and that is that I have been really impressed with the team in the Attorney General's office and the work that they have done going forward and getting us to this point in the justice system.

As I said before, maybe my situation is unique, but in Sarnia-Lambton my constituency office happens to be right across the street from the provincial court office. That presents opportunities as well as challenges, which I won't go into today. As a result, we are often the first stop for constituents after they have run into roadblocks at the courthouse. I have heard from many constituents and families over the years who have been really frustrated by the legal system for many valid reasons.

That's why I am quite optimistic with the work that the team in the Attorney General's office has been doing.

Bill 245, the Accelerating Access to Justice Act, represents another big step towards improving access to justice by modernizing complicated and dated processes that our justice system has had for too long.

The changes presented in Bill 245, if passed, would break down many barriers in the province's courts,

tribunals, estate law, family law and child protection sectors. These changes that are outlined in Bill 245 will transform the way Ontarians access justice in the courtroom and beyond. If passed, they would benefit people from across the province by saving them money and reducing the time they spend waiting in court. Bill 245 builds on Ontario's recent modernization breakthroughs in the justice system and presents urgent reforms to address delays in the resolution of legal disputes, both inside and outside of the courtroom. These changes support our ongoing effort to move more justice services online and closer to Ontarians.

I think the Attorney General himself said, about a year ago or more, that the justice system, because of COVID-19, advanced "25 years in 25 days." I know he said that and it has stuck in mind every since.

Our government wants to expand access to justice across this province and provide better services to people regardless of where they live, and especially for those who live in rural, northern, Indigenous and francophone communities. If passed, these changes would help us achieve these important milestones. These are important changes, Mr. Speaker. I, for one, think the more things we can handle outside of the courtroom, the better.

It's hard to believe, but we've been dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic for over a year now. We've all seen the widespread impact that has had. It has given us all a chance to adapt and learn to do things differently. The justice system should be no different. Bill 245 seizes on that opportunity and provides some much-needed support and relief in the justice sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed nearly every aspect of life for Ontarians. For our government, it underscored the urgent need to change and modernize systems from every sector. In the justice system, COVID-19 highlighted that the old way of doing things needed a rethink or an important pillar of our democracy would be lost to many. Expanding the range of court and justice services offered online and finding ways for people to access services closer to where they live was a priority for the Ministry of the Attorney General and their staff.

Speaker, the breakthrough modernization initiatives in this bill will transform all Ontarians' access to justice. With a laser-like focus on keeping people safe, the Ministry of the Attorney General collaborated with our justice partners and public health experts to prioritize the health and safety of the judiciary, the jurors, court staff, litigants and the public. Access to justice requires access to the justice system. That is exactly why we should all be supporting these important reforms in Bill 245 that will

improve access across the province, including in our remote communities, such as rural, northern, francophone and Indigenous communities, where you often have to travel further for legal representation. It will break down many barriers in the province's courts, tribunals, estate law and family law. The bill will bring about a more equitable and responsive system.

Madam Speaker, every government ministry has faced new and unanticipated challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As I mentioned earlier, the team at the Ministry of the Attorney General has been particularly good at reading the situation and adapting. In fact, this is the fourth bill that he has introduced in the last 14 months. For those who may have forgotten, two of the previous bills introduced by the Attorney General were Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, 2020, and Bill 207, the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act, 2020. These were excellent bills that were passed by this Legislature and have now become law.

I was a particular fan of the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act. I'm sure every member of this Legislature understands the challenges that their constituents face every day with family law. As I mentioned in my second reading debate comments, the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General came to Sarnia–Lambton a few years ago and had some really great conversations with local stakeholders about the family law system—comments from that trip that I still hear about today in conversations with my constituents and people affected by family law. I just want to acknowledge how much I still appreciate that visit, and I know my constituents appreciate the fact that their feedback helped in the drafting of that bill.

I'm just as confident that the changes proposed in Bill 245 will receive a similar positive response from my constituents if it is passed into law. With Bill 245, our government has responded to the unique challenges presented by this pandemic with practical plans for change and a vision for an easier, less costly and faster justice system for Ontarians across this great province. It drives forward continuous efforts to accelerate justice modernization, with concrete actions to remove barriers to justice in this system. Specifically, it would, if passed:

- help to fill judicial vacancies more quickly so that people will be able to have their matters heard by a judge more quickly and with fewer delays;

- permanently allow the virtual witnessing of wills and powers of attorney to make it easier for people to get those important documents and affairs in order without the limitations of travelling to access these services in person;

- promote the interests of children by giving children a greater voice in the court process and better focusing resources of the Office of the Children's Lawyer;

- increase access to justice in French by expanding and guaranteeing the ability of francophones to file documents in French at all Ontario courthouses and for all matters, including civil and family law;

- modernize state laws, including changes that would help people resolve their estates and other legal matters quickly, efficiently and safely.

Madam Speaker, these are very important initiatives that are long overdue for the justice system. I have every confidence that these changes are a marked improvement over what is currently in place, and that's great news for the people of Sarnia–Lambton and for the broader province of Ontario. I'm proud to support the work of the Attorney General in co-operation with our justice sector partners and seeing this bill through this stage. With that, I move that the question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Bailey has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate, with over six hours, to allow this question to be put to the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be referred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day. I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 10:15.

The House recessed from 0911 to 1015.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Wayne Gates: On April 6, the government released a list of postal codes across Ontario which were deemed hot spots. These hot spots were designated based on transmission records and hospitalization. These postal codes have seen so much death and suffering on account of this virus.

One of those postal codes is the L2G postal code in Niagara Falls, yet that community in Niagara was not given access to priority lists for vaccines. This is another failure of this government to provide the vaccines we need in Niagara. In fact, this postal code may not have been needed at all if this government didn't divert over 5,000 life-saving Moderna vaccines from us in January, something the government now claims is a myth, despite all the evidence that this happened.

Time and time again, this government's failure to get Niagara the vaccines it needs is making this pandemic worse. The people of Niagara want an end to this cycle of lockdowns and viruses. We can end that cycle by following the guidelines set out and giving vaccine priorities to

more postal codes in Niagara, especially the L2G code, as identified by your own government as a hot spot.

You say, “Listen to the doctors,” so let’s listen to them and their plea to provide paid sick days for workers, paid time off to get vaccines. We also need more vaccination dates available in Fort Erie. We also need them in Niagara-on-the-Lake, to service our elderly population.

Enough failures. Get this right. Get these vaccines into these postal codes in Niagara immediately, and let’s save lives.

RAMADAN

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: The holy month of Ramadan has arrived, and Muslims across Ontario and around the world will observe 30 days of fasting, prayer and self-reflection in commitment to the religious values and traditions of their faith.

Just like last year, Muslims in our province continue to demonstrate their willingness to adapt to the current restrictions by practising social distancing and wearing a mask to stop the spread of COVID-19. Across Ontario, the Muslim community has found ways to practise their faith in these uncertain times, and for this, I thank them for their diligence in keeping one another and all of us safe.

Ramadan is a blessed month of charitable giving, self-reflection and, most importantly, commitment. For this, I say thank you to all of my Muslim brothers and sisters for your continuous generosity and support toward those in need during these unprecedented times.

On behalf of my family and the people of Ontario, I wish the Muslim community a Ramadan Mubarak.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: As a working parent of two children, with one in elementary school, I have a question for the Ford government, a question I know parents across Ontario have as well: Why do you feel the need to surprise people? For weeks on end, you kept saying that schools were safe and that in-person learning was going to continue, only to have it changed on us at the last minute. Think about the panic you create. Parents don’t know what to do. Everyone is left scrambling. It’s stressful. We have to make big changes again, on very short notice, because this government can’t be bothered to share with everyone what is actually going on. Be transparent. Provide a clear strategy and line of thought. Show some leadership.

People understand that we’re in the midst of a pandemic and tough decisions need to be made. What we get from this government instead are press conferences announcing that there is an update, but that update can only be shared tomorrow. Don’t keep us guessing what it may be. Just tell us what you know. Tell us what you want to tell us tomorrow, today. Now is as good a time—better, in fact.

You know, Speaker, if people did this at work, if people did at their jobs what this government is doing, they would be told, “You don’t know what you’re doing.” They would be fired. So do you know what you’re doing, or do you not

know what you’re doing? I understand these are unprecedented times, tough times. If you don’t know what you’re doing, maybe leave it to—

Hon. John Yakabuski: Time.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:—someone else that can do it better.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I say to the Minister of Natural Resources, the time is 10:20 this morning.

1020

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House this morning to express my gratitude to farmers, not only in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook but of course right across the province of Ontario, for their efforts to keep us fed throughout this pandemic.

Farmers have faced incredible challenges because of COVID-19. They’ve been dealing with a shortage of migrant workers. Farmers are at the mercy of the weather. They need adequate workers to plant, maintain and harvest their crops at the right time. Without these workers, consumers would see empty shelves in our grocery stores. To compensate, farmers and their workers have been toiling long hours in the fields, in our orchards and in our vineyards.

Farmers have not only been losing workers, they have also been losing money. Over the past year, they’ve lost a large share of the restaurant and hospitality business. Restaurants aren’t able to buy products like tomato sauce by the gallon. With movie theatres closed, butter isn’t being delivered by the pail.

But farmers have figured out different ways to sell their products. They’ve effectively shifted to online sales and roadside operations. Farmers are selling chicken, beef and pork to consumers at roadside stands right across the province. Some dairy farmers are now selling online and delivering milk to your door, just like the old days. Because of their efforts, grocery store shelves, coolers and freezers are fully stocked.

This past year has been a struggle for farmers, and at the start of the pandemic, the food system did bend, but due to their ingenuity and industrious nature, it didn’t break. We thank them.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, it’s no secret that our small businesses in Ontario are struggling more than ever right now. The Ontario Small Business Support Grant was supposed to be a lifeline, but for too many small business owners, the process was made impossibly complicated.

Dani is a small business owner in London and she is one of many in my riding having issues accessing this grant. She first applied for this grant in January, but after, her application sat under review for months. Finally, in April, after the deadline had passed, she found out her

application was denied. She was not given a reason why and there is no appeal process in place for her to challenge this decision.

Dani told me she has called the helpline 20 times and left nine escalation tickets without any follow-up. “It’s infuriating,” she told me, “that [some] businesses ... received funds within two weeks ... while businesses like mine are on the brink of bankruptcy.”

Speaker, after the year they’ve had, our small businesses deserve clarity and support from this government. Each day their grant requests go unanswered is another day of anxiety and uncertainty. I’m asking the Premier to take immediate action to provide our small business owners with the answers and information they deserve, and get these grants to London’s small businesses today.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Mr. Speaker, good morning. Earlier this week, the British Journal of Sports Medicine released a study which looked at almost 50,000 adults with COVID-19. The objective of this study was “to compare hospitalization rates ... ICU admissions and mortality for patients with COVID-19 who are consistently inactive, doing some activity, or consistently meeting physical activity guidelines.”

The conclusion was that other than advanced age and a history of organ transplant, a lack of physical activity was the strongest risk factor for severe COVID-19 outcomes. Those who engage in at least 150 minutes of physical activity a week had “a lower incidence, intensity of symptoms and mortality from various viral infections,” so not just COVID-19—a fact that, I’m sure, many gym-going Ontarians and gym owners have known for a very long time.

Physical activity is good for your cardiovascular and pulmonary health. It boosts immune function and improves mental health. So, why has this Progressive Conservative government shuttered gyms across Ontario for extended periods of time on three separate occasions? Why have children across this province been denied access to sports, dance and other forms of physical activity?

This government has continued to implement draconian measures on the people of Ontario for over a year, and has failed to educate Ontarians on modifiable risk factors such as the benefits of physical activity and vitamin D supplementation. I am asking this government to open gyms now and to let our children return to play.

PETERBOROUGH REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Dave Smith: I would like to share a snapshot of the excellent work being done by the health care heroes at Peterborough Regional Health Centre. Most people in Ontario won’t know about PRHC, but my regional hospital has performed in truly incredible ways during COVID-19. Not only have the 3,500 staff and physicians been tirelessly caring for people in our community,

they’ve also been pulling out all the stops to support a Team Ontario approach.

Since January, PRHC has accepted more than 40 transfer patients from GTA hospitals. This week, they’ve increased their critical care capacity to 48 ICU beds, standing ready to save more lives. Their vaccine clinic for some of the highest-risk populations has been described as the “happiest place on earth” by those who have come, and that’s not normally a phrase you hear when someone jabs you in the arm with a needle.

Speaker, I have to share this story from Tuesday. A person waiting to take someone home from the vaccination clinic experienced a life-threatening event. The nurses in the clinic responded immediately and saved that individual’s life, then went on to vaccinate more than 500 people so that no appointments were cancelled.

The staff and physicians at PRHC are passionate about what they do, about the people they care for and have been absolute heroes throughout this pandemic. From the bottom of my heart, I want to say thank you to all the staff at PRHC.

TRUCKING LICENSING

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I’d like to talk about the negative impacts of the Highway Traffic Act on the dump truck industry. The owner-operators and small business owners are facing illogical and unreasonable costs, from \$25,000 to \$40,000, in the dump truck industry.

The industry is mostly comprised of owner-operators and small businesses, and this issue affects the whole industry. It does not make sense for these dump truck drivers to retrofit their 15-year-old-plus trucks that are on the end of their lifespans with such high costs to only get a few more years out of them. This would lead to these trucks being decommissioned and would result in more harm for the environment. Instead, Mr. Speaker, we should allow them to operate, especially when our construction industry and economy need more dump trucks to continue operating in the midst of a pandemic.

The other truck industries, like concrete trucks and bulk fuel trailers, have received extensions of 20 to 25 years from the MTO, but the MTO is ignoring these dump truck drivers, not even providing adequate reasoning for this.

I’m once again asking, as we have before, to allow tri-axle dump trucks manufactured before July 2011 to operate their lifespan without these restrictions. This would allow the owner-operators and small business to operate without paying \$40,000 to retrofit their old trucks.

RAUFIKAT OYAWOYE

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, season 4 of the Great Canadian Baking Show has wrapped up, and although I wouldn’t usually be following this show so intently, this year was extra special for my great riding of Milton. This year, we watched as Milton’s own Raufikat beat out nine other bakers for the title of Canada’s best baker. Raufikat put forward some of the most mouth-watering dishes I’ve ever seen during the eight-week competition.

Speaker, I'm proud to represent a community that has such flourishing talent and, although in the middle of a pandemic, has been able to cheer on Miltonians like Raufikat while they achieve new heights.

In one of her interviews during the competition, Raufikat credited her unique and award-winning flavours to her mother's kitchen back in Nigeria. This achievement was made possible through hundreds of hours of dedication, support and, I imagine, a few taste tests along the way.

Speaker, I would like to congratulate Raufikat and all of those who supported her throughout this competition. Milton is proud of you, and we look forward to watching you as you continue to succeed in years to come. I know my colleagues will join me today in congratulating Raufikat.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I rise today to acknowledge and thank the hard-working members of the Niagara regional public health unit as well as Niagara Health for the incredible work that they have been doing to ensure that residents in Niagara are able to access COVID-19 vaccines. From Dr. Mustafa Hirji to Lynn Guerriero of Niagara Health, we've seen the incredible commitment of the health care workers across Niagara.

Speaker, we've seen over 119,000 vaccinations given in Niagara. That's over 22.5% of the population, a percentage that is above the provincial average. It's so important that we continue to encourage people to be able to go out and get their vaccines at the many locations that are across Niagara.

1030

Just last week, I had the opportunity to announce an additional 19 pharmacies that are rolling out across the region. That's in addition to the 22 pharmacies that were rolled out the week prior. That's 41 locations to access a COVID-19 vaccine in the region of Niagara, Speaker. And that, of course, is in addition to the 11 sites that were seen rolling out across the region, as well as the Seymour-Hannah site, which the Premier visited to thank the remarkable front-line workers who are doing important work there.

As we await more supply from the federal government, our government is committed to ensuring that each and every community in Ontario receives equitable access to important vaccinations. That's why in Niagara, I'm proud to say that we have an average that is above the provincial average of our vaccinations rollout. That's over 22.5%—119,000 vaccinations—and more are coming very soon.

COVID-19 DEATHS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I've been informed that the Leader of the Opposition has a point of order she wishes to raise.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the 221 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 since April 1.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment's silence for the 221 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 since April 1. Agreed? Agreed.

I'll ask the members to please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Members may take their seats.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier blamed 10,000 cancelled appointments in Scarborough on a cancellation of the Moderna shipment. Now we hear from Scarborough Health that in fact that's not the reason for those 10,000 appointments being cancelled. Can the Premier actually tell us why it was that 10,000 people in Scarborough had their appointments cancelled and are now waiting for another appointment to get a vaccination?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: The Leader of the Opposition has to understand the process we're going through. Three hundred thousand Modernas arrived yesterday; 400,000 Pfizers arrived Monday. The shipment that we expected from Moderna—an additional shipment this week—has been delayed again, I got notice, to May 3. How can you deliver the vaccinations to areas when we don't have the supply? It's very simple, Mr. Speaker: If we have the supply, we give it to the public health units and they distribute it. If they don't have it, they can't distribute it. It's not Scarborough's fault. It's not Toronto's fault. We need the supply of vaccines—simple as that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That's not what Scarborough Health says. Scarborough Health says it had nothing to do with a Moderna shipment delay.

However, last week, the Premier promised that there was going to be a program in hot spots for vaccinating people over the age of 18. We find out, of course, that public health had no idea that this was coming. There were no extra vaccines provided. There were no extra resources provided to public health units. Then Scarborough had 10,000 appointments pulled right out from under them. Here is what one source tells the Toronto Star: "They made an announcement without a plan, or a supply to implement it ... A, there was no supply. B, people couldn't register for appointments. C, there was no plan."

What the heck is going on with the government? Why can't they get their act together and protect the people of this province from COVID-19? That's their job.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition can get up and shout up and

down and scream and do cartwheels, that's fine. The bottom line is the Leader of the Opposition doesn't understand the process, doesn't have a clue about the process and how it's been working.

Again, God bless the people of Scarborough. We're going to get them vaccines. There are three million—three million appointments have been booked. We don't have the vaccines for three million people, it is as simple as that. As soon as we get the vaccines, we'll be able to distribute them. We'll be able to get them out to the pharmacies, with the AstraZeneca, and in the primary care. We'll be able to get the Moderna and the Pfizer out to the public health units that will distribute it to the hospitals.

It's not their fault, because they have 10,000 additional appointments and didn't have the vaccines. There's only one government that's responsible for the supply of the vaccines. It's not the province, it's not the municipality; it's the federal government. We need the supply of the vaccines—simple as that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have news for the Premier: There's a distribution issue here in the province of Ontario, and that's his responsibility.

But look, the Premier was warned back in February. It was really clear. The warnings came from the experts back in February that we were going to end up exactly where we are now. We have over 650 patients now in the ICUs, Speaker—and these aren't just numbers; these are people who are literally fighting for their lives; fighting to breathe, fighting this virus in ICUs. Of course, places like Scarborough are ground zero, where they're literally airlifting people to Ottawa to try to give them the care that they need. People were failed by this Premier. He failed the people of Scarborough.

So my question is, when is this government, when is this Premier, going to stop making excuses, stop blaming everybody else and start protecting those front-line essential workers, those front-line workers in Scarborough?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition is talking this way, she does a disservice to the public, she does a disservice to our health partners and to the public health units that have been working their back off day in and day out. As the Leader of the Opposition sits there and throws barbs at everyone when she hasn't even been involved from day one—has done zero, nothing, nothing at all, to support the system, nothing to help out. People up in Hamilton are struggling. What has the Leader of the Opposition done? Nothing.

We're going to continue to focus on making sure that we get the vaccines. Part 1 of our plan is to limit mobility to get the ICUs down with the people of this province. Part 2 is we are going into high-priority neighbourhoods, we are going into high-priority companies within those neighbourhoods, as we speak right now. It's happening. We saw it happen over the last four or five days. We're getting the job done.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. I can tell you for sure that I would have been listening to the scientists. I would have been following the instructions of the folks who were the experts who were giving this Premier advice, but instead he didn't. He actually ignored the advice of experts and walked us right into this third wave—which is now completely out of control—with his eyes wide open.

There are a number of things that he could have and should have been doing, and I assure him I would have been doing them—I would have been doing them.

Now apparently cabinet is meeting today. So I'm asking the Premier, yet again, as the experts have, as his own Chief Medical Officer of Health has, to start providing paid sick days to essential front-line workers, to all workers in Ontario. Start providing paid time off for vaccinations for all Ontario workers, so that they can have the tools to do the right thing.

I don't want to hear the malarkey about the federal program; it is not a paid sick day, it's a benefit that you might or might not get.

1040

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, the Leader of the Opposition is doing a disservice every time she stands up and speaks, every single time. She's telling the people that there are no paid sick days. Imagine the people at home listening to this who won't even apply to the federal government's sick day program that we fought hard for, that we fought for \$1.1 billion. There's \$700 million, but guess what? We're fortunate that 300,000 people in this province are smarter than the Leader of the Opposition, because they did apply and they did get funding for sick pay.

I encourage every single Ontarian not to be double-dipping—it doesn't matter if it says the government of Canada or the government of Ontario. There's one taxpayer. There's \$700 million sitting there for the people of Ontario to apply.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The disservice comes from a Premier who doesn't want to do his job and acknowledge that people need paid sick days, not a program that you have to qualify for, that you have to jump through hoops for, that you may or may not get access to. Paid sick days occur in the moment. You don't have to wait for them. You don't have to worry that your pay is going to be docked and then wait for even a week and a half. You get them right away. That's why every single expert—not just me, not just the Leader of the Opposition—every single expert has been telling this Premier that those front-line heroes, those essential workers, the people he pretends to care about—the “little guy”—the little guy needs paid sick days.

When will this Premier do his job and protect those essential front-line workers with paid sick days and paid time off for vaccinations?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, talk about doing a job. Our team, the front-line health care workers, the docs, the nurses, paramedics—everyone has been working around the clock for well over a year, literally 24/7 every single day trying to support the people of Ontario.

The negative talk that comes out of the Leader of the Opposition again does a disservice to all of the front-line health care heroes, all the people of Ontario. And it's ironic: It's coming from a person that has done diddly-squat, nothing, zero, sat in their seat—and sits there and criticizes the hard work of the health care workers and the doctors that give me advice, no matter if it's Dr. Williams or Dr. Brown and the hundred doctors underneath them, or if it's Dr. de Villa or Dr. Loh who all are giving advice, all working their back off.

Why doesn't the Leader of the Opposition do something? Do something positive once in a year and a half, because it's not even in her mindset to—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. This will be the final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Ontario deserve so much better than this. Folks are losing their lives. People are getting sick at unprecedented numbers: 659 people in the ICU today, struggling to breathe. The virus continues to grow. Over 4,700 people in Ontario now have the virus.

We've given this Premier all kinds of advice. We've asked him, we've begged him to listen to the experts, to follow their lead, to do what they're telling him to do. Instead, he walked us right into this third wave, into this rampant spread of variants of concern. Now, he seems to think that it's not his responsibility, that it had nothing to do with what he did or didn't do, the actions that he refused to take.

Take the actions necessary. Take the actions that the experts are telling you to take: Bring in paid sick days, bring in paid vax time and stop the spread of this virus. Will the Premier do that?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, it is so frustrating sitting here, listening to the Leader of the Opposition disrespect Dr. Williams, disrespect Dr. Brown, Dr. Huyer—I could keep rattling all the doctors, all the CEOs that I talk to, at least a half a dozen every single day, giving advice, and the Leader of the Opposition wants to disrespect them.

We have followed medical advice from day one. We have followed science from day one. That is the reason we're doing more vaccinations than anyone—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: That is the reason we're leading the country in vaccinations, bar none. No one even comes

close to the amount of vaccinations. We're getting in excess of 100,000 vaccines out a day. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? We have 3,200 pharmacies; we're only at 1,400 pharmacies. We need more supply. We can ramp up to well in excess of 300,000.

I want to ask the opposition leader a question: What would happen if we would have—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The Premier will take his seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The next question.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question is to the Minister of Health. There's no other way to say this right now: We are in the middle of a full-blown crisis. We are in the midst of the third wave, and vulnerable people are going to be paying the price for the Conservative government's inaction.

More than just inaction, the Conservative government actually ignored critical information, advice and pleas to act that could have avoided this third wave. They ignored calls to bring in greater support to COVID-19 hot spots. They ignored our hospitals who were warning about the third wave and overcrowding in our hospitals. They ignored experts who were calling for paid sick days. They ignored our teachers who were demanding safer schools. They even ignored our doctors who have been warning about this third wave for weeks and months now.

Why did the Conservative government, despite all these warnings, still decide to not act to bring in measures with the urgency that we needed to fight the third wave and stop this third wave?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We have taken every step along the way since this pandemic began, realizing that we would need to enhance our hospitals' capacity. Since this pandemic began, we have brought forward 3,100 new beds, enhanced our ICU capacity by 14% and made significant investments in our hospitals—over \$15 billion so far, including \$1.8 billion in the most recent budget to deal with the extra beds that have been brought on, to deal with the surgeries that again we unfortunately have had to delay because of this pandemic.

We anticipated, as we saw the numbers rising—and listened to the experts and listened to the doctors: Dr. Williams, Dr. Brown and the science advisory table, the public health measures table. We brought in the emergency brake shutdown, and then realized we needed to have the stay-at-home order.

I'll speak more to the preparations that we've taken in my supplementary, Speaker.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Again to the minister: In communities like Brampton and Peel that were the hardest

hit by COVID-19, we're in desperate need of help, but the Conservative government is still leaving Brampton behind, despite the fact that we are a COVID-19 hot spot and we are full of essential workers.

Brampton was left behind earlier in this pandemic, and we had to fight tooth and nail to get the testing capacity that our city needed. Now we're being left behind once again by this Conservative government as we fight to get the vaccine to those who are most vulnerable in our community.

We knew this third wave was coming for weeks. Every single health expert in Canada was warning that Ontario was facing a third wave. Yet despite these alarms being raised, the Conservative government decided to not act, and in the end, Brampton is suffering.

My question is this: When will the Conservative government finally decide to stop leaving Brampton behind and give Brampton access to the life-saving vaccine so we can fight and beat the COVID-19 pandemic?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member opposite would know that Brampton is going to get a brand new hospital, thanks to the hard work of this Premier and this Minister of Health.

But I have some advice to the member opposite. If he is really concerned about the federal sick day program that his brother, the leader of the NDP, helped to negotiate, along with this Premier, then he should pick up the phone, call his brother and suggest to him that when the federal Liberal government delivers a budget, if it doesn't include the enhancements he is talking about, that he does not need to vote for that budget.

If he thinks the distribution of vaccines is not sufficient, that we haven't got a big enough supply, then I suggest the member opposite call his brother, the leader of the NDP in Ottawa, and suggest that he not just give him a blank cheque on a budget. Don't settle for a stretch goal again.

Your brother has the opportunity in Ottawa to ensure that Ontario gets the vaccines it needs. If there needs to be an enhancement of sick pay, he has the ability to do it. Pick up the phone and help Ontario.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. David Piccini: As our government works to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians during this third wave, it remains my top priority to ensure that my constituents remain up to date on the latest news and advice and guidance on how to navigate this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, locally, I've compiled a website, vaccineupdate.ca, and held many tele-town halls, bringing together our health units, local municipal leaders, to provide current information on vaccine availability and health guidelines to my local constituents.

1050

Imagine how frustrated I was, Mr. Speaker, when I received an email from a constituent in Grafton. She writes: "David, I'm writing to you today to inform you that

I was unable to join your tele-town hall nor go online to see its recording because our Internet in Grafton is so bad that I was not able to participate effectively. We have had so many technicians, new modems, ISPs, and we are on our third dish."

Mr. Speaker, my community needs better broadband. They deserve better broadband. Would the minister please rise and inform the House what steps—

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

I recognize the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thanks to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South for his tireless advocacy on this issue for his constituents in his riding.

Right now, it is so imperative that we work quickly to get more households connected to high-speed Internet. How can anyone refute the fact that the lack of broadband is detrimental to the daily lives and livelihoods of too many Ontarians when stories like the member shared clearly indicate that people are being left behind? There's no question that the lack of Internet is detrimental to the daily lives and livelihoods of Ontarians, especially during this stay-at-home order, and having unreliable Internet or even no service at all is simply unacceptable.

That's exactly why I introduced the Supporting Broadband and Infrastructure Expansion Act, 2021, that will reduce barriers faced by the telecommunications sector. When it comes to building broadband faster, we're taking an innovative approach so that everyone in Ontario can get reliable Internet no matter where they live.

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

Mr. David Piccini: Mr. Speaker, to meaningfully address broadband, it's more than just money; it's about measures that that minister just alluded to, to reduce barriers in areas of rural Ontario like mine. Also, it helps when you invest money, and I'm proud of this government's historic \$4-billion investment into broadband, the largest in Canadian history.

I recently joined PA Cho and the Port Hope chamber and other chambers in my riding to discuss what was being done about poor broadband in our area and its impact on small business. We were pleased to share the \$2.8-billion commitment in this budget and the steps the minister alluded to, to reduce barriers.

Mr. Speaker, I think it was put best, perhaps, by the CEO of the Port Hope chamber of commerce. She said, "Vital infrastructure such as broadband will help bridge gaps that are happening in these challenging times and improve life for our small businesses." This is welcome news by the Port Hope chamber of commerce and chambers throughout my riding.

Speaker, would the minister please share with the House what more we can expect from this historic investment?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you to the member again for the question. Without healthy people, we can't have a healthy economy. That's why we're focused on protecting every life and every job we possibly can during COVID.

I, too, share the member's excitement, because for almost 20 years, I've advocated for the expansion of broadband across Ontario, especially in rural and northern communities like the ones we represent. With our legislation and commitment of an additional \$2.8 billion for a near total investment of almost \$4 billion, we can help accelerate broadband expansion across all regions of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm thrilled to say that finally this groundbreaking legislation has received royal assent, and now, shovels can get moving, people can get connected and Ontario can recover from COVID-19.

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier.

Cases of COVID-19 in child care centres are rising fast, and parents are worried that their children are no longer safe. There have been more than a thousand cases reported in the last two weeks, including 134 cases yesterday alone. Twenty-five per cent of all child care centre closures due to COVID-19 in the last 10 months have occurred in just the last two weeks. Experts like Dr. Janine McCready, an infectious disease specialist at Michael Garron Hospital, are advising parents to pull their kids from child care.

What is the Premier doing to address this growing crisis?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we've put a plan in place with \$234 million of investment for child care, recognizing how critical it is to keep kids safe, the staff themselves and our communities at large—234 million more dollars to help strengthen the infection prevention measures in place. That includes the cohorting of children in groups of 10 or less every day, the establishment of COVID-19 response plans, the active screening of all staff and all students before they enter the centres, daily attendance records, enhanced cleaning of the centres, mandatory PPE for the staff and a no-visitor policy beyond essential visitors.

We have followed all the advice of the medical officer of health, which is why in this province, over 91% of centres have no confirmed cases of COVID at all. We're going to continue to follow the best medical advice, working closely with the chief medical officer, because like the member opposite, we appreciate how critical child care is right now as we work through this pandemic.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Child care workers are working through the shutdown. They perform close care work with unmasked children who are too young to understand social distancing, children who need help going to the bathroom or changing their diaper. While education workers in hot spots are rightly receiving their vaccines, child care workers are being left behind. Without child care workers, essential workers can't go to work. We rely on child care workers to keep our kids safe. Why won't the

Premier immediately prioritize child care workers for vaccinations?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We made a commitment to make sure that our child care staff can get a vaccine—part of phase 2, which we are in. As the Premier has rightfully noted, I think as every objective mind has acknowledged, the first step in defeating the pandemic is this province getting vaccine in the first place, and that responsibility to procure it rests with the federal government.

When we get it in Ontario, I assure the member opposite and every child care worker in this province that they will get access to the vaccine. But yes, individuals 55-years-plus are eligible. Those 60-years-plus are eligible, as well, for Pfizer and Moderna. In addition, anyone who lives within a hot spot is eligible for the vaccine, particularly child care workers. Any ECE that works within our schools, especially those that work with special education teachers and students, can get access to the vaccine.

We are making steps in the right direction. We realize there's more to do, and as vaccine comes to this province, we will get it out to the people of Ontario.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

There are 653 people in intensive care units today, 4,736 new COVID cases, and over a million doses of vaccines in freezers. And if we were administering the 150,000 doses daily, which we're not, that's about a week's supply. We're more around 100,000 doses a day, and that's about 10 days of supply. Speaker, I don't know about you, but that's a pretty large buffer to hold back in a crisis. The government says that they're spoken for, but there is no transparency as to where the government delivers vaccines here in Ontario, so none of this—none of this—makes any sense to Ontarians.

Speaker, through you: Can the Premier explain why the government is keeping an almost 10-day stockpile of vaccines in freezers?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I can assure the member opposite that no amount is being held in freezers that's not already allocated to people. We have already booked over 2.5 million appointments for people. That's using our booking tool. That doesn't even include the appointments that are being booked in pharmacies, in personal care offices, in primary care offices, in hospital units as well. So those allocations are already spoken for. Every dose that is in the freezer now has been booked already for an appointment for a person. We are deploying them as quickly as possible.

Yesterday, we vaccinated 105,500 people, and we're able to do more. We can triple, quadruple the number of vaccinations we can do every day if we have the vaccine supply. But as has been already indicated, the Moderna

supply has been put off yet again. We're receiving the Pfizer vaccines, but we don't know when we're receiving AstraZeneca. The Moderna supply is also delayed. So as soon as we get them, we are putting them into people's arms as quickly as possible.

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

Mr. John Fraser: A million doses in freezers and we're cancelling appointments. That's all I'm going to say.

The problem here is, for the Premier, it's been too much business as usual during this pandemic. He's been too focused on other things, like Highway 413, paving over wetlands or, a couple of weeks ago, campaigning in Brampton. Ontarians need a Premier who is focused on keeping them safe from COVID-19.

1100

Last Friday, the Premier gave the impression that mobile units were out as he spoke vaccinating people in hot-spot communities, and he said that if you're over 18 in those communities, you can get it. He did both of these things before public health units and the vaccine task force were ready. Then he had the temerity to say, "It's not complicated." Well, he's making it complicated. People are angry and frustrated, and they have every right to be.

Speaker, through you: Can the Premier explain why he is announcing things before the mechanisms to get them done are even close to being ready?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the member that what you're suggesting is simply not the case. There is a plan that was developed by working with Dr. Williams, with the public health measures table and the members of the vaccine distribution task force, as well as with the chiefs of all the hospitals in Ontario and the local medical officers of health in all 34 public health unit regions. The plan was developed with them. They have known about it since the beginning.

The distribution for each amount of vaccine that is distributed to the public health units is then given to the units that are going to be providing them. That is what happens. That is what was planned for. That is what we are doing now. The fact that we've already distributed 3.5 million vaccines indicates the plan is actually working.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. David Piccini: Yesterday, the Premier joined his counterparts from New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta to welcome Alberta as a signatory to the small modular reactor memorandum of understanding. I gather that this news generated—pun intended—a lot of excitement in the nuclear energy sector and beyond. This matters to the many hard-working men and women in the riding of Northumberland–Peterborough South who get up every day to power our province and this nation.

Mr. Speaker, will the Associate Minister of Energy please tell the House what yesterday's announcement means for the province, the people of Ontario and the hard-

working men and women of Northumberland–Peterborough South?

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South for that great question. It did generate some great excitement here in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, small modular reactors, or SMRs, are a real game-changer that have the potential to power Ontario's future job creation and export opportunities. We're thrilled to welcome our friends from Alberta to the table to be part of the next generation of nuclear technology.

A feasibility study was also released, confirming that SMRs represent an important solution for our unique energy challenges, such as powering remote and rural communities that currently rely on expensive diesel power.

I thank Ontario Power Generation, Bruce Power, New Brunswick Power and Saskatchewan Power for their work in preparing the study, which will help us plan for the development and deployment of SMR technology in coming years.

Ontario is leading the way when it comes to SMR development, just like we did with the development of Candu technology. We are excited about how SMRs can contribute to a clean and reliable energy and environmental future for our province and our country.

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

Mr. David Piccini: Mr. Speaker, constituents of Northumberland–Peterborough South welcome that news. I know a number of them were very scared three years ago when they heard members opposite talk about shutting down the sector, so this is welcome news.

I'd like to reference a note I received from a constituent of mine, Mike in Newcastle, who said, "Dave, this groundbreaking technology has so much potential and I applaud this government for its leadership in this area." It's for hard-working men and women, people like Mike, that we get up every day to make this province a better place, to invest in groundbreaking technology like this.

My question back to the associate minister: Can you please tell us more about ways that SMRs can be utilized to benefit this economy in Ontario and the hard-working men and women of Northumberland–Peterborough South?

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you to Mike, and to the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South for another great question.

SMR development represents an immense opportunity for Ontario to become a leading exporter of technology and expertise that can address global issues such as climate change and energy reliability and further strengthen Ontario's position as the global leader in the supply of life-saving medical isotopes.

SMRs could offer energy-intensive industries, such as mining and manufacturing, a safe, lower-cost source of clean, safe energy and enhance their competitiveness. SMRs also have the potential for innovations beyond electricity generation, such as supplying heat or steam for

industrial processes or producing hydrogen, which is another clean resource that our government is very interested in developing.

Mr. Speaker, the possibilities are truly endless for a sustainable made-in-Ontario supply chain and jobs, and I share the member's enthusiasm for Ontario's future as a world leader in nuclear energy.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is to the Premier. This stay-at-home order and the school shutdown could have been avoided if this government invested in the safety of Ontarians. There were over 8,000 cases this weekend, and over 65% of the cases were between the ages of 20 and 59.

This age group represents a majority of Brampton's workforce, and they mostly work in front-line occupations, such as transportation and manufacturing. They are being heavily impacted by this government's inaction. They need paid sick days. I'll say this once again: They need paid sick days. They are critical to stopping workplace outbreaks, to keeping our front-line workers safe and to stopping the spread of COVID-19.

My question to the Premier: When will this government help them by mandating paid sick days?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to respond to the member's question. There are now four weeks of paid sick days for every worker in Ontario. I would remind every worker in Ontario to go to canada.ca/covid-19 and they can apply for those paid sick days.

Furthermore, the members opposite should let their constituents know that there are 20 days, or four weeks, of paid sick days available to each and every one of their workers and their constituents. In fact, more than 300,000 people in Ontario have either received the benefit or are receiving the benefit as we speak.

We'll continue to advocate to the federal government, to always be there for Ontario workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Let me tell you how it really works. We just heard the member opposite. I'm going to educate him as to the way it really works.

Workers cannot rely on the CRB as a replacement for paid sick days. They cannot apply for the CRB if they take a day off to go get tested. There's a reason why health officials such as Dr. Lawrence Loh have been advocating for paid sick days: They know the CRB is not enough to stop the spread of COVID-19. The Premier earlier said that he was listening to health experts, but obviously he's not listening to Dr. Loh.

Our front-line workers, who are being impacted heavily by the virus and all the new variants, need relief and they need paid sick days. The Premier says that he doesn't make any decisions by himself and that he listens to health officials. So instead of accusing the NDP of playing politics, why won't he listen to health officials like Dr. Loh when they are asking for paid sick days?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: The very first piece of action that our government took when COVID-19 hit Ontario was to bring in job-protected leave. I'm proud to say that we led North America. In fact, if any worker out there is in self-isolation, if they're in quarantine, if they're a mom or dad, for example, who has to stay home and look after a son or a daughter because of the disruptions to the school system, they can't be fired for that.

Furthermore, we were the very first jurisdiction to bring forward job-protected leave for those getting vaccinations. I have to say it was just last week that the NDP government in British Columbia reached out to my office. We helped them. They're drafting legislation now to bring in job-protected leave for vaccinations. But we were the first ones to do that, supported by all members in this House.

Mr. Speaker, every member is doing a disservice to their constituents when they don't tell workers in their own local communities that there are 20 paid sick days available to each and every one of them.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Shortly after the Premier issued yet another stay-at-home order, my constituency office started to receive an increase in calls asking for clarity and reasoning behind these new rules. In one instance, a gentleman was denied the opportunity to purchase batteries for his smoke alarm from a store because the clerk said it was non-essential. Another individual said that the local Dollarama would not sell them school and office supplies as they were deemed non-essential. A constituent was even barred from purchasing sandwich bags at Sobeys, again because they were deemed non-essential.

My question to the Premier is, after saying for months on end that restricting stores from selling "non-essential items" would be detrimental and impractical, what science did he follow that persuaded him to flip-flop on this messaging? And how did he determine what makes an item essential or non-essential?

1110

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: If the member opposite is not willing to educate and inform her constituents, I'm happy to do that. The reality is, from the beginning, businesses across Ontario have been allowed to provide curbside service. It's safer, it protects the customers, it protects their employees and it also allows individuals who need to purchase things for their family to get that safely.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Aside from her childish jab, what this government has done is pushed those who can shop online to do just that, once again favouring the big box stores over our local small businesses. Not everyone can afford a lobbyist, Mr. Speaker, especially ones who used to work or volunteer with any of those who serve on the government benches.

What we are seeing is a lack of science behind decisions that are having detrimental effects on the small business owners and their families in this province. This new stay-at-home order is wrong, and the restrictions that come with it are confusing, heavy-handed and ineffective. It is insulting to Ontarians to know that pot and booze are essential but car seats for children are not.

So, I ask again, why did the Premier and this government change their stance on placing restrictions on businesses from selling certain goods?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, the short answer is because lives were at stake.

We have instituted a stay-at-home order to protect the most number of Ontario citizens. It truly is the difference between ensuring that we can protect the vast majority of people—if people understand that allowing the movement of individuals is actually leading to more transmission rates, then we need to send a clear message that says, “Stay at home. Order online. Pick up by curbside. Do your delivery models.” Because at the end of the day, it will protect your family, it will protect your neighbours, it will protect your community and ensure that we have the necessary medical resources to make sure that if someone unfortunately catches COVID, then we can protect them in our hospitals.

ATTORNEY GENERAL’S VICTIM SERVICES AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Mr. David Piccini: My question is for the Attorney General. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to serve in a government that is committed to standing up for victims of crime and supporting the growth of safer communities in every corner of the province of Ontario.

Recently, the Attorney General announced new sexual violence support services for historically underserved regions of the province of Ontario and the province-wide expansion of free legal advice for survivors of sexual assault, no matter where they live. This matters for rural and small-town Ontario.

Yesterday, the Attorney General recognized the exceptional achievements in the service of victims of crime across Ontario through the Victim Services Awards of Distinction. Could the Attorney General please share the importance of celebrating these heroes and their vital work for communities?

Hon. Doug Downey: I want to thank the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South, my colleague and friend, for the chance to honour with him the remarkable contributions of 15 individuals and organizations from across the province who have been recognized through the Victim Services Awards of Distinction.

In the face of unprecedented challenges, these dedicated professionals, generous volunteers and outstanding organizations have demonstrated an impressive drive to raise awareness of victims’ issues, increase access to crisis intervention services, and provide compassionate support in times of need. This recognition highlights the dedication and creativity of professionals and volunteers who serve

victims, and the courageous efforts of individuals who have been personally impacted by crime and are now working to raise the profile of victims’ issues in Ontario, including in rural, northern and Indigenous communities.

I want to congratulate and celebrate each and every remarkable recipient on the important impacts their service to victims of crime is having in their communities.

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

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the Attorney General for recognizing these heroes who go above and beyond to support victims of crime and survivors across the province of Ontario. In my region, we are proud of the work that is done on a daily basis by dedicated professionals, volunteers, organizations and partners.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to particularly highlight the great work being done by Peterborough Police Service. I know there has been groundbreaking work done there with the Peterborough police victim services unit. We are proud of the work of Alice Czitrom and facility dog Pixie. They’ve been accomplishing remarkable work at the unit, and I applaud the Attorney General for shining a light on these important efforts.

Mr. Speaker, can the Attorney General tell us about this remarkable pair of recipients?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you again for the question, Speaker, and the chance to speak about this deserving team of recipients. Alice Czitrom is a social worker and civilian coordinator with the Peterborough police victim services unit who developed its first facility dog program. She is the primary handler of Pixie, a five-year-old accredited facility dog, and you can follow Pixie on Instagram if you wish.

Pixie helps provide people experiencing trauma with positive physical and neurological impacts. Since the program began just over a year ago, Pixie has provided critical support to victims of crime at court, police scenes, interviews, meetings, stress debriefings and community presentations.

Alice creatively champions the use of canine-assisted intervention. The story of Alice and Pixie is one of 15 recognized by the Victim Services Awards of Distinction, and I encourage all members of the House to share stories from their regions.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier. Agri-food is an important pillar in London’s economy, and a business is only as strong as the people who work there. Front-line workers are responsible for the high-quality food on our table.

This week, the members from London–Fanshawe and London West and I learned that over 80 essential workers at Cargill—people who don’t have the luxury of working from home or physically distancing in the workplace—contracted COVID-19. Right now, we’re thinking of all the workers and their families.

Without provincial paid sick days, our food supply chain is under attack. Thankfully, Cargill stepped up and

supported workers with paid sick leave while this government stepped aside. Denying front-line essential workers paid sick days means that many people can't take the time off when they're feeling unwell, which puts us all at risk.

When will this government listen to experts, listen to doctors, listen to nurses, listen to the legion of people calling on them to step up, show some responsibility and provide provincial paid sick days?

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I do want to begin by thanking all of those farmers, all of those farm workers, all of those agri-food workers who have ensured that every single day in the province of Ontario, all of us have had food on our plates at the dinner table. Mr. Speaker, I think about all those Cargill workers, and I do want to say thank you, Cargill, for stepping up, for paying those workers who are not going to be on the job for the next number of days.

But, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Ontario, 2.3 million workers actually have paid sick days through their employers. For everyone else, I plead with the NDP, with the provincial Liberals, with all elected officials: Please tell these workers to go to canada.ca/covid-19. Some 300,000 workers in this province are receiving this benefit. It's a responsibility for all of us to let them know that these supports are in place.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary question.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Back to the Premier. This is a serious hit to London's economy and our food supply chain, but first and foremost, this government didn't listen to scientific advice to vaccinate front-line workers who want to get their shot. It's even more disturbing that this government is now shirking its responsibility by having employers in hot spots set up their own vaccination clinics for workers in the community, and then sticking them with the bill. The Premier's mouth tells workers and businesses that he stands shoulder to shoulder with them, but his actions say something completely different.

Paid sick days protect our economy. Paid sick days protect our food chain. Paid sick days save lives. Does this government truly want to protect Ontario workers, or would they rather save a buck?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, I am proud that more than 3.4 million people in the province of Ontario have received a vaccination as of yesterday, with millions more ready to be vaccinated; they booked those appointments. But, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and his party need to work with us to call on the federal government to get us more vaccines. The supply issue is a real challenge in London and in every other community across this province.

But, Mr. Speaker, as a ministry, we are sparing no expense to protect the health and safety of workers. I'm proud to say that as of today, we've done about 47,000 workplace inspections. We've hired 100 more Ministry of

Labour, Training and Skills Development inspectors, something that that member opposite voted against. We will stand with workers every single day to get through COVID-19.

1120

LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY

M^{me} Lucille Collard: My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. Monday was a devastating day for people in Sudbury. More than 150 members of their community working at Laurentian University were told that they were without a job in the middle of the pandemic because the university had to cut nearly 70 programs.

I know the government has been saying that it can't get involved while the CCAA process is ongoing, but the government knew these program cuts and job losses were coming months ago, before the process began.

I would like to ask the minister, why didn't the government act before February 1 to collaborate on a made-in-Sudbury solution and protect all those affected by Monday's cuts?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Northumberland–Peterborough South.

Mr. David Piccini: Let me be clear that I understand the very difficult and personal situation affecting students, families and workers at Laurentian University. The courses of 90% of students have not been affected, and for the 10% of those who have, we are working directly with the institution, who is working in turn with each student, to ensure a pathway for graduation.

The member asserts information prior to knowing the CCAA protection proceedings. Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you is that the gravity of Laurentian's financial situation was only very recently brought to the government's attention. It's been widely reported that Laurentian University has over \$300 million in liabilities, and we've appointed Dr. Alan Harrison to have a look at this and to provide independent and thoughtful analysis to ensure that we make meaningful decisions going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: And again to the Minister of Colleges and Universities: Laurentian is a northern institution that serves Indigenous and francophone communities that are largely underserved by provincial services: 45% of French-language programming is being cut and the Indigenous studies program has been cut entirely.

The institution does not only support these communities, but it also supports the vitality of Sudbury as a whole. Once students leave the region to complete their studies, most of them won't come back. For the francophone community, the impact is on the survival of our culture in the north.

The government has taken symbolic steps to recognize the important role Franco-Ontarians play in our society. So my question is, what does the government intend to do concretely to support the right to study in French for our Franco-Ontarian community in northern Ontario?

Mr. David Piccini: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address that. The member opposite said "symbolic." Well, I can assure the member opposite there's nothing symbolic about \$17.6 million to expand French-language programming in the post-secondary sector, providing more opportunities for francophone students. There's nothing symbolic about the \$74 million to support over 30,000 Ontarian students who enrol in French-language programming across Ontario.

That member is from the national capital region. I would encourage her to work with us, work with the federal government, who contributes one fifth of what this government contributes to French-language programming in the province of Ontario—one fifth. We know the Official Languages Act talks about the importance of bilingualism in this country and the important role that francophones play in the province of Ontario. So I would encourage that member opposite to work with us, work with us to grow the first-ever Franco university governed by and for francophones; in addition, Mr. Speaker, to work with—

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

LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY

Mr. Jamie West: My question's for the Premier. The Minister of Colleges and Universities allowed the CCAA process to fire over 100 people and slash nearly 70 programs at Laurentian University. One of those programs was midwifery. I want to remind you, Speaker, that Laurentian has the only French "école de profession de sage-femme" outside of Quebec. It is the only bilingual midwifery program in the entire country.

I spoke with Lisa Morgan, the director of the program, and she said other midwifery schools are valued and protected as rare and necessary because there's only six of them in Canada. Lisa was told the program was cut due to low enrolment, which is confusing because Laurentian's program is the largest school of midwifery in Canada. This program is managed by the Ministry of Health, which caps enrolment at 30 students even though they turn away hundreds of students every year.

My question, Speaker, through you: Will the government finally realize how ridiculous the CCAA process has been and reverse the harmful cuts that were made to Laurentian University's programs?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South.

Mr. David Piccini: Mr. Speaker, I do acknowledge and understand the rare and necessary programming of midwifery. That's why this government provided an additional \$1 million to Laurentian University, dedicated specifically for the midwifery program.

But the real question here—and the member alluded to it—is, is it the position of the NDP for government to now get involved in specific programming at every university across the province of Ontario, which are autonomous-governing institutions? Is that the position of the NDP? Is

it the position of the NDP to interfere in court proceedings? If so, be honest with Ontarians and just tell them that.

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

Mr. Jamie West: The CCAA process is not meant for public institutions. It's a brutal process that's made to satisfy bankers. As long as they get paid, they don't care what cuts are being made—and there's the Conservatives in their pocket.

Our university is a community and we care about all the cuts that are being made, especially when they don't make sense. One hundred per cent of midwifery graduates have been hired. Laurentian midwives make up one third of all midwives in Ontario and in Canada.

Alison Kroes is a midwifery student at Laurentian. She said:

"I have exposed myself to COVID for the last year in order to serve the Ontario population. I've moved more than 10 times for placements. I've completed unpaid placements and acquired significant student debt. I've faced extended separation from my support systems.

"And, I now have no clear path to graduation or registration to the profession.

"This cut is unconscionable."

He can pivot and dance and sidestep and hide, but I want the Premier to answer. Will the Premier do the right thing for northern students like Alison and fund Laurentian to save programs like midwifery?

Mr. David Piccini: Mr. Speaker, again, we understand the important role midwives play across this country and in the province of Ontario. That's why this government provided a million additional dollars to Laurentian University to support that programming.

But again, the underlying issue here, which that member refuses to address, is that he believes that politicians know better than our autonomous institutions what programming to offer, that politicians know better than independent court cases.

We know that when it comes to the independent processes, when it comes to court proceedings, they couldn't care less. They want politicians making all these decisions. We understand the important role the government does play. That's why we're working with the institution to ensure a pathway to graduation for the 10% of students affected at Laurentian University, individualized pathways for each. We are going to continue doing just that.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. We know that the pandemic is not being experienced in a uniform way across the province. While many parts of the province have low case numbers and people living in circumstances that help facilitate successful safety measures, such as staying home and maintaining distance from others, my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood does not have the same options.

Scarborough–Guildwood has been a COVID hot spot since the beginning of the pandemic. A disproportionate

number of residents cannot work from home. They are essential and front-line workers.

With dense housing and multi-generational family homes, community transmission is also a continuing problem, with a 24% positivity rate—more than twice the provincial average. This reflects the numbers of cases in Scarborough.

The vaccine rollout has been unnecessarily complicated and confusing for Ontarians, especially newcomers and seniors. They have faced many barriers booking their vaccine. What is the provincial government doing to make vaccines more accessible—instead of chaotic, by closing hospital-run vaccination clinics—in hot spots like Scarborough?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: We have been clear that phase 2 of our vaccine rollout will focus on age and risk, while also focusing on hot spots across the province. There have been 114 hot spots identified through postal codes. Where we understand that there are barriers to people receiving vaccines—there's vaccine hesitancy, there may be language problems—there may be other issues involved with it.

We are vaccinating people through the vaccine clinics. We are also doing mobile clinics and pop-up testing, going to apartment buildings, going to other locations, using faith-based organizations as well, because these are trusted organizations that people depend upon and rely upon, and we're finding that that's really dealing with the vaccine hesitancy.

With respect to the issue about the shortage in the vaccination clinics, it's very important to remind the member that local public health units are responsible for managing and overseeing the distribution and administration of the vaccines across their entire region. Similarly, clinics are expected to administer the—

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

1130

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Back to the minister: 10,000 people in my riding and across Scarborough are now out of luck. They are having to rebook their vaccinations.

I was there yesterday at Centennial College. I met Lisita. She is 74 years old. She has had an appointment booked for weeks. She came an hour early for her appointment and had to be turned away. Sixty-nine-year old Ramji rode his bike to get his vaccine, only to be turned away.

I understand that we are all in this together. We need to roll this vaccination program out across the province; however, we cannot keep passing the buck on to others. It's not the local public health's responsibility to coordinate the distribution.

Interjection.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Well, the distribution is decided by the province. If you're telling me that that's not the responsibility, then we've got more to do.

But Mr. Speaker, I'm asking this minister: Will they send Scarborough an equitable share of vaccines so that

they can vaccinate the thousands of people who lost their appointment yesterday?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Through you, Speaker, I can assure the member that Scarborough is receiving an equitable distribution of vaccines, as is every other part of Ontario. It's based on age and based on risk, and taking into account the numerous hot spots that we understand Scarborough has within its geography.

But we have been working hand in glove with local public health units to ensure that there are clear expectations about what allocations public health units and vaccine sites will be receiving. To be clear, Toronto Public Health has their own Toronto vaccine table that determines how their allocation is distributed within the city. We know that delayed vaccines are extremely disruptive, but we are working with those local public health units so that they know what allocation they will be receiving, and then they distribute that allocation to all of the vaccine sites. That is something that we are going to continue to work on with them, but be sure that Scarborough is receiving their equitable share.

COMMERCIAL INSURANCE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Premier. St. Catharines city council just passed a motion about commercial insurance gouging. They want action. In October, you acted surprised at commercial insurance gouging that you described as “astronomical” and said, “Wait for the next budget.” It was more of the same tough talk that stops after you leave the podium.

What's the cost of no action? In St. Catharines, the Mitsopoulos family owns three hotels. In December, their insurance rate increased by 300%, almost \$200,000, over the pandemic. That's more than all federal and provincial pandemic supports combined. Will this government step in to do something meaningful to protect our small businesses affected by insurance profiteering, and will this government finally take action on commercial insurance?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know that the Minister of Finance has been working very closely with the industry and, more importantly, has been working with small, medium and large job creators to ensure that the economy continues to grow post-pandemic, as it really did before the pandemic.

As I said a couple of days ago in this House, back in 2018, the people of the province of Ontario voted for a government that could focus on their priorities, and their priorities, of course, were job creation. The number one priority was job creation. We saw thousands of jobs coming back to the province of Ontario, following the disastrous 15-year government of the previous Liberal regime. But let the member rest assured that this government will continue to focus on small, medium and large job creators and continue to focus on the tourism industry, like she just mentioned in her question.

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know she's now hollering and apparently doesn't want to hear the answer, Mr. Speaker, but I guess that's typical of the NDP: lots of holler, lots of bluster; no action.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And so question period comes to an end.

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 third 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): Next, we have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for third reading of Bill 254, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to elections and members of the Assembly.

On April 13, 2021, Mr. Downey moved third reading of Bill 254. On April 14, 2021, Mr. Nicholls 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. Nicholls's motion that the question be now put. I will ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1206.

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

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 32; the nays are 16.

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

Mr. Downey has moved third 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 will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The bells will now ring—

Interjection: Same vote.

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

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 32; the nays are 16.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ACCELERATING ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT, 2021 LOI DE 2021 VISANT À ACCÉLÉRER L'ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

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

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): Next we have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for third reading of Bill 245, An Act to amend and repeal various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Ontario Land Tribunal Act, 2021.

On March 23, 2021, Mr. Downey moved third reading of Bill 245. On April 15, 2021, Mr. Bailey moved that the question be now put.

The bells will ring for 15 minutes, during which time—

Interjection: Same vote.

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

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 32; the nays are 16.

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

Mr. Downey has moved third reading of Bill 245, An Act to amend and repeal various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Ontario Land Tribunal Act, 2021. 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 will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The bells will now ring for—

Interjection: Same vote.

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

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 32; the nays are 16.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

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

The House recessed from 1209 to 1300.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Paul Calandra: I rise in accordance with standing order 59, just to highlight the order of business when we return next week.

On Monday, April 19, a bill which will be introduced shortly in the name of the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction will be on the docket.

On Tuesday, April 20, the morning and afternoon sessions will be on the budget bill.

On Wednesday, April 21, in the morning, we will continue with the budget bill, and in the afternoon, we have opposition day number 4.

On Thursday, April 22, in the morning, we will be back again with the budget bill, and in the afternoon, we will be back to a bill which will be introduced shortly by the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

The private members' bills for that week:

—on Monday, ballot item number 71, standing in the name of the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, which is Bill 271, Persian Heritage Month Act;

—on Tuesday, April 20, ballot item 72, from the member for Sarnia–Lambton, which is Bill 237, Fostering Privacy Fairness Act, 2020;

—on Wednesday, April 21, ballot item 73, standing in the name of the member for Oakville North–Burlington, which is a motion about expanding the greenbelt; and

—on Thursday, April 22, ballot item number 74, standing in the name of the member for Orléans, Bill 260, Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act, 2021.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPORTING RECOVERY AND COMPETITIVENESS ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE SOUTIEN À LA RELANCE ET À LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ

Mr. Sarkaria moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 276, An Act to enact and amend various Acts /
Projet de loi 276, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would like to invite the minister to briefly explain his bill, if he wishes to do so.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This legislation, if passed, will support economic recovery, spark competitiveness and help businesses weather the impacts of COVID-19. It is the next step in our efforts to modernize regulations and ease unnecessary burdens. It is designed to remove regulatory roadblocks, attract investment, accelerate business recovery and growth and help government deliver clear and effective rules that will keep Ontario workers and families safe and healthy while also protecting the environment and the public interest—modern regulations that are easier to understand and comply with that will allow people and businesses to invest time and money into what is important now: recovering, rebuilding and re-emerging from this pandemic stronger than ever before.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE AMENDMENT ACT (SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS IN THEIR HOMES AND COMMUNITIES WITH ASSISTIVE DEVICES FOR MENTAL HEALTH), 2021

LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE (APPUYER LES PARTICULIERS À LA MAISON ET DANS LA COLLECTIVITÉ GRÂCE À DES APPAREILS ET ACCESSOIRES FONCTIONNELS POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE)

Mr. Kernaghan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 277, An Act to amend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act with respect to assistive devices to support individuals with mental health needs in their homes and communities / Projet de loi 277, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne les appareils et accessoires fonctionnels destinés à appuyer, à la maison et dans la collectivité, les particuliers ayant des besoins en matière de santé mentale.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member from London North Centre to explain his bill.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: New technological devices are emerging to support individuals with mental health needs who are living at home. Assistive devices for mental health needs may allow individuals to access medical and counselling appointments on a virtual basis; have their heart rate, physical activity and sleep data electronically relayed to health care providers; and have their medications dispensed automatically at prescribed times.

A pilot study recently conducted through St. Joseph's Health Care in London, Ontario, determined that a hospital bed for one individual with mental health needs costs \$454 per day, or \$165,710 per year. Conversely, providing assistive devices for mental health for that same individual living at home, including licensing and billing fees, costs \$12,000 per year.

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Mr. Bourgouin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 278, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act / Projet de loi 278, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Comme vous le savez, depuis le début de la crise sanitaire de la COVID-19, les bureaux régionaux de la santé publique jouent un rôle essentiel pour assurer le partage d'information avec le grand public pour communiquer les consignes provinciales ou assurer le déroulement de la campagne de vaccination. Malgré cela, les francophones, particulièrement les aînés franco-ontariens, ont été doublement touchés, faute de manque d'information de services en français.

Suivant la recommandation de l'ancien commissaire aux services en français dans cinq rapports, et plus récemment le rapport de la francophonie en temps de crise sanitaire de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, ce projet de loi prévoit : (1) qu'une personne a droit à l'emploi du français pour communiquer avec un bureau de santé publique et pour recevoir les services; et (2) que le médecin hygiéniste en chef fournisse en français les renseignements qu'il communique.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting the order of precedence for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice with respect to precedence of private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Again, I'll recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that a change be made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Coteau assumes ballot item number 74 and that Mr. Blais assumes ballot item number 76.

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

Motion agreed to.

1310

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AMENDMENT ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CONSEIL EXÉCUTIF

Mr. Calandra moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 265, An Act to amend the Executive Council Act in respect of attendance at Question Period / Projet de loi 265, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif à l'égard de la présence à la période des questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the government House leader to lead off the debate.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I will be deliberately brief on this one, Mr. Speaker, only to say that it is really a house-keeping matter that is made necessary as a result of the pandemic and the measures that have been brought into place to ensure that the Legislative Assembly can continue in a safe fashion.

As you know, we have done a number of things cooperatively in this assembly, on all sides of the House, to ensure that we can be as safe as possible, and that includes cohorting. As a result of that, ministers have really been asked not to be in attendance at the Legislature and for question period, sometimes for weeks on end, so that we could ensure that there could be a continuation of question period and accountable government.

I also want to really, deliberately thank all members of the opposition: the official opposition, the House leader of the independent Liberals, the independent Green and the independent members as well. Obviously, one of the most important features of any legislative day for the opposition is question period, and with their assistance over the last year, we've been able to ensure the safety of this place but also recognize the fact that not all members could be here.

Just to say very directly to the people of the province of Ontario, and I think the opposition House leader and whips will agree with me: It has been one of the most difficult things that we have to do, asking our members not to be here in attendance for weeks on end so that we could be safe. It is not something that any member wants to do. They all want to be here representing their constituents during question period, during debate in this place. All members on all sides have been doing a spectacular job despite the limitations, representing their communities both back at home and in those instances when they're here in the House,

I think with that I will yield the floor, but again I thank all members for what has been a very difficult year, but also, at the same time, just to express some pride in the fact that this Legislature has been able to continue with accountable government even in the circumstances that we have found ourselves in.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite questions to the government House leader at this time, related to his remarks.

Miss Monique Taylor: I thank the government House leader for his words of encouragement on how we've all worked together. Unfortunately, I think, on this side of the House, we don't always feel that collaboration and working together.

I'm curious about his thoughts on this actual bill that he has brought forward. An explanation is typically what happens during bill debate time, so could he please take some time and explain the bill that he has brought before us today?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll do that again, Speaker. As you know, I did explain the bill on introduction of first reading, and it has been on the order paper for quite some time, so I'd assumed that the opposition had availed themselves of the opportunity to read it.

There's an important measure that was brought in by a previous government with respect to ministerial attendance at question period. What this bill will do is it recognizes the fact that it has been impossible to ensure the attendance level of all ministers to 70% over the course of the pandemic. What this bill does is it waives that requirement through the course of the pandemic. It does not eliminate it. We think it's an important piece of ensuring democratic accountability for the opposition during question period. At the conclusion of the pandemic, the requirement will once again be enforced at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you to the government House leader for your presentation. As we know, question period is a really important part of our Legislature in terms of how we hold a government—any government of the day—accountable. I certainly understand the reasons why this bill has been brought forward. Obviously we're all operating our Legislature in new and different ways right now with our cohorts as we attempt to stay safe and minimize the risk, especially for the legislative staff that we're so grateful for, who have been coming in to work to support the work of this chamber.

My question to the government House leader is, what additional steps is your government taking to ensure that your government is as accountable and available as it can be during this difficult time, as we understand the reduced capacity of ministers to be present during question period?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, as you know, we brought in a number of measures to keep the Legislature safe, in co-operation with all members—I don't want to take credit for it; all members of this House did that. As you know, the Legislature agreed to different forms of voting, so that we could be socially distanced.

We all agreed to make up time with respect to private members' business that had been lost last year as a result of the closure, of the pandemic, and we've actually done a really good job. I think all sides would agree that an extra day for the consideration of private members' business, perhaps, is something that we might even make permanent, frankly. I think it has worked out quite well.

The cohorting, I think, has gone very well, Mr. Speaker, and I think one element that this Legislature has done—I don't know that others haven't; I don't recall—but this Legislature actually sat through much of July to try to make up time. I think that's certainly a testament to the hard work of all members.

As I've said, Mr. Speaker, and I know the member will agree, I don't want the people, our constituents, to think for a moment that there haven't been extraordinary levels of accountability held by the opposition, even, as I've said on a number of occasions, in those instances when they have supported us, supported measures to get through the

House quickly. It's not that they have not been advocating for their constituents; just the opposite. It just might not necessarily have been done here.

We will continue to ensure that this place, for as long as we possibly can—to keep it safe. We will be here. I think the members will agree: It is important that we have a question period. It is important that we debate bills, and as long as we can do that safely, we will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question to the House leader is as follows: The grounds for bringing this piece of legislation in the context of a pandemic—there are obviously grounds for that, but the suggestion that this kind of policy should be extended past the pandemic is problematic. Could the government House leader clarify? Is this a policy brought in just under the scope of the pandemic, or is this something that the government House leader is hoping to expand beyond that?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The bill does suggest that it is just for the balance of the 42nd Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Any further questions?

Further debate? The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I'll change masks so I can hear myself.

It's always an honour to be able to stand in the Legislature, today to debate Bill 265, the Executive Council Amendment Act. I would just like to say, due to cohorting, that I am not the spokesperson on this act; it would actually be our House leader, who is not in this cohort, so hopefully I can do it justice. She usually has much better researched speeches than I have, but hopefully I can give our comments as the official opposition.

To put this in context: We are in an unprecedented time now, in this province, in this country, in the world, but we will keep our comments to this province. We are in the third wave of a worldwide pandemic right now, in a province-wide lockdown. Our schools are closed. People across the province are extremely concerned, not only with the virus itself, obviously, and its health impacts, but the collateral damage caused by the virus, the damage to people's mental health, the health damage when other medical procedures are delayed or cancelled, the damage when schools are suddenly closed and you need to find immediate child care or you can't go to work. People's lives are in turmoil. That is the background. Regardless of where you are in this province, your life is in turmoil.

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People depend on their governments to make decisions in their best interests. I think anyone who is in an elected position—we have our philosophical differences, but we are all here to, on the government side, make decisions; and on our side, to provide both criticism, opposition—official opposition—and also provide ideas so we can move forward to help protect and ensure the safety in the lives of people in this province.

Having said that, one of the most important parts of our democratic system is question period. I know when people watch question period on television, it isn't always evident how question period works. No fault to the Speaker of the day, but sometimes question period gets a little bit raucous—not as much now, because we have all made efforts. The government and certainly the official opposition and the other members of this Parliament have made Herculean—that's the only time I've ever used that word and ever will—have made great efforts to keep this place safe and keep the hall of democracy open, because in a true democratic system, a government gets elected, but there needs to be a mechanism for a government to be held openly accountable, and one of those mechanisms is question period.

I can remember the first time that I actually watched a question period in this House. It was long before I was elected. I had no plans of ever getting elected. After watching that question period, I had no plans of ever watching another question period. I asked the person who I still respect in this House, who is still in this House—my uncle at that time was the Minister of Agriculture under the Harris government. I watched dutifully, and I asked him, "Okay, but why don't you ever actually answer the question?" I quote him quite a bit, because he has some pretty good quotes. He said, "John, it's called question period, not answer period."

But when you're here—and I hope that the government members will agree, and I hope the members on this side will agree—there is much more to question period than what you see on TV, and there's much more to in-person question period than what you see on TV. You test each other's mettle, test each other's character, see who and how to work with other people. One of the greatest things I really appreciate about this place and about question period is that after question period, you can go talk to a minister—and hopefully, if I ever get to that point, people would come talk to me, and we would discuss the issues that make a difference to people's lives in this province. That is an opportunity that no one outside this place—that's not something you see on TV, and that's something that is developed in question period.

I remember when I was in the far corner back there, watching it, and now standing here and many days wondering why I'm standing here; I should still be in the back corner, I think. But there is something about question period. There is something about this building and both governing and holding a government to account. There's something about matching wits with people you respect. It's an incredibly important institution.

At this point in the province's history, when so many people feel that they are in a perilous state, it's important that they know this isn't just a show. There is an incredible importance to question period and to maintaining question period. I'm saying this because I want to put it in the context of why—we're not just talking about something flippantly here; we are here for a reason.

There are questions on how the process works. When people call my office, they have questions. I'm sure people

call all of our offices and all have questions, and the ones we can't solve, the ones we are wondering ourselves, the ones that we think, quite frankly, the government of the day has missed the mark on, those are the ones that make it to question period. It's a way to hold the government to account. It's also hopefully a way for the government, because they're being held to account, to not just defend themselves but to actually improve the services they are providing.

Again, I don't believe there's any government that does not want to improve. Every government has a philosophy, a philosophical bent. Regardless of right, left, centre, you win an election, you have the right to govern and you govern to the best of your ability. Question period and the role of the official opposition is to improve your governing abilities, hopefully. If they don't improve, well then, that's what elections are for. For the official opposition as well, the Legislature is also a way for the official opposition, or another party, to show that they have the right stuff, perhaps, in the next election.

Having said that, it's very important that, under normal circumstances, ministers are available for question period. Under normal circumstances, one of the ways to be held accountable is to be able to stand in your place and ask a minister, ask someone who is responsible—the Minister of Health, the Minister of Infrastructure, in my case often the Minister of Agriculture—you can stand in your place and ask them a question. It's incredibly important.

I have to say, I didn't actually even realize myself how important that is until after I was elected to this place. I was a whip of the third party, and under normal times—now we have no spectators, we have no physical participation and that's the same—our numbers are very much reduced here and that actually makes it harder to operate here, the social interaction.

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But we used to have tours. Other Legislatures would come tour here. And I got to meet—I believe it was the whip of a state Legislature, and I'm just thinking of this now, but I think it was Iowa. It's either Iowa or Ohio, one of the two, and I apologize to those two great states. But we were talking. He sat in the gallery and watched question period, and we met with him right after. It was a particularly raucous question period, Speaker, and we asked him, "So, what did you think of that?" And I was a bit taken aback by his response. He said, "It was fantastic."

Laughter.

Mr. John Vanthof: I see the government House leader is chuckling a little bit—because there are days that none of us think this place is fantastic.

So I asked, "Why?" He said, "Well, in our system"—and he gave an example—"the Secretary of Agriculture is appointed and isn't in the Legislature. So there is no way, in my case, as a farmer on an opposing party, to hold the Secretary of Agriculture to account in an open forum." It took him pointing that out to me, because I had never really—I've spent a lot more time on my tractor on my farm than I have studying other Legislatures around the world, and that had never occurred to me.

The one trip I've taken outside—one time, we went to an agriculture conference. The former Minister of Agriculture asked, and I went with him. We went to a conference in Colorado, and we toured their state building and we toured their Legislature. Although I've seen it lots of times in pictures, their Legislature isn't structured like ours, either. It's a semi-circle. There is not the direct debate like we have here, and not the direct question period. That interaction with that legislator from another part of the world and, actually, from our closest neighbour, that impacted me.

Often, we don't appreciate—we all do. We all appreciate this place and we all appreciate the roles we play; I'm sure we all do. But I can say personally that although, when I come into this place, I'm often—for me to be able to stand here and speak on behalf of other people is an incredible experience, but I think sometimes, we forget how incredible it is and how hard we all have to work to protect it. We have our political differences, we have our philosophical differences, but we all have to work together to protect the right to express those differences and to use those differences to make everyone's lives better, because it doesn't take long to go the other way.

I think often, we don't appreciate the power of this place, the power of debate, the power of being human, the power of thinking on your feet, the power of making a mistake and having someone else point it out to you and knowing that you're not going to make that mistake again, hopefully. So question period is really important.

This amendment to allow ministers to attend fewer question periods in exceptional conditions, like now, is reasonable. We have all taken steps to make sure that the parliamentary system maintains integrity and that the government can still be held accountable without full participation from all its members, particularly ministers. I think the reasoning behind this amendment is reasonable. There might be a bit—no, I'm going to leave it there.

We all understand, and the reason there are so few people in this House now, the reason that there are so few people in this House at question period, is because we all understand that, although question period is so important and it's such an integral part of our democratic process, at times, we have to make allowances for exceptional conditions, like now.

The problem is—and I wouldn't be doing my job as an opposition member if I didn't point out that there are some issues—perhaps with a bit of overreach that it also covers some time post-pandemic, when there is no reason for all ministers or for the Premier not to be here on a regular basis. That's one thing that I am always concerned with, and specifically with this government. I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't say so. We have to look at what the legislation says, not what specifically the members of the government say the intent of the legislation is. This is a pretty straightforward piece of legislation, but it does cover some time post-pandemic. Specifically, I don't know why it would have to. I expect ministers would want to be here. I expect the Premier would want to be here, I would hope.

I don't pretend to be—and I think I've made this fairly obvious in my time here—a legislative scholar. I think one of the strengths of this building is that you can have regular people here asking regular questions. The question that I, as John, farmer from Timiskaming-Cochrane—I need to know that this doesn't create some type of precedent going in the future that ministers wouldn't have to be here. It does say that ministers don't have to—the way I read it, even after the state of emergency is over, conditions created by the state of emergency could allow a minister not to have to attend. Again, we need to know exactly what those conditions are. I can think of examples where ministers need to be out of the Legislature for extended periods for their jobs, but I can also picture ministers that need to be in the Legislature regularly to be accountable for ministries that have little to do with files that are outside of the provincial jurisdiction.

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Again, we need to make sure that this legislation is doing what its stated purpose is. I am not trying to attack the government on this. We always have to look at what an amendment is going to do in a year or two years. Because if you look at this, we are operating now. We obviously don't agree with many of the government steps during this pandemic—we're very critical—but the government is operating without this amendment now, during a pandemic. The government House leader said it was basically a housekeeping matter, but the House is running. So we need to be sure that there isn't something else that, quite frankly—"Oh, I wish we had have known that while we were discussing this."

I always try to be very respectful of the government; it's not an easy job. And when I have to be, I'm very critical of the government. I don't think this is a bill that we need to fight at length. We just need to make sure that this amendment is actually strengthening the democratic process and not finding a way to weaken it. I will give you an example—and you may disagree; the government may fully disagree. When the government changed the standing orders so that parliamentary assistants answer a lot more questions, I think it did diminish the impact of question period. There is a difference. I am not knocking any parliamentary assistant or their capabilities, but there is a difference. There is a difference between asking a question to the Minister of Health and to the parliamentary assistant. There is a difference. There is a difference asking a question to the Premier and getting an answer from someone who isn't the Premier. There is a difference. We need to make sure that we protect that on behalf of—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, not just on behalf of one party or the other party or the third party or independents. We need to make sure that this House is as strong as possible, because if the Legislature is strong then the province, hopefully, will be strong.

I wasn't planning on going there, but really, there is a massive difference. It's not easy for a minister or the Premier to answer a question. It's not that easy for us to ask a question either. But it makes a difference if you can

hold the Premier accountable or the minister accountable or the parliamentary assistant.

I can't speak for government, obviously—and they wouldn't want me to speak for them—but we have made a valiant attempt, and continue to do that, to make sure that the people who voted for us are represented, even though we can't all be here. And the government has done the same. But we need to make sure that, once this epidemic has passed—and hopefully it will pass—this Legislature isn't watered down because of it. That, I think, is the most crucial thing here. All ministers need to be held accountable. There is a reason why, at some point, this legislation was put forward: to make sure that ministers did show up. I believe that they all want to show up. I don't think anyone here got elected because they didn't want to be held accountable to their own people. But there are times when it's not easy; I understand that. There are easier places to be than being on the government benches. We want to make sure that the only place to be when we are not in a crisis like we are now is on those government benches when you are making the decisions that affect people's lives—and you are. And at some point, we will.

But regardless of who's making the decisions and who is criticizing the decisions, we need to make sure that they are held accountable. So we want this bill to go to committee to make sure that those issues are going to be dealt with. We want to make sure that people's concerns are dealt with, that our questions are answered and that those questions—I'm going to give you an example, Speaker. I'm much better at examples than at speeches, hopefully.

A restaurant owner contacted me—Mike Dumoulin, from Cochrane. He owns two restaurants. He was in orange when the Premier announced that patios could open here in Toronto, in grey. So Mike thought, “Well, that's a pretty good sign that I'm going to be able to keep going.”

And Mike did what a lot of other patio owners did: He bought kegs of beer. Just for some interest, when he opened on February 16 until the second lockdown, he served 2,262 people. They were all tracked and no cases. And he thought, “Okay, the patios are opening in Toronto.” He geared up and then—to him, out of the blue—in an area that was doing a very good job fighting COVID, he was shut down.

That's something that Mike would like to ask and that I would like to ask the Premier on his behalf. The Premier has to make hard decisions. No one is discounting that. But what the Premier says matters. And when the Premier says something is safe, people have confidence, or should have confidence, or grasp that it is safe, or if something is going to be open, that it is open. When it turns on a dime, people like Mike lose confidence, lose money. He might lose his business.

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Mike needs to be able to hold the Premier accountable. The only way Mike can hold the Premier accountable is if I do it for him, or someone in my party does it for him. I'm sure there are Mikes on all sides, Mikes from everywhere,

so I'm sure there are for government members. But for us, the way to hold people accountable on behalf of Mike is to be able to stand in my place or have one of my colleagues stand in their place—because whether it's my Mike or someone else's Mike or someone else's Michelle, the issue is basically the same: to demand an answer from the Premier. The only way that that works is if the Premier or ministers are there on a regular basis, and that's very important.

So the safety of the Legislature is very important, and the safety of the legislators. The safety of the staff is very important. But the right to be able to hold a government accountable is equally important—perhaps not equally, but is extremely important, because for people across the province, they need to be able to know that the government is being held accountable and that they are being forced to make the best decisions, or that they are being held accountable for decisions that people across the province find very questionable.

We want this amendment to go to committee. We want these questions answered, and I am very appreciative of the time that you have given me, Speaker, and that the government has attentively listened while I make my case.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Ms. Suze Morrison: I listened intently to my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane in his presentation. I thought it was really important what he mentioned at the end, about the right to be able to hold government accountable, and how that right is literally carved into this very chamber. When we look up at our arches, we know that the government members face a carving of the owl, reminding them to always be wise with the power that the people of Ontario have given them. Meanwhile, we face a carving of an eagle, a bird of prey, reminding us to always keep a watchful eye over the government. I often look up at these carvings and the really important symbolism that they have in this chamber.

My question to the member is, what additional steps do you think we could be pushing the government members to provide to ensure that we have strong accountability in light of these proposed changes?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to my colleague. I think I made it pretty clear that the personal part of Parliament is very important, but in a pandemic, if we are forced to for safety reasons, we should also be able to employ virtual meetings. But I'd like to make it very clear, and that's why I focused so long at the start: Virtual is a tool, but if we ever went to the point that we would have virtual Parliament—like “Oh, it's much cheaper, it's simpler; we'll just do everything virtual”—I think that would be a mistake.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question is a very directed one towards my colleague. He talked about the importance of question period and how it helps us hold government to account. Can you expand on that importance of question period?

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to thank, once again, my colleague. Question period: I'm sure it's probably one

of the parts that they like the least on the government side. For the opposition side, it's one of the parts, again, where we test each other's mettle and we get down to issues, and hopefully after—the part of question period that I liked, where I learned the most years ago, is when, the first time I ever asked a half-decent question, the minister came over—I'm not going to say who—and said, “Okay. How do we fix this?” That's how question period—it doesn't work all the time, but there are times when you can get something done because you asked the right question at question period, and that is something that is irreplaceable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: This bill does nothing to address the pandemic we are facing or any issues our constituents are facing. Peel region has 20% of all cases, and our own Dr. Loh has called this the most menacing, as the variants are taking place, and they're somewhere between 60% to 70%, these new variants, of all cases right now. The race is on now between the variants and getting vaccines into arms. That has to be our priority, and nothing else right now. The rest of the province will not get through this crisis until my region in Brampton and Peel and the city of Toronto does.

My question to the member is, why does this government feel the need to prioritize this bill over engaging in the issues our constituents are facing?

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to thank my colleague for that question. I agree that the pandemic and the race between the virus and the variants is the issue that we should all be addressing. The government House leader said that this is a housekeeping issue, but we have to ensure that we don't dilute question period because we will have a much harder time after that, holding governments to account—because we think the government should be held more accountable for what's happening now with the pandemic. We want to make sure that we don't lose the part of question period to be able to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question? No further questions?

Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Calandra has moved second reading of Bill 265, An Act to amend the Executive Council Act in respect of attendance at Question Period. 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, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I am certain that I will. The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6 o'clock. Is it agreed? Agreed.

1400

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021

SUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE MATERNELLE

Ms. Karpoche moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to proclaim Maternal Mental Health Day and to require a review of maternal mental health in Ontario and the preparation of a Provincial Framework and Action Plan / Projet de loi 176, Loi proclamant le Jour de la santé mentale maternelle et exigeant un examen des enjeux de la santé mentale maternelle en Ontario et l'élaboration d'un cadre et plan d'action provincial.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: In November 2019, just months before the pandemic began, I rose in the House with my newborn and gave a statement about maternal mental health. I spoke about the challenges of prenatal and postpartum mental health that many new mothers experience. My statement went viral, with millions of views and over 50,000 shares. So many moms and moms-to-be responded by sharing their experience with postpartum depression, anxiety and other maternal mental health disorders. So many of these moms struggled in silence without access to perinatal mental health care, without the social support they needed. So many mothers feel they have to navigate their mental health struggles silently, if at all, because of stigma, because of fear of pushback from friends, family, medical professionals or their community.

Conversations about maternal mental health are missing from public discourse, from our workplaces and even from our own homes. Speaker, our society today leaves new mothers treading these waters in isolation—yes, during the pandemic, but even before—with the assumption that this is all natural and we should be able to manage on our own. Despite the high prevalence of maternal mental health disorders in society and their serious and lasting impacts on moms, moms-to-be, bereaved moms and children, this issue is overlooked in policy-making decisions and in our health care system.

Ontario is without a strategy or coordinated plan to tackle maternal mental health issues. I heard the moms in Ontario respond to my statement and ask for help, not just for themselves, but for all mothers who struggle too. I am joining forces with all mothers, pushing the province to take action on maternal mental health. That is why I tabled

Bill 176, the Maternal Mental Health Act and that is why I'm bringing it forward for second reading today.

As a first step, the bill proclaims the first Wednesday of May of each year as Maternal Mental Health Day to raise awareness of this issue. To bring forward concrete solutions to improve maternal mental health, this bill also requires the Minister of Health to conduct a comprehensive review of maternal mental health in Ontario and prepare a provincial framework and action plan on the issue.

It is important to acknowledge that perinatal mental health problems—meaning those that occur in the period before and a year after childbirth—can affect us all. Parents of every culture, age, income level and race can develop perinatal mental health disorders. In fact, groups that are pushed to the margins may face increased risk of developing these disorders. This includes transgender men and lesbian, gay or bisexual parents, non-binary folks, as well as Indigenous peoples, Black and racialized folks, newcomers and disabled people. However, I am using the term “maternal” mental health disorders because mothers are overwhelmingly the largest group affected.

Maternal mental health issues are not at all uncommon. As many as one in five mothers in Ontario experience some type of maternal mental health disorder. The most well-known and most common are postpartum depression and anxiety, but other maternal mental health disorders include post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder and psychosis.

The difficulties posed by these disorders cannot be overstated. If untreated, they can lead to devastating outcomes such as prolonged parental depression, partner conflict, weakened attachment between mother and child, and increased risk of impaired child development. Maternal mental health disorders increase the risk of obstetric and neonatal complications, and they can affect the entire family. In very rare cases, these disorders can even lead to maternal suicide or infanticide.

Yet despite the devastating health impacts of these disorders and the high prevalence of maternal mental health issues in our society, the vast majority of women are left to manage this alone. Up to 85% of mothers who experience a maternal mental health disorder do not receive treatment. Let that figure sit with you for a bit: As many as 85% of mothers go without the help they need.

According to a study from the Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative, 95% of health care practitioners believe that maternal mental health services are insufficient in Canada. Some 87% of health care practitioners do not have mandated screening for maternal mental health disorders at their workplace, even though we know that one in five mothers will develop issues at some point. Even when they are screened and symptoms are identified, mothers have to wait for months to access treatment.

These figures are disturbing, and they show us that maternal mental health care in Ontario needs a complete reset. But figures alone don't tell the whole story. Thousands of mothers responded to my statement on maternal

mental health, and I want share some of their experiences with you.

Mothers emphasized how unsupported they felt in their struggles. One mother said, “This video brought me to tears. I can still remember so clearly the struggles I had and the inadequacy I felt as a mom. The difference we could make by supporting one another instead of judging is enormous.”

Another mother said, “I'll never forget my daughter's first six months. I thought I wouldn't make it. It was dark and I realized later that I should have talked to my family and loved ones. I needed to ask for help.”

Some mothers describe the constant terror they felt. One wrote, “I'm in fear even when my baby is sleeping. I'm in fear even to be home with him on my own. These fears are ignored completely by people around me.”

They shared how being a mother can be an all-consuming task and that even when they try their best, they are judged and criticized. One wrote, “I tried to be everything for everyone else and I almost forgot who I was before. Even though I love my child more than life itself when I looked in the mirror, I didn't recognize myself, and I wondered why people had to judge me on a daily basis.”

Speaker, I had the privilege of being joined by three incredible moms and maternal mental health advocates at a press conference yesterday. Their words were powerful, and I want to share their words with you today as well.

Candice Thomas, a small business owner in Barrie who gave birth during the pandemic, said this about her experience with postpartum depression: “Most days feel impossible to get through. Most days, I just want to stay asleep. It's lonely but I have a newborn and a toddler to care for. It's so hard and the sadness is all-consuming. The anxiety makes me feel like I'm constantly” drowning “and gasping for air.” Candice said, “I'm not just struggling; I am barely surviving. I'm just asking for a mental health care system that works so I can simply survive. Not just for me, but for my girls.”

Another panellist, Melisa Bayon, interim executive director of Progress Toronto and also a first-time mom, said this of her experience with prenatal depression: “I became increasingly isolated and concerned for my well-being. I wasn't sure what to do or where to turn and frankly there were moments I thought I might not make it.”

Patricia Tomasi, co-founder of the Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative, addressed how mothers are being let down. She said, “It is so hard to navigate a health care system, for help that doesn't exist. I know this myself having gone through postpartum bipolar disorder twice. It took me eight years to be properly assessed and diagnosed. Eight years!”

These stories are harrowing. We owe it to mothers everywhere to listen and to take action. The year after the birth of their child can be one of the most challenging times in a mother's life. She is trying to heal mentally and physically from the experience of childbirth, despite the sleepless nights and the constant care needs of her newborn. Mothers also take on the emotional labour in their families, remembering birthdays, appointments, school

events, and they often are the ones called on to care for aging parents and relatives. On top of all of that, many mothers have to return quickly to their full-time jobs.

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Mothers do their best to handle the crushing weight of these responsibilities every day, but sometimes the weight is just too heavy. Mothers need and deserve help from their family, from their community, from health care providers and from their government to make it through. This need has never been more true than in this moment. New mothers today have to navigate motherhood in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic. The isolation and access to care that mothers experience is worse now than it has ever been. The Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative notes that almost 70% of health care practitioners report that the pandemic has made access to care much more difficult. Another study out of the University of Calgary shows that there has been as much as a threefold increase in maternal mental health problems in Canada during the pandemic. Now is the time to act, and all of us in this chamber have an opportunity to act today.

Speaker, moms have one of the best jobs in the world, but it is also one of the toughest. We tend to forget about that second part, especially when our child is first born and we feel that mothers should be happy all the time. It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child. This is true, but what is a village in today's world? A village includes our partners, family and friends, but also our workplaces, our health care system and our government. We all belong to this village, whether we acknowledge it or not. We can do more to help raise the children of our village. Maternal mental health should not be a luxury. We cannot afford to keep leaving mothers behind.

I call on all members of this House to take the step today to pass the Maternal Mental Health Act.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park for bringing forward this important bill and for raising the important issue of maternal mental health. Our government was elected on a commitment to build a coordinated and comprehensive mental health system, and we've been hard at work on that objective ever since.

This commitment included a record investment of \$3.8 billion over 10 years into mental health and addictions, which is the largest investment in the sector in Ontario's history, and many of those funds are already flowing.

To operationalize that commitment, we have created the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence within Ontario Health. Of course, that was as a result of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. The Vice-Chair was the current Minister of Health. I think that was over 10 years ago. The organization, the centre of excellence within Ontario Health, will use Ontario Health's combined expertise to drive demonstrable improvements in all types of mental health and addiction challenges. This is very much in line with what that report recommended, the one I just referred to, the select

committee report, and with what Cancer Care Ontario has done and continues to do for cancer screening and treatment in our province as part of Ontario Health.

To make sure that the work moves forward, we've also appointed, as you know, our first minister responsible solely for mental health and addictions—the first one in Ontario's history. Since our comprehensive plan to build that system, the Roadmap to Wellness, was released a year ago, we've been committed to working with our partners across the mental health and addiction sector to close long-standing gaps in care, expand services for our most vulnerable populations and provide long-term stability.

Speaker, we all recognize that maternal mental health is an important part of mental health care, and we recognize the importance of ensuring that new mothers can access local mental health services in their area to get appropriate treatment and diagnosis. I want to just take a few moments to speak about some of the efforts and programs that already exist in this area.

The Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health, for example, is a council of experts and senior administrative representatives from the maternal-child health sector that reports to the Ministry of Health and works to improve the system of care for maternal, newborn, child and youth populations. The Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health, working with our health care sector partners, has included maternal mental health screening questions—I think you mentioned this—and tools on the Ontario perinatal record, which is the standard form to guide and document pregnancy care used by obstetricians, midwives, family physicians, nurses and nurse practitioners to identify and to help those at risk.

The Ministry of Health also funds the Better Outcomes Registry and Network, commonly referred to by the appropriate acronym BORN, as the maternal-child health registry prescribed under the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to collect, analyze and report on clinical outcomes, including maternal mental health in Ontario. BORN also runs a comprehensive website and mobile application that, among its other services, includes information to connect people with the right maternal supports, including specifically for mental health.

I should also mention pregnancy and infant loss, with the acronym PAIL—it's a network, so the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network, which is housed at Sunnybrook Hospital. It is a provincial program that provides support services to individuals and families who have experienced pregnancy loss or infant loss, and compassionate care training to health care professionals on pregnancy and infant loss. Of course, this program does not itself specifically deliver mental health services, but rather seeks to provide bereavement care and training for those working with people who are suffering from grief—families who have lost an infant.

In addition to programs directly operated or funded by the Ministry of Health, many public health units have also implemented their own activities to promote mental health for pregnant women and new parents, including promotion of postpartum mental health.

And on that note, many of you will recall that as part of Ontario's comprehensive plan to end hallway health care, the ministry is hosting consultations on how to strengthen and modernize our public health services to meet the evolving needs of communities across Ontario. Those consultations are being led, as you may recall, by Mr. Jim Pine, adviser on public health and emergency health services modernization.

You may recall also that those consultations had been put on hold at the onset of COVID-19 to allow our health units to focus on the very important work of fighting the pandemic, but we've not forgotten about them and we very much look forward to concluding these consultations in due course.

I should also note, among the other programs, that our counterparts at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services fund young parent resource centres across Ontario to deliver a range of services to young parents, including services that may be considered to be maternal mental health services. This, of course, is something that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services continues to support even after the broader transfer of children's mental health services to the Ministry of Health.

It is important, however we proceed on this important issue, that any approach that we take be integrated into the province's overall mental health and addiction system. We cannot really place maternal mental health, nor any other part of the mental health system, in a silo away from the other parts of the system. I know this is something that our Minister of Health and our Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions are very committed to.

I can remind the member opposite that during the first year we were in government, the minister and I held many, many consultations across the province to find out about the existing gaps in services available across the province. With mental health, there was what was commonly referred to as the "spaghetti map" of services; in other words, it's very, very fragmented and very, very confusing. That was part of the thinking behind establishing one centre, the centre of excellence for mental health and addictions under Ontario Health: so that all of the services could be coordinated better, so that people know what services are available and where they can get them, and so that services can be provided all across the province.

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I'm afraid that the problem that I have with the motion that has been brought forward today is that it has the potential to silo off maternal mental health from a lot of the other mental health and addiction services. At the same time that we're setting up the centre of excellence for mental health and addictions within Ontario Health, to coordinate the entirety of what is a very disjointed and disconnected mental health and addiction system—something that mental health and addiction stakeholders have told us that we need to do, to coordinate and keep it from being so fragmented—this motion asks us to set up a separate framework, action plan and approach to maternal mental health. We don't believe that that is the right path forward for this issue.

But that's not to say that maternal mental health is not important. In fact, Speaker, it's quite the opposite. We recognize the importance of ensuring that it is addressed properly by our health care system. The proper way to do that is really to leverage the existing strengths and institutions of our system, resources like some of the ones I've referred to—the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health; the Better Outcomes Registry and Network, or BORN; the new centre of excellence for mental health and addictions—to ensure that our maternal mental health programs are fully integrated as part of our mental health and addiction system and in our health care system in the province of Ontario.

As we continue to build our mental health and addiction system in the province, and as we continue to execute on our road map to wellness, I'm sure I'm speaking for everybody when I say we are certainly willing to work with the member opposite and all of the members of this House to make that happen, but we think we just need to go about it in the way that integrates maternal mental health within our fuller mental health and addiction system.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm very pleased to be able to rise and to speak to my colleague from Parkdale–High Park's bill, the Maternal Mental Health Act. I want to thank her for this bill, as well as for being a fierce advocate for mental health and addictions here in Ontario.

If passed, this bill would move the government to act on maternal health. Like many PMBs, the bill establishes an awareness day, but it goes further to demand action, requiring the government to produce an action plan and report back to the Legislature on its progress.

Action on maternal health is badly needed in Ontario, and I hear it from my constituents. I spoke with Lorraine recently, who wanted to start a petition on this issue. She told me about the ways that new mothers are set up for failure, and how they're unprepared and unsupported if they have postpartum depression or any other maternal mental health disorder. She told me that it was a six-month-to-one-year wait for the services in our community to ensure that she was able to get supports for postpartum depression. I told Lorraine about this bill and about the petition that the member already had put forward, and she was happy that the opposition was working to move this issue forward.

Maternal mental health impacts every mother and every family. Everyone thinks that once you have a baby, it's the best time of your life, and they expect that from you. So many women struggle during this period, and they feel that they're letting everyone down because they're struggling. This adds to the exhaustion and the stress of doing something wrong. They feel like they're not the perfect mother and that they should be, and they think, "Why am I struggling if motherhood is supposed to be joyous and natural?" It can be a difficult time for mothers, who might feel ashamed of their own thoughts or feelings.

I know that raising a baby is difficult. I had my daughter, Destinee, when I was barely just turning 20. I

was a single mother and leaving an abusive relationship. Thankfully, I had my own mother to provide support to me and to my daughter. My family network really helped me to be able to get through a difficult time. Many new mothers and new families don't have that family support network that they can rely on. They don't have the ability to look after their own mental health while trying to raise their child. There is no respite from the demands of working, taking care of their own mental health and ensuring that their child is cared for.

I'm proud to support this bill, because it throws a lifeline to many mothers and new families out there who are desperately needing help. I want to thank all the mothers and fathers, people who have had children and the many who have advocated to raise this issue by taking time to lobby for change. There is a lot of stigma around maternal mental health disorders, so it takes a lot of courage to advocate for change on something that is so deeply personal.

I want to thank my colleague from Parkdale–High Park for doing the hard work and for bringing this bill forward. To all the mothers out there struggling: We hear you and we want to continue to work to push this government to build a better maternal mental health system that serves you.

I hope the government sees the error of their ways and changes their decision on how to move this bill forward. Sometimes picking out pieces of our community that are important may not go along with their road map, may not go along with the papers that they have written before them, but they truly go along with what our families in our province need to ensure that we have healthy children who have the ability to be raised in our community. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise on behalf of the residents of St. Catharines. I also would like to thank the member from High Park for bringing this very important bill, the Maternal Mental Health Act, 2021, forward this afternoon.

I'm going to make an observation that over the last decade, as a society, we are talking about and talking with people with mental health problems in a healthier way. We are all aware of the Let's Talk campaign, which has led to the creation of other, more localized, more direct campaigns addressing specific mental health issues. I recognize that this legislation accomplishes this goal in exactly the same way. Lived experiences are critical components of ensuring the laws that we pass in this chamber reflect accordingly the properties which they are trying to address.

There is no question this is a woman's issue. I am proud to be part of a caucus with strong women in leadership who intend to bring issues like this to the forefront. It is why we elect women legislators, and it is why diversity in all its variations is so important to the well-being of democracy.

As a grandmother of two beautiful young women and a mother of a wonderful daughter—who is expecting her

second child, by the way, in July—it is clear that, if faced with this type of barrier, one like any version of a maternal mental health disorder, it is important that they are able to know it is normal and they are not alone. There are resources and a framework to support them, and it is very treatable.

This is the benefit of any mental health campaign we see in Canada. They start with raising awareness, and that is a component of the legislation that I believe in. Make no mistake: This is a non-partisan issue. The heightening of awareness in this motion is needed to address a specific mental health issue, the maternal mental health complications after having a child.

New mothers have had to face additional mental health challenges due to the pandemic, leading to a significant increase of maternal mental health problems. This is why it is so important now to create the provincial framework and the action plan today. We can make early parenthood better for people after giving birth by having strong, culturally appropriate programs for early diagnosis and treatment.

The first step will be about amplification and raising awareness of the issue. Tackling stigma is one of the elements to ensure not only that there is support available, but that the women affected by maternal mental health issues are able to be seen and treated without prejudice. Ensuring we give a reason for the media to mention it on their morning talk shows and radio announcements—all of these steps will help move us to a goal of making sure that women who need the help are able to get it.

Thank you to the member from High Park for bringing this forward.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Doly Begum: I rise today to speak to my friend and colleague's bill on maternal mental health. I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing this thoughtful, beautiful and important bill forward.

Moms have one of the toughest jobs in the world, often thankless, and society has done such that even mothers themselves sometimes feel that they aren't doing enough. So, today, I want to take the few moments that I have to say that I want to thank my own mother and all the mothers across the province, as well as many mothers-to-be. A big congratulations to my friend Lorena Moltisanti, who is a strong woman and waiting to welcome her baby soon as well. To all of you who are watching out there, you are perfect in every way possible. Everything that you do is beautiful, and we thank you for it. You are beautiful and you are perfect, and you do more than enough.

I am so grateful to see my colleague bring this bill forward, because I know what my mother has gone through, when she had a younger brother, a stillborn—and I think it's really important to recognize both the prenatal part of mental health as well as what happens after, whether you're able to welcome the baby or not. This bill will help us understand a lot of these pieces that sometimes we don't even want to talk about.

Experiences of postpartum depression, PPD, and anxiety are common across not just Ontario or Canada but across the world. It's often untreated and the impact of it being left untreated has devastating impacts, not just on mothers, but also on children and families. In Ontario, as many as one in five new mothers experience a maternal mental health disorder such as postpartum depression or anxiety. Up to 85% of people who experience a prenatal mental health disorder go untreated, without the help that they need. This bill, what it does, is it focuses on a lot of these things.

It's very important to recognize the fact that people who give birth, of every culture, age, income or race, can develop mental health disorders. We know that marginalized populations—as someone who is in Scarborough and has a very diverse group of people that she represents, I understand the struggle that many mothers in my community face. It's so important to recognize what a Black mother, a racialized mother, a brown mother—all the things that they would go through, and what society may do to stigmatize some of the experiences that they are facing. People with disabilities, new immigrants, refugees: I cannot even fathom the experience and the strength they need every day to take care of their infants, themselves and their families.

This plan is to promote maternal mental health and to implement a provincial framework and action plan. It will raise awareness and tackle that stigma by declaring the first Wednesday in May of each year as Maternal Mental Health Day. We have an excellent amount of research done, well-researched, that's available already so the government really has their work done for them. There are treatments already available, and there is enough data to show what kind of supports mothers need.

It is crucial that we recognize these things, because, yes, it's important to look at mental health and addiction—and that's another piece that we have to recognize and understand the need to invest in as well—but maternal mental health is a part of that that we need to take out and make sure that we are focusing on. Because when we're talking about social and emotional support from partners and family members, and throughout our community, in order to do that effectively, Speaker, we need to be able to have a framework that helps moms as well as all families across Ontario in any of our communities depending on what background they are coming from.

I thank you for this opportunity, and I thank the member for bringing this beautiful bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? Further debate?

The member from Parkdale–High Park has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I'd like to thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for joining this debate.

To the government I will say that I urge you to support this bill. Let's take it to committee. Let's figure out how we can move forward on this. Maybe it will take an amendment to ensure that the maternal mental health strategy can be a part of the larger Roadmap to Wellness that the government has in place, but we need to take action. Moms across the province are counting on us to take action on maternal mental health. For example, the member opposite mentioned that there are already screening questions, but what the member didn't mention is that those questions are not mandatory, and there is a lack of training—so things like that that we can take action on to ensure that mental health services for moms and moms-to-be are there.

Finally, Speaker, I just want to take a moment to thank my fellow amazing mamas who joined me at the press conference yesterday. Thank you to Candice Thomas, Melisa Bayon and Patricia Tomasi for sharing your experience and for being incredible advocates for maternal mental health.

I want to end with a quote from Melisa. She said, "If we have learned anything from this pandemic, it's that a strong public health care system is how we keep our communities healthy and robust. Moms need access to mental health support to be seen, to be recognized, to be loved." Melisa is so right. Now more than ever, we need to ensure that every mother receives the care and support she needs and deserves.

Finally, I want to say to all the mamas out there, I hear you, I see you, I feel you, and this bill is dedicated to you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Karpoche has moved second reading of Bill 176, An Act to proclaim Maternal Mental Health Day and to require a review of maternal mental health in Ontario and the preparation of a Provincial Framework and Action Plan. 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 opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded division being required, the vote on this item of private members' public business will be deferred until the next proceeding of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, April 19, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1437.

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

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

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

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
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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Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles
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**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
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Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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

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**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
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Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche
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Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell