

Legislative  
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of Ontario



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Jeudi  
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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 April 2021

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 avril 2021

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers/Prières.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### PROTECTING THE PEOPLE OF ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2021

#### LOI DE 2021 VISANT À PROTÉGER LA POPULATION ONTARIENNE (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 21, 2021, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 269, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 269, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

**Mr. Joel Harden:** It's a privilege to rise this morning to speak to this bill, because this bill really is about priorities for the people of Ontario, and I don't think we could imagine a more important time to be talking about that. We are, as everybody knows in this House—we've been talking about it all week. I'm mindful all members are mindful that we are at a really critical point in our handling of this pandemic. Speaker, our ICUs are nearing capacity, and our office, as I'm sure everyone's office, has been deluged with plaintive appeals for help. I want to bring some of those plaintive appeals to the floor this morning.

I want to talk this morning about someone I'd like my friends in government to help, and it involves advocacy they're going to need to do with the federal government. I want to talk about Kherin Dimalanta. Kherin is a Filipina woman who is 33 years of age, who came to Canada, like thousands of Filipinos do every year, to look after other people's children. Kherin left her two young children, Jeremy and Jillian, back in the Philippines to do this. It's a sacrifice that people have made in that country for a very long time.

Speaker, six months after she arrived here to look after the children, and this bears mentioning, of two essential workers, the Kyeremanteng family—the husband is an ICU doctor in our city. When Kherin came to Canada in 2017 to look after the Kyeremanteng children, she had to—every single temporary foreign worker has to undergo

regular tests for insurance reasons, for immigration reasons. Six months into her stay here, she had a blood test. After that blood test, she was diagnosed with a significant kidney disease. And if you can believe it, Speaker, for this essential worker who's looking after the children of essential workers, she had to immediately go onto a dialysis program while looking after these children. She's a truly heroic person, Speaker. I invite you to look up her story on the Internet.

But there is a very cruel aspect to our federal immigration program, Speaker. We actually have, if you can believe it, a health care costs cap for people who are allowed into Canada to work under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. It's \$21,204. If someone here in Canada under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program costs our country more than that, then we tell them to go back home. Can you believe it? Can you believe it, Speaker? I have a hard time, as a Canadian, contemplating that. In the country that celebrates public medicare—all of our parties do—we're saying to someone who comes to this country, leaving her own children behind, the sacrifice that entails, to give their family some kind of opportunity—we're telling her, when she had been working here, paying taxes here, that she costs too much for us.

So at the end of this month, one of the many plaintive appeals our office has received—Kherin is being told that her OHIP coverage can be cut off. Just to repeat that, Speaker, for the House: Her OHIP coverage could be cut off, because she costs Canada too much. It takes my breath away, Speaker. It truly does. We deal with many, many challenging cases in our office; I know everybody in this House does. But this is one where I invite my friends in government, who I know are listening, to take a special interest in.

I have been talking to my counterpart, the member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre, the Honourable Catherine McKenna, making a plaintive appeal through that direction.

I know this government has a lot on its plate, but I also know this government cares—they mention it all the time—about front-line workers. We often will talk about the people toiling in the grocery stores and the warehouses and driving our buses, delivering our food, looking after our elders. All of those people, bless every single one of them, particularly in this moment. But I don't want us to forget, Speaker, about people who are sometimes hidden from view, because they're working flat out in our own homes, looking after children or looking after elders.

Kherin right now is faced with an untenable choice. She can stay and hope that advocacy like I'm trying to do this

morning—and Migrante Ottawa and other members of the Filipino community who have been advocating for Kherin—works, and we can extend her health care coverage and she can stay here and stay healthy, or she can go back to the Philippines and die in front of her own children. I'm sorry, I know that sounds melodramatic, but it's true. Talk to the physicians working with Kherin. A 33-year-old woman could be helped with urgent health care.

My pitch to this government for Kherin Dimalanta is to take the sword of Damocles off this person's life. Let's do the Canadian thing. Let's do what Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, Greens and every other Canadian with a conscience would do in a situation like this. Let's make a plaintive appeal to the federal government and say every single person here under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program that's dealing with a backlog at the IRCC, dealing with situations like these, be it health care or others, let's act for them. Let's act for them now as a Legislature. Let's insist on justice for Kherin Dimalanta and every other single temporary foreign worker in this moment.

Speaker, on a related note, I want to mention something that has been troubling me since last summer. It's been troubling me because I'm mindful, having had the benefit of talking to Migrante Ottawa and other advocates for temporary foreign workers who are here in Canada as agricultural workers—I've listened to them. I haven't been able to go to the grocery store in the same way ever since. Every time I look at a tomato sitting on the shelf of one of our grocery stores, I think about the hands that harvested that tomato. I think about the hard-working producers in this province that go lights out for us, and I appreciate it.

But, Speaker, something I found chilling is: Last July, we made a public health decision in this province to say that agricultural workers in this province could continue to work despite testing positive if they were asymptomatic. Let's let that marinate for a second. We just did a prayer a few moments ago to give thanks for those who look after us and to remember to abide by them. It's a prayer I take seriously. But last July, we said that the hands that harvest those tomatoes or those grapes or whatever the product may be, if those workers test positive but are asymptomatic, they can continue to work.

It was a terrifying moment in the province of Ontario. When you're talking about folks who have been coming here for years and more recently as migrant workers in the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to help our agricultural system work—they're a critical part of the agricultural economy. Everybody acknowledges it. My question for you, Speaker, is were we there for them in that moment?

I know many, many producers, many agricultural producers, who were there for their workers in that moment. But there were some public health officers in this province that had to issue their own directives to make sure the bunkhouses where those workers slept were safe. I know my friend from Windsor-Tecumseh has spoken about this eloquently in this house. If there is a golden rule, Speaker, perhaps it's don't bite the hand that feeds you.

## 0910

So I'm urging my friends in the federal government, whether it's the case of Kherin Dimalanta—the agricultural season is imminent again. I wish it were otherwise, Speaker, but we're not probably going to be past this pandemic by the time people are back out there in the fields doing the good work for us. Are we going to be there for them? Are we going to make sure that we get vaccines into arms to help keep those workers safe? Because, just like Kherin, they make great sacrifices to come to our country to make sure we're fed. So let's be there for them. Let's not forget about them.

I also want to talk about Chandra Pasma, Speaker. Chandra Pasma is someone who has taught me a great deal. Not only has Chandra served at a high level as someone working for the Leader of the Opposition at the federal level back in the 2011 Parliament, Chandra presented herself as a candidate running for our party in Ottawa West–Nepean in the last provincial election. She did a fantastic job, and it was a great team.

But one of the things that impacted Chandra was this virus that we're all talking about. Chandra is one of the folks in our province who are described as COVID long-haulers, Speaker: You test positive, you live with the virus, you deal with treatment, you deal with isolation, you do it, but for Chandra and, as I'm learning as the province's critic for disabilities, for a significant amount of people, the impacts of the virus don't leave.

I've got to tell you, Speaker, every time I hear members of my community—and I know members of the government hear the same stories and hear the same voices—diminishing this virus, or suggesting that this is only impacting a minority of people or trivializing the impacts—I invite every single person watching what I'm saying right now to look up and google the name Chandra Pasma, C-H-A-N-D-R-A P-A-S-M-A. Look up the stories that she has told.

She has become a focal point for COVID long-haulers in the province of Ontario. She's become a resource for them to seek out to say, "Is there something wrong with me? I thought I'd gotten through this, but I still can't focus on my tasks. I'm living in a constant brain fog. I have inexplicable scales on my skin all the time. I live in constant, aching pain." Chandra lived through that. Her whole family has lived through that. And here we are, in this moment, where we actually don't have a clinical—well, that's not fair to say. We don't have a disability accommodation appreciation of this disease yet; COVID-19 is so new.

I'm inviting all of us to think about the consequences of living with this virus for the rest of your life after this moment, when we decide whether or not to open up too early, when we decide whether or not we take risks with large, congregate workplaces or settings for people who aren't vaccinated. Think of the people like Chandra who are going to be living with the consequences of that.

But, you know, there's a sliver of good news to this story, Speaker. We're living in a difficult time, so it's important to emphasize the good news when we have it. I

am proud to tell this House that Chandra Pasma is going to be seeking the nomination for Ottawa West–Nepean again tonight. She's going to be surrounded by her family and friends. It takes a lot of courage. It takes a lot of courage to go through the year that she has gone through, to wrestle with the decision about, "Do I put myself forward again or not?" And she is going to do it. God bless her, Speaker. God bless every single person in a position like Chandra's.

I want to talk about someone else, on a related note, that I heard about on the radio this morning, Rob Kingston. My friend from Peterborough might have heard of Rob's story. Rob Kingston used to work at a credit union in Peterborough. He's also a COVID long-hauler. He had trouble, after going through his quarantine, with the virus, dealing with regular tasks at work. He was ultimately fired last October from his job. He loved the credit union. But his affliction, his predicament—medically, there's no real diagnosis for it yet. So the employer is just looking at an employee who's not meeting targets and saying, "I'm sorry, Rob. Times are tough. We need you to get through these expectations. You're not meeting them. You've got to go."

But Rob knows what he's living with and Rob is taking his claim public. Rob is asking the Ontario Human Rights Commission to render a judgment about whether or not it is, in fact, workplace discrimination to ask COVID long-haulers to demonstrate the same productivity as people who are not struggling with those conditions do.

I have good faith in the great Ena Chadha, who is our commissioner for this province, Speaker, that she and her team will expeditiously look into this matter, because COVID long-haulers deserve respect. They deserve help. We should be trying to enable their participation in the workforce. We should be accommodating their needs in this moment. I know there's a team of health experts, researchers, trying to figure this out right now. But until we do, there are human beings and families that are suffering as we wait.

Speaker, in the time I have left, I feel compelled to also talk about a group of workers in downtown Ottawa who have reached out to us, who have had to live through something that I find deplorable. One of the best hotels in downtown Ottawa, Speaker—I've had occasion to do business there; I'd ask family members to stay there who were visiting us from away, before this virus hit our economy—is the downtown Sheraton Ottawa Hotel. Great place—at least I thought it was a great place. It had won award after award for customer service. The Ottawa tourism awards would often feature some employee from the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel winning a customer service award, a food excellence award, and trade association after trade association saying, "This is a great hotel."

Management in this particular building had been telling the workers regularly through the bulletin board, "We can't wait to bring you all back on once this virus is over and tourism comes back. This is hard for everybody." As recently as January, those sorts of messages were coming out from local management. But when workers tried to

access their records of employment to file their taxes, they found a shocking revelation: Most of them had been terminated. The entire workforce pretty much had been laid off, as is the case in the entire tourism industry. But they went to get their record of employment, and when they pulled down the document, it said "terminated."

You can imagine what people are thinking. The average service in this hotel, which is always a good litmus test for how happy people are, is 15, 16, 20, 25 years. I encountered a banquet server—32 years. They made this place a crown jewel of Ottawa's tourism industry, but if you can believe it, an offshore investment company that now owns this hotel, someone at a boardroom table somewhere outside of Canada, decided these workers were expendable. At the stroke of a pen, "We're going to let you go."

I have written my neighbour the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. I have asked the minister to intervene. I have written officials within the city of Ottawa and my colleague the member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre to stand up for jobs. These are family-supporting jobs in this place. These are the kinds of jobs that people worked hard to get and, when they got them, worked hard to keep—award-winning service. By and large, the people in this place are racialized women cleaning rooms, making food, organizing conferences in hotels. But have we heard a peep from my friend MPP Lisa MacLeod on this matter? Sadly, no. Minister MacLeod does not leap forth, and she has a considerable pulpit in our city. People respect the minister; I respect the minister.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** A reminder to all members that we refer to other members by their title or their riding only.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Okay, the MPP for Nepean, Minister MacLeod. Better?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Not her name; her riding or title.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** At any rate, Speaker, I was just asking my friend in Ottawa to stand up for these workers, and I haven't heard a peep yet. I haven't heard a peep.

I hear this government all the time say they believe in front-line workers. I know the tourism industry is going to come back. It's going to come back, and Ottawa is going to continue to be a fantastic place to work, live and play and do business. But if this employer at the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel thinks it can take advantage of this moment and throw 70 hard-working people under the bus, they've got something coming. We're going to put a scarlet letter on this hotel. I'm going to personally tell everybody I know, "Don't patronize this hotel. There are plenty of other hotels in the city of Ottawa that don't treat their workers like this."

Can you imagine if we behaved like this as MPPs during a pandemic and we said to our staff, teams, working lights out back in the constituency offices, if they were laid off, "I'm just going to get rid of you, and after the pandemic I'm going to hire somebody back at minimum wage." There are collective agreements governing our workplaces here in our party. There's no way in heck a

union would let us get away with that. But I know no member in this House would behave like that. So how can we sit idly by and watch Keck Seng Investments, an offshore company, throw 70 workers under the bus?

**0920**

I'm making a plaintive appeal to Minister MacLeod and this government: Stand up for Sheraton workers and tell the people of Ontario that companies that try to do this, we're going to make an example of them and we're going to say, "We don't put up with that in Canada. We don't put up with that."

The great Martin Luther King once said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies. We remember the silence of our friends." That's what Dr. King said. I think about that all the time in this moment, because advocacy is hard; I'm not going to lie. I'm an opposition politician. I know that everyone in this House gets tough case after tough case coming into their offices. But I've tried to highlight a few this morning to illustrate the gravity of some folks' lives in this moment and how some of us, if we utilize our parliamentary tools a little bit more than usual, we can offer a lot of help and a lot of comfort to people in difficult times.

That's what I am hoping to see the government's budget do. I'm hoping to see the government's budget go to bat for jobs. I'm hoping to see the government's budget go to bat for COVID long-haulers and help people. I'm hoping to see the government's budget go to bat for Kherin Dimalanta and people who came here in good faith to work hard for this country. The notion that we have a cap on health care costs for people is un-Canadian, Speaker. It's beneath us. So let's work as a Legislature to do better. We can and we must do better.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):**

Thank you. Again, a reminder to all members: We get into the habit of referring to people by name and that is not acceptable. It has to be by their riding or their title, full stop. Thank you.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. David Piccini:** I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House today. Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre for his speech, especially his impassioned speech about temporary foreign workers. I know in my riding they're critical to our agriculture supply chain and to putting food, the tomatoes, on the table.

One of the things with respect to health care supports, would that member support—and perhaps something we could all agree on is that the Canada Health Transfer is not enough from the federal government and we could, indeed, receive a larger proportion from the federal government.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Yes, absolutely. We do need some more funds coming from the federal government. The federal government can, on the one hand, preach tolerance and preach compassion with how we treat people and then put a cap on their health care costs. I bet if I did, "Okay, let's do a show of hands right now. Who opposes this arbitrary cap on health care costs for people?" I bet you every hand would go up. So, yes, I welcome the member's suggestion. Let's fight for Kherin and workers like her.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Thanks to the member from Ottawa Centre for that contribution to the debate. It was very interesting and very compelling when he was talking about temporary foreign workers and how we open our doors for them to come in and do the work that's so essential to us, but they don't have things like the health care that they need and there's a federal health care cap on that.

I also want to talk about, as we're talking about workers in the hospitality industry—I'm just wondering in this budget if you can talk about how it could be enhanced, where there could be benefits if one of those workers were sick. Is that in the budget? If one of those workers needed to go get a vaccine, is that in the budget? Can you tell us how those kinds of benefits and programs would actually help workers that you talked about in that essential field or the hospitality industry?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** My friend from London—Fanshawe is absolutely right. The benefit of a paid sick day program that was universal and focused on employers and the efficiency of that would absolutely help someone like Kherin or any of the folks out there working in our economies, who are often below the radar, who work on those short-term contracts that the federal program does not cover.

Ontario has an opportunity to come to the rescue, and I hope news of that is imminent, because we can all agree that those workers matter. We need to help them, and we need programs to help them.

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

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** My thanks to the member from Ottawa Centre for his speech this morning—of course, speaking about the budget and particular aspects of the budget that perhaps the member felt should have been strengthened.

I always appreciate hearing from members of the opposition—also having served in that role, to know, of course, that there needs to be that level of probing questions and probing concerns being raised, also from various backgrounds.

My question with regard to, particularly, the workers you spoke about—and obviously, we've seen workers in hospitality and tourism impacted: Have you heard anything about the training benefit that has been offered, the tax credit of up to 50% back, with regard to up to \$2,000 this year for training? I know it's a difficult choice for many to make, but unfortunately, just given the situation, in Niagara we've seen people take advantage of that. Has that happened in Ottawa, as well?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** It's a good question. I know the member's riding has got to be impacted just as badly as ours. Tourism is a big part of the Niagara experience. I've had occasion to be down in your neck of the woods, and I know people from all over the world do the same. When the economy falls apart and that sector falls apart, a lot of

people are going to be faced with those choices of, “Where do I go?”

So do we have a tax credit to help people retrain? For sure, it could be utilized for something.

But I’m thinking about someone like Glen Shackleton, who runs the famous Haunted Walks business you may have heard about. Glen told me, “Joel, what I need is some upfront cash, much more ambitious than the grant program the government has outlined, to keep a lifeline out to these—because we’re going to be doing those haunted walks pretty soon”—thank you, Glen—“in the summer and fall.” That business needs to stay alive. That’s a Canadian success story, and I know in the member’s riding there are also Canadian success stories.

So tax credits for training are good, but let’s amp this up a little bit. Let’s really be ambitious with probably the sector most impacted, in many respects, by this crisis.

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

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** My good friend from Ottawa Centre put the names of Chandra and Rob on the floor, and I thank you for that. He also quoted Martin Luther King, who said that a measure of a man is taken not at times of comfort and convenience but at times of conflict and controversy. We are certainly in conflict and controversy.

There’s so much yet we have to learn about COVID-19. It’s a very cross-jurisdictional issue, as we all know—federal, provincial, municipal.

My question is, what can we do, what should we do together—because we’re all in this together—to prepare a proper path for those who travel the COVID-19 long-hauler journey to recovery?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I think the first thing we need to do is to acknowledge, as a Legislature, that this is a phenomenon unfolding before our eyes. As our health care system is bursting at the seams to deal with the emergency care that’s part of this virus, we have to help the people who are going to live with this and continue to live with this. So let’s acknowledge that research that says this is a significant problem. Let’s make sure WSIB, let’s make sure employers, let’s make sure every single public policy program we have control of in Ontario accommodates COVID-19 long-haulers, gives them real relief so they can actually take, perhaps, a step back from employment—partial employment—so that when they’re ready to be back to where they were before they became a long-hauler, they’re back and they can be back on their feet. Those are proactive solutions that we can do to help people.

I thank my friend for the question.

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

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** You raised some valid points about lack of support for people who are impacted by COVID-19 in the workforce. Of course, in the recent federal budget, we saw absolutely nothing in terms of any sort of additional support through the recovery sickness benefits.

We’re also seeing, more and more, that one of the reasons why we are having such a difficult time across Canada in being able to control the spread of COVID-19

and we’ve seen this third wave is because our airports remain open.

My question to the member opposite: Do you and will you encourage your party on a federal level to lobby the federal government to address these glaring omissions in the recent federal budget, to ask for increased supports for benefits and also to shutter our access at the airports?

0930

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I thank the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook for that question. I think we are agreed that the federal program is not working. It’s particularly not working for workers like the workers I tried to describe in the time I had this morning. It’s not helping people on temporary contracts. The member’s government has a historic opportunity, as we’ve been begging for months, to come to the table for those precariously employed workers who are continuing to get sick despite going all out for us in those essential workplaces.

Regarding the issue of the airports, Speaker, I’m just going to say, for the record, the debate on public security is important. I know this is not what the member intended, let me be very clear, but there is a constituency out there online that is starting to attack. It’s not the member; it’s not necessarily the member’s government. There’s a constituency out there online that is using this moment to attack people coming to Canada from other countries. As a Legislature, as that policy issue gets resolved federally, let’s make sure we don’t cater to those voices. I think the member knows who I’m talking about.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre for a very impassioned and really, I think, important contribution to the debate today on this bill.

One of the things that the member and I have spoken about before on numerous occasions is his concerns regarding the lack of support—frankly, the lack of adequate funding—for schools, for education and particularly our children.

I was on a town hall last night with parents and students from the Windsor area who are deeply concerned about the impact of COVID on children going forward. I wonder if the member would speak about the concerns that he’s heard from his constituents in Ottawa Centre.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** A very quick response from the member from Ottawa Centre.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Quickly, Speaker, I would just say to my friend from Davenport that we’re dealing with a mental health crisis amongst, particularly, teenagers in our city. It scares me; it truly does.

My partner is part of a great team at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario working with eating disorders. They’ve never seen such an influx of patients: kids struggling with anxiety, with self-harm behaviours.

Let’s take a collective breath. Let’s get the resources into the hands of school boards. I know every single school board official and every single education worker wants to

help those kids, but they need extra staff power and extra resources to make it happen.

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

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Speaker, I intend to speak for the next 10 minutes, and it is certainly an honour to be in the House to speak on the 2021 budget. Our action plan to protect people's health with \$16.3 billion and to protect our economy with \$23.3 billion makes it a total, all in, for COVID of \$51 billion in supports.

This budget is about making good on our continued commitment to do whatever it takes to keep the people safe while building the foundation for a strong economy and steady economic growth. This budget is a signal of confidence to the people of Ontario that we are all confident that Ontario families, when the time is right, will unleash the economic growth that is necessary for job creation, prosperity and a stronger province.

Speaker, many people here have spoken about the tremendous investments that we have made with families, with our loved ones, with our children, with our seniors. My focus will be twofold. It will be on the economic side, as economic development minister, but it will also be on the northern side, as a proud northerner and lifelong resident of northern Ontario.

I would start with passenger rail, Speaker. As part of the commitment from our budget, as part of our commitment to Ontario's future, our government fully understands that every region of the province must have its interests represented, its priorities recognized and its full potential achieved. We know, historically, for the last 15 years, for the north that has not been the case.

Speaker, I speak specifically about passenger rail. For 100 years, northern Ontario was well served by Ontario Northland's passenger rail, linking Union Station in downtown Toronto with Cochrane and then up to Moosonee. If you take the canoe across, you're on Moose Factory Island. That happened for 100 years, until 2012.

A few years ago, those who were here will recall, at that time the Liberal minority government, only with the support of the NDP, shut down our 100-year-old passenger rail. That could only happen in a minority government by the NDP assisting them. The PC member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and I were the only two northerners back then who stood up and voted against the Liberal budget to stop that closure.

In a few minutes from now, today, this morning, the northern members in this Legislature will have a chance to change that. They will have a chance to stand up for the north. We urge the northern NDP members to vote in favour of the \$5 million that's coming to support the planning and design work for the final return of passenger rail that was taken away from us.

This is another serious step our government has taken to help meet the north's transportation needs. This investment builds on last year's transportation plan for northern Ontario. Our commitment to passenger rail, unlike the other parties, is firm; it's ongoing and it's unyielding. We want our trains back, and we're going to bring that back.

We're also committed to building the foundation of a strong, modern and interconnected mining sector. We urge the northern NDP members to vote in favour of the \$5 million over the next two years in the new Ontario Junior Exploration Program. This is going to attract investment and improve Ontario's competitiveness in the exploration sector. It's going to facilitate the discovery of promising mining opportunities. This is when we get our mining back in Ontario.

Think about before that Liberal government got put into power. We were the number one mining jurisdiction in the world, and under that previous government, with the policies that they put in place, we tumbled. Well, we're back. We're building all of these great resources. We're increasing the funding for the Ontario Mine Rescue Program by \$2.9 million. That's money that will fund training for underground mining and that will expand the program services to ensure emergency preparedness for all surface and subsurface mines in the province.

Most importantly, we are developing Ontario's first-ever Critical Minerals Strategy to support the mineral industry, high-growth sectors, innovative clean technologies and transition towards a low-carbon economy both at home and abroad. Minerals required for electric vehicle batteries are found all throughout the north. There's cobalt, well, in the town of Cobalt. There's graphite in Hearst. There's lithium north of Red Lake. There's nickel in Sudbury.

Our strategy will complement the recent investments that we've heard from the auto sector: \$6 billion, unprecedented in the history of Ontario. Ford is transforming their Oakville complex to become the global hub for battery EV production. GM is returning to Oshawa and investing in the delivery truck EV plant in Ingersoll. We'll see Stellantis invest in Windsor. Those are the announced programs we've heard. Others are growing as well.

#### 0940

We've seen our Driving Prosperity auto plan is working. The leaders of all five auto companies have told us that the fundamental changes that were made over the last three years, including in this budget, have reduced the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$7 billion a year. They know that, and they acknowledge that.

This budget provides \$200 million for the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund to help small and rural northern communities build and repair local infrastructure. It continues investments in northern highway expansion for projects like the Cochrane bypass in the northeast, Highway 69 from Parry Sound to Sudbury, Highway 11 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon, and Highway 17 to the Manitoba border. It puts \$10.2 billion over 10 years to continue the success of that ICIP program that has already delivered water and waste water in Rainy River, a new bus garage in Kenora, upgrades to water pollution control in Latchford.

These very important developments in the budget include temporarily doubling the Regional Opportunities Investment Tax Credit from 10% to 20%. This is really important for your business community to grow. All

across northern Ontario, including Algoma, Kenora, Manitoulin, Parry Sound, Thunder Bay, they can raise that maximum from \$45,000 to \$90,000. Those are the regions we're doing this for. We're doing it for the north.

There are northern upgrades to long-term-care beds and new long-term-care beds: Extendicare, upgrading 256 beds in Sudbury; Waters Edge, 12 new beds to their upgraded, brand new, in fact—148 beds in North Bay; Extendicare Sault Ste. Marie, 20 new beds and upgrading 100 beds. In my riding, in Trout Creek, we'll have a brand new 96-bed long-term-care home built. If you remember sitting in this House—Trout Creek, the tiny town was rocked when the former Liberal government, again always with the support of the NDP, shut down the 66-bed facility there, sent those people, those families, to the hospitals in the area and sent 80 workers home that day. Well, we're putting a brand new 96-bed facility back in Trout Creek and the 100 employees that come with it, and the families that will be there.

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation: We are adding \$50 million over two years to the NOHFC. This is the time for the NDP to stand up and support the north, support their local businesses. This is the time for you to vote in favour of adding \$50 million to the NOHFC, to add to the \$100 million that's already there every single year. Your businesses depend on this. Your businesses apply. This is how they're going to expand. This is how they're going to grow. They need the support of the NOHFC. They need you to stand up for them today.

Speaker, there's a lot more that I can say and there's a lot more to be done, but I certainly acknowledge that all regions of the province can and will feel the effects of an economic rebound. It's extremely important to note, though, that while the NDP have said they will not support this budget, they did not offer up even one amendment—not one. They complained, but they did not add one change to the budget.

Throughout this pandemic, the people and businesses of Ontario have made very difficult sacrifices to stop the spread of this virus, often at a very personal cost. Our government will continue to support and work hand in hand with all of the people in Ontario.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak today.

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

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Budgets are about cash; my favourite “cash” is Johnny Cash. To channel Johnny Cash, Speaker, I would say I fell into a burning ring of fire. For the Ring of Fire, during the Liberal majority government was going to put \$1 billion in the next budget. What did we get? A plug nickel.

With this majority government, when elected, the Premier said he'd be on the bulldozer getting into the Ring of Fire. I ask the minister—I didn't see it, perhaps I missed it—where in the budget is all the money you're going to do to open up the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Thank you very much for the question, to the member. I have personally been to the Ring of Fire five times now, and I can tell you that the

changes we've seen from the very first day I was there to what's actually happening on the ground, right now as we speak—there are environmental assessments that are there, after more than a decade of silence from the previous government where absolutely nothing was done. In fact, worse than nothing was done; it fell backwards. We're actually seeing the environmental assessment being done now.

The planning is under way. The groundwork is under way to be able to link the Ring of Fire to the nearest rail line. We're actually seeing this development. It warms my heart, Speaker, to be able to say that it is well under way.

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

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** As I have mentioned in the House many times, I grew up in northern Ontario, in a small railroad town called Capreol. I was absolutely thrilled to see in this budget funding going towards the reopening, I guess you would say, of rail service in northern Ontario. My father was a railroad engineer. I grew up on the rail, on a train literally. I travelled across Canada. I was very fortunate. It is such an integral part of the north too.

To the minister: Would you please expand on the opportunities in this budget for a revived rail service in northern Ontario?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Thank you very much to the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook, and thanks for your great work in the transportation sector, especially with our ports in the Hamilton area as well.

You'll be very pleased to know, as a Capreol girl, that there are tremendous projects under way with rail in the north. As I said earlier in the speech, to have grown up travelling on what was then known as the Northlander from Union Station to my hometown of North Bay, all the way to Cochrane and then farther—there are the drawings now. The design work now is actually being done to rebuild that removed rail line.

There was no more sales office in Union Station. Some of the hubs along the way have been torn down. There's a tremendous amount of work to do, and with this budget, the \$5 million that's in this budget, that work is now under way.

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

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I thank the minister for his speech. As a man of business, I was wondering if you could comment on a micro-economy that I have to pay attention to in my critic role, and that's people living on disability right now in this pandemic. Something I was disappointed to not see is an immediate increase in benefits for folks on the Ontario Disability Support Program. There was a temporary increase for a few months if you found your worker, but there was nothing across the caseload. I know other provinces, like British Columbia, immediately brought in increases across the caseload that are still in effect.

I'm sure the minister is aware that what we can do for people who are living in poverty living on disability benefits is going to impact his local economy in North

Bay, and right across the province, and is going to help people with disabilities whose costs of living have massively gone up. Does he have anything to say for those folks?

**0950**

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Let me directly answer your question. There is \$750 million-plus put in the social services relief fund. That's my direct answer to your question.

Let me talk a little bit more about the jobs that have been created in Ontario. This very morning, today, Thursday morning, 25,000 more men and women woke up to go to a manufacturing job in Ontario than did pre-COVID-19. That's the growth that we're seeing happening here in Ontario, and that is the growth that's coming.

Over the last two years, this government, led by Premier Ford, has worked to reduce the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$7 billion. Those fundamentals are all still in place, and the business community has recognized that those fundamentals are in place. That is exactly why we're seeing—

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

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thank you, Minister, for your remarks.

Minister, I feel very strongly about our environment—and I feel too often that discussion is solely limited to taxation and, specifically, taxing the hard-working men and women of the riding I represent.

You spoke about transportation. I didn't know about the northern line and the lengths that the previous Liberal government went to to shut that down.

I think of the importance of transportation in my riding—increased investments that this government has made to accelerate the GO and increase two-way GO, accessible transit in Port Hope, a new fleet of buses in Cobourg. This is critical to not only a more sustainable environment, but to getting people to places and to their jobs.

Minister, how important are these sorts of investments to the north and to communities like mine?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Thank you very much for the opportunity.

We have laid out a tremendous path in last year's transportation plan for northern Ontario. You asked the question, "How important is it?" It's important enough that the north has its own unique transportation plan, which talks not only about the final return of passenger rail—after being stripped away from northern families in Ontario by the minority Liberal government, as I said, only due to support from the NDP—but in addition to that, we've seen the new bus routes that have been added by Ontario Northland.

We see the hard work that is being done on roads all across, as I started to talk about—Highway 11 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon, Highway 17 to the Manitoba border, Highway 69. I can't believe the NDP will be voting against the expansion of Highway 69 from Parry Sound to Sudbury.

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

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** It's always a pleasure and a privilege to take my seat on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

Small business is something that we've been—their heartfelt struggles have been felt through this entire pandemic for a very long time.

I always give credit where credit is due. I must say that the renewal of the program which is going to be providing additional funding for those businesses that did previously qualify is going to be welcome news. I know the TIAO, also with the CFIB, worked extremely hard to lobby this government to get those things done—the expansion that was done in the tourism sector, particularly for northern Ontario; the outfitters who are now going to qualify for some assistance.

However, there is a big piece, which was the eligibility criteria, that was left out for other small businesses to qualify for this program. Why was that missing from this year's budget?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Thank you very much for the question. And thank you for the acknowledgment that the small business support grant really was brought in in such a timely manner and with such great assistance.

I can tell you that just down the street from my home on Highway 94, where I've been for the last year, there's the Royal Canadian Legion. I picked up the phone and gave them a call and said to them, "The Legion qualifies for the small business support grant." He went online at 11 o'clock on Wednesday morning, during the eligible time, and he called me at eight minutes to 7 on Thursday night, the day later, and said, "Vic, the money is in our account already." That is why the small business support grant was put in.

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

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** It's always, again, a privilege to stand here on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin and offer some of my comments to Bill 269, which is comprised of 10 schedules. There's not a whole heck of a lot to talk about in this, so some of my comments that I'll be bringing to the floor this morning are going to be from a different perspective, particularly from the tourism sector—that's where I left off in my comments and my question to the minister right now—who have felt that they have struggled, they have been alienated, they have been forgotten for a very, very long time.

J'apporte une différente perspective, surtout sur les économies et puis les petites entreprises, les entrepreneurs qui sont dans le secteur touristique. Ce sont des gens qui offrent leur cœur, offrent leurs jours—c'est leur vie qu'ils mettent dans leur petite entreprise—and qui n'ont jamais demandé pour de l'aide. Ils sont tout le temps débrouillards, inventifs. Ce sont des gens qui mettent leur esprit dans leur ouvrage et ce sont des gens qui, vraiment, sont essentiellement fiers d'être capables d'accomplir sans avoir de l'aide.

Mais une chose qu'on réalise pendant cette pandémie, c'est qu'on a tous eu besoin d'aide. Tous les gens à travers cette province ont eu besoin d'aide, puis, surtout dans le

secteur touristique, ce sont des gens qui ont été oubliés par ce gouvernement. Il y en a plusieurs d'entre eux dans ce secteur-là et d'autres secteurs, des petites entreprises. Oui, le gouvernement a apporté des projets de loi, puis des subventions et de l'aide financière pour certains. Mais il ne faut pas qu'on oublie qu'il y a une grosse partie de ces gens qui n'ont pas été inclus dans ces fonds-là. Il y en a qui sont encore frustrés d'avoir l'éligibilité et d'avoir leur application et des réponses de ce gouvernement. Là, on attend des mois pour avoir une réponse, s'ils vont effectivement recevoir des fonds pour qu'ils puissent survivre à travers cette pandémie.

Je vais vous donner un exemple d'une petite entreprise sur l'île Manitoulin. Ils ont appelé et ont fait application. Une fois qu'ils ont fait l'application, ça a été un gros montant de temps avant qu'ils ne reçoivent une réponse qu'ils n'étaient pas éligibles. Quand ils ont regardé l'information et la réponse qu'ils ont reçue, ils ont remarqué qu'ils avaient fait une erreur dans leur soumission.

Ça fait au-dessus de deux mois qu'ils sont en train d'essayer de contacter le ministère pour corriger cette erreur, parce que la seule réponse qu'ils ont eue d'eux autres, effectivement, c'est qu'ils ne sont pas éligibles. Il y a un deuxième fonds qui est devenu éligible pour les gens de recevoir, mais ils n'ont même pas arrangé leur première application. Ils veulent avoir le premier fonds—pour être éligibles pour le deuxième, il faut qu'ils qualifient pour le premier—mais ils ne peuvent recevoir aucune information de ce gouvernement. Ça, c'est un gros problème auquel beaucoup des entreprises sont en train de faire face.

Un autre des gros problèmes est, à cause que leur entreprise était rouverte un montant de temps après la date requise—ils ont été rouverts pendant la pandémie—ils n'ont pas de moyen de démontrer qu'ils ont eu un revenu dans un tel mois pour être éligibles. Ça fait au-dessus de quasiment 11 mois qu'ils sont en fonction, qu'ils sont rouverts pour le public, mais à cause qu'ils n'ont pas été ouverts pour la grosse période de temps, eux autres non plus ne sont pas éligibles pour le premier fonds ni le second fonds.

Je voulais simplement donner ces deux exemples-là pour qu'on apporte un visage à ce que les gens sont en train de faire face.

I really want to put my comments today on the tourism sector. Tourism businesses are really struggling out there.  
**1000**

I want to bring a couple of examples to the House. There is a small business that opened up on Manitoulin Island. They have been trying to obtain a small business loan, and when they initially applied, they were denied. I know I have spoken to the minister's assistant about this, and I'm hoping we're going to be able to resolve it, but these individuals had initially applied for the small business grant, and they received a response from the ministry that they were ineligible. When they received that ineligible response, they reviewed it. They couldn't figure out, "Why are we ineligible?" They noticed they had made an error in their submission.

It was very time-consuming for them to first get that first response from the government, but since then, it's been over two months that they've been waiting to get a response from the government to correct the error in the first application for the initial funds that were there. They are excited that there is a second one that has been announced as well, which is going to help them survive through this pandemic. However, the first one still needs to be addressed in order to get them an opportunity to qualify for the second one.

This is happening in many small businesses across this province, where people are struggling to get through. I understand that there is an overwhelming amount of applications that are in, but there should be a way for that individual to put their concern or to change or to modify their initial application to correct the errors that were inadvertently made. That's a struggle that small businesses are facing.

According to TIAO, the industry lost over 200,000 jobs in Ontario, and 74% of those businesses are facing significant cash flow problems. The industry needs more than tax credits, marketing and money for loans. They are under a mountain of debt. If we don't want the industry to crumble, there needs to be direct, immediate financial help. The tourism industry feels abandoned.

Here's another example: Businesses like coach bus companies have seen their businesses drop 99% while receiving no help from government and are drowning in debt. When I sat down with representatives and businesses from the coach industry—these are the businesses that actually travel tourists, when they do come to Ontario or to Canada, to our wonderful locations that we have across this province, our landmark destinations: Niagara Falls, the casinos, Wonderland. You name the place, that's where these buses take individuals, to those destinations.

It's great to see that there is some assistance that has been provided to some of those venues. Some of the other venues have not been included in that assistance. But it's these buses, these businesses that take those individuals—and they have been decimated, completely decimated, as far as getting any assistance through the Ontario Small Business Support Grant.

Again, I want to reiterate that I'm glad to see businesses that already qualify will receive a second grant. They have been struggling, and this is probably going to help them pay a good portion of their debt.

I want to come back to a constituent of mine. She has a small coffee shop in Massey. She serves a little bit of sandwiches and soup. Essentially, it's kind of a social gathering group that you have there. There are people who come into her shop. She offers crafts and she does a lot of yarn work.

Sometimes, we just need to be seen. Sometimes, we just need people to know that, "Hey, I'm alive. I'm over here. This is who I am." That's what she does. Her name is Laura Courtemanche.

Right now, she is struggling. She is having a hard time making ends meet—not only just surviving with rent and her location and supplies and so on, but her hydro bill.

She's asking me, "Mike, can you please tell me when this next round of funding is going to be made available? Because I've sent a note in to Hydro One to let them know that this is coming and that's how I'm going to be able to pay my hydro bill. Please don't cut me off. Can you also tell the government to do something in regard to telling these utility providers not to shut us down and not to cut off my hydro in the middle of this pandemic?"

Because not only does she care for the services and the small bowl of soup—God forbid; she makes probably about 50 cents on that bowl of soup, which is a great soup, by the way. Laura, I love it. Thank you very much. She makes great muffins, and I have to stop eating not just those muffins, but her butter tarts. Her butter tarts, I tell you, are something else. But she provides a location for people to go to and just sit and talk, with all of this pandemic that's going on. It's not just in her restaurant; a lot of that social interaction happens on the sidewalk right in front of her place. It happens on the stool that's in front of the window with the "open" sign.

That's what these small businesses do in small communities across Algoma-Manitoulin, and in a lot of your own communities as well. It gives you that opportunity to release your stresses, your concerns. These small businesses really need help. For too many, this grant is still far from enough. These series of lockdowns and this uncertainty have put a toll on their finances, and most of them will continue to need help past the March 31 deadline on that first loan and afterwards. It's not because the program ends that the lockdown and the uncertainty go away.

The virus is still here. It will remain here for a very long time. Many businesses were excluded from the grant because they were considered essential, yet they were also affected by the lockdown, like hotel businesses in downtown Toronto and Ottawa, restaurant suppliers. They all have been affected because they depend on other businesses and people coming to them. They also need help.

The Manitoulin conference centre in Little Current: Usually, there's a workforce of anywhere between 40 to about 55 individuals that are there. Talking to Corey, the proprietor of the conference centre, they are down to nine, and it's a struggle for them to just make ends meet, as well, because they're not getting much of the assistance that they need as well.

I could talk about ski hills and them suffering in northern Ontario, particularly the small ski hills. The snow is gone, but they're going to go through their summer months, as well, where they start preparing for their winter months. There are a lot of costs that went into preparing for the previous or the last two winters, but then they were told to close down. There are a lot of inspections that need to be done. The equipment needs to be inspected. The individuals need to be trained. All of those are all costs which these businesses were hoping to recuperate, but are not going to be able to recuperate at all.

The support grants are going to be helpful, but when it comes to many tourist outfitters, the initial \$10,000, followed by a second one is going to be a drop in the

bucket, and those are realistic. You've heard those words before from your tourist outfitters in regard to how they're going to be struggling. I know that the member from North Bay—sorry, the member from—give me your riding, Vic.

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Nipissing.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** The member from Nipissing understands that, because he's actually been to some of those tourist outfitters in Algoma-Manitoulin and across northern Ontario, and he has heard those same complaints. He knows those struggles and he has listened to those comments of individuals, from those business owners.

**1010**

Michelle Watson from Kaby Lodge has expressed her huge concerns in regard to the struggles that they are facing. Here's the reality of what they are facing: They have lost over 90% to 95% of their entire clientele for this entire pandemic. They were told to prepare last year, previous to the shutdown that happened last year. They had to go through an entire process of going to camp; opening up camp; checking the equipment; making sure—because there's no hydro going to these areas, they rely on generators—that those are in place; making sure that the fridges are working, in order to order the food in; making sure that the accommodations are there, because over the course of the winter and the spring, there is sometimes damage that happens, whether it's heavy snows or our northern critters decide to walk in and break down a door.

We have issues at times with bears. Speaker, you've experienced some of that. You were down at my trailer last year, so you had that wonderful time. Oh, and by the way, you know those swamps that we go in? I actually find them beautiful. I actually find them very refreshing, and that's where you see those wonderful critters that we so enjoyed very, very much.

The point that I was trying to make is that it takes a very long time for these businesses to actually ramp up their operations, and it is extremely costly for them to ramp up that operation. So when you set that in motion, and they go out and fly out to their camps—because they can't drive, they fly out. And you need pilots. You need special individuals in order to make sure the maintenance is being done over at camp, to open up your camp and prepare for the upcoming season. So you do that.

You look out. You bring in all your employees, because some of these individuals in their isolated areas that they're in—you're accommodating for some 200 to 400 individuals coming into their lodges, to their various destinations that they have on the lakes and so on, so you need a small army of individuals to provide the services, the housekeeping, the cooking, the cooks, the janitors, the cleaning, and so on and so forth. So they all come in and they all gather. You've got to make sure that they go through the safety procedures and know the protocols that are there, because, like I said, 911 isn't going to pick up the phone right away. So you need to make sure that your staff is a quality staff, that they are informed, that they are knowledgeable, that they know the process and they know the procedures of how to respond to urgent matters.

A lot of your tourist people who do come to these destinations don't have to think about that, because that

environment is provided to you. That environment is something that goes without even saying, but that's the ambience, and that's the joy that northerners have, to provide that ambience, to provide that opportunity to people who are coming to our destinations and really enjoy what we have to offer in northern Ontario.

So employers prepare to train and prepare to open, and without any notice, without any warning, they are told, "You know what? You can't open." They understand the challenges that we're in under COVID-19 and the pandemic. What they don't understand, and what frustrates them, is that entire period and the costs that were associated with preparing to open up, with training your employees, with moving things along and getting going, and then they are told, "You know what? You're on your own."

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you. I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but seeing the time on the clock, it is now time for members' statements.

*Third reading debate deemed adjourned.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Speaker, T.S. Eliot started The Waste Land, one of his most famous poems, with "April is the cruellest month." But for the past 55 years, April has been recognized as National Poetry Month in Canada. This year's theme, as announced by the League of Canadian Poets, is "resilience."

What is resilience? Well, Speaker: "We meet resilience in every corner we've been backed into, every hardship that we endure. Resilience is geographical, spiritual, historical. It's the fight against climate change, the inner battle with mental health, the outcry for human rights and an end to systemic racism. Resilience is the backbone of generations of trauma, the silence at the dinner table, the bow to culture's violin. Resilience is the courage to start each day anew."

Speaker, the League of Canadian Poets says, this National Poetry Month 2021, we should "celebrate, reflect on and respect the resilience that has made us who we are."

Perhaps this month, we, in this chamber, can set aside some time, if you will, to stop and smell the roses, so to speak, reflect on why we're here, respect the resilience that has made us who we are and perhaps pick up a book of poetry or read some poetry—maybe even write a few lines of poetry:

It's easy to do  
For MPPs like me and you  
Don't be meek: Do it—just for fun  
Speaker, I see my allotted speaking time is done.

### REBECCA FOURNIER

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** I want to take this morning to recognize a true pandemic hero in my riding of

Flamborough-Glanbrook. Her name is Rebecca Fournier. Rebecca is the care coordinator at St. Elizabeth Retirement Residence in Hamilton. She treats her residents and her staff as extended members of her family. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Rebecca was willing to live at St. Elizabeth in an effort to keep her residents and staff protected against the spread of the virus.

Rebecca is a single mother. She has two children at home. Her children stayed with her parents during the time that she actually moved in and lived at the retirement home. Rebecca was willing to sacrifice time with her family for months in an effort to protect the lives of her most vulnerable residents. She even gave up her personal time when St. Elizabeth was dealing directly with a COVID outbreak.

Rebecca's co-workers say she is a leader, a solid role model, someone who inspires others to go above and beyond. She's willing to work long hours. They say she's always positive. She's always available when her residents need her.

Rebecca is an example of how to make a positive difference in this world. She's one of the many thousands of people in Ontario who have been working to keep our most vulnerable residents safe, who have been making a positive difference in the world.

Rebecca and all of these front-line workers represent the best of humanity, and I want to sincerely thank them for their sacrifice.

### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** We must have an equitable vaccine rollout so that those who are most at risk are prioritized in getting vaccinated. My community of Humber River-Black Creek has been one of the hardest hit during this pandemic, due to the socio-economic barriers faced by so many living there.

A couple of weeks back, and under rising pressure, when the Premier announced that those 18-plus in hot spot communities would be vaccinated, we thought we were finally heard, but when we realized that this announcement was made without a plan, details, a timeline or a dedicated vaccine supply, we had to quickly take matters into our own hands.

We formed a team to quickly plan and distribute a large number of vaccinations within Black Creek to get some of the province's most at-risk individuals and families their first dose of vaccine as soon as possible. I joined a team of incredible and tireless health care providers and organizers, including Black Creek Community Health Centre, Humber River Hospital, the University Health Network, Michael Garron Hospital, LOFT, Toronto Community Housing, the San Romanoway Revitalization Association, Greenwin and our councillor, Anthony Perruzza. Together, we organized a series of pop-up mobile vaccinations at Jane and Finch, and we were able to administer over 12,000 vaccines to Humber River-Black Creek residents since this past weekend.

Our work isn't over yet, and we continue to work hard at establishing new mobile vaccination clinics here in

Humber River–Black Creek. I thank those who lined up and braved the weather, rather than waiting untold weeks or months so that they could get a vaccine elsewhere. The government must secure more vaccine supply and vaccinate all of those most at risk as soon as possible. The vaccine rollout must be equitable, and we must prioritize all hot spots.

**1020**

#### PETERBOROUGH PORCH PIRATES FOR GOOD

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Ninety seconds doesn't seem like it's enough time to really reach out and thank all of the volunteers who have done so much in our communities, but there's one in particular I want to talk about, and that was back on April 10. The event was called Porch Pirates for Good, and it was a Peterborough-wide food drive hosted by Kawartha Food Share. The Porch Pirates food drive volunteers and Kawartha Food Share turned the phrase "porch pirate" into something that was good. In fact, it was the largest fundraiser in Kawartha Food Share's history, collecting over 51,000 pounds of food and over \$4,000 from our community members in just a couple of hours. They also had a collection from 20 local businesses the day before, collecting 2,000 pounds of food.

With 70 volunteer pirates, each covering a neighbourhood in the city, they distributed flyers beforehand. People left the food donations in bags on their porch, and those volunteers went out and picked it up. There were 10 captain volunteers back at Kawartha Food Share, and it would not have been possible if it wasn't for those head mateys: Megan Murphy, Ashlee Aitken, Lois Tuffin and Susan Dunkley. This collection will be a great help in getting Peterborough–Kawartha through the spring, when it typically sees a lull in donations.

The spirit of giving in my community never ceases to amaze me.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Today is Earth Day, an important day to celebrate our environment and act to protect our natural heritage. It's important to acknowledge also that today, April 22, 2021, here in Ontario, we are at the height of a third-wave COVID crisis. Sadly, we are experiencing the disastrous results of this government scrambling too late in a crisis.

We're also facing a climate crisis. Experts are warning us that the time to take urgent action to avoid the devastating impact of climate change is now. I want to recognize Indigenous women, water protectors who fight to ensure our water is protected. Kristen Villebrun, Makaša Looking Horse, Autumn Peltier and the late Josephine Mandamin have all taken action to protect our water, and all of us in this House could learn a lesson of leadership from them.

In my riding, people care very deeply about natural spaces like Cootes Paradise. This weekend was the 50th

anniversary of the Dundas Valley School of Art auction. So many of the works were tributes to Cootes Paradise, including a very special watercolour by the founder of the DVSA, Marion Farnan. Our love of Cootes Paradise runs deep in Hamilton.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also extremely proud of our party's plan for the environment, "Climate. Jobs. Justice." It's the boldest climate plan Ontario has ever seen.

We are facing the devastating impact of a government facing a crisis unprepared. It is also unthinkable that Ontario does not have a credible climate plan. Please stop being silent on the climate crisis. The time to act is now.

#### HOME CARE

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Door-knocking in the last provincial election, I remember meeting Anne, a resident of Beamsville in my riding of Niagara West. Anne was in her eighties. Her husband had recently passed away.

Visiting Anne at the little white bungalow that she and her husband had built together in the 1960s, she told me about her desire to stay in their home as long as she could. But Anne's children had moved out of the area, and she worried about having an accident or not being able to get the support that she needed.

Speaking with seniors like Anne in Niagara West over the past few years, I've heard a great deal about the importance of aging in place. But of course, this aging needs to be safe. Many seniors in my riding want to be able to stay at home as long as possible, as long as they can know that they are safe and supported in their environment.

Our government agrees and is taking action to support seniors with the care they need. A couple of weeks ago, I was joined by Kevin Smith, the chief of Niagara EMS, Marvin Junkin, the mayor of the town of Pelham, and Jim Bradley, the chair of the region of Niagara and former long-time member of this Legislature, to announce an expanded community paramedicine program across Niagara. The significant investment of over \$8.2 million in the community paramedicine program on behalf of the Minister of Long-Term Care is a great step to providing the care that seniors such as Anne deserve.

It provides services to seniors who are waiting for placement in a long-term-care home or who are soon to be eligible for long-term care to safely keep seniors in their home for as long as possible. The program offers access to health services 24/7 through in-home and remote methods, such as online or virtual supports, non-emergency home visits and in-home testing procedures, as well as ongoing monitoring of changing or escalating conditions.

This is just one more step to provide health care in Ontario and to support seniors in Niagara West.

#### YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Ms. Sara Singh:** I wanted to take an opportunity today to thank the amazing youth who are part of the Brampton Centre youth council, members like Evan, Omar, Jasmine,

Giya and Erika, who have been providing their insights and sharing their thoughts and perspectives about the challenges that young people are facing during these uncertain times.

Many of them are concerned about what's happening in education. They're worried about the health and safety of their families and their educators. Many of them felt that our classrooms were unsafe, and many shared concerns about access to mental health resources throughout this pandemic.

Many are worried about what the future has in store. Will they be able to find stable employment? Will they be able to attend their graduation or even hug their loved ones? They're also worried that their friends are dying by suicide, because they weren't able to get the help and supports they needed in our community.

Speaker, Peel has an average wait time of 790 days for mental health services for young people, and this has only gotten worse with COVID-19. We need urgent investments in our mental health services, so children in our province aren't waiting far too long for the supports they need.

This pandemic has been difficult on all of us, and the long-term impacts have yet to be seen for future generations. So I just want to take an opportunity and say to young people at home that it's okay to not be okay. It's okay to be upset, it's okay to be sad and it's okay to be mad. You are not alone. Please reach out if you need help.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Roman Baber:** I submit that the government has lost legitimacy to govern. Let's review:

- a quarter million surgeries postponed;
- one million cancer screenings that did not take place;
- a mandatory directive yesterday to cancel all non-emergency surgeries, including cancer surgeries;
- children out of school for the third time;
- a mental health catastrophe, with youth suicide attempts skyrocketing;
- an only 14% increase in ICU beds available during the pandemic;
- a \$30-billion deficit, with nothing to show for it;
- a new \$20-billion structural deficit, remaining for years to come after the pandemic is gone;
- a \$400-billion debt, a 24% increase, for one more than \$76 billion higher than they inherited from the Liberals;
- outdoor recreational activities closed for absolutely no reason; and then
- last Friday, predicated on political advice, martial law; the unthinkable, the unconscionable, the unlawful, the undemocratic, an attempt to create a police state in Ontario, thwarted by the police itself. Shame on them.

Speaker, they have shown utter incompetence. They've shown disregard for the rule of law. They do not represent Ontario. They do not represent their voters. They do not represent their party. They lost legitimacy to govern.

You've lost the mandate to govern and you should govern yourselves accordingly.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll remind the members to make their comments directly through the Chair, not across the floor.

**Mr. Roman Baber:** You know I'm right.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order.

**Mr. Roman Baber:** Shame on all of you.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for York Centre will come to order.

The next member's statement.

#### AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Since the start of the pandemic, one of our government's top priorities was to guard against the spread of COVID-19 in agri-food workplaces and to ensure that Ontario's food supply remains strong and responsive.

Yesterday, ag minister Hardeman announced that our government is investing \$22 million in a brand new program designed to drive the adoption of technology in agri-food workplaces and to enhance the health and safety of our workforce. Known as the Agri-tech Innovation Program, this new initiative will help our farmers and agribusinesses adopt unique and innovative technologies to improve efficiency and productivity.

This plan is the second stage of the Agri-food Prevention and Control Innovation Program, which was announced in the 2020 budget. The Agri-tech Innovation Program will not only better protect agricultural workers and farm employees, but it will also help drive the agriculture industry's success and growth and improve resilience in the years ahead. Examples this program could support include on-farm automation and robotics to assist with things like production, harvesting and so many other functions.

More details on the Agri-tech Innovation Program will be available at the OMAFRA website. I sincerely thank Minister Hardeman for his commitment and his investment in Ontario's farms and our agri-food business.

1030

#### ANNIVERSARY OF ATTACK IN TORONTO

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I rise this morning to mark a sad and difficult day for my neighbourhood. Tomorrow will be the third anniversary of the Toronto van attack that took the lives of 10 and left a deep, lasting scar on our city and on my community of Willowdale.

On April 23, 2018, a beautiful, warm spring day, a terrorist, driven by misogyny and hatred, used a rented van as a weapon by driving onto the sidewalk of one of our city's busiest streets, killing 10 people, most of them women, and injuring 16 others.

This senseless act of evil had a profound effect on my community. We were scared, shaken to our core. We had been attacked in our home, on the streets where we, our families and our friends walked every day.

But through this tragedy, there was also an outpouring of kindness, love and hope. From everyday heroes on the

streets who ran towards danger to help victims, to those who laid flowers, led prayers, hugged neighbours and brought the community together to mourn and to heal, Willowdalers found light in the darkest of moments. And that light shines just as bright today as our community continues to heal, continues to support each other and remember those we lost.

Tomorrow night, Willowdalers will gather virtually for a community dinner organized by We Love Willowdale, a group of neighbours that formed in the wake of the tragedy to look after one another. This event will give our community a chance to reflect, to remember, to grieve our loss, but also to give thanks for an incredible community and the kindness of our neighbours who call Willowdale home.

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

The member for London West has informed me she has a point of order.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Speaker, on a point of order: I seek unanimous consent to bring forward a motion without notice requiring the government to implement paid sick days legislation to help protect workers across Ontario from COVID-19, so no one has to make the difficult choice between staying home when sick and being able to pay the bills.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for London West is seeking unanimous consent to bring forward a motion without notice. Agreed? I heard a no.

The member for Davenport has informed me she has a point of order.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to immediately pass private member's motion 153, calling on the Ford government to implement paid time off for vaccinations, helping facilitate the timely vaccination of Ontario's workers as part of the fight against COVID-19.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Davenport is seeking unanimous consent to immediately pass a private member's motion. Agreed? I heard a no.

The member for Humber River–Black Creek has informed me he has a point of order.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to immediately pass private member's motion 152, calling on the Ford government to revoke O. Reg. 298/21 and the unprecedented and potentially unconstitutional powers it has extended to Ontario's police services.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Humber River–Black Creek is seeking unanimous consent to immediately pass a private member's motion. Agreed? I heard a no.

The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to immediately pass private member's motion 154, calling on the Ford government to implement a full shutdown of Ontario's non-essential businesses where the risk of COVID spread is high and extend adequate financial supports to help the workers and businesses impacted by the interruption.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas is seeking unanimous

consent to immediately pass a private member's motion. Agreed? I heard a no.

The member for Algoma–Manitoulin has informed me he has a point of order.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to immediately pass private member's motion 136, calling on the Ford government to provide financial assistance for small businesses not eligible for other supports during the pandemic.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member is seeking unanimous consent of the House to immediately pass a private member's motion. Agreed? I heard a no.

## COVID-19 DEATHS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Brampton Centre has informed me she has a point of order.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the 150 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 over the past week.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Brampton Centre is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment's silence for the 150 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 over the past week. Agreed? Agreed. I'll ask members to please rise.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. Members, please take your seats.

The member for Don Valley East apparently has a point of order as well.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I seek unanimous consent to move a motion regarding the immediate passage of Bill 247, the Paid Personal Emergency Leave Now Act.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Don Valley East is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for the immediate passage of Bill 247. Agreed? I heard a no.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Last week the government made an announcement that was so devastating, it literally led to physicians sobbing when they heard it. Doug Ford of course, as we all now know, made decisions not based on public health at all but, rather, based on politics and polling. His decisions, based on these kinds of factors, have really caused a ravaging of communities, a ravaging of families to COVID-19 in this province.

Today he had a chance. Today he had a chance to do the right thing and actually implement the recommendations of the science table: paid sick days for all workers; really, truly closing non-essential businesses and giving them the support they need, as well as their workers need, to get through these next several weeks; making sure that every hot spot has the vaccines that they need, that the

priority goes there to stop the spread of this deadly, deadly virus. He didn't do any of those things today when he made his press conference—none.

How much longer are Ontarians going to have to wait for their Premier to do the right thing, base his decisions on public health and science and save lives and stop the spread of this virus?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members, please take their seats. Government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Of course, that is exactly what we've been doing since the start of this pandemic. As I mentioned the other day, when we took office, we had a provincial lab system that could handle 5,000 tests a day. That is up to 75,000 tests because of the hard work of this government. We had a long-term-care system that was in peril. We have made significant investments to increase that. We had a system that has one of the lowest ICU capacities per capita in North America. We moved very quickly to upgrade that capacity and to put resources in place for health and human resources to cover those ICUs. We added critical care access to the system. We're bringing vaccines into hot spots. We're bringing vaccines into essential services. We have vaccinated over four million people in the province of Ontario, despite the fact that we have been having unreliable vaccine delivery from the federal government.

There is a lot of work that has been done. There is more to do, and we will get the job done on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, they haven't gotten the job done yet. There are 806 people with COVID-19 in our ICUs today—806. It's a dire situation in this province. The only people who don't seem to get that is this government.

Surgeries are now being cancelled, and in response to what both the Minister of Health and the Solicitor General had to say yesterday, Shady Ashamalla, head of general surgery at Sunnybrook hospital, said this—this is around the triage, which today they claim isn't happening. But the doctors are saying this: "There is triage. We are long past the point of standard of care."

**1040**

Dr. Nir Lipsman, from Sunnybrook, a neurosurgeon at that health sciences centre, said this: "Man in 20s with life-threatening brain hemorrhage, the most urgent of urgent cases. Can't take to OR, they're full of patients waiting for ICU bed. Meanwhile, pressure grows, life slipping away."

The crisis is getting worse day by day. When will the people of Ontario have a government that takes it seriously and acts on the recommendations of the science table?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** We do take the situation very seriously, have since the beginning of this pandemic and have taken steps to build our hospital capacity since day one, since this started. We've built over 3,100 new beds in this province since the pandemic began, six-community-

hospital size. We've also increased our intensive care capacity by 14%. We've initiated programs so that we can use the entire capacity of our health system, by being able to do the patient transfers, which are happening on a daily basis, and by redeploying staff to make sure that as we create more spaces, we have the staff to activate them and to work in them.

We've also created two new field hospitals at Sunnybrook. We're also building one in Hamilton. We are creating the capacity that we need so that if people in Ontario need to be in an intensive care bed, there will be one there for them.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, while this—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for York Centre will come to order.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** While this government is lost in a quagmire of internal politics and worried about polling, people are dying and hospitals are in an absolute scramble.

Nearly a week has gone by since the government first learned of the science table recommendations—over a week, actually, since they learned of it. It's been a week since the failure of an announcement that they made on Friday and it's about three months since the science table has been warning this government about what would happen in the third wave if they didn't bring the right policies to bear. Of course, we all saw that they didn't, so here we are.

Yet the government still refuses to act on the recommendations of the science table, while people lose their lives, while entire communities are aflame with COVID-19. How much longer before the government starts doing what they should be doing: bring in paid sick days, close down those non-essential businesses and give them the support they need, make sure that we're addressing the COVID fire in the hot spots? How much longer?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Since the beginning of this pandemic, we have relied on the advice and recommendations given to us by Dr. Williams, our Chief Medical Officer of Health, and others, by other medical experts and by other tables, including the science advisory table. They have provided the critical data and modelling that has allowed us to be able to make the decisions that we have made up until now. They advised us to put the emergency brake on, which we did do, and then recommended the stay-at-home order, which we did do. They also recommended that we reduce mobility, which we did do.

We have taken their advice. They advised us we needed to increase hospital capacity, which we did do. We have followed the advice of the medical experts since the beginning, and we will continue to do that until we get everyone in Ontario who wants to receive a vaccination vaccinated. That is what we'll continue to do. Our medical experts are the ones that are providing us with that advice and counsel, and have since the beginning.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is to the Deputy Premier. This morning the Premier said the decisions aren't easy. But there are the right decisions that need to be made and this government has not made them.

There's no doubt, as was mentioned by the government House leader, that the hospital system was in disarray: years of cuts and frozen budgets, cutbacks by this government to public health before the pandemic hit, a failure to listen to the public health advice warnings about COVID-19 and especially the huge failure in February, when they were warned what needed to happen to avoid exactly where we are now. They were warned by the science table.

Now, people are dying in our emergency rooms and an ICU doctor in Barrie literally just told his vice-president that this situation is catastrophic. This is catastrophic. That's what the doctors on the front lines are saying.

How can this government justify where we are? We didn't get here overnight, for sure, but how can they justify not taking the actions that they should have been taking all along?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Necessary actions have been taken all along since the beginning of this pandemic to grow our hospital capacity. We also set up the framework which we are following. We also set up the emergency brake for the entire province, followed by the emergency stay-at-home order and the other emergency orders that we had to bring forward.

It was recommended that we stop with our surgeries and procedures for a period of time—not because we wanted to, but because we knew we had to create the space in our hospitals to be able to care for COVID patients, as well as other patients who come in during an emergency. We also were advised that we needed to build up our staff, which we are doing with the redeployment of staff from Ontario Health and the former LHINs. We are receiving assistance from some other provinces in Canada with staff, as well. We are doing whatever we need to do in order to create that capacity so that we have spaces for people in our emergencies and people in our intensive care units.

But it's also really important to blunt that transmission of the variants. That is why we had to bring the emergency stay-at-home order forward to reduce mobility, to get people to please stay at their homes, to please follow public health measures so that we can blunt the transmission of these variants, which is a totally different situation from what we were dealing with in the first wave. But we are dealing with it. We're asking people to please continue to follow those public health measures so that we will be able to curb that transmission, as we are doing in hot-spot areas.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, it is beyond belief that this Minister of Health is still, to this very moment, not listening to what the experts are saying and not listening to the recommendations of the science table. Instead, they are blaming people. She just did it again, blaming people. Stop blaming people. Stop closing parks. Stop bringing

police powers into Ontario that everybody knows were wrong.

We need to have some focus here. We need a government that's doing its job. We need to close non-essential businesses and support them through. We need to move vaccines to the places they're needed most, where COVID is raging. And we need paid sick days for every worker in this province.

How long are Ontarians going to have to wait? Will they ever get the recommendations passed through this cabinet and this government to save Ontarians' lives and stop this COVID spread?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Through you, Speaker, I would like to say to the leader of the official opposition: Don't make suppositions about what you think I'm thinking and what I am saying. I am not in any way accusing the public of anything.

I am working to protect the health and safety of the people of Ontario, and have since the beginning of this. That is why we have taken the steps that we've taken to bring the stay-at-home order forward. That's why we've taken the steps to reduce the surgeries and procedures, unfortunately, for a short period of time, so that we will have the capacity in our hospitals. That's why we are having to move people around to places where they can be served, using our entire health system capacity. That is why we've designated the hot spots, because we know that's where we need to concentrate our efforts in order to reduce transmission across the entire province. That is why we're designating 25% of all the vaccines coming forward now into those hot spots where they're absolutely needed. That is why we're introducing the pop-up clinics and extending hours, so that people can get the vaccines that they need.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, we heard the government House leader try to slough off their huge error on Friday as a communications mistake, that it was some small mistake they made. Everybody knows that that's not true. It was an embarrassment that the government tried to suggest that that's all it was: a communications problem.

Hot spots still don't have vaccines at places like—well, actually some of them do, but the lineups go for miles and miles at places like the Driftwood Community Centre. The lines are huge. Whole families are still getting sick from contracting COVID-19 at non-essential businesses. There are no paid sick days in our province. Dr. Irfan Dhalla from Unity Health said this: "How many lives would have been saved if we had provided paid time off in January...? Or, even better, before the second wave?"

Does the Premier or the government have an answer to this? When are we going to get real, accessible paid sick days for every worker in our province?

**1050**

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Of course, we are moving very quickly to ensure that essential workers have access to a paid sick day regime.

As we said, we were very disappointed on Monday that the federal government did not honour the commitment that we thought we had in place to supplement paid sick days, to fill in some of those gaps that had become very clear as a third wave started hitting across Canada, every province in the country—and some of the things that we saw, of course, in Europe, Germany, France and a number of other jurisdictions that had been in a third wave before us.

We are working very diligently to ensure that a very comprehensive paid sick day program comes forward for the workers of the province of Ontario.

Just the other day, I was speaking to a good friend of mine, Mr. Baljit Sierra, who I referenced the other day in the House. He talked to me about how hard his workers have been working. He, of course, does provide sick pay benefits for his workers. He gave us some great suggestions.

Very soon, we're going to be bringing forward a very comprehensive plan to cover the gaps in the federal system.

#### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**Ms. Sara Singh:** My question is for the Deputy Premier.

Yesterday, Peel's chief medical officer revealed that Brampton's positivity rate has reached a staggering 22.4%. That means that one in every five COVID-19 tests is coming back positive. Dr. Loh said that community members who come into contact with one another should just "assume that they might have COVID."

Speaker, the Premier let the pandemic completely go unchecked in Brampton. They failed to provide equitable distribution of vaccines to our community, they didn't protect essential workers with paid sick days, and now community members and front-line workers are at more risk than ever. The COVID-19 crisis has reached unthinkable levels in our community.

Why is the Premier ignoring our pleas for help in Brampton?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** We have been providing the communities across the province of Ontario—all 34 public health units—with an equitable distribution of vaccines based on population, also based on risk.

Peel region definitely has a higher level of risk—we certainly recognize that—as does Toronto. That's why we have been expanding the solution for Brampton, particularly, by taking 25% of all of the vaccines that are coming in in the future, going to hot spots in the province of Ontario.

There are 11 postal codes in Brampton that have been identified as hot spots, and extra vaccines will be going there. We also have a variety of distribution channels. Speaker, I would say that William Osler has the Brampton Civic Hospital, the Chinguacousy Wellness Centre; Trillium Health Partners has Mississauga Hospital, University of Toronto Mississauga. There are 18 hot spots pop-ups in Brampton and Peel. There are 61 pharmacies in Brampton

right now that are administering vaccines. So Brampton will be getting an extra number of vaccines, and we'll have those available in a variety of locations.

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

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Speaker, what the government is allocating—25% of the vaccines—is still well below the 50% that the science table recommends. So I can appreciate what the Minister of Health is trying to say here, but we're still not getting our fair share.

Brampton is a city full of essential workers who have to show up to work so that other people can stay home. It's bad enough that the Premier refused to provide them with paid sick days, but now he's refusing to provide access to vaccines that our community desperately needs.

Yesterday, Mayor Brown had to make a public plea, begging for the Premier to expand vaccine access in our community, because case counts and hospitalizations are continuing to rise.

Speaker, we are experiencing some of the highest positivity rates in the province—nearly double what Toronto is experiencing. Why do our mayor and community members still have to continue to beg this government for assistance for vaccines? And what is this government going to do to help make sure that Bramptonians will get through this next wave?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Our government already recognizes that there are concerns in Peel region, and Brampton in particular. That is why we are concentrating an extra level of vaccines to be delivered to Brampton. There are 11 hot spots that have been identified in that area. We are providing extra vaccines there.

It's also important to note that in addition to the pharmacies that are providing them—61 pharmacies in Brampton—we've also worked with Shoppers Drug Mart for 20 locations to have 24/7 availability of vaccines to make it convenient for people to come in whenever they are able to, knowing that many people are working during the day and have to go to work. There are 20 locations that are offering these 24/7 vaccine clinics, and six of those 20 are going to be active in Brampton. We recognize the difficulties there. We are sending more vaccines there, and we are making them more available.

#### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** My question is to the Minister of Health and Deputy Premier. Mr. Speaker, my constituents, like all Ontarians, are anxious to get their COVID-19 vaccinations. I hear from so many constituents who say that vaccination is the one hope they have been waiting for and the first step to returning to a somewhat normal life. My constituents also tell me they just want to feel safe when going out to do everyday things, like grab a coffee or get some groceries.

Can the Minister of Health tell this House what our government is doing to expand vaccinations across the province and help more Ontarians feel that sense of relief?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you to my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton for that important question. As we know, Ontarians are anxious to get their vaccines, and we are anxious to get them to them. That's why, this week, under the guidance of Health Canada, we announced that we were going to extend vaccine eligibility for the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at pharmacies and primary care settings to individuals over the age of 40. By doing so, we're able to offer the protection of the vaccine to more Ontarians earlier than anticipated.

With the supply of AstraZeneca available at this time, this expansion significantly increased access to vaccines in hot-spot communities. In fact, yesterday, our pharmacies had a record-breaking day by vaccinating over 135,000 Ontarians with their first shot. We will continue to work with all of our partners to ensure that everyone who wants a vaccine will get a vaccine as soon as possible.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I know my constituents are also thrilled to be able to access first doses and my pharmacists are happy to support our mass vaccination program.

Mr. Speaker, like everyone else in this province, I've heard concerns about supply issues with the COVID-19 vaccines. Can the minister update this House on the progress of our provincial vaccination campaign?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you again for that question. In addition to yesterday's record-breaking pharmacy numbers, we also hit a record for the total number of doses administered in a day by vaccinating over 130,000 people. This means that we have now administered over 4.2 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccination. Although we have faced vaccine shortages from the federal government, we are working with all partners to get as many vaccines into arms as possible.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report to the House that we are on track to vaccinate 40% of adult Ontarians with their first dose by the end of this month.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** My question is to the Premier. We never should have gotten to this point where critical care triage becomes a possibility, but the government's choice to put politics before public health has brought ICUs to the breaking point. In Ontario, we have seen again and again that anti-Indigenous bias, anti-Indigenous racism is systemic in our health care. We are often scared to get medical care we need because of racism.

What protections are in place to ensure Indigenous and other racialized patients don't get wrongly triaged as a lower priority for intensive care when needed?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I thank the member very much for the question. There has been no triage protocol that has been activated in Ontario as yet. What we are doing is building capacity in our hospitals so that anyone who needs to be in intensive care will have a space.

But I can also advise the member that Chief RoseAnne Archibald is a member of our vaccine task force. She has been a very ardent member in favour of making sure that First Nations people have their vaccines as soon as possible. That is why we implemented Operation Remote Immunity, working with Dr. Tien of Ornge to make sure—recognizing the vulnerability of many First Nations people to COVID-19—that they were amongst the first to receive their shots. We are looking at second doses now.

1100

Again, I can advise that Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald is a very valued and respected member of the vaccine task force. We are listening to her issues and concerns on a daily basis. As a matter of fact, we had this conversation with her last evening.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Back to the Deputy Premier: Workplace conditions and the lack of paid sick days are driving essential workers, who are often racialized people, into intensive care units. I know the ICUs are full of Black, brown, Asian and Indigenous people—essential workers. They are in the line of fire.

That means, once again, racialized people are the ones who are disproportionately impacted by physicians deciding who does and doesn't get life support.

What urgent measures is your government taking so no one is given the power to decide who gets what precious medical resources, and who does not?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you again for the question. Again, I will reiterate that no triage protocol has been initiated in Ontario. Everyone is receiving excellent care. We are making sure that there is no discrimination, there is no bias—there's nothing there. We have worked with our vaccine task force. We have bioethicists at the table. We have, as I told you, Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald.

We are making sure that every person in Ontario who needs care will get the care that they require. That is why we are building capacity in our hospitals. To make sure that we have that capacity, we are transferring some patients from one hospital to another, because we are looking at our entire hospital system as one system, and we are using every resource available within that system to care for anyone who needs to be in intensive care.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mme Lucille Collard:** My question is for the Minister of Health. The third wave has put us in the middle of a historic health care system crisis. Yesterday, there were 72 new admissions to critical care units. This week, we've learned that the government has ignored countless recommendations from the COVID-19 science table. The government failed to properly implement the six recommendations that experts believe will help us through this, and they further announced new restrictions that the science table has explicitly said won't work. The government also ignored the advisory group's recommendation regarding the allotment of vaccines to hot-spot regions.

So my question is, if the government is not following science, can the minister explain to Ontarians what process it follows in making decisions about their safety?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I thank the member for the question. We have been following the recommendations of our medical advisers since the beginning of this pandemic: Dr. Williams, the health prevention table group, as well as the science advisory table. We have taken their advice in terms of the recommendations to bring in the emergency brake, to bring in the stay-at-home order, to increase capacity in our hospitals.

We also received some modelling from them with respect to what would be the difference if we increased vaccine allocation into the hot-spot communities. We looked at several different scenarios. We have decided to increase to 25% of all of the vaccines that are coming in, as we receive increasing supply very shortly, to go into those hot-spot areas, because we have been advised by the medical experts that if we do that, we will be able to reduce transmission more quickly. That will benefit all of the people across Ontario. It will also reduce hospitalizations, intensive care admissions, and prevent more deaths.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Again to the Minister of Health: I've said many times that the government is consistently failing to consult key players that could help in making effective and informed decisions. This week, Ottawa Public Health wrote a letter to the government to make specific requests about COVID-19 restrictions and enforcement. The board of health for the city of Ottawa health unit "approved a motion requesting time-sensitive actions in order to curb COVID-19 rates and transmission and lessen the burden on our health care sector." These specific requests are made with good intentions to help the government make better decisions.

Will the minister commit to take these immediate and decisive actions to protect the health of Ontario residents, as well as our health care sector's capacity to continue providing care to those who need it?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** What I can certainly advise the member is that we do listen to the advice and the issues that are raised to us by local regional medical officers of health, as well as Dr. Williams, who is in regular contact with them. We have also listened to the hospitals. We have listened to their concerns with respect to capacity. We have conversations with the vaccine task force, with the local medical officers of health and with the heads of the hospitals every two or three days.

So we are very cognizant of the issues that they're raising, of the requests that they have from us, particularly through the Ministry of Health. We've always listened to them since the beginning, and we will continue to listen to them, because they are the ones that know the issues in their local geographic areas. They are the ones with the medical expertise, knowledge and judgment. Of course we rely on that to be able to make the decisions that we are making, to continue to pursue the health and safety of all of the people of Ontario. We rely on them for their expert advice and judgment, and we will continue to do so.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I'm proud of the work our government has done to ramp up vaccine access to Ontarians, and of course this includes giving priority access to education workers. Speaker, education workers are essential to keeping kids learning, which is critical for their development, both academically and socially, as well as for their mental health. We know getting our educators vaccinated is a key step that will help ensure a gradual return to normalcy for our students. With that in mind, can the Minister of Education share some more details about this accelerated plan to keep kids safe?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** There has been great progress in the province of Ontario, notwithstanding insufficiency of vaccine supply in Ontario. Yesterday we hit a new record of 136,000 doses administered. That is progress. I'm proud that many educators, those working with special education, those who live or work within a hot spot, are able to get access to the vaccine. I'm grateful for the leadership of the Solicitor General and the Minister of Health in working to get as many front-line workers those vaccines that they need.

I'm also grateful for the ongoing work being done to support front-line workers in the province. We extended emergency child care to them, given this period of remote learning closure, because we want them to know that, as the Premier has said, we have their back. We will care for their children as they have to report to work and do the really impossible work of keeping this province safe within our hospitals, those that work within our grocery stores, our police, our fire and paramedics and, of course, those supporting the vaccine rollout. We'll continue to be there for all parents, specifically those working within our front lines, and will continue to work very hard to get these vaccines to all front-line workers across Ontario.

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

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Speaker, through you: Prioritizing education workers for vaccines is an incredibly important step that we need to take to ensure that they are, of course, safe and protected.

We also know how important it is to be there for Ontario families. While shifting to remote learning was necessary given the spike in community cases, it nonetheless poses a challenge for moms and dads, including my own family. We all know the importance of safe and accessible child care, most importantly for our brave front-line workers, who depend on it so they can continue to perform their critical work. I'm proud that our government is once again providing emergency child care for these workers. Still, it can be a struggle for parents to keep up with the cost of living while trying to support their children's education amid the stress of this pandemic.

Can the Minister of Education please share with this Legislature what efforts are being taken to support parents at this time?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** In addition to the work being done to support reducing child care costs in the budget, the Minister of Finance confirmed that there's a 20% top-up

for the child care tax credit. That's going to save an average family \$1,500. It's going to make a difference.

In addition, to all families out there, for children aged zero up to grade 12, province-wide, they will be receiving a cheque of \$400 per child within the province of Ontario. And I'm proud: Effective this coming Monday, April 26, for all Ontarians who've applied before, they need not apply again. They will automatically start to receive those cheques within their accounts, which will make the system more seamless, and really at a critical time while their kids are home. For those who have not applied in the past, you will be able to apply effective May 3 to 17. This is part of a broader plan: roughly \$2 billion in direct financial support in the pockets of parents, where we believe it belongs.

We'll continue to do everything we can to support families through this difficult time.

1110

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This morning, CBC is reporting that the Attorney General warned the Premier that his plan to expand police powers was unconstitutional, but the rest of the cabinet decided to ignore him. Yesterday, the Solicitor General refused to answer this exact question from reporters.

My question, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Solicitor General: Did you know this was unconstitutional, yes or no?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** When we introduced the regulatory piece on Friday, we didn't actually accurately capture our intention, and that was the importance for all Ontarians to respect the stay-at-home order and stop the spread of COVID-19.

Although the vast majority of Ontarians have respected the public health measures put in place, individuals continue to put others at risk by gathering with those outside their household—which is why we rescoped regulation 8/21 to make sure that the focus was ensuring police and bylaw enforcement officers had the enforcement tools necessary to enforce the order so that people stopped gathering outside and in large gatherings, which is, as we all know, the cause of the variants of concern spreading so quickly through our communities.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Here's the thing: Not only did the Solicitor General and the Premier ignore warnings from the government's top lawyers and from their own fellow cabinet ministers around the table, we also learned that the people responsible for this half-baked, unconstitutional and outright ridiculous plan to make things worse for Ontarians were party-insider-turned-lobbyist Kory Teneycke and the Premier's personal pollster, Nick Kouvalis. Surprise, surprise, Speaker: The same two concocted that hare-brained scheme to tape off parks and picnic tables and turn playtime into criminal activity.

My question, Mr. Speaker, again through you to the Solicitor General: Why, when thousands of Ontarians are

barely hanging on in ICUs across this province and more and more are getting sick every day, are you taking advice from the Premier's buddies instead of doctors, nurses and health experts?

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order.

The Solicitor General to reply.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** The science table and medical experts have told us that actually limiting movement does improve our outcomes in terms of tamping down and ensuring that the variants of concern do not continue to transfer and transmit. It's pretty clear, in the last number of months, that those variants of concern are far more deadly, are far more easily transmitted and, ultimately, are leading to ICU bed capacities.

Our priority has always been to address and discourage gatherings and crowds that violate that stay-at-home order. We have to do these things in order to protect people. I'm frankly shocked that the members opposite don't understand how critically important it is for people to follow the rules so that we can protect—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Davenport, come to order. The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, come to order. The Minister of Natural Resources, come to order. The member for Don Valley East, come to order. The member for York Centre, come to order.

The next question.

#### EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** My question is to the Premier. Paid sick leave is one of the most urgent concerns right now. This morning, we learned from a CBC story that after hours of debate in cabinet last week, the government determined no additional restrictions were required. Then hours later, all of a sudden, the government changed its mind and brought through rushed, ill-conceived measures because pollsters told them the decision wouldn't fly.

It's because of accounts like this that no one has faith in this government anymore. Now, the Premier comes out, just an hour ago, and says that he's working on a plan. Mr. Speaker, where is this plan? Will this plan include paid sick days, and will this plan be ready on time?

My question back to the Premier is: Does this government need to conduct another poll to tell it how to build a program for paid sick days here in Ontario to protect the lives of Ontarians?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Of course, as I've said on a number of occasions, we were expecting improvements to the federal program in Monday's budget. That didn't materialize as we were promised, so we are moving very quickly to ensure that there is a program in place for hard-working essential workers across this province, who have

really played a heroic role in making sure that this province continues to not only keep the economy going but to help us get past this pandemic once and for all. Of course, as the Premier has said on a number of occasions, as all of this caucus has been working, we're going to have the backs of essential workers in this province of Ontario, like we have right from the beginning.

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

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** It really shouldn't take polling and a week of public anger and sadness to get the Premier and this government to take ownership. There's no excuse for months of inaction by this government. It should have been yesterday. It should have been a year ago.

In fact, this very afternoon, I have a bill coming before the Legislature, Bill 247, that is asking for 10 paid sick days, so this government can make a decision. Speaker, through you to the minister, since they haven't put anything on the table at this point, will they commit to the legislation that's being brought forward today to provide 10 paid sick days to all Ontarians?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, of course, the member opposite has chosen to leave his seat and abandon the people of his riding so that he can seek office somewhere else, which means that even if his bill was passed, it would die in the Legislature because he is not here to support that bill. So we will not—

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Don Valley East will take his seat.

The government House leader will conclude his response.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** So even if the bill was to pass, of course, it would not have life after the member left the chamber. What we will do instead is bring forward a very comprehensive program—

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Pass it today.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Don Valley East will come to order.

The next question.

#### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Speaker, to you and through you to the government House leader: My constituents, government House leader, are hearing about shortages in Ontario's vaccine supply, and they're very worried. They're seeing great progress all across this province, but they want to see a ramp up, not a ramp back down.

Can the government tell this House what they're doing to ensure our vaccine rollout continues to be the most successful in Canada?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I appreciate the member for Sarnia-Lambton for that question. He's a tireless worker on behalf of his constituents, Mr. Speaker, as you know.

We continue to ramp up capacity and expand our vaccine rollout to additional age groups and locations. Our greatest challenge remains, of course, a stable and reliable supply of vaccines from the federal government. For

example, our next shipment of nearly 500,000 doses of Moderna was due to be received on April 19 and has now been delayed until the week of May 3. Also, the shipment is going to be reduced to 235,000 doses, not the 500,000 that we were expecting.

An additional shipment of the AstraZeneca vaccine has also not come in. We were expecting it in mid-April. It has now been delayed until May—this coming at the same time that we are expanding the rollout into pharmacies across the province, expanding them to well over 1,400. The delay in vaccine shipments from the federal government will obviously cause a delay in getting these vaccines into people's arms. We need the government to be more—

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Speaker, through you to the member, I thank him for that answer. I'm happy to hear that despite the supply issues from the federal government, we are still on track to have an incredibly successful COVID-19 vaccine campaign. By building our vaccination system now, I know when the supply does become available, we'll be ready to go.

Can the minister please update the House on the following?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Despite the challenges that we've been having with vaccine supply and the promises that have not materialized from the federal government—and I will say, it's not always their fault, Mr. Speaker. But the challenges that we have when the federal government is unable to supply us with the vaccines promised—as you can see, it will have an impact on our delivery to our pharmacy partners and to our other partners across the province and the 34 public health units.

#### 1120

But despite that, we've had over 4.2 million doses administered into the arms of the people of the province of Ontario. Yesterday, over 130,000 vaccinations were completed in the province of Ontario, working with our public health partners across this province. I am told that fully 94% of long-term-care residents have been vaccinated, and 90% of people over the age of 80, Mr. Speaker. I can't tell you how happy my father-in-law was. I didn't know he was doing it, but he went out and got his own vaccine appointment—92 years old. At the Stouffville vaccine clinic, the drive-through being done by local physicians is at capacity.

We just need to ensure that we keep getting those vaccines. Progress is being made. I'm proud of what the people of the province of Ontario are doing, and we're here to support them.

#### COMMERCIAL INSURANCE

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** My question is to the Premier. Insurance premiums are killing businesses left and right in Ontario. Small trucking businesses in northern Ontario and across the province are facing brutal insurance costs, a shortage of drivers, and many of them are choosing to

leave the business. John Grégoire from my riding in Algoma-Manitoulin informed me that after changing his truck, his insurance went up from \$10,000 to \$35,000 per year. He had no choice but to go work for another company.

Will the government support my colleague the MPP for Mushkegowuk–James Bay's motion, calling on them to commit to a truck owner strategy to tackle the truck driver shortage and the increasing truck insurance costs hurting truck operators across this province?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Willowdale.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It's certainly been a very difficult time. Market conditions that exist for commercial insurance have provided challenges for businesses throughout Ontario, throughout the pandemic.

We are pleased that the Insurance Bureau of Canada and its members have launched a new business insurance action team to help find viable insurance solutions for small businesses in Ontario's many sectors, including our trucking sector. I appreciate that there are unique challenges in different parts of this province, and I'm willing to work with the member opposite to help John find a solution. He knows that in that spirit of co-operation we have collaborated in the past, and so if he wants to present the details of that particular case, I am happy to listen to them.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Algoma-Manitoulin: supplementary.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Again to the Premier: Insurance premiums are also hitting the tourism industry hard. Many businesses are forced to close or simply do not have the customers to stay afloat because people cannot travel. But regardless of their situation, they still have to pay liability insurance. Many of them have lost 90% of their clientele and revenues, but costly insurance expenses just keep adding up, and they're increasing debt every month.

Will this government help struggling tourism-based businesses with their insurance liability payments and their increasing debt, or will they just simply continue to let the industry suffer?

**Mr. Stan Cho:** This is a challenging situation for the tourism sector, as well. Of course, commercial insurance rates—challenging market conditions are provided for that sector also. I encourage those in Algoma-Manitoulin and throughout the province to go to [businessinsurancehelp.ca](http://businessinsurancehelp.ca) to see some other solutions that have been provided, put forward by the many insurance companies in Ontario.

But I also want to remind the member that there has been \$624 million announced in additional supports in our recent budget to help the tourism sector, including a grant program for those in the tourism and accommodations sector, recognizing that that industry has indeed been hit very, very hard.

To the member opposite, who I respect very much, and to all NDP members, I hope that in third reading of this budget—it's never too late to do the right thing—please, let's vote in favour of getting these supports out to the

tourism sector that has been hit hard. Let's support these small businesses in Ontario until COVID-19 is far behind us.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Roman Baber:** My question is to the Minister of Health—and it's with respect to ICU capacity, so hopefully she won't talk about last year's 3,100 acute beds again.

A few days ago, we heard an astonishing revelation from the health minister: In the entire year since the pandemic began, despite all threats of our ICUs being overwhelmed, our provincial ICU capacity had only been increased by 14%. Why, when space is ample, when most of Ontario's ICU-trained doctors are underemployed or don't have full-time work, when she was firing nurses in her own riding of Newmarket last September, when it only takes four months to train a nurse to become an ICU nurse? In a pandemic year, they only increased ICU capacity by 14%.

What is the minister's excuse for this ineptitude?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I recognize that we are in a difficult situation with our ICUs right now.

We have increased—the 3,100 beds that you don't want me to speak about, but that's really important—

**Mr. Roman Baber:** That's not ICU beds.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for York Centre is warned. If I have to speak to you again, you will be named.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order.

The Minister of Health to reply.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** It is equivalent to the size of six community hospitals.

Building the intensive care capacity by 14% is a significant increase—over 285 beds. We are also building the field hospitals at Sunnybrook and Hamilton.

What the member might not appreciate is the fact that we also need the health human resources. That has been one of the biggest limiting factors.

We have been moving forward. We have brought in the nursing extern program, which is now going to bring in another 3,200 people, with nurses, respiratory therapists and others to add to the mix.

There are those two components: the building of the beds and having the people to be able to operate them. We're working on developing both.

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

**Mr. Roman Baber:** Speaker, according to Critical Care Services Ontario, last night the province of Ontario had 1,975 patients in ICUs. The province of Ontario has 2,412 ICU beds. Divide 1,975 by 2,412 and you get under 82% ICU occupancy. Only 82% of the province's ICU beds are occupied. That's better than in the last four years. Yes, three or four GTA hospitals are at capacity. That's nothing new; that's hallway health care. And sure, we're

transferring patients between hospitals—it's called management. That's why they have 6,000 employees at the Ministry of Health.

So why is this minister locking down the entire province, ordering us to stay at home and keeping kids out of school under threat of the province's ICUs being overwhelmed, when the provincial ICU occupancy is under 82%, or better than in the last four years?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** In fact, the ICU capacity is stretched to the limit right at the moment. It is much higher than 82% in many, many parts of the province, especially in the hot-spot areas. That's why we have taken the steps that we have with the emergency orders that we have, with the reduction of the scheduled surgeries—I won't call them elective surgeries, because they were scheduled surgeries. I know that's disappointing to many people, and we want to get back to that as soon as possible. That's why we've also been deploying extra staff from Ontario Health, from the former LHINs. We are looking at other areas where we can deploy more staff. That's why we've had to do the patient transfers, as well.

What we are trying to do is to use all elements of our health care system, looking at it as one system right now, to make sure that every possible space that we can use in our hospitals is going to be available for people who need them.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. Speaker, five months ago, I tabled my bill to bring paid sick days to Ontario workers. On March 1, with the disastrous third-wave modelling projections already known, this government voted against it. They said Ontario couldn't afford it, that paid sick days weren't necessary, that it would be a duplication, that it was double-dipping.

We are in some of the darkest, deadliest days of the pandemic, and things keep getting worse for essential workers.

Why did this government stubbornly refuse for months to introduce paid sick days? Why did it ignore urgent pleas from municipalities, health care professionals, business and labour advocates and, as we found out this morning, 83% of Ontarians, who all understand that provincial paid sick days are the right thing for Ontario workers?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** As I've said on numerous occasions, we are bringing forward a very comprehensive plan, following the disappointment of Monday's federal budget, which did not enact some of the things that we were expecting with respect to improvements to the federal paid sick days program. Of course, this was the initial program, which was a program negotiated by a number of the Premiers, which provided pay for many workers. It needs to be improved and that's what we are doing.

But by the same token, I would ask the member opposite if she could help us. The sick pay benefit that was

negotiated in the first place, of course, was contingent on the support of the federal NDP. They thought it was a great program that was put in place and that's why they supported the federal government.

1130

We have been working with the federal government to improve that program. They didn't come through on Monday. That's why the Premier and this government will move quickly to ensure that those holes that we've identified for a number of months are filled and that our essential workers are protected, as we have been doing since the beginning.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Last summer, the Premier did all he could to derail the very federal program that his government later defended as all that workers needed. He said bluntly, "I don't support it. We have legislation that protects jobs that people ... if they don't feel safe, they don't have to go to work."

The Premier fought the federal program until it became a condition for federal restart dollars. He then tried to take credit for it and spent months attacking anyone who pointed out its shortcomings.

We understand that he has now had an eleventh hour change of heart. Speaker, can he guarantee that Ontario workers will get the paid sick days program that they need to reduce the spread of this virus?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes, of course, Mr. Speaker. We have been saying throughout the week how disappointed we were that the federal budget—a budget that was delayed by two years and that had some \$20 billion of unspent COVID-19 pandemic supports that did not go utilized. We said we were disappointed. We thought there were going to be improvements in that budget. That's why I'm so surprised to see that the federal NDP are going to continue to support that budget.

But because of the failure of the federal government to improve it, we are going to move quickly to ensure that our essential workers, whether they're in Brampton or Markham and across this province, who have worked so hard to keep our economy going to ensure that the people of the province of Ontario had all the products they needed—we're going to work really quickly to ensure that they're protected, despite the fact that the federal government didn't step up the way we thought they would.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** My question is for the Deputy Premier. People are frustrated and angry because there seems to be a disconnect between the government's decisions and the science. This boiled over with the incomprehensible measures announced last Friday.

If we have any hope of getting ahead of this virus and saving people's lives, people need to be able to trust their government. People need to know that the government is

listening to, understands and is acting on the science. Speaker, I'm asking through you to the Deputy Premier: Will you commit today to publicly release all recommendations from the science advisory table—not just modelling data, but recommendations—before the government announces any new, or any, changes to public health measures?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I thank the member for the question. What I can advise is that this information is already available. We have regular modelling that is presented to us by the science advisory table. Dr. Brown and others come forward publicly to release this information as soon as it's available to indicate to members of the public and to the other members of this House exactly what they are seeing and what the recommendations are. This is available. This information is registered on the website. Dr. Brown is available to answer any questions. Members of the science advisory table have already come out with their own views about issues as well. There is no gag order they have to sign. They are free to talk about their recommendations, and they are already doing that.

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

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I realize this is called question period and not answer period, but right now I think the people of Ontario need an answer.

On February 11, the chair of the science advisory table said that we were headed for a disaster if the government lifted restrictions. We're facing that disaster today. Last Friday, when we needed people to take public health measures seriously, people were just dumbfounded by what was announced. They were trying to say, "Is the government really following the science table's advice?"

That's why I'm asking, Speaker. I'm asking because we need everybody in this province right now, at this critical moment, to work together, and that requires trust and confidence.

The people of Ontario need to know. Through you, Speaker, to the Deputy Premier: The modelling data, we know, is released, but will you please release the science table's recommendations so people know, that they have confidence, the government is following those recommendations?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** This information is already available. The science advisory table, as you know, issued a document several days ago that contained their recommendations. I'm not sure what else the member would like to have released, but that is what was released.

We have been following the recommendations. We have been told that we need to limit mobility, because that is how this is being transmitted. We are doing that with our stay-at-home order and with the other orders that we brought forward. We have been told that we need to build our hospital capacity. We are doing exactly that, including with our intensive care beds. We have been told that we need to use the system as a whole. We are doing that with the order of transferring patients from one location to another and using the entire system as a whole. The science advisory table is providing recommendations that we have been following.

Do we follow every single thing that every single medical expert advises us to do? That is our responsibility, as government, to make some of those decisions. But we are following the advice that we are receiving from Dr. Williams, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and the public health measures table, the science advisory table—

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

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This question is for the Deputy Premier. Speaker, the Canadian Paediatric Society has written to the Premier to raise real concerns about the devastating impact this pandemic is having on children and youth. Their letter echoes the concerns that we have been raising on this side of the House since this pandemic began, and they're asking the questions that parents across this province have.

Speaker, students province-wide are back at home in emergency remote learning this week after this government failed to make schools safe, after this Minister of Education sent a memo around 24 hours earlier saying, "Don't worry, everything is okay."

They failed to deliver small class sizes. They failed to deliver comprehensive in-school testing. They dragged their feet on prioritizing teachers and education workers for vaccination, and their only plan to help our kids, after nearly two years of disrupted learning, is summer school—summer school, Speaker. Instead of charting a path forward with a recovery that centres our children and youth, the Minister of Education is—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. To reply—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Davenport will take her seat.

To reply, the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Mr. Speaker, the pessimism of the member opposite is not going to get us through this pandemic.

What we need is a united resolve to overcome the challenge. It's why the Premier announced a plan of \$1.6 billion in schools, upgrading 96% of air ventilation systems within the province; 7,000 more teachers hired; and hundreds of mental health supports extended, the single largest investment in mental health, \$52 million, for children facing adversity as a consequence of being home.

What the member leaves out in her question is, if it was left up to the New Democrats and Liberals, they would have kept schools closed in all of 2021—that just is the truth—exacerbating the mental health challenges. That is a fact.

The members on this side of the House and our Premier know that children are best to be in schools. We are working hard with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to do that, realizing that we've taken action province-wide to reduce transmission in the community, to get our kids back—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you.  
Question period has concluded. This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.*

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2021

### LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Dave Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 281, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 281, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the member for Peterborough–Kawartha care to explain his bill?

**Mr. Dave Smith:** The Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry) currently is available to law enforcement agencies only. This would open it up to companion agencies to help in the fight against sexual assault and human trafficking.

I fully support it. I'm going to sign it and make sure it gets down to the table.

## RED TAPE REDUCTION

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for government to modernize regulations and reduce regulatory roadblocks on people and businesses; and

"Whereas to plan for economic recovery Ontario must spark competitiveness, support businesses, and deliver clear and effective rules to protect our environment and keep Ontario workers and families safe and healthy;

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

"Pass Bill 276, the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, 2021, so that:

"(1) Ontario continues to improve its regulatory framework, which will give our businesses and communities the support they need during COVID-19 and beyond, and is critical to making Ontario work better for people and businesses alike;

"(2) Ontario modernizes by bringing more processes and services online, including developing new applications that will allow online sticker renewal for heavy commercial vehicle licence plates in mid-2022;

"(3) Ontario support the not-for-profit sector and other corporations by allowing them to continue to hold virtual meetings during the pandemic."

I agree with this, Mr. Speaker, and will affix my signature.

## PETITIONS

### VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Good afternoon, Speaker. I have a petition entitled "Recognize Our Cadets by Passing the Cadet Citizenship Recognition Act, 2020.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas army, sea and air cadets are some of the best of our youth; and

"Whereas the young men and women of Canada's cadets volunteer and serve their communities with honour and distinction; and

"Whereas their development and service within our community are admirable and should be emulated; and

"Whereas their teamwork, dedication, and discipline are qualities worthy of recognition; and

"Whereas the Cadet Citizenship Recognition Act, if passed, would create an annual award for a nominated cadet from within each local cadet corps to celebrate their remarkable acts of citizenship;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario vote on and pass the Cadet Citizenship Recognition Act."

## 2021 ONTARIO BUDGET

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** The petition I'm about to read is entitled, "Immediately Pass Ontario's 2021 Budget, Protecting People's Health and Our Economy.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario does not have to choose between a healthy economy and healthy communities; and

"Whereas the reality is you cannot have a healthy economy without healthy people; and

"Whereas Ontario's budget, if passed, will bring total investments to protect people's health to \$13.3 billion; and

"Whereas, if passed, the budget would bring the total investment into the economy to \$23.3 billion; and

"Whereas the budget would invest an additional \$1.8 billion to build more beds, increase care for COVID patients and reduce surgical backlogs, bringing the total to \$5.1 billion; and

"Whereas to finally fix the long-term-care system, \$7.5 billion will create 30,000 new beds, improve care, and hire 27,000 new nurses and personal support workers; and

"Whereas the 2021 budget would double the Small Business Support Grant to \$1.7 billion, benefitting over 120,000 Ontario businesses;

“Whereas the new Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit would support the training of more than 230,000 people;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario vote on and pass Bill 269, Protecting the People of Ontario Act, 2021.”

I fully agree with this, will affix my signature and give it to the page.

#### CAREGIVERS

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I have a petition that’s entitled “Stop Banning Concerned Family Members Visiting Seniors and People with Disabilities.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas some retirement homes, group homes and long-term-care operators have banned family members from visiting using the Trespass to Property Act;

“Whereas these bans have been issued when family members have raised concerns about their loved ones’ living conditions;

“Whereas it’s cruel and unfair to punish seniors, people with disabilities and their loved ones for speaking out on their behalf;

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

“The Ford government should provide clear direction to operators that the Trespass to Property Act does not permit them to issue trespass notices to exclude substitute decision-makers and guests of the occupants of retirement homes, long-term-care homes and other congregate care accommodations when they raise concerns about their loved ones’ living conditions.”

I’m happy to present this today. I’ll sign it and send it to the Clerks’ table.

#### FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and give it to the usher for the table.

#### SCHOOL FACILITIES

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Mr. Speaker, good afternoon. I’m very pleased to present this petition on behalf of Adelina da Silva, a resident of my riding.

“Fund Our Schools

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas too many children are going to school in buildings without proper heating or cooling, with leaky roofs or stairways overdue for repair;

“Whereas after years of Conservative and Liberal governments neglecting schools, the backlog of needed repairs has reached \$16 billion”—it’s \$16.3 billion now;

“Whereas during the 2018 election, numerous members of the Conservative Party, including the current Minister of Education, pledged to provide adequate, stable funding for Ontario’s schools;

“Whereas less than three weeks into the legislative session, Doug Ford and the Conservative government have already cut \$100 million in much-needed school repairs, leaving our children and educators to suffer in classrooms that are unsafe and unhealthy;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Education to immediately reverse the decision to cut \$100 million in school repair funding, and invest the \$16 billion needed to tackle the repair backlog in Ontario’s schools.”

#### 1310

I support this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I’m going to affix my signature and table it with the Clerks.

#### BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** I have a petition with regard to supporting broadband infrastructure.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas now, more than ever, we need an Ontario-made plan to help build infrastructure faster, strengthen our communities and lay the foundation for growth, renewal and long-term economic recovery; and

“Whereas as the province recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ontario government is taking action to remove barriers to help build better infrastructure faster and strengthen communities, while laying the foundation for future growth, renewal and long-term economic recovery; and

“Whereas COVID-19 has made reliable broadband access even more critical for families and individuals across Ontario to work from home, learn online and access essential services; and

“Whereas by removing these barriers, more Ontarians will be able to access reliable broadband sooner;

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

“Take action to remove barriers and help expand access to broadband service to unserved and underserved communities across the province by passing Bill 257, Supporting Broadband and Infrastructure Expansion Act, 2021.”

I strongly support this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to the usher.

#### TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I'm very pleased to present this petition on behalf of my constituent Rachel Young.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the TTC has owned, operated and maintained Toronto's public transit system since 1921; and

"Whereas the people of Toronto have paid for the TTC at the fare box and through their property taxes; and

"Whereas breaking up the subway will mean higher fares, reduced service and less say for transit riders; and

"Whereas the TTC is accountable to the people of Toronto because elected Toronto city councillors sit on its board;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Reject legislation that allows for the breakup and sell-off of any aspect of the TTC to the province of Ontario, and reject the privatization or contracting out of any part of the TTC;

"Match the city of Toronto's financial contribution to the TTC so transit riders can have improved service and affordable fares."

I'm very pleased to affix my signature. I fully support this petition, and I'll table it with the Clerks.

#### FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I have a lot of petitions. It's exciting.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to present this petition on behalf of Helena Coura, who presented it to me. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Do Not Cut Education Funding. Fully Fund the Equitable Education System Children, Families, and Education Workers Deserve.

"Whereas since July 2018 the Ontario provincial government has cut millions of dollars from public education funding including: \$100 million in funding allocated for school repairs; cancelled curriculum writing sessions to incorporate Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission into school curriculum; removed the 2015 health and physical education curriculum from kindergarten to grade 8, reverting to the 2010 version; launched a web-based 'snitch line' for parents to report on teachers they suspect are not following the outdated curriculum; cut education programs by (EPO) for at-risk youth, including Indigenous and racialized students by \$25 million; cut funding for autistic children and students; and

"Whereas the Ontario provincial government has announced a hiring freeze and significant class size increases from grades 4 to 12, mandatory e-learning and other detrimental changes to our public education system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose these damaging cuts and implement:

"—a fully funded public education system that includes low class caps, excellent needs support, no mandatory e-learning and well-maintained buildings;

"—funding that provides equitable enrichment opportunities across the system and reduces the burden on school-based fundraising;

"—an inclusive curriculum and respect for the diversity of our students and educators."

It's a very well-written petition, Mr. Speaker. I'm very supportive of this, and I'm pleased to affix my signature and table it with the Clerks.

#### ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE

**M. Michael Mantha:** Une pétition reçue du groupe RÉFO, Regroupement étudiant franco-ontarien :

« Pour une université de la langue française dans le nord-est de l'Ontario.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Alors que l'Université Laurentienne a annoncé, le 12 avril 2021, son plan de restructuration, qui incluait la fermeture de 69 programmes (dont 28 programmes francophones), la dissolution de la Fédération laurentienne, et la mise à pied de plus de 100 professeur(e)s, et que ces annonces ont un effet dévastateur aux niveaux social, économique, et humain pour la communauté francophone du Moyen-Nord;

« Alors que la communauté franco-ontarienne exige des institutions postsecondaires de langue française depuis les années 1960, et que les manifestations du 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2018 ont montré l'engagement et la volonté d'avoir des institutions postsecondaires gérées par, pour, et avec la communauté francophone;

« Alors que le 12 mars 2021, l'Université de Sudbury et l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario ont annoncé le souhait que l'Université de Sudbury devienne une université de langue française et laïque;

« Nous, soussignées, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario pour qu'elle entreprenne les actions suivantes :

« —assurer dans les plus brefs délais le rapatriement à l'Université de Sudbury de tous les programmes et les cours offerts en français, et le transfert de toutes les ressources matérielles, physiques, humaines et financières (incluant de façon non limitative les archives, bourses, dons et droit d'auteur) en lien avec l'offre de services en français et la programmation francophone de l'Université Laurentienne, disponibles et offerts en date du 9 avril 2021;

« —mettre en place un moratoire d'un an, renouvelable, sur tous les programmes francophones de l'Université Laurentienne et de ses universités fédérées offerts en date du 9 avril 2021, afin d'assurer qu'ils puissent être offerts dans leur intégralité d'ici la fin de la transition des ressources et programmes francophones vers l'Université de Sudbury;

« —établir une commission de mise en oeuvre qui sera chargée d'assurer le transfert des programmes vers l'Université de Sudbury et d'appuyer cette dernière dans son développement, dans un contexte de pérennité de l'enseignement postsecondaire en français dans le nord de l'Ontario; laquelle considérera en priorité les besoins des étudiant(e)s francophones actuel(le)s et futur(e)s;

« —s'assurer, par tous les moyens, que les étudiant(e)s actuel(le)s des programmes francophones touchés par la restructuration de l'Université Laurentienne puissent obtenir un diplôme dans le programme au sein duquel ils/elles étaient inscrit(e)s en date du 9 avril 2021, sans cours ou coûts supplémentaires à ceux déjà prévus initialement. »

**1320**

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition et je la présente à la table des greffiers.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time we have available for petitions.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** On a point of order—

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, I'm just rising on a point of order on standing order number 59. As you know, standing order 59 outlines the business for the next week that we are here.

That will include, Monday morning, a private member's bill by the member for Waterloo, which is Bill 275, An Act to amend the Supply Chain Management Act. I'm looking forward to that bill. In the afternoon, Bill 276, the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, will be the feature of the day.

On Tuesday morning, Bill 265, the Executive Council Amendment Act—I again want to thank the opposition for the speedy passage of that. In the afternoon, we'll have Bill 251, Combating Human Trafficking Act, and then in the evening, a private member's bill by the member for Orléans, Bill 260, Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act.

On Wednesday morning, we'll have Bill 265, the Executive Council Amendment Act, and in the afternoon, opposition day motion number 5—again, I can confirm for the opposition that should their leader require us to delay it until 4:30, as she asked the other day, we can certainly, hopefully, accommodate her, but we'd like to start early—and a private member's bill, standing in the name of the member for Ajax, which is to be determined.

On Thursday morning, we'll have Bill 251, Combating Human Trafficking Act. In the afternoon, it will be a bill that is to be determined, but as we have been doing, we will reach out to the opposition over the weekend—I'm sure we'll read about it on Sunday. And we will have a private member's bill on Thursday, standing in the name of the member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay, private member's notice of motion number 150, which is on the trucking industry.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### PROTECTING THE PEOPLE OF ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2021

### LOI DE 2021 VISANT À PROTÉGER LA POPULATION ONTARIENNE (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 22, 2021, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 269, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 269, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Speaker, I don't have much time left, but where I wanted to end off this morning on my comments—as far as talking on small businesses and, in fact, to ramp up and ramp down—is the huge amount of cost that is imposed on them by lack of information, lack of notice. There are foods that are being ordered that have now gone to waste—because they were preparing to receive their clients. There are employees who travelled into these remote destinations, who now have to return home. There are resources. There are flights. There's just a whole bunch of costs. The fact that the government has now looked at expanding and providing some funding to some of those tourist outfitters—in reality, the amount that they're going to be eligible for is peanuts. It's like grabbing pennies to pay dollars. That's the point that I was trying to finish off with this morning—the impacts by the

lack of information that was provided to small businesses, on the notices.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Questions to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I appreciate the opportunity to ask my good friend from Algoma-Manitoulin some questions. I certainly enjoy spending as much time as I can with him, and I will certainly enjoy the next number of weeks in the House doing just the same.

I'm just a little concerned, because I heard the member talking about some of the things that he had disagreed with in the budget—and I know a number of other members have raised the point with respect to the lack of amendments that were brought forward by the official opposition and the lack of witnesses brought forward at committee, which I found somewhat strange.

Having said that, I wonder if he could talk about why the lack of amendments in the budget—and if he could specifically talk about what types of funds he is looking for with respect to the tourism operators in his riding. What's the range of funding that he thinks would be appropriate?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I want to thank my esteemed colleague for having this chat. I, too, look forward to the very many weeks to come and to working together to really get this Legislature to work forward and move the issues that are important to Ontarians.

What I do want to remind the member of is that we are talking about Bill 269, which is a collection of basically 10 little schedules that don't contain a lot of meat inside them; they don't substantially do anything.

I think you've heard from our side that on many occasions, we have come to committee with very specific amendments that would improve several pieces of legislation and private members' bills that the government has put forward. On each and every one of those occasions, very little, if any, of our amendments were ever accepted.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Questions?

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** My friend from Algoma-Manitoulin this morning mentioned two women in his riding, Laura and Michel. One runs a restaurant where they have really good muffins, and the other is an outfitter who is facing exceptional challenges—as are all outfitters in the north—because of COVID-19 travel restrictions and associations.

My question to my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin—as he would say, my esteemed colleague: What more could the government be doing to look after the deep concerns that have been raised to him by Laura and Michel?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** From Laura's perspective, who is a small business owner of a small corner shop that provides some great food—it's actually the location where a lot of people go to gather and support themselves, as well—what could help her is a more expedited process of getting access to those funds. That's something that could really help her life.

As far as Michel Watson, who has the outfitter's post, what could help her is—first, having been eligible for the

initial small business supports that were announced at the beginning. But what would really help her out now are two things—one, there has got to be some type of communication, notification coming from this government when they're making the decisions, on how it impacts those businesses. There has got to be a recognition that they prepare to ramp up. They just can't turn on the switch and be ready the next morning. They actually have to put in their orders; they have to bring in their food; they have to fly in people. All of this stuff costs a lot of money, time, effort and investment.

In the grants that have been made available now and that should have been made available in the first round, as well—again, there are small amounts of dollars, and they need a larger amount of dollars in order to help with their costs.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Member for Flamborough-Glanbrook.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** As we heard earlier today from the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, there's a lot of investment in this budget for northern Ontario. We're going to see expanded mining opportunities, in terms of exploration. And of course, as I mentioned earlier, being a northerner and the daughter of a railroader, I was very excited to hear that we're going to be providing \$5 million to look at reopening the line to northern Ontario.

As a member from northern Ontario, from Algoma-Manitoulin, do you support the funding opportunities for northerners in this budget? If so, will you support the budget?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I want to thank the member for the question.

I want to remind this member again that I'm hoping we'll be able to talk about Bill 276 later on this afternoon, which will address some of the concerns that the member from Nipissing brought into the House this morning. I'm hoping we're going to get to that.

At this point in time, we're talking about Bill 269. It's a combination of 10 minor measures that are being discussed at this moment. As much effort as I would like to put forward on these issues—they're really not addressing the economic impacts that some of our businesses and some of our small businesses, our organizations, our communities, our municipalities, our fire departments and our not-for-profits are feeling right now. They're feeling abandoned. They're feeling hurt. They're feeling desperate. And like everybody else in this province is feeling—everybody is feeling frustrated right now.

1330

What the heck is going on? How are we talking about, again, these 12 minor schedules that are here when we could be talking a lot more about the priorities and the real challenges that people are feeling in this province?

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

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Today is Earth Day. As I listened to what my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin was saying, I was reminded of how important those local operators are for us in celebrating ecotourism, celebrating the parts of

our province. I'm willing to say on record that I have even personally inquired with the member about how I could visit that beautiful riding that you have the lovely pleasure to live in and serve.

What could that boost do, not only for the people you represent, but for the whole province to get to know a place like Manitoulin Island better?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Thank you for the question.

First and foremost, what I would encourage this government to do is to really develop a strategy. I'm going to brag, because I know—it's in my riding; I have the largest freshwater island in the world. How could we not develop a strategy with that as your anchor? And across my riding—particularly in the Sault North area, the drive from Sault Ste. Marie all the way up to Wawa, or even into Thunder Bay—are some of the most scenic views that you will see across this country, only comparable to the drive that you will get on the coast of BC or in the Maritimes. There is no strategy that has been developed for that area—something that I actually pursued with the previous government, and no action was done. I've approached the ministers at various times to talk about developing that strategy.

By developing that strategy, we are going to encourage people to move, to find out what they have in their own backyard, instead of letting people look at other options or look at other jurisdictions. Finding out what we have in our own backyard, whether it's going for a walk down to the stream that is a new one that you didn't know of, whether it's a snow melt from one of the mountains—these are beautiful things that we can capture. You would be surprised at what you see when you get out, particularly today, on a day like Earth Day—and the importance of knowing your environment.

These are strategies that we could develop that would help our economies and our businesses.

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

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I'd like to thank the honourable member for his words.

Considering there's going to be over \$1 billion cut from education, I was wondering, how is this going to impact northern Ontario, from your perspective?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Again, I want to remind this member, as well, that we're talking about 12 particular schedules under Bill 269. Those cuts are contained within Bill 276, which I hope we're going to be getting to this afternoon.

But to try to answer those questions, it's going to devastate a lot of our schools and their communities, particularly in northern Ontario, where the challenges are—and this is a real story: The Maltais family in Goulais River have two beautiful boys. Those boys have to leave their house and walk two kilometres down the road to where their school is, sit down in a parking lot, and open up their laptops in order to do their homework. That's a reality—and these are just two boys. There are many of those stories that we have in northern Ontario.

I'm looking forward to talking about the broadband announcement that the government has put in their budget,

because I want to bring the real stories of where the shortfalls of their budget are going to be across northern Ontario.

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It is a pleasure to rise and be able to say a few words on the budget that was brought in recently.

Of course, this government—this is our second budget, as you know, during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is something that we felt was important to the people of Ontario—that the government of Ontario be quick to move on a number of initiatives that were important to the people of Ontario as we try to battle the COVID-19 virus head-on, but also as we chart a course beyond COVID-19, as we seek to rebuild our economy and to seize on some of the things that we've learned through COVID-19 to help improve Ontario for many generations to come.

A number of the members have already touched on items that are important to them.

I have no doubt that the member for Algoma-Manitoulin has a spectacularly beautiful riding. I've told him on a number of occasions that I actually can't wait to come up. When this is all over and life starts to return to normal, I can't wait to come and visit him at his camp that he has in his riding and maybe share a beverage that has been brewed in northern Ontario. We can chat about how we can do even more to help northern Ontario move forward. There will be a lot of questions if we sit there for a little bit and have discussions.

I notice the member for North Bay—and I actually didn't realize this; when we were talking about reinstating train service from North Bay into northern Ontario, I had always just blamed the Liberal Party for cancelling that service. We know, of course, that the Liberal Party have never really had much patience or a desire to make investments in northern Ontario. We understand that. We can see that, actually, through everything that we've been dealing with over the last couple of years.

I've said it on a number of occasions—not to stray too far—but the Liberal Party left us with one of the lowest ICU capacities per capita in North America because they did not make investments.

I know that the member for Don Valley North is seeking to make the move to Ottawa. He will know—I know he shouted it out yesterday in reference to a question—that I was in Ottawa and the people of my riding retired me for a short period of time. Fortunately, they regained their trust, and they sent me back here to fight for them.

I remember when I was in Ottawa, colleagues, I was part of a government that was transferring to the province of Ontario some 6.5% a year, year over year, for health care—one of the biggest investments in health care in the history of the federal government, under the Stephen Harper government. That didn't quite translate to 6.5% in the province of Ontario. In fact, it never translated to an investment of 6.5% by the previous Liberal government. In fact, that money was used and moved around to other areas.

As I said, I don't want to digress too much, but the member for North Bay, as I was listening to his wonderful speech about all of the investments that are going into northern Ontario—and northern Ontario is really part of the jewel of what makes Ontario such a special place. It's so important to our economic vibrancy and the stability and future growth of the province of Ontario. When I heard him tell me that it was under a minority Liberal government that rail service to the north was cancelled, and that the NDP actually stood and supported that decision, I cannot tell you how shocked and surprised I was by that. I was very surprised at that.

Then, I hear in the House over the last number of days that the NDP have completely given up. You just heard it from the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. Because we don't do all of the amendments that they bring forward on committees and on private members' bills, they're no longer going to put amendments forward. They're not going to participate in committees because they don't get all of them passed.

So on a budget—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. The government House leader has the floor.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** So on a budget, one of the most important recovery budgets in the history of this province, a budget that is putting billions of dollars back into health care, a budget that is about to unleash investments in northern Ontario like they've never seen before, not just in rail but in broadband—in his own answer to a question, he talked about students having to sit outside and borrow WiFi from a Tim Hortons or a school because they don't have it, but he voted against a \$4-billion investment in WiFi, the largest investment. The folly of it is that the Liberals joined them in voting against that. And what's the federal investment nationwide? It's \$1 billion nationwide—and they want us to be all happy. When they had the opportunity to make that change, what did they do? They went and voted no in the lobby there.

**1340**

You will know that we are still in this place voting because we thought it was important that the people of the province of Ontario have an accountable government. Mr. Speaker, you will recall that the opposition get the right to vote in an opposition lobby even though they didn't want to do that. They voted against that safety measure. But I digress again.

Whether it was the Northland rail that they killed for a stretch goal, whether it was them voting against a massive expansion in broadband in this province, which will see every single community in this province connected to high-speed Internet for the first time—and we're doing it without the federal government, as has been the case since we came to office. Especially during the last number of months, when you talk about investments in infrastructure—important investments—it's the province of Ontario moving unilaterally.

When you look at this budget in particular, it's not only about the investments in the north, but let's focus it back

down to what we're doing on health care, the massive investments in health care that we're doing to increase hospitals, build hospitals—a brand new hospital for Brampton and a brand new hospital for Windsor. The people of Windsor fought so hard for a hospital—the Liberals said no; the NDP said no when they were in coalition with the Liberals. This Premier said, "Yes, we're giving you a new hospital, because it's important to your community. We're going to get the job done." Brampton has fought so long. For 15 years, they got nothing. This government is getting it done.

The NDP had not one suggestion on how to improve the budget—and it wasn't that they didn't have suggestions, colleagues. Apparently, now, it's because if they don't get their way on everything, they're folding their tent and going—that's it; they're not going to participate anymore.

I remember having this conversation with my daughter before she went into kindergarten. We had this explanation that when you're in the sandbox, you're not always going to get everything you want; you're going to have to share once in a while, and that's part of growing up. I had that conversation with my daughter Olivia, and my older daughter, Natalie, helped us at that time.

Now I'm hearing that the official opposition is no longer going to participate. I should have known, because when we moved to make this place more democratic and put opposition members in leadership roles on committees, they didn't want to do it. In fact, the Legislature had to give them the opportunity—they forced us into a vote to give them the opportunity to participate in leadership roles. So they don't want leadership roles on committees. They don't want to participate on committees. They don't want to make suggestions to make bills better. I guess we now know why they've never been given the opportunity to govern this province since 1990. There is absolutely nothing that they have put forward to give people any reason to believe that they will ever change and that they will ever be a responsible party that could govern or lead this province. I know, Madam Speaker, that you would likely agree with me.

I will say this, colleagues: Given the fact that the opposition has not put forward one amendment to this bill, given the fact that they have decided to pack it in and fold their tents, I move that the question now be put.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Mr. Calandra has moved that the question be now put. There being over seven hours of debate, I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate 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.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Given the fact that there were no amendments to this bill and that the NDP already seem to have folded their tent, I seek unanimous support to pass Bill 269 right now.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to immediately pass government Bill 269. Is it agreed? I heard a no.

SUPPORTING RECOVERY  
AND COMPETITIVENESS ACT, 2021  
LOI DE 2021  
SUR LE SOUTIEN À LA RELANCE  
ET À LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 19, 2021, on the motion for second 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 Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Further debate?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** It's my pleasure to be able to speak on Bill 276 today.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for government to modernize regulations and reduce regulatory roadblocks on people and on business.

When we talk about modernizing regulations, we need to think about what we've seen in the last couple of years: We have lowered the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$7 billion. Part of that was through reducing red tape and reducing the burden of regulation. That's why it's crucial for our government to act now to eliminate outdated regulations and minimize needless burdens on consumers, families and businesses.

Our spring 2021 red tape reduction package will lay the foundation for a strong economic recovery. The steps we're taking will benefit individuals, families and businesses, by introducing measures that will create the conditions for investment and prosperity over the long term, while enhancing policies that protect our environment and keep us safe and healthy. This red tape reduction package consists of the proposed Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act and regulatory changes to modernize the rules and accelerate business growth to attract investment and create jobs.

Earlier this morning, I talked about the fact that today, 25,000 more men and women woke up to go to a job in manufacturing than did before COVID-19. That's a fascinating statistic, and it tells us the story of what's happening in Ontario. Yes, there are families who are struggling, and that is why we continue—this week, we started with the \$400 payment to families with children, from newborn to high school. That is why there are so many supports that are put out in child care, so many items in the budget bill that are helping families. But I'm going

to talk a little bit more about economic development and this red tape reduction.

Those 25,000 more men and women who went to work in manufacturing today—that's the result of all of the regulations that we have changed in Ontario, the burdens that we have eased in Ontario, and the other changes, like reducing WSIB premiums by 47% without reduction of the benefits, by putting an accelerated capital cost allowance of about a billion dollars a year, and the list goes on and on and on. It includes reducing hydro rates on January 1 by 14% and 16% for industrial and commercial businesses. It means reducing the province's share of your local property taxes by \$450 million a year. This is \$7 billion a year, year after year after year, that the business community will be reinvesting into their business and hiring. And a part of that \$7 billion is the reduction of red tape and the burden in our province.

This package continues our work to cut costly red tape. It reduces those unnecessary burdens and interestingly, along the way, it digitizes many of the processes. This will help more people and more businesses recover from the economic effects of COVID-19, while preparing them for future opportunities. Modern regulations that are easier to understand and easier to comply with will allow people and businesses to invest their time and their money in what's important right now: recovering, rebuilding and re-emerging from this crisis stronger than ever before.

1350

I've said earlier today that Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting People's Health and Our Economy brings our total COVID-related investments to \$51 billion. In this last budget, \$16.3 billion alone was for protecting families' health, and \$23.3 billion was to protect our economy. That's what's happening, Speaker.

Let me talk a little bit about the guiding principles that we have. The red tape reduction has, really, five overall guiding principles.

The first is protecting health, safety and the environment. The government will continue to ease regulatory burden in a smart, careful way to ensure that health, safety and environmental protections are maintained and enhanced. That's one of the guiding principles of what we're doing.

The second is prioritizing the important issues, even if they're tough. As the government works to deliver smarter government for the province, we're very carefully assessing which regulations cost people and businesses the most time and the most money, while looking for innovative, modern ways to ensure that these rules are as effective and efficient as possible.

The third guiding principle: We want to harmonize the rules with Ottawa and other provinces where we can. This duplication is costing horrendous dollars, so we're targeting duplicated red tape. We're aligning our regulations with whatever is already existing with the feds, and we're really trying to eliminate those steps that cause the job creators time and money. You shouldn't have to do one set of forms and a duplicative set of forms for another level of government. It should be harmonized. Do it once. Save time. Save money. Invest that money. Hire people.

The fourth is listening to the people. Almost every single meeting that we've had—and I can tell you from a personal perspective, on almost every Zoom call, when a business or stakeholder says, "What can we do for you?", I tell them, "Send us your red tape and regulatory burden that we can help reduce, that will save you money. Then you can put it back in your business and hire more people. We want to hear from you." This is the spring bill. There will be more red tape bills, each and every year. So we want to hear directly from the people about what we can do to remove red tape, what we can do to create the right conditions for businesses and communities to prosper.

Finally, the fifth guiding principle is a whole-of-government approach. Regulations don't fall under one ministry. They span the entire breadth and width of government. That's why we're taking a highly coordinated approach and we're making sure everyone is on the same page when it comes to the red tape strategy.

I can tell you, there has been the reduction of red tape and lowering of the burdens throughout the pandemic. I'll give you some examples of what we're talking about. We allowed restaurants and bars to extend outdoor patios and expanded opportunities in alcohol sales, including making the sale of alcohol with food takeout and delivery orders permanent. As well, we capped delivery fees charged to restaurants. The government is also permanently allowing 24/7 deliveries to retail stores, restaurants, hotels, distribution facilities, to help ensure that shelves stay stocked during this pandemic and that families can have food on their table and businesses can operate efficiently. That's red tape reduction. That's burden reduction.

In the past year, we've also worked very diligently to pass three high-impact burden-reduction bills: the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act; the Main Street Recovery Act; the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. All of these measures have been taken to help boost the province's economic recovery, create thousands of jobs, put more opportunities within the reach of businesses, digitize more processes—and you'll have heard the President of the Treasury Board say "digital first." It's not digital only; this is digital first. For those who haven't got access, who don't care to have access—they can still do things in the traditional manner. All of these are designed to improve the quality of life in every community across the province.

The changes we're making are helping to create a modern, smarter set of regulations, with a very clear, focused and effective set of rules that do not compromise people's health, safety or the environment.

We continue to work with our counterparts, through our Ontario.ca/smallbusiness website, to allow temporary changes to provincial rules and regulations in order to remove those barriers that are hindering businesses and negatively impacting Ontario's supply chain.

Some specifics: We have the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. You'll see that this program—we're reviewing the applications and the nominations. We're streamlining the program.

On the mining side: There are many, many areas that we're assisting the mining sector with, as well. We're

establishing a public registry, administered under the Mining Act. We're better aligning the French and English versions of the Mining Act. We're reducing paper-based mining land forms for a more efficient, modern and competitive business environment. We're simplifying the process of issuing mining leases. We're streamlining the sale of bulk samples and products for the mining industry. We're reviewing the bulk sample thresholds. We're taking a graduated approach to closure planning. These are all really important red tape and burden reduction efforts that we're making in the mining sector.

I'm talking a little bit about northern Ontario here. The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp.: We're going to update their forms repository. There's a whole multiple funding application forms system that has been in place for too long. We're going to simplify it with a very automatic, generic information form.

Speaker, I want to say thank you for this opportunity to talk a little bit about the red tape bill. I look forward to the questions.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you to the member opposite for the comments.

I've got some questions about the small business support grant that come from my constituents, from small businesses in my area.

The small business support grant was released in February of this year, and it was a year into the pandemic. By that time, more than 25,000 small businesses had gone under in this province because of this government's inaction through that first year.

What the small businesses in my area are asking for now is—instead of just a maximum of \$20,000, they're looking for a percentage of rent. Speaker, \$20,000 is a lot of money if you're paying \$2,500 a month in rent, but if you have a storefront on Queen Street in downtown Toronto, your rent is often \$20,000 or even more per month.

Will you consider changing the small business support grant to reflect a percentage of rent rather than a gross amount?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** The small business support grant is not attached to the rental program. The rent program—there are many great combination federal-provincial programs, of which rent would be one.

The small business support program itself is application-based. There are 105,000 businesses that received the small business support grant. You go on the website, you enter your sales in April 2019, you enter your sales in April 2020. If there's a 20% reduction, you automatically receive \$10,000, up to \$20,000. It's \$1.7 billion that has been released in that program to date.

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

1400

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I'd like to thank the minister for his comments.

I understand what the minister and the government are trying to do. I think that any type of attempt to improve the

way business works to make it easier for companies is a good thing.

I would really like to know what the consultation process was like by the minister and his government—specifically, in northern Ontario, with the Indigenous community, francophone communities and people from the BIPOC community, who are having a lot of challenges when it comes to the economic recovery in this province, due to COVID-19. So can you talk a little bit about, specifically, those four groups and what that consultation process looked like?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** This may be the largest consultative process in the history of our government. There were consultations on an almost daily basis, I can tell you. That's something that I said in my earlier comments. There would not have been one day that went by in my informal consultations—let alone the formal consultations held by our ministry and our Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Every single one of the Zoom calls would end with, "By the way, you can help us by offering regulation reduction, red tape reduction"—and this is to a wide audience from end to end of the province, from every possible spectrum. We've had one of the deepest consultations into the burden of red tape in Ontario.

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

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** To the minister: As the member from Don Valley East rightly stated, it's important for businesses to work with a government that understands how difficult red tape can be. As you mentioned, we held these very long and very in-depth consultations with businesses across Ontario throughout the summer. Again, it was the largest-ever consultation process in the history of Ontario.

We heard time and again that businesses feel that this burdensome regulation is not only time-consuming; it costs them money—and that's the last thing they need during a pandemic.

Can the minister explain why it is so important to identify and eliminate burdensome regulations that are too duplicative and unnecessary, and how it helps small business?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** As the member noted, we spent a tremendous amount of time in consultation.

I said earlier that we have five guiding principles, and one of those was listening to the people of Ontario. We definitely want to continue to do that.

As I mentioned, this is not the first and won't be the last red tape and burden reduction bill. We need to remove red tape and create the right conditions for businesses, for families, for communities to prosper, and that is why we so widely consulted on this.

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

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Speaker, my friend from Nipissing, the minister, was mayor of North Bay for seven years, as you know.

During his presentation, we heard him talking about cutting red tape. He wanted to hear directly from the people.

The minister was at the cabinet table last week when cabinet decided to close golf courses. I'm just wondering what he's hearing these days from the members at the North Bay Golf and Country Club, Osprey Links, Lookout Terrace, Clear Springs, Highview, Laurentide and Pinewood Park—as you may know, that's the golf course that former Premier Mike Harris used to manage. I'm just wondering what the people in North Bay who like to golf are saying to the member from Nipissing these days, after he had a say in closing golf courses in Ontario. He wanted to hear from the people. What is he hearing these days?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Well, with all the snow we have in North Bay, I can tell you we're not hearing "fore." I'm sure that the fact that we haven't put our snow tires or our snow shovels away yet might have something to do with that. I shared a photo electronically yesterday with the stakeholders here in Toronto who were getting snow—I shared with them the photo of the snow on my back deck.

I would say, to directly answer your question, we continue to take the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, who continues to share with all of us that we are in the middle of a stay-at-home order, that we are in the middle of a pandemic—and that he is doing everything in his power to express to us the need to reduce mobility right across all of Ontario.

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

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I'd like to thank the minister for those answers.

I think that having a full consultation is a great thing here in the province of Ontario, and I'm glad to hear this was probably, to quote the minister, the most comprehensive consultation in the history of his ministry or government. He said that he was out there consulting with a lot of people.

I have a very simple question. He said that he consulted a lot of different people. I'd like to know, specifically, who he consulted from the Black community, and what did they have to say?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** I will ask our ministry to—be able to share some of those details.

But I can tell you that red tape reduction and the sharing of red tape reduction is genuinely critical to this government. We've seen that this pandemic has reinforced the need for our government to modernize regulations and reduce regulatory roadblocks on people and on businesses.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** We don't have time for another back-and-forth.

Further debate?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** It's a great pleasure to rise today to talk to Bill 276.

I have a lot of great mentors I've never met, and it's because they're in books. One of the things that has always inspired me—when I think about important measures like several of the measures proposed, imposed, in Bill 276, I think about what labour leaders have said about how

change happens. We're days away from May Day, May 1, the international workers' holiday. One of the people I learned about really quickly, when I got to know this country's labour history, is a labour leader out on the east coast. His name was J.B. McLachlan. J.B. McLachlan organized with coal miners back when unions were illegal. He once had this to say when he was asked about how important legislation being drafted in Halifax was to his members: "We understand exactly that working-class laws are like the score kept at a cricket match, recorded after a run has been made in the field. We will make the run all right and the politicians in Halifax can suit themselves as to when they will record it." So he looked at legislation and how it impacted his members on the basis of how successful their organizing was.

That takes me right to schedule 27 of Bill 276, which imposes a \$25,000 fine on anyone who records part of a Landlord and Tenant Board proceeding. That is a pretty significant statement. Inspired by the great J.B. McLachlan, you have to ask the question: Why is the government doing this? I've heard and I've done my part to try to understand the government's perspective. They're concerned about privacy; they're concerned about adjudicators being intimidated. But if you talk to the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, they will cite case law after case law to indicate that Ontario's courts and tribunals have an obligation to remain transparent to the public.

Do you know the other thing you discover when you poke away a little bit about what has been happening under the pandemic? It's a shameful thing. People are being evicted from their homes en masse. When we haven't had lockdown orders that have forbidden evictions taking place during the course of those lockdown orders, evictions have been happening en masse. Between November 2020 to January 2021, the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario said that there were over 14,000 eviction hearings—13,000. Some of these eviction hearings, as my colleagues, particularly my Toronto colleagues, have mentioned here, have been less than four minutes long. Tenants, at their wits' end in this pandemic, many of whom had language barriers, had foisted upon them, at some point in the pandemic, a repayment agreement they neither understood nor could resist. They felt a real power imbalance with their landlord. Well, with one of those in hand, sheriffs have been called, hearings have been scheduled, and people are thrown out onto the street.

#### 1410

Think about what the member for Spadina–Fort York has been doing in his community, visiting homeless folks in that riding, and how so many of those folks have been a victim of these expedited hearings. So many of these folks have gone right through this Landlord and Tenant Board expedited kick-out process and ended up straight on the street.

I want to ask the good people of Toronto: Who was there for you when you were kicked out on the street because of a measure like this? It was someone like my friend MPP Glover over here. Who else has been there for you?

Speaker, I want to talk for a moment about my friend from Beaches–East York. My friend from Beaches–East York, MPP—what can I say? What am I allowed to say, Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** You're allowed to say the riding or their title, if ministerial. So Beaches–East York is sufficient.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** All right. The MPP for Beaches–East York, who shall remain nameless. But nonetheless—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Order.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Joel Harden:** That's what I thought—a pretty arcane rule.

Nonetheless, that member has actually been there for her community, Speaker. My friend from Beaches–East York has not only availed the MPP's office to help those tenants put up in front of these star chambers, these ridiculously expedited processes that have preyed upon marginalized and low-income people and people for whom English is not their first language—not only has that MPP's office been there for those members; she has been there to advocate for them herself. Amen, and bless that woman. That's the kind of politician I love. Yap, yap, yap in a chamber—great. I want to see the kind of politician who's going to stand up for me and my family at the LTB when I'm going to get thrown out on the street imminently. That's what my friend from Beaches–East York did. That's also what my friend from University–Rosedale does. She's our critic for tenants right now. Do you know what both of those folks have in common? They're organizers. And guess what they have been working with closely? Mutual aid societies, otherwise known as tenant unions—fantastic organizations like People's Defence, the Goodwood Park and Crescent Town tenants' unions. They have been there when folks have been—tried to throw them out on the street. They have asked reasonable questions of adjudicators—never rude. Yes, they have recorded those proceedings. I took the last couple of days to look at some of the recordings, and I've got to tell you, Speaker, there's some chilling stuff.

I saw an adjudicator attempt to throw out a disabled woman—\$11,000 back on her rent—with a massive spinal injury, and were it not for the tenants' union in that woman's neighbourhood, it might have happened. It was shared hundreds of times. People's compassionate instincts have been awoken. And this government thinks it's more appropriate to levy a \$25,000 fine on neighbours looking after neighbours through schedule 27 of this bill? Come on. Speaker, through you: I tell my friends over there, you're better than that.

I saw a video of a child who had capacity in English speaking on behalf of her mom, and the representative for the landlord attempting, even at that hearing, to persuade the child: "No, no, no. You can agree to this, you can agree to that, and you can vacate the unit." The child had the courage of her convictions. She stood up for her family. There was also a tenant union representative on that

hearing, and they worked together, and that eviction did not happen. It's the great spirit of Canadian resistance. This is how we get through adversity in this country. We look out for each other. We stand up for each other.

Let me make a bold prediction, Speaker. We're going to have an election—as I understand it, at least—in June 2022. I think the kind of politicians the people of Ontario want to support are not just the ones who are talking in this place—talk is important. They're going to want to vote for the ones who are standing up for people when people were trying to throw them out onto the street, when they were ringing up the sheriff, saying, "Hey, come clear the unit."

People of Toronto, remember: Who was there for you when those hearings took place?

I also want to talk about something that concerns me in this bill and its impact on people with disabilities. Earlier, when the member from Nipissing spoke, I remember him answering that the previous bit of legislation we spoke about today had an assistance fund of \$715 million during this pandemic to help people on the Ontario Disability Support Program and people on Ontario Works—it's hard for me to get that out, because I don't really want to use the verb "help."

People on the Ontario Disability Support Program try to eke out an existence, if they're lucky to receive the maximum benefit of \$1,169 a month, and the costs of their life have massively gone up, if they want to stay safe. We put in a temporary benefit for them for a few months—if you could chase your ODSP worker, if you could find that person. So many of those workers have over 400 clients, so—no big surprise—38% of the caseload found that \$100-a-month emergency benefit, and then it was yanked away last summer.

So \$715 million; 500,000 people on the Ontario Disability Support Program living in legislated poverty—to our province's eternal shame.

That's what worries me about Bill 276 and those folks, Speaker, let me tell you.

There's discussion in this particular piece of legislation about partnering with private partners around employment services. Let me tell you about the record of some of these organizations, like Fedcap, elsewhere.

#### *Interjection.*

**Mr. Joel Harden:** My friend from Hamilton is saying they've had them in Hamilton. I've seen and read the awful stories from England about what happened when they let private, for-profit companies enter into employment transition contracts for people with disabilities, people living with trauma, people on income support programs. It was a very thinly veiled effort to push people off disability benefits, to push them into employment circumstances, and the mental health impacts of that—I'm sorry, Speaker, but this is what happened in England—led to thousands of people taking their own lives.

The member for Niagara Falls has risen in this chamber and talked about the case of Chris Gladders, a 35-year-old man who opted for medical assistance in dying in that community because of how he was living his life in this pandemic. That MPP didn't just talk about the story; that

MPP went to that retirement home room. I saw the pictures, Speaker. You should see them if you haven't seen them yet—a disgusting indictment of what we allow people with disabilities to live in. Chris Gladders would rather take his own life than live in his own excrement, than live with soiled sheets for weeks. This is the reality. This is the province of Ontario. This is Canada. And we ask people with disabilities to suffer.

What I worry about with these new arrangements for disability benefits is that this is just an—look, a big part of my family are business folks. They're fantastic. I love them, but I would never put them in charge of a health care program. Do you know why? Because they know how to do fantastic work with money to create more money, to create enterprises and to build things. That's what they're very good at. I love the Harden family. But health care doesn't work like that. There are some things in health care that, on the surface, cost a lot and seem nonsensical to someone who just looks at dollars and cents on a balance sheet. But when you look at what happens to a person and to a community if you don't make those investments—you see the awful spectacle of Chris Gladders. You put a retirement home in the hands of a family that has been cited time and again by the registered retirement homes authority, but despite all those citations they still have these enterprises and they're running their organizations at the expense of the staff and their residents. So let's think of what happens when we put employment contracts to companies that are trying to "encourage" people—that's a polite verb—off disability benefits or income security benefits and into employment contracts. The history is not kind.

#### **1420**

Let me be very clear: One of the best parts of this job that I have as critic for people with disabilities and accessibility in Ontario is, I have the great opportunity to speak to people on ODSP and Ontario Works from around Ontario—and you trace the links between the advocacy they do for themselves on a hashtag on Twitter called #ODSPoverty, if people want to follow it, and the stories they tell of their lives before the pandemic.

I can tell you, in Ottawa, Speaker—and any of the Ottawa members in this House can corroborate this—there's not a mass festival in our city that would be able to function were it not for the unpaid voluntary efforts of folks on ODSP or OW. Look at the roster of Bluesfest. Mark Monahan, the great creator of Bluesfest, a fantastic outdoor music event, is explicit about this. He loves working with folks on disability benefits or OW who, for whatever reason, for whatever has happened to them in their life, don't have the capacity to hold on to full-time, permanent employment. Mark gives them real opportunities. It's work or volunteer work that can fit around their lives. So he has this massively successful recruitment initiative for people with disabilities, and it has worked, like I said, every single year. He said to me, straight up, "Joel, I am a big believer in employment opportunities for people with disabilities. But if one of the reasons people qualify for ODSP in the first place is that it's pretty much,

basically, mentally impossible for people to hold down full-time employment contracts, who fills the gap?" Because people still have a lot to give. People still have tons to give their community. Just because they can't have high professional status occupations in our society, doesn't mean people don't matter anymore. We shouldn't be changing our income security programs to push them into warehouses eight hours a day or push them into personal support work contracts eight hours a day or push them into other occupations. We should be trying to see people where they're at.

Maybe my friends in government will call me naive for saying this, but I actually believe every single Ontarian wants to contribute to our society. I don't begin from the supposition that someone is trying to grift and game the system; I never do, because inasmuch as I know those folks are out there—the thousands of doors I've had the privilege to knock on back home and in other communities—I believe everybody wants to contribute something. I want to see a province that tries to meet people with that ambition and take them to a great place. What I've seen Mark Monahan and Bluesfest do is precisely that.

Speaker, let's pull this together a little bit, if it's all right.

I think ultimately governments are judged not by the amount of construction cranes in their cities, not by the titles after your name, not by the signed photos you may have having had experiences with famous people; I think governments are judged by what they do for marginalized folks and the less fortunate. The leader of our party gave me and the office that I work with the responsibility to look out for those folks across this province, if they're on disability benefits.

My question to my friends over here, because I know many people in this government care about those folks, too—when it comes to their housing and when people want to hold on to their housing, don't levy \$25,000 fines on people who are trying to advocate for themselves. And to the organizers out there who are doing it, that's a compliment to you, by the way. That wouldn't be in this legislation if your work wasn't working.

To my friends in my party, in the Ontario NDP, who have been there for people on the front lines—my friend from Beaches–East York, my friend from University–Rosedale—they're all here: Davenport, Spadina–Fort York, Toronto–St. Paul's, Scarborough Southwest. They have been waging this fight, and maybe the newspapers won't write about it—some do—but it has been working. Sadly, that's why we've got this punitive measure in this piece of legislation.

I'm just insisting to my friends over there, you've got to take this out. I don't care what lobbyist is in your face; if you want to be portrayed, as I've heard the Premier say time and again, as the champion of the working class—a champion of the working class does not throw working-class people out onto the street. A champion of the working class does not try to criminalize the advocacy of tenants' unions. A champion of the working class,

particularly on a day like May Day, looks at the traditions of our country, like J.B. McLachlan or other great union leaders who built the middle class, who built the prosperity all around us—it was never given to us—and realizes that the goal of the government is not to side with the powerful all the time; the goal of the government is to celebrate the resilience of a society and contribute to that resilience.

My friend from Kiiwetinoong is sitting right in front of me. Every time he has stood up in this place to remind us of our treaty obligations, I think about what a friend of mine back home—I'll end on her words—Elder Claudette Commanda from Kitigan Zibi First Nation has told me: "A politician has one job: protect Mother Earth; listen to the people. Do those things, Joel, and you'll be okay."

I'm going to tell my friends in government to do the exact same thing. Take out this \$25,000 fine that you are levying against organizing among tenants. Do not experiment in adding misery to the lives of people with disabilities, which is what these employment reforms are poised to do. You can do better. You're better than this.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you for the debate on Bill 276.

One of the items in the bill attempts to modernize direct deposit results, which would help a lot of the people on ODSP and other issues—low-income people the member spoke about. It would eliminate the outdated requirement that an employer must get an employee's written agreement where wages would be deposited in the employee's account at a financial institution. I wonder if the member from Ottawa Centre could comment on that, please.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** One of the things I appreciate from the member from Sarnia–Lambton is how he enjoys reading the finer points of bills—but there's a bigger picture here, and I was trying to raise that in my comments, Speaker.

This bill is poised to continue the misery of people with disabilities, and this bill is poised to attack directly advocacy of tenants, organizing amongst tenants. I am laser-focused on that thing, my friend from Sarnia–Lambton, and that's what I would love to have a debate about right now.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for saying in this House what needs to be said. I am proud to serve with you and all the members of Ontario's official opposition.

In my riding, in Hamilton, we understand the struggles of poverty. We hosted a town hall last week called "Frozen in Time!"—we named it "Frozen in Time!" because it was dealing with the inadequacy of social assistance rates and it was addressing the notion that there hasn't been a raise to social assistance rates by a PC government in 36 years. In fact, we'll all remember that it was Mike Harris who cut those rates by 22%.

We've seen this government cut the Basic Income Pilot. They have cut a planned increase to social assistance in

half. In addition, they just don't seem to understand that privatizing the delivery of social services is not the answer. You don't save a buck on the backs of the most vulnerable people in the province.

My question is, why do you think this PC government doesn't understand that people on ODSP and people living on social assistance need their help?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Well, when I hear my friend Hamilton say those words, I'm reminded of the words of Oscar Wilde, who once said there are people who know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

If we worry about shrinking the caseload of ODSP or shrinking the caseload of OW and that's the value that will have been returned to the treasury—those people don't disappear once they're off that caseload. When someone is homeless—ask my friend from Spadina–Fort York—they end up homeless and it's trauma for them, but it's also massively more expensive for our society. First responders are probably involved, the hospitals are probably involved.

1430

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Jails.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Jails are involved. It is much better, it is much more equitable, it's much more financially appropriate to provide people the treatment they need, and that's the starting point I want to encourage us to take.

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

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** I always enjoy the passion that the member from Ottawa Centre speaks with. I do hear good things, the things that you're doing and whatnot.

You talked about tribunals. I want to go there for just a moment, if you don't mind. Recently, there have been incidents of individuals disrupting and recording or publishing recordings of tribunal hearings. These incidents have become more common and difficult to manage as tribunals have largely moved to the virtual hearings, since the beginning of COVID-19.

This bill provides tribunals and tribunal users with the same protection against unauthorized recordings of tribunal hearings, whether in person or virtual, that applies to court proceedings.

My question to the member from Ottawa Centre: Is the opposition against protecting the integrity of tribunal hearings and the privacy of hearing participants?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Thank you for those kind words, friend from Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

I'm not against that. What I am against is the researcher who wrote you that note, because—holy smokes—somebody recording the abuse of a tenant is disruptive? I call the whole process disruptive. I call uprooting people out of their homes disruptive. I don't know how people can sleep at night, to be honest, as adjudicators, sitting through processes like this. I want to see the trouble-making extend beyond those mutual aid societies. I want to see adjudicators revolt against this government.

Don't participate in this process. It's hurting people. We're living in a pandemic.

Respectfully, friend, I think recording these things, as I read the law, is someone's civil right. The problem we

have to deal with is that we're throwing people out on the street. That has to stop.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Question?

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** I heard my friend from Chatham-Kent–Leamington—I guess we could check with Hansard—just say that he wanted to go to tribunals. Rima Berns-McGown, Suze Morrison, Jessica Bell go to tribunals—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Just a reminder to state their ridings. The member knows—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Stop the clock.

The names of the individuals who are currently serving members need to be referenced in the House by their ridings or their titles, respectfully.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Thank you. I apologize. I withdraw.

I used to be a reporter. I'd go to OMB hearings, and I'd ask the chair, "Can I record?" Some would say yes; some would say no.

Now, with technology changing, we have these Zoom meetings. My office tells me there was a Zoom meeting of the Landlord and Tenant Board in Windsor—or through the airwaves in Windsor. The camera was broken, supposedly, at the landlord's office, but the people who were being evicted said, "That isn't the landlord. That's not his voice. That's a family member of the landlord." So if the hearing officer is allowing technology interruptions to happen, why are we not protecting the rights of the tenants—as opposed to "Don't record anything that might be said at the tribunal in case we find out it's not really the landlord who's there."

My question to the member from Ottawa Centre is, what is going on when we make up these rules that side with the landlord at the expense of the tenant?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Speaker, it's not fair that the member who just spoke not only has the idea to speak here in verse, but he's just that articulate, too. You set the bar too high.

You answered your own question. The problem here is, we've got—and I'm not sure who came up with this idea, in the civil service or in the senior levels of government, but we appear to have identified eviction as a priority in the pandemic. Wrong priority—vastly more expensive than actually finding a way to keep people housed. It's bad all the time. Flirting with this in a pandemic is a truly, truly dangerous strategy. The Attorney General, for example, is a municipal lawyer and is very well aware of these tribunals and their limitations. We've had occasion to speak here and again. I know people inside these systems know they're flawed. Expediting them and putting them online makes those flaws worse.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Question?

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Speaker, through you to the member: You know I'm a huge Tragically Hip fan, so I have to bring a quote in from them:

Fingers and toes, fingers and toes  
Forty things we share

I hope that we can find something in this bill that we share together. My riding has a very, very small francophone component, about three tenths of a per cent, but your riding has a much greater representation from the francophone community. This bill increases access to French-language services in the health care sector. Can we find some common ground in that and agree that if there's nothing else—at least recognize that French-language services in Ontario should be equitable across all Ontario and that this bill moves that bar forward? Can we at least find that commonality?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I'll just ask the member to put in his earpiece, because I want to answer him in French.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** It's okay; I understand it.

**M. Joel Harden:** OK, excellent. Donc, à mon collègue, je vais dire que c'est absolument sérieux, particulièrement dans le secteur de la santé, que les personnes qui vivent dans toute la province de l'Ontario puissent chercher leurs services dans la langue de leur choix. Mais—bon exemple—on a vu déjà que ce gouvernement a enlevé le commissariat des affaires francophones, le chien de garde qui était là pour les communautés francophones.

À mon ami, je lui dis : est-ce que c'est bon? Allons-y avec des droits pour les services de santé : c'est bon. Mais d'enlever le commissariat en même temps, je crois que non. On va parler de ce sujet un petit peu plus.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I rise this afternoon to speak to the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act.

I'd like to start by congratulating the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction and his team on bringing forward this legislation that touches on so many different areas of government. It's really a terrific achievement, and as the members of this Legislature really start to dig into the legislation, they're going to see that there are so many great changes that the minister is proposing to help improve things for people and businesses in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, as you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for government to modernize its regulations and reduce regulatory roadblocks on people and businesses. For our province to experience the roaring economic recovery following this pandemic that we need and deserve, it is crucial that our government act now to eliminate the outdated regulations and needless burdens on consumers and businesses that have been on the books for far too long.

For context, Madam Speaker, COVID-19 continues to challenge our businesses as we enter the second year of fighting this terrible virus. No corner of this province, no sector of the economy has gone unaffected by this pandemic. Lives, routines, businesses, traditions and pastimes have all been affected. But now, as we start to see more and more individuals in Ontario receive vaccines—in

Lambton county, for example, we are at over 35% of the eligible population with a first dose—this is really laying the groundwork for how we will bounce back eventually.

The Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act is one of the ways we're doing that. The steps that have been laid out in this act will benefit individuals, families and businesses by introducing measures that will create the conditions for investment and prosperity over the long term while enhancing policies to protect our environment and keep us safe and healthy.

Our government continues to lead the country in helping people and businesses to make it through this challenging time and get back on their feet.

Since the early days of the pandemic, the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction has been working tirelessly to help small businesses recover for their future opportunities. Many of the ideas that the minister has put forward have come from meeting everyday people and business owners across Ontario over the last year.

**1440**

I've had the privilege of hosting the minister for virtual meetings in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton over the last year. I know the people of Sarnia-Lambton really appreciate the direct interaction with the minister and they appreciate many of the actions we've taken so far to support our small businesses: things like capping delivery fees charged to restaurants, as well as allowing licensed bars and restaurants to include beer and wine with food takeout and delivery orders, or allowing trucks to make deliveries during off-peak hours to retailers—small changes that make a big difference.

We also introduced the Ontario Small Business Support Grant and committed \$3.4 billion to the program in this year's budget so we can provide support to more companies and double the grant to each recipient. Today, we are supporting over 120,000 businesses in this province through this Ontario Small Business Support Grant.

In addition to financial support, our government has been providing support by creating conditions for businesses to succeed by modernizing government and reducing business costs. The Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act builds on that work. If passed, this bill will sustain and build on the wide-ranging efforts across all areas of government to cut red tape and reduce regulatory burdens.

This is a big bill with lots of proposed changes. I'm just going to focus on a few of the changes that really interest my constituents.

First, this bill is going to make it easier for employers to report workplace injuries and illnesses when required. The current process is confusing, because they're spread across numerous regulations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We are simplifying things by consolidating the rules into one single regulation.

The second item I'd like to mention is something I'm very interested in: compressed air energy storage projects. We have a lot of natural storage caverns in Lambton county, in former salt caverns. In fact, those caverns are

one of the main reasons that Ontario residents like here in Toronto and the GTA continue to benefit from some of the most affordable natural gas prices anywhere in the world. I see the Associate Minister of Energy is here today. He can probably speak on that. Replicating that sort of storage capacity for the renewable energy that we generate in the province would be a very important advancement. Compressed air energy storage projects store massive amounts of renewable power underground by compressing it at very high pressure and storing it in reservoirs for later use. This will help to smooth out the supply of renewable power when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing. Currently, this storage is taking place in salt caverns. In this bill, the government is proposing to make changes that would also allow for storage in reservoirs and other underground areas.

Third, this bill is also proposing to make changes committed to supporting business needs and ensuring that interactions with the government are efficient and straightforward.

Fourth, this bill is going to streamline drainage approval for farmers, farm businesses and municipalities—something that I know a little bit, as I was involved with that for a number of years before I came here. I also had a private member's bill about Ontario One Call, which we'll go into some other time at greater length. I know some of the members from the larger urban centres will be scratching their heads on this one, but drainage issues in rural Ontario are a very big deal for a lot of small municipalities. Streamlining drainage approvals will save time and money, and enhance competitiveness for businesses in the agricultural sector. We're also going to eliminate licensing fees of \$50 or less under the Agricultural Tile Drainage Installation Act for drainage businesses and operators. I know a number of them back home that will be very happy about this. They call me on an ongoing basis. It's a small thing, but all small things add up to big changes for business owners. I know a few tile drainage business owners, and I can tell you they're going to appreciate this.

Fifth, this bill will help to further modernize the Ontario Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act. That's a good one there. I think a third of the business in my constituency office—and I'm sure of others here—involves family responsibility and those types of orders. This bill is proposing four legislative amendments to the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996, to help drive efficiencies and streamline processes. Anyone who has ever had to interact with the process through the Family Responsibility Office will know how cumbersome and difficult it is to navigate. If passed, this bill will:

—allow a recipient to advise if support has ended, without requiring an agreement of the payer;

—allow for part of an order to be enforced, even where the Family Responsibility Office has determined that it cannot enforce other parts;

—process wage garnishment requests from other provinces more efficiently; and

—make it easier to start a child status review to determine if enforcement should continue for a child over the age of majority to avoid the support payer making overpayments. That's something I've experienced in my office, not on a regular basis—but a couple of times we had to help an individual who was still paying long after they were eligible to pay. They had just kind of given up on it, but my office worked with them to get it reversed.

I'm sure all members in the Legislature have had constituents contact their offices because of FRO. I'm optimistic that these changes will be successful improvements to the Family Responsibility Office system, or FRO. Anything has got to be better than what's there now. I advocated for this a long time ago. When I first got elected in opposition, I wanted to see changes to this office. We had this opportunity when the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General visited my office, and I hope in some small way these changes will be a small step in that direction.

Finally, Madam Speaker, we should be doing everything we can to provide digital services that are accessible to stakeholders when possible. A business that is required for any reason to submit documents to a ministry of the government in order to comply with provincial rules will now have the option of submitting documents electronically. I think this will be a major improvement for many businesses that have adapted to the paperless world with their own processes. It's time the provincial government joined them. I'll drink to that.

Madam Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need for our government to modernize regulations and reduce regulatory roadblocks. This bill lays the foundation for a strong economic recovery. It's critical that our government act now to eliminate outdated regulations and minimize needless burdens on businesses and consumers. The steps that we are taking will create the conditions for investment and prosperity over the long term. Modernized regulations and simplified regulations will allow people and businesses to focus on what is important right now: recovery, rebuilding and re-emerging from this crisis stronger than ever before. Continuing to improve Ontario's regulatory framework is key to making Ontario work better for people and smarter for business in this recovery period and beyond.

Together, Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting People's Health and Our Economy brings the total investment to \$16.3 billion to protect people's health and a further \$23.3 billion to protect our economy.

Madam Speaker, there are so many important things in this bill that are going to help the people and businesses in Ontario in lots of different ways.

I'd like to wrap up by commending the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction again for the outstanding work that he and his team and staff at the ministry have been doing since he took on that important role. As I said, the minister has been out and about around Ontario speaking with and listening to the people of Ontario for well over a year. He has already introduced a number of important and successful pieces of

legislation to support businesses through this pandemic, and I have full confidence that if this bill is successful and is passed, the minister will be diving right back into the work of figuring out what more can be done to make sure, as a province, that we emerge from this pandemic stronger than ever before.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** My question to the government member for Sarnia–Lambton—earlier today, we heard the Minister of Economic Development describe this as a red tape reduction bill. As you will know, like communities all across Ontario—right now Hamilton’s ICUs are overflowing. In fact, in my riding, in Hamilton, we’re building a field hospital in a parking lot. It’s very frightening to see. Where I live in Hamilton, I can hear day and night—I can see the Ornge air ambulances flying overhead, shuttling patients in and out, COVID-19 patients far from their home. It really is upsetting to listen to.

So while we’re here debating a red tape reduction bill, I can’t imagine why the government would not have something more important before us.

My question to the member: What advice does this member have for ICU doctors who are dealing with not just red tape burden but a triage protocol that, in this province, will decide who gets treatment, who gets care and who doesn’t?

1450

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you for the question.

I think that we’ve got to do more than one thing at the same time. We will hopefully come out of this pandemic sooner than later, and when we do, we need to have all the things in place that will help us recover the economy. It was too early this morning, but I watched Pattie Lovett-Reid explain that the economy is on track to grow somewhere between 6% and 6.5% this year. So if we’re going to have the growth, we need to have the tools in place to accommodate that.

As far as the emergency units, I know in my hospital in Sarnia–Lambton we also are accepting patients from out of town; I think the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex is, as well. They always say that health care in Ontario is seamless. This is when all the hospitals are going to step up and they’re all going to help each other—everywhere from Oshawa to Ottawa to Windsor to Hamilton and to Sarnia.

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

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I’d like to thank the member for his comments.

I got a phone call even today from a community member in my riding asking about the relief funds that the government is providing to businesses. Talk about red tape—there have been dozens of calls that have come in. They’re finding the program to be very, very difficult to access and to get answers from.

I was just wondering if the member has any advice on how we can reduce red tape within his own government when it comes to the allocation of that funding. I know that

where he’s located, there’s a large Indigenous population and a lot of diversity. Does he have any advice to women-owned businesses, Black-owned businesses, BIPOC-owned businesses and Indigenous business owners on what they could do to access some more relief from government to help with their recovery?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you to the member from Don Valley East for that question.

I’ve had a number of businesses from my riding qualify, as well. I’ve got some I’m working with yet that haven’t got anything—so it’s not anything to do with party politics, I can assure you. I’ve got people I’m advocating for in my office—actually, more than me. They’re there every day trying to advocate for these people. I think the last number I’ve seen—it was over 120,000 businesses in Ontario that have accessed something like \$1.5 billion already. There’s more money there. We’ve said that anybody who qualified in the first round automatically is going to qualify for the second. My office is reaching out directly.

I would recommend that any member here who is having issues talk to the Minister of Economic Development and Job Creation personally. It’s his file, it’s his fund, and I know he wants to see it be a success. I just spoke with him earlier today about it. I know he’s on the ball. I got a call within a couple of hours from his office that they’re going to take another look at these files.

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

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** We spoke earlier about the amount of consultation that this government has undertaken with small business communities right across the province. We’ve spoken to people from the Far North. We’ve spoken to people in all parts of the province, all different sectors. I know that a question was raised earlier—we had consultations with chambers of commerce and the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce, of course.

Regardless of the sector, regardless of the region, one of the main issues that they raised was the fact that they wanted more modernization within government. That is something that this bill addresses.

My question to the member is: Can you share with us what our government is doing to allow businesses to adapt to technology, to modernize, and how this bill will help in that process?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you to the minister—to the member, sorry, I’m getting ahead of myself; she’s not there yet, but she’s getting there—for that great question.

Yes, we say: Digital always, but not digital only, as the processes are put in place to advocate for businesses—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** To the Chair.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I know one was self-audits for business to do with safety and health issues—sorry—safety and health issues and—anyway, I lost my train of thought.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** I apologize to the member for derailing him, but I was

unable to hear him, as he was facing the wrong direction. We'll work it out next time.

Further questions?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** I know when we talk about the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, we keep hearing "red tape reduction bill." I know I always bring it up: Water is such a basic thing. Can we put this bill into—where's the red tape to structural racism? Where is cutting the red tape of systemic racism? When we talk about business, when we talk about economic recovery, I keep hearing from that government that to have a healthy economy, we need healthy people. To be healthy, we need water.

When will the government move towards having clean drinking water for First Nations communities in the north?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you for that question.

I've heard this issue raised a number of times by this member. I totally agree with him, and I can't believe that in this day and age—and I'm not going to say it's a federal issue, even though it is, because you probably get tired of hearing that, and I do, as well. I don't know how we can work together—the province of Ontario and the federal government—to address this issue.

I've heard you tell us stories about children not being able to get—I'd like to say a lot more than I can. It is a responsibility of the federal government, but I think the province of Ontario has an obligation, as well, to press them and to work with your First Nations communities—to press the federal government and the Prime Minister himself to address this issue and not keep campaigning on fixing it and never fixing it. That's my answer. Sorry.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** There's time for a quick question and answer.

**Mr. Dave Smith:** As the parliamentary assistant to northern development and mines and energy, I have to throw this in there to the member: We are looking at making some serious changes, developing Ontario's first critical mineral strategy. The minister responsible for mining, northern development and energy has said that critical minerals are critical to the success of Ontario's economy moving forward. We've got the Ford plant—the investment in it for electric vehicles.

How does this bill help with critical minerals to help in that low-carbon economy?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** A brief response from the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** It will certainly be brief, Madam Speaker.

I've actually got on my desk a book I've been reading in here when I wasn't listening to the debate, which wasn't very often. It was about the partnerships between the Indigenous community and the business community across Canada and North America, and the opportunities for them to help and grow and be partners. I think that's one way that we can solve that problem about water issues in these northern communities—the development of these critical minerals that the member spoke about. When that's developed, we should go hand in hand and improve the water situation, the drinking situation.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** It's an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 276, on behalf of the people of Spadina–Fort York.

Today is Earth Day, and I think one of the messages that the media and the government need to get out is that it is vitally important for all of us to be getting out and getting some exercise and getting the sunshine, because that helps both our physical and our mental health.

**1500**

This morning, I was out on a ride on the Martin Goodman Trail, along the shore of Lake Ontario. I stopped at my favourite spot there, and somebody had left a whole bunch—it looked like they'd opened all their mail and just left all the papers on the ground there. This is this idyllic little spot where I sometimes stop and have a few moments just to think. Anyway, I picked up the papers, because usually, on this day in my riding, all of the different neighbourhood associations, CityPlace, Liberty Village—so many—Gooderham and Worts, normally have a cleanup day. So I figured this is my little part. And then I sat down by the shore of the lake just to rest for a few minutes—people don't understand how much wildlife there is in Toronto—and a mink walked along the shoreline, and then it dipped into the water and it swam out, and it was swimming over to the breakwater. Then I was sitting there a little longer and a swan came swimming by, and above it, there were all these seagulls circling in the air.

I was thinking about this moment and about it being Earth Day, and I was thinking about a teaching from Duke Redbird, who is a First Nations elder in Toronto. It reflects a lot of the lessons that I've learned from my colleague from Kiiwetinoong. He says that our role should be to be good elders, to be good ancestors to future generations. He says that we never own the land; we are stewards for the next generation. I think that's something that's really important and that we should reflect on. It's a First Nations teaching that we should reflect on, not just on this Earth Day but in every action that we take in this House.

I'm looking at this bill, Bill 276, and I'm thinking of it in this context. It's called the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act. We are at the most crucial moment of a year-long crisis with this pandemic. A bill with that title should have certain things in it, and I don't see those things that we are going to need to support recovery and competitiveness.

I hear now that finally, this government has been dragged kicking and screaming and they may possibly introduce paid sick days, which have been necessary for a year. Thank goodness they may finally do something on that. The proof will be in the pudding and what they actually introduce—because right now, it's just words. That should have been introduced a year ago. We would not be in the situation we're in right now if we had paid sick days.

The other measures that should be in the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness—we need to get through

this pandemic. We need our schools to be safe. We've got another devastating round of cuts coming to our schools. We've got child care workers who need vaccines, and that needs to be prioritized.

If we're going to support recovery and competitiveness, we need small business supports. At the beginning of this year, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reported that 25,000 small businesses in Ontario had gone under. That's 25,000 business in Ontario that will not be part of the economic recovery in this province. Of the businesses that are remaining, the CFIB reports that one in six is at risk of closing, only 43% are open, 36% are fully staffed, and 25% have normal sales. Some 73% of small businesses in this province have taken on debt to get through the pandemic, and the average debt is \$170,000. If we are going to help those existing, the remaining small businesses to get through this pandemic, there are certain measures that need to be taken. One is to fix the criteria on the small business recovery benefit. Right now, if you started a business within the last year or more, you're not eligible for that small business recovery benefit. So new businesses, people who saved up and started these small businesses, may not be able to survive through this pandemic.

There's also the criteria—with this benefit, they compare your April 2019 to your April 2020 receipts. But some businesses that got shut down in March 2020 were still receiving money in April 2020, so it didn't show the loss. There's one business in particular in my riding that had an 80% loss in their income in 2020, but they're still not eligible for this. And other business owners, like Jeff Cohen, who owns the Horseshoe and Lee's Palace in my riding—because he actually owns three venues, he's not eligible for the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. If this bill is to live up to its title of "Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness," the first thing that it needs to do is to fix the supports for small businesses so that one in six businesses that are at risk right now do not also go under and follow in the footsteps of the 25,000 that went under because this government didn't provide enough supports.

I've got a couple of quotes from some small business owners in my riding. The first one is from a restaurant owner at West Queen West. Her name is Catherine Lehto. She said, "My husband and I own a restaurant in the West Queen West neighbourhood. We have two children, one in" junior kindergarten "and the other in daycare. We have been working to save our business by doing catering and takeout. Not once have the government offered any help to parents in the service industry and their children."

"I feel anger about the way that the restaurant industry is being treated.

"Stand up for the people who are working long grinding hours with children.

"Toronto's small business restaurant owners need help. We give Toronto the vibrance of a beautiful city and we are dying in COVID."

Another small business owner, Susan Gini-Jones—she owns the 6 Oceans Gallery, which "is a small business that employs three people and supports the work of 65

Canadian artisans." She said, "We have been effectively shut down since late November by order of the government. I hustled tremendously to move my business online, and I am proud of our digital presence. But the reality is that nothing beats the walk-up traffic in my beautiful Queen West neighbourhood. It is not an overstatement to suggest that another stay-at-home order will kill literally hundreds of small businesses. Families and lives are being devastated. The onus is on all of us to work together to survive this pandemic, and forcing small businesses to bear the weight of responsibility is grotesquely unfair."

Madam Speaker, if this bill is to live up to its title, the first thing that the government needs to amend is—to provide the supports for small businesses.

The other thing that small business owners are asking for is—they're looking for a recovery fund for small businesses, because these small businesses, as I mentioned, have a mountain of debt behind them; on average, \$170,000. They are leveraged to the hilt, but they need to buy stock in order to reopen. So they're going to need support for that.

They also want an evidence-based reopening strategy. They need the government to say—all of the business owners that I talk to say, "I understand. Health comes first. If my business needs to be shut down, so be it. But show us the evidence that my business is one of the ones that need to be shut down." The government has refused to provide that evidence.

For example, the hairstylists in Toronto have been shut down for eight of the last 12 months, and the hairstylists in British Columbia have been open. So I'd ask the government to please look at what's happening in British Columbia, because the hairstylists have been open safely, just like dental offices have been open safely here; they can follow the same protocols without jeopardizing health and without being transmission points.

The next part of this bill is about electricity. It repeals sections of the Electricity Act that give priority to renewable generation projects. In other words, this section, schedule 5 of this act, is another attack on the renewable energy industry in Ontario, and it's also another attack on climate. One energy stakeholder said this is just another part of the government's winding down of the Green Energy Act.

I'll compare the actions of this government on the environment to what the Biden administration is announcing right now. They've got a Build Back Better plan. Biden says that the goal is "building a modern, resilient climate infrastructure and clean energy future that will create millions of good-paying union jobs...."

This government's actions on climate over the last three years, including the actions in this bill, have been absolutely abysmal. They've taken us in the exact opposition direction. One of their first acts in coming to office was to fire the Environmental Commissioner. Then they cancelled the cap-and-trade program, losing \$3 billion in revenue. Then they spent \$3 million of taxpayer money to fight a lawsuit that they knew they were never going to win—to fight the federal carbon tax in court. They also

wasted money on a gas station sticker campaign, with gas station stickers that didn't actually stick. They've also reduced funding to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, including emergency forest firefighting, in spite of the fact that two years ago we had a record number of 1,500 forest fires in this province. That is partly due to climate change. They also tore up the Green Energy Act, cancelled green energy contracts and weakened the Endangered Species Act.

**1510**

President Biden's motto on climate change is: "Any time we think about climate, we should think about jobs. Any time we think about jobs, we should think about climate."

This government's motto on climate change should be: "We believe in climate change; we're just not going to do anything about it." In fact, they're trying to crush the renewable energy industry and the electric car industry in order to maintain subsidies for the fossil fuel industry in this province. It's absolutely shameful, and it's just so out of touch. It's going to cost us tens of thousands of jobs going into the future.

The other schedule that I wanted to talk about is schedule 21. It's potentially setting the stage for the privatization of Ontario Works. This is really frightening to a lot of us in Ontario, because if the government does what seems to be indicated in the schedule, it would be allowing companies to profit off the misery of others, and that is just awful. One part of the schedule gives the government the power to potentially download social assistance—so Ontario Works and ODSP—to municipalities. The last time Conservatives were in power, they downloaded social housing. We used to have a thing called the Ontario Housing Corp., and we had public-supported housing. When the NDP were in power in this province, we were building 15,000 affordable housing units a year just in Toronto. Since then, we have built almost none in this province—very, very few; just a few small projects here and there. So they downloaded social housing onto the municipalities, and the result is the homeless encampments.

All of us in this House—when you're coming to the Legislature, you could not walk to this House, you could not ride or drive to this House without passing people who are sleeping in tents because there's no affordable housing. We have not built affordable housing and we have not built social housing in this province in 25 years. This potential—

**Mr. David Piccini:** That's not true.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Stop the clock.

The member from Northumberland–Peterborough South will withdraw.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Withdraw.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** I return to the member.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** So this potential downloading of Ontario Works and ODSP onto the municipalities is giving it to a level of government that does not have the tax base

to support it, just like they did not have the tax base to support affordable and social housing.

The other part of this is the potential for privatization. This bill allows third-party providers—in other words, private, for-profit companies, such as the multinational Fedcap—to administer employment and life-stabilization programs in regions. They're already in place in Hamilton, Brant and Niagara. This is incredibly frightening.

If you're wondering why people are sleeping in tents in the city, it's because Ontario Works is \$735 a month for an individual. It's absolutely a shameful amount. You cannot rent a room. If you find a room to rent in Toronto for \$1,000 a month, you've done well. So they're \$265 short just of a room, let alone having food to eat or clothes to wear or money for transportation.

What we are creating here with this privatization—I know the Conservatives have this fanatical belief in privatization of public services. This with Ontario Works is potentially another step in that direction, and it's incredibly frightening for all of us who have seen the devastation that has been wrought by the downloading of social housing onto municipalities and into the private sector.

The other schedule that I wanted to talk about is schedule 27. This one is also really frightening. When we're talking about the homelessness crisis in this city—schedule 27 uses the force of law and the threat of a \$25,000 fine. The government says it's to protect privacy, but all of the tenant advocates in this city and in this province are saying, no, this is to hide what's actually going on at the Landlord and Tenant Board right now, because there are horrific abuses happening there.

The Globe and Mail, for example, reported that since the Landlord and Tenant Board restarted in August, it "has conducted its work in digital hearing rooms on Microsoft Teams. It's common for the LTB to schedule as many as 10 matters from multiple regions of the province into one two-hour hearing block."

"In November and December, almost 12,000 eviction hearings—almost all for late payment of rent—have been held in Ontario."

Even during those times when evictions were banned, the Landlord and Tenant Board was continuing to issue eviction orders.

When you listen in to those Landlord and Tenant Board hearings, you see horrific abuses of process. Tenant advocates have repeatedly raised the alarm about the unfairness of the virtual eviction hearings. The hearings deny basic justice and fairness to the tenants—particularly tenants with disabilities, language barriers or a lack of access to technology.

We heard that the Premier is in isolation right now, but we've heard that he has somebody to help him start his laptop.

If you are a low-income individual, perhaps with language barriers, and you have to participate in an online hearing where you could lose your housing and be turfed onto the street, who is going to start your laptop?

In fact, at some of the hearings, some of the tenants who are being evicted, or potentially being evicted—one tenant

was trying to call in on a pay phone because they didn't have a cellphone. They kept getting cut off, and the hearing took place, and they were evicted. Another tenant wrote to the Landlord and Tenant Board and said, "I don't have a cellphone. I won't be able to participate. Please delay the hearing." The adjudicator said they could call in on a pay phone.

There's no fairness in this online process. There's particularly no fairness because they're not represented in part because of the 30% cut to legal aid in this province.

I'll just give a couple of examples. There was one instance where an advocate was booted from an online hearing where a disabled person, a woman who had fractured her back and couldn't work, was reportedly ordered to abide by a rent repayment plan of \$11,000 in 11 days, or be evicted.

In another video—this is a video that this government is trying to stop from being recorded and getting out—a tenant was not given a translator and had their child trying to translate for them. The tenant advocate is heard on this video accusing the Landlord and Tenant Board of coercing the child into accepting a repayment plan on behalf of the parent that the parent did not understand.

It's absolutely appalling that people's lives are on the line, that their housing is on the line in these hearings.

Instead of going back to the drawing board and making sure that there's a fair process at the Landlord and Tenant Board, the government's response is to say, "Well, we want to bury this. We want to make sure that nobody finds out what's actually happening at the Landlord and Tenant Board, so we're going to ban the recording of the hearings. And if anybody does record those hearings, we're going to slap them with a \$25,000 fine." It's absolutely appalling.

This bill is called the "supporting recovery" bill—but it's doing the exact opposite. It's not supporting small businesses, it's not supporting an environmental recovery, and it's going to be fuelling the homelessness crisis that we are feeling already across this province. So I wish the government would reconsider so many parts of this bill.

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

**Hon. Bill Walker:** I'd like to comment on both the Spadina–Fort York member and the member from Ottawa–Carleton, who spoke earlier.

The member from Ottawa–Carleton talked about marginalized people and said that they should be supported. I wonder if he could ask some of his colleagues in his caucus why they decided to support the Liberals for two different budgets, to keep them in power and raise record debt and deficit that didn't help those people disaffected.

Think about the Capitol building in Washington. He encouraged revolt. He suggested that they disrespect law by allowing tribunals to be disrupted and the courts.

**1520**

The member from Spadina–Fort York talked about the Green Energy Act. Is this another way for them to say they're totally opposed to nuclear? They think we can get

to net zero without nuclear. They were prepared to actually close Pickering—7,500 jobs.

So could he clearly say whether he supports Bill 276 and Bill 269?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I ask the member opposite the question back: Do you support silencing advocates who are trying to make public the horrible breach of process and the eviction orders that are being issued by the Landlord and Tenant Board?

We need to make sure that people have due process in those hearings because their lives are literally on the line, and otherwise, they could end up in tent encampments out on the streets. Then you'll be driving by them and passing another bill that will actually lead to more tent encampments on the streets.

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

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** I don't know when the last time was that we had anybody here from Ottawa–Carleton.

My question to the member from Spadina–Fort York: Since last Friday, the calls coming into your constituency office—do you get most of them from (a) tenant evictions; (b) homelessness; (c) paid sick days; (d) the vaccine rollout; (e) safer schools; (f) small business supports; (g) fear of enhanced police powers; (h) closing nail and hair salons; (i) privatizing Ontario Works and ODSP; (j) abuses at the Landlord and Tenant Board hearings; (k) lack of technical support for those hearings; (l) none of the above; or (m) all of the above?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** (M): all of the above.

The people in my riding want to get through this pandemic. They are so sick and tired. In Toronto, we have been locked down for longer than any other jurisdiction in North America. We've been in lockdown since mid-November, and then, after four months of lockdown, they issued a stay-at-home order.

We need to get through this pandemic, and we need the government to take the measures that will get us through this pandemic. That includes supports for small businesses. It includes paid sick days. It includes making sure our schools, our workplaces and our long-term-care homes are not transmission points, so that we don't end up walking or running into the third wave—and then the government resorting to asking the police to try to manage the pandemic instead of doing it through public health measures.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Order. When I stand, I don't need the commentary. Thank you.

Question?

**Mr. Dave Smith:** You made a reference in there to electric vehicles. There's an investment of almost \$300 million from the Ontario government into Ford for electric vehicles. In this bill, in schedule 14, adjustments are being made to the Mining Act to help with critical mineral discovery, like cobalt, lithium and nickel, which are all required in electric vehicle batteries.

Would you at least support schedule 14, which is going to improve the ability to have electric vehicle battery

construction here in Ontario, so that we can be a leader in that green technology and be the world leader in electric vehicles?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** To the member from Peterborough–Kawartha: There are always some schedules—all of the bills that the government brings forward here are omnibus bills. This one has 27 schedules. There are always a few things in there that are not terrible.

As far as this government's record on electric cars goes, it is terrible. One of the first things you did was that you tore up the Green Energy Act, which ended the subsidy on electric cars. Tesla was looking to build a new factory, and one of the places they were looking at was Canada, but when you ended the subsidy for electric cars, they were no longer looking at Canada.

The other thing that you did: There were electric car charging stations in place in GO Transit parking lots, and you had them taken out. Why?

You spent money to make it harder to own and commute with an electric car, so you actually have been taking a hammer to the electric car industry and to the environmental industry in this province.

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

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I want to ask a question on the presentation and some of the comments that he brought forward in regard to the challenges that small businesses are facing.

Pete Dunlop is a business owner. He makes homemade foods inside the mall up in Espanola in my riding. He always tells me about how innovative he is and how he's making his foods in a way that meets the local needs. He puts in his orders, gets his product in, takes the time to prepare—and then all of a sudden he gets that call and he says, "No, you can't do it. No curbside; no nothing." There's no preparedness. There's no messaging. There's no awareness. There's no heads-up. It just happens.

If we're going to be reopening, when we're prepared to be reopening—you've talked a lot about having that preparedness: being ready, developing a strategy. Do you see that reflected in this bill? And if not, what would it look like?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Like your resident in Espanola—there are so many restaurants in Toronto, in my riding of Spadina–Fort York, that were told to reopen, spent lots of money on buying food, bringing their staff back, PPE, getting ready to reopen, just to be shut down two weeks later without notice, and all that food suddenly having to be thrown away. It was incredibly costly to an already strapped sector.

The small businesses in my area are asking for supports for reopening. This is called "supporting reopening"; we need to reopen. We need to give the small business owners the supports they need to buy stock, to deal with the mountain of debt that has been built up through this pandemic, so that they can again start to reopen, and also contribute to our economy.

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

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** To the member from Spadina–Fort York: For the past several months, we have sat in the chamber and listened to the leader of the official opposition challenge this government, suggesting that we do not follow the advice of medical health experts and our own science table. And here you stand today, asking us to not follow the advice of our health experts and the science table, and open hair salons and open nail salons.

So my question is, is there a fracture now in the NDP caucus? Are you now revolting against your own leader? If you're suggesting that we should not follow the advice of health experts and should consider opening hair salons and nail salons, are you now going against your own leader?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Actually, I want to correct the member opposite's record of what I just said. I did not say "reopen"; I said, look at the evidence—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Stop the clock.

I apologize for interrupting the member.

We recognize that we can only correct our own record, but it's part of his response and not a point of order, so I'm going to let the member speak without all of the government interventions.

And a reminder to all members: You can only speak for yourself. Thank you.

I return to the member.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I understand. I would argue that it was a false assumption from the member opposite.

What I said was, "Look at the evidence and share the evidence." That's what the business owners in my area have been saying. If you need to shut down particular sectors, share the evidence that shows that those sectors need to be shut down. But this government has closed small businesses and let Walmart and Costco open for months on end, while the rest of them are shut down.

There was one business owner in my area who has a 10,000-square-foot store, and through Christmas and the holiday break, he was not allowed to open. He could not have one customer in there. Meanwhile Walmart and Costco were wide open and there were thousands of people in there.

So what they are asking for is evidence-based decision-making and to look very carefully, because when this government makes a decision to close a business, that has devastating impacts, and when you leave the big box stores open and—

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

**1530**

**Mr. David Piccini:** I appreciate the opportunity to rise today. It's always an honour to rise in the Legislature to speak about important pieces of legislation, to speak on behalf of the constituents of my riding of Northumberland—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** I apologize to the member for the interruption. Pursuant to

standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours on the debate for the motion on second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Given how interesting this member is, Madam Speaker, I think I would love to hear the debate continue.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** I will return to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South. Again, I apologize for the interruption. Please continue.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm torn, on a Thursday night, with the desire to get back to do my work in the constituency—I always find I'm far more productive there. But I appreciate the words from our House leader and his belief in my speaking abilities.

Madam Speaker, as I said, it's an honour to rise in the House to speak about this important piece of legislation and the importance of reducing regulatory roadblocks for people and businesses in the province of Ontario. It is important we reduce these regulatory barriers. I think to a recent report that came out from the C.D. Howe Institute that talked about regulatory barriers to stop housing, regulatory barriers that prevented building permits from being issued and the detrimental effect that has on housing supply, the detrimental effect that has on long-term-care builds, hospital builds, the detrimental effect that has on that new home for a husband and wife, for partners, for loving couples trying to take that first step. We rank woefully below many progressive jurisdictions worldwide in addressing this in a meaningful manner.

Why I talk about that is, there is an important balance to strike. Obviously, when we talk about regulations and things like that, they exist to protect people, to protect workers, to protect various segments of our society. But it's important that we have balance and that we look to other jurisdictions, that we look to other areas of the country. When we consider the fact that Ontario is the most regulated jurisdiction in North America, that warrants a good long look at how we can address these systemic barriers to better the lives of the people we represent.

There's always an interesting dichotomy. We hear often from various woke elements. I think to colleagues at the municipal level in the city of Toronto. I applaud many of their initiatives for affordable housing, and then when push comes to shove and we talk about MZOs issued to support those important initiatives, they stop. We hear gridlock. They stop and are influenced by the more activist individuals, who are often supported by big-money interests. I think, again, we have to strike that balance.

Of course, we want to hear from all of those constituents we're here to represent. But I think to important initiatives in my community and addressing these systemic barriers, and what does that mean? I always really feel strongly about coming in this House and saying to the

people of Northumberland–Peterborough South, what does that mean? Well, in the case of the Elgin Park redevelopment, that means new affordable housing units. We've got an eight-year backlog that we're working to address that we inherited from the previous government. We've got a brand new build. We've got new long-term-care homes throughout our riding. We've got Parkview seniors' home in the region of Durham, in Clarington, that's going to provide not only important market rate but important subsidized rental units.

Madam Speaker, I hear often—and I give credit to the member opposite from Ottawa Centre, who talks about and advocates for those in need with accessibility issues and accessibility needs. Again, that Parkview development addresses that.

Speaker, our spring 2021 red tape reduction package will lay the foundation for a strong economic recovery. The steps we're taking will benefit individuals, families and businesses, and create the conditions for investment and prosperity in the long run. Modern regulations that are easier to understand and comply with will allow people and businesses to invest time and money in what's important to them right now: recovering, rebuilding and re-emerging from this crisis stronger than ever before.

We know that our action plan talks about protecting people's health and our economy. I had 20 minutes to speak to that the other day, and I ate up the entire amount of time just scratching the surface on the monumental shifts that we've made in health care to support long-term care, to support our hospitals, the rural health hubs, community paramedicine. Mr. Speaker, I could go on. Fundamentally, we are in a better position today because of those initiatives, because of our investments in the community of Northumberland–Peterborough South, than we were just three years ago when I was first elected. You know, politicians come and laud the things that they've done. Yes, our government has taken monumental steps in the right direction, but it's because of the community-based partnerships. It's because of those partnerships that we're seeing this.

I think tonight to Power and Politics. We'll have community-based leaders from Northumberland–Peterborough South going on. I believe Dr. Bhargava from Northumberland Hills Hospital will be on tonight speaking about the importance of those partnerships, and Gord Ley, who has led the volunteer initiative from Cobourg Rotary. I've spoken in members' statements about the important work Cobourg Rotary has done in mobilizing the mass vaccination effort.

When we take these decisions and when we lean on local experts—when we take those decisions out of Bay Street, out of talking heads in Toronto on Twitter and into the hands of local leaders—our community benefits. We've seen that with community paramedicine. We've seen that with the rural health hub in Northumberland. We've seen that from every day volunteers who, day in, day out, go to volunteer at our mass vaccination clinics. I'll have the opportunity to do that tomorrow in Trent Hills, and I look forward to doing that alongside so many volunteers.

But Mr. Speaker, to this bill: You know I represent a rural community with a proud agricultural tradition. In fact, last night I was speaking with members of Northumberland Federation of Agriculture, a phenomenal group of agriculture leaders in our community, the best stewards of our environment. As a part of our plan to create a more competitive business environment, we're proposing amendments to the Drainage Act, made by the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act.

And I think to, again, the Drainage Act: what a snoozer, for anyone watching at home. For people wondering what that means, if you haven't already fallen asleep, what I would say to you is the important take away there in those amendments to the Drainage Act is that it came from your neighbour. It came from that farmer driving a tractor down County Road 45, down Third Line, down the streets, the rural roads—many of them unpaved—in Northumberland–Peterborough South. I think to the Drainage Act consultations that I had with leaders in our community. I think to Brian, a local farmer who spoke up. I think to Mr. Archer and to so many who spoke about drainage—Lisa Meekes, who does a great job coordinating for the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture as a farmer, and advocating herself.

This new regulation is critical. It addresses long-standing issues to better manage water quality and increase climate resilience through the adoption of innovative technologies which can improve and lead to better environmental benefits. This new regulation will make it easier to improve municipal drains to reduce flooding hazards, while maintaining our high environmental standards, and streamlining administrative processes would encourage innovation in drainage practices to support good environmental practices. When we talk about source water protection, we talk about proper drainage. And I think to our farmers navigating different bodies, different individuals. By streamlining this, we're making life easier for them.

The environment is not just about crocodile tears and platitudes about taxing the poorest people among us, but being meaningful stewards of our environment, addressing climate change, doing things for the environment. And it's also not just about jet-setting leaders' summits either, although that does play an important role: leaders gathering, talking about how we can improve and make meaningful impacts on our environment.

**1540**

I think of source water protection and the largest cleanup of its kind, Pollution Probe, which draws some of its origins in my community. I'm proud to say that one of our first announcements was made in the Cobourg harbour. This technology—you should see it, Mr. Speaker—is picking up microplastics and source water pollutants, studying them, partnering with some of the best research institutes we have in the nation. U of T is studying that source water protection.

It's not about the rhetoric, standing up and saying, "Let's put people out of business overnight"—like the Dart plant closure in my riding—by platitudes and bans.

It's about actually zeroing in on the greatest pollutants. It's about zeroing in and studying it and addressing it, investing in the technology to better address that.

Again, it's not about platitudes and going after the trucker and the farmer in my community. It's about doing some of the innovative measures we've taken on recycling. I'm in a plaza—as I'm sure many of you are in your constituency offices—that doesn't recycle. It's embarrassing. Our government is taking meaningful steps to address this.

Back to the Drainage Act piece and supporting our farmers, the best stewards of our environment, and how we better our environment and how we take meaningful steps forward: Again, it's not about platitudes; it's about rolling up our sleeves and addressing issues with the Drainage Act. It's about the largest cleanup in fresh water of its kind with Pollution Probe, and the investments in Lake Ontario. It's about source water protection and the investments that this government has made in that. It's about expanding the greenbelt, which this government is doing.

It's about actually addressing barriers in recycling. In my previous career I went to countries like China, which had systemic and easy-to-read—I don't speak Mandarin, but I could understand the recycling system from Shanghai to Beijing. You can't from Toronto to Port Hope. That is insane, Mr. Speaker. That is insane. The previous government did nothing to streamline and address this, and we are.

It seems simple, but we know that by diverting all of this garbage and junk that's going to end up in our landfills, by better recycling, by investing with our early years in education about this, about simple and easy-to-understand measures—all of us lead busy lives, whether you're opposition, government or independent members, whether you're a trucker, whether you're working in the fields on the farm, whether you're working the till at Timmy's. We're all busy people. If you don't understand and if we don't make this easy, we're never going to address the meaningful steps that we need to address to better this environment.

This takes me to colleges and universities and the opportunity that I have to serve as parliamentary assistant to Minister Romano on this important file. We're establishing the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and Université de Hearst as two new independent, degree-granting universities in northern Ontario. We know that our post-secondary institutions play a critical role in stimulating our economy. That's why we've made critical investments to expand those capital investments with modern and new learning spaces.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? We weren't prepared to tackle the pandemic of today because of the systemic neglect of previous governments. But we are positioning ourselves today to better address the challenges of tomorrow by making record investments in broadband, record investments in modern, new and safe learning spaces in our colleges and universities, working in close collaboration with partners in our Indigenous communities

and investing in OSAP expansion for Indigenous learners. In my community, census data shows us that some of the largest-growing populations for young Ontarians are Indigenous leaders in Hiawatha and Alderville, and in our Indigenous communities around Ontario. That's why we must take lessons from our elders, take lessons from Indigenous leaders that we work in close partnership with in the province of Ontario, expanding OSAP eligibility and working closely. That's what we've done.

As I go back to tie it into the north, to NOSM, to Hearst, the important Indigenous programming that they offer, the important francophone programming that's offered and medical education: We know that's so important. We know that when the previous government slashed residency positions, when the previous government didn't make those investments into unlocking better training opportunities for nurses, for PSWs—we dealt with the health care human resource crisis that we're in today. Thanks to stand-alone nursing, that means that these colleges in the north can offer nursing degrees as well. Thanks to the free tuition for PSWs, we're unlocking the training of the next generation of health care professionals, which will better equip us to meet the health care needs of today, but also of tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, that's a record I'm very proud of. That's something that should have been done years ago, but it's something that I hope the independent members, who took an important lesson in humility when they got reduced to independent status, will take. I think it's something we can all agree on, that these investments that we're making today are a non-partisan issue: investments into PSW training, investments into nursing training. This is a non-partisan issue. This is something that Premier Ford understands and is working tirelessly to address.

As I said, the need for doctors, nurses and allied health care professionals is so important in this province. The evolution of an institution to a full, independent university is a process—and I say "process" because we know not all members of this House really understand or respect an independent process. But this evolution has occurred many times in Ontario, including to Lakehead University, which began as a technical institute, then became a college and finally became a university. There is a litany of examples across the province of Ontario of this important process taking place. We respect the independence of that process. We respect that process. When we lean on that process, what do we see? We see important announcements—like NOSM, like Hearst—that this government has made.

In addition, I think of the digitization initiatives and the important work that this government has done to digitize all Ontario ministries now through the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act. It's our effort to reduce burden in legislation, to introduce legislation that creates obligations for all of Ontario's ministries to follow when creating new legislation, regulations, policies and forms, digitizing the process so we can invest in rebuilding operations and rehiring staff.

Mr. Speaker, let's look to the pandemic we're in and digitization and the important role that that technology

plays. I think of the important patient-centred care that our physicians have been able to provide thanks to those digitization efforts. I think of digitizing simple government services online. I think of steps that this government took to digitize our vaccine process in the province of Ontario. I know, saying a litmus test, that hey, not crashing, having a system that doesn't crash—that's nothing that we should applaud. But when we look—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Order.

**Mr. David Piccini:** I know it's upsetting the member opposite—to other provinces where their system crashed, as we look to other provinces and states that did not invest in important call agents—I think of a litany of emails that I've received from my constituents. Yes, this is a trying time for all of us. As I've said before, you get a call from your constituent, and if I return that within 24 to 48 hours, call them back, inevitably they say, "You know what, Dave? We actually did take your advice"—which I've pre-built into our voicemail—"and went online and called in, and within two to three minutes," which is the average, now, for our call-in centre, "we had our vaccine booking."

We know that if we had more supply, this would be done much faster and we'd be able to ramp up. Nobody enjoys sub-grouping a sub-group. But why do we do that? Because we don't have the supply, which takes me, again, back to the important digitization efforts of this government. It's really important, as I've often said, that we take the government—Outlander is a great show my partner and I are watching—out of the 1700s and into the 21st century. We're doing that. To understand the importance of the backbone, we've made the largest broadband investment in Ontario's history, Madam Speaker. That's going to benefit all our ridings. Durham region had a phenomenal—this is where we're working together. I know you've done that, Madam Speaker, with so many members in a bipartisan manner, leaning on the expert advice of our region, of the economic development department of Clarington region, and working with them to make the largest investment in broadband in Canadian history. It didn't come from a federal government, Conservative, Liberal or NDP; it came from a Progressive Conservative provincial government. I'm very proud of that.

**1550**

When I think to our farmers, our small businesses, everybody is going to benefit from reducing red tape, from investing in broadband, digitizing service delivery while also making important investments to in-person services. Madam Speaker, that's going to build a better Ontario for you and me today and a better Ontario for tomorrow.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I don't know about what's happening in Northumberland–Peterborough South, but the people in my riding of Hamilton expect me to be in this House dealing with this unending crisis that we're facing. They didn't expect that I would be here debating a red tape reduction bill.

I would just like to ask the member: What is different in your riding that you are not here debating and advocating for what you need in your riding? I know that the Peterborough Regional Health Centre is continuing to receive COVID patients from all across Ontario. It's almost 15 patients that your hospital has received, and they're ramping down non-urgent care. Your region set a record for new COVID cases, 50% of which are people under the age of 29. You have an outbreak in a retirement home, Empress Gardens. And I would just like to say that the chair of your health unit board has said that it's time for this government to stop the blame game.

So my question to you is, why are you not—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you.

Response?

**Mr. David Piccini:** I always appreciate the opportunity to answer questions. I think the differentiating factor here is that my constituents—and I know that member opposite's constituents as well—understand the need to make systemic investments into our broken health care system left behind by the previous government, supported by that member opposite's party; making investments into our small and medium-sized hospitals, which have benefited Peterborough, which have benefited NHH and Campbellford; making record structural investments into new long-term-care beds, into staffing initiatives, the Herculean effort to hire 27,000 more health care workers.

If that member opposite can look, with a straight face, and honestly believes that there is one silver bullet—we are in a third wave globally, across the globe, that we're all dealing with. We're working together, yes, working and calling on the feds to improve the paid sick leave—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you. Sit down.

Further questions?

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** The member opposite spoke about not being able to recycle in his plaza where his constituency office is located. I would just love to know: What in this bill is actually going to mandate mandatory recycling in a plaza like his? Can you just enlighten us on that solution the government has brought forward?

**Mr. David Piccini:** I drew that as an analogy to the Drainage Act, which is in this bill. I think that's reflective of a member of a now-independent party that didn't understand that when you punish municipalities, when you punish the working poor, when you punish farmers by bypassing the municipal process—as his government did in bypassing the municipal process to force feed green energy contracts to benefit their friends, down the throats of hard-working farmers—nobody benefits, and the municipalities don't benefit.

So when I draw these analogies, it's because I understand that when talking about the environment, there's a lot of work to do, but drawing these important analogies

on actual roll-up-the-sleeve initiatives that this government is doing matters when it comes to a sustainable environment.

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

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** It's been said that we can only have a healthy economy when we have healthy people. I've spoken to some people in my community who apparently just don't have a clear understanding of what red tape really is or why we need to address Ontario's over-regulation, which over-regulation, by the way, is something that the previous government was very, very good at—probably one of the only things they were very good at.

To the member: Can you please tell me why addressing red tape and regulatory burden is of particular importance to Ontario's economic recovery?

**Mr. David Piccini:** I do think it's important. The bottom line is, the facts speak for themselves. When we're the most regulated jurisdiction in the world, what does that mean? That means that the Elgin Park redevelopment project is 10 years out from concept to shovel in ground. That's the legacy of that previous government.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Order.

**Mr. David Piccini:** It means that when it comes to that first household—and the member heckling me wants to be part of a party that wants to tax people on their house. Madam Speaker, it's not lost on anyone here that when it takes a decade to get a shovel in the ground on housing—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Order.

**Mr. David Piccini:** —and we can't unlock housing supply.

I think to our long-term care bill—again, the member chuckling—it gets frustrating because I do highlight that abysmal record of 611 net new beds. By contrast, by streamlining regulations, do you know what that means? That means that we have almost as many beds under construction today in my riding alone than they did in a decade. That's what reducing regulation means.

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

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** I just had to rise and express my disappointment and surprise, I guess, that my good friend from Northumberland–Peterborough South would say that the Drainage Act is something that could have put us to sleep late on a Thursday afternoon when perhaps he doesn't know that in Chatham-Kent county alone there are 4,100 municipal drains stretching over 4,000 kilometres. That's big, big news in Chatham-Kent.

Perhaps he doesn't know that the nominated Progressive Conservative candidate in the great riding of Windsor–Tecumseh is Windsor's drainage commissioner, or he might be the assistant drainage commissioner. He was recently in the news for getting rid of the beavers in a

ditch—the beaver, a Canadian icon on the nickel since 1937.

Speaker, please, to the member: Can you tell us again how important drainage ditches are and the Draining Act is in Ontario in—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you.

Response.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thank you to one of my favourite members opposite in the Legislature for that important question. I apologize to the folks at home who are inspired and stimulated sifting through the Drainage Act.

But what I think we can all agree excites us is that when we streamline those administrative processes, as the amendments to this Drainage Act do, when we reduce costs for farmers, when we make it easier for them to address these issues, we all benefit. Our farmers benefit, our municipalities, our upper tiers benefit, and our farmers can do what they were born to do the best, and that's be the best stewards of our environment and that's to thrive and get remarkable made-in-Ontario products onto shelves, onto plates and into our bellies.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** I do think we need to amend the Drainage Act so we can get a ditch to drain the marsh that's over there.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** I didn't say "swamp."

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** The House will come to order.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Can I ask the member why this government took away two paid sick days in 2018 and they haven't been there for essential workers at all during this pandemic? Now the government is saying they're going to do something, except for a full year they've been saying, "Well, there's no gap, but we're going to fill this gap that we didn't admit was there." And then the Premier is saying that there's a gap because this program, that he was a creator of—the one that he didn't want and the one that he said was a waste of money because Ontario workers were protected enough. So I hear the member's passion for farmers, and it's a good one. What about essential workers?

**1600**

**Mr. David Piccini:** Liberals often like to say that they have a monopoly over positive politics and that everything is so nasty from everyone opposite. You heard the same Trumpian words from that member just now, which is unfortunate. It is unfortunate, because I so enjoy debating him and talking with him. I like swamps when I go to watch birds and things, but when we politicize that term, as that member did, we drag the discourse into the gutter. But I'll elevate myself from that, as we did when we signed a historic agreement with the other Premiers to invest in paid sick days, to work collaboratively to address the \$700 million, to support the 300,000 workers that have benefited from that program. It's a nuanced issue, without

question. This province is addressing that. Mark my words, Madam Speaker: We will be the first to have a comprehensive program in Canada.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It's always a privilege to rise today on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Davenport. For those who are watching, we are participating in a debate on a bill, Bill 276, the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act. This is a red tape reduction bill. I have a whole speech; I'll read it and I'll go back to the speech. But I've got to tell you, sitting here and listening to the last, I don't know, 30 minutes or so with the member from Northumberland-Peterborough South and his comments and the questions that were going around, I feel like we need to pause here for a moment, because while we're sitting here this afternoon—it's a Thursday afternoon. And I know that all of us here—Thursday afternoons are tough, actually—relatively tough, not compared to what a lot of people are going through, but relatively tough, because we're sitting here and we're eager to get back out into our communities or get to back to our homes. And it seems to drag on. I find that; I don't know. It just does on Thursday afternoons.

I'm looking at the clock and I'm dealing with the questions I'm getting from the people in my community, people who have family members who are homebound, who still don't have vaccines in arms, not even one shot, and I have four postal codes in my riding that are supposed to be priority hot-spot postal codes. I have people who are receiving home care, who are homebound, who cannot get a vaccine. Their family members are calling me just terrified.

I have many, many similar—and I know we all do. I know we're all dealing with this right now. I know all members around this House are. And when I hear the member opposite talk about how important this bill is because they're digitizing processes like the vaccine registration and I'm literally, every day, walking people through the disaster, the absolute failure that is our online registration system for vaccines, it's like I'm in a different reality. It's like the twilight zone in here. It really is. It's astonishing.

At one point, one of my colleagues had mentioned that it feels like—wouldn't the government rather be in here doing something that was actually relevant to people in our communities right now? Because I've got to tell you, people in our communities right now are actually dying.

I want to read something for you, because I'm obviously in here and couldn't hear the medical briefing but I've been reading some of the reports. The headline is: "People are now dying of #covid19 at home. This hasn't been seen before according to Ontario's coroner Dr. Huyer at today's medical briefing. They are staying at home sick and getting more seriously ill faster until it's too late." I want to quote him: "'Many of these people were found deceased.' Dr. Huyer says. He adds the people who have died at home didn't need to go to hospital based on symptoms. They were stable but deteriorated" so quickly.

I want to also point out that many of the people who are dying of COVID-19 at their homes are in their thirties. They're in their thirties, and their family members are finding them. So I've got to tell you, Madam Speaker: I started out today thinking, "I can handle this. I can debate this red tape reduction act," but I feel like it is absolutely shameful. I'm going to do it, because that is what we were elected to do—we will tackle these bills, however reprehensible they are—but in this moment, I can't even believe it that we are not sitting here and talking about paid sick days, that we are not talking about paid vaccine leave, that we are not talking—

**Hon. Todd Smith:** You are talking about it.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** There's a minister over there heckling me in this moment. Shameful—the Minister of Community and Social Services, for the record. I just want to say, Madam Speaker, that it is really appalling.

I'm going to read through this, because I do think the problem that's happening right now is that this government is using this pandemic as an opportunity to pass legislation when nobody is watching, things that actually do have implications. But I want to say very clearly on the record that there are so many things that we should be talking about right now, and this government refuses to, and they're taking joy in it. They get up and they joke around, and it's hilarious. I'm trying, you know? I know we all try to be collegial in here, but I really find this so deeply distasteful today.

Do you know what I'm going to say, too? I hope that when the members opposite, the government members, go back to their homes—because we're all isolating, right? We're not going to be out much in our communities. But when they have a chance to go back to their communities or be at home or whatever, I hope that they reflect a little bit this weekend on the seriousness of what people in our communities are dealing with.

The member from Northumberland-Peterborough South also made this comment. He said, "We're taking Ontario out of the 17th century." I think that was the comment. I thought, "30-year-olds are dying in their homes right now. What about that is not like the 17th century?" It's very unfortunate.

The other thing is that I've heard the members opposite this afternoon talk about things like the number of jobs that have been created, even since the pandemic began, manufacturing jobs. They're so proud, and I'm thinking to myself, "Those workers don't have protections in their workplaces." They're getting sick in the workplace and they're going home, and then maybe their kid comes home from school and is sick, and they can't afford to stay home one day with that child. They have to risk going to work. We have children taking care of children, small children, in families across this province, and the family members—we have whole families who have died, whole families who have left children.

Wow. I don't know. I've got three minutes left, Madam Speaker. I will attempt to address this bill. This bill has a bunch of schedules. It says it's supposed to be about fixing things for small businesses. Small businesses in my community are shutting down every day. This third wave has

destroyed them. The for lease signs are on every window. Communities, neighbourhoods are being destroyed, and there's this kind of attitude in this bill, and in the budget we saw recently too, that we're somehow past this. We're not.

And I want to say, too, that I've been writing letters to the minister with cases. We've been working really hard with our ministry liaisons or whatever to try to solve problems for some of the small businesses applying for these small business grants, and I've been writing letter after letter. We've been, again, working with them, but every once in a while I feel like I need to say to the ministers, "Here are the problems that we're seeing. Let's work together," and I just keep getting more and more.

This week I wrote the latest one. Here's one: There are people who are applying and they're being rejected, and they don't even know why. It's just over and over and over again, and in the meantime they're shutting down. They're shutting down, because they cannot survive.

**1610**

I will tell you something else, and I've mentioned this in the House before: Before the disastrous announcement last Friday, I had been out in my community when things were a little bit more open in the last few weeks, talking with some of the restaurants and the cafes. It was the weekend when they were told, "Open up. It's time to open up. Open up your patios." The restaurant owners and the cafe owners in my community were saying to me—every single one of them, without fail—"Could you please tell Doug Ford we don't want to"—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Who?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Sorry; the Premier. I apologize, Madam Speaker.

"Could you please tell the Premier that if we reopen now, we will be closing again, and we will not survive?" Actually, a lot of the businesses in my community chose not to reopen, because as we heard from other members here, it destroyed a lot of our businesses, having to reopen and bring in all the supplies and everything, and then they lost a lot of money.

So this government has been a disaster. It is shameful that we are having to sit here and debate this when what we should be doing right now is dealing with all of the major and shameful gaps in this government's plan. Madam Speaker, my colleagues have identified many, many issues, and I wish I had 20 more minutes to go through them. But I feel that in this moment there's really nothing more important than to talk and to share with the members opposite how dismayed and angry my constituents are.

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

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I want to take a moment to recognize the words that the member from Davenport just said. It was a really good reminder of our purpose here, especially during a pandemic. I just want to say thank you to the member, because it was a bit of a reality check, I think, especially for the Conservatives across. We're in a pandemic, people are dying and we need to prioritize here.

My question to the member is, what are some of the things that the member thinks we could be doing differently, or should have been included in this schedule, to really deal with the reality of Ontario today?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you very for that question. I do feel like a lot of the measures in the bill are punitive, so I would just like not to see them here. I would not like to see them basically criminalizing advocacy by tenants at the landlord and tenant tribunals, because I think that is just a shameful thing to be doing in this moment.

I would have liked to see something in here that set out to actually save Laurentian University, as opposed to this Northern Ontario School of Medicine University Act that is really just an excuse to address the fact that they've so dismally failed the people of Sudbury.

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I recognize that the member opposite's job is to oppose everything that we're doing, but there are some things in this bill that actually are very, very good: schedule 17, for example. I'm going to talk specifically about something in my riding. The Kinsmen do fantastic work. They purchased a refrigerated van for Kawartha Food Share so that they could get fresh produce and fresh meat to the food banks. It's something that all communities need to have. The problem is, they've only been able to meet once in person, and they will be breaking the law if they don't get at least three more meetings in. Schedule 17 allows them to meet electronically or by telephone. Is that not something that would be valuable during a pandemic: to make sure that those organizations that are supporting all of those who are at most risk can continue to operate?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Schedule 17? Well, yes, sure, make the meeting electronic. Go for it; that sounds like a great idea. However, consider also the food banks, the lines that go up and down the streets to the food banks in my riding, people who have never had to access a food bank before. I would like to see this government actually deal with—maybe they could have addressed it in here. I don't know; instead of trying to privatize Ontario Works, maybe they could have actually gone some way toward supporting people who are on ODSP who are literally calling my office and saying, "I don't know if I should continue to live, because I cannot live like this anymore."

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** To the MPP for Davenport: You talked about the small businesses in your riding; I receive phone calls from all across Hamilton about businesses that have given up calling the Progressive Conservative ministers. I have a small business, Ancaster Sports Centre, the Brassie Pub franchise owners—they're calling me because they can't understand the program. They've been denied, and there are no clear guidelines. They need supports now.

This red tape reduction bill will do nothing to keep their doors open in the short term. They are people who can't get access to vaccines; their workers can't get access to vaccines. They have difficulty with child care. All of the

supports that a business needs are not there. Why do you think the government failed to put those supports in place at the height of this unprecedented humanitarian health crisis?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you to the member for her excellent question. There's no question in my mind that this bill and what it purports to do does not support recovery in this province. Nothing, really, in here is going to help our small business sector get back on its feet and continue to generate the jobs that we know most Ontarians are employed in.

Here is the thing that Ontarians get but that this government just doesn't seem to want to acknowledge, which is that as long as this pandemic continues, there is no recovery. So I think this government is just playing the waiting game. They thought they could wait this out and vaccines would eventually come, and it would be miraculous. When I look at their faces opposite, I know they know that's not what's happening here. I wish they would act with more urgency.

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

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I want to just engage with the central thrust, I guess, of the member opposite's speech this afternoon, which was that she felt this legislation isn't necessary, that we should be focusing on something else, that we shouldn't be talking about these issues which matter to a great deal of our constituents, as we heard also from some colleagues from the opposition in some of the earlier speeches today.

Of course, we have the legislative branch and we have the executive branch. The executive branch is tasked with ensuring that the decisions of the Legislature are being enacted across the province. We know that many members of the executive are working extremely diligently, as well as implementing the budget that we heard about again earlier today, to ensure that all aspects of this pandemic are being addressed.

My question is to the member opposite: Does she believe that it's possible for the Legislature to be able to debate issues while the executive is fulfilling the tasks that we already set out for them in bills that have been passed throughout the past months?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I appreciate the question. I guess what I would say to the member opposite is that we aren't seeing any action. We aren't seeing any urgency from the executive council. We are not seeing it move forward. Again, the science table, all the medical experts have come forward—my goodness, I'm the education critic; I have come forward with multiple proposals and brought the words of education experts before this government so many times, and they have taken virtually none of the actions. And here we are.

No, I actually think that there are very important things we could be dealing with in this Legislature right now, and it's not generally represented in this legislation.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to thank the member from Davenport for that excellent analysis of this bill and its

shortcomings in the middle of this pandemic to deal with some of the crises that we're dealing with. One of the crises is the homelessness crisis. This government's response to the homelessness crisis that they inherited from the last government and from the government before that was to cut \$349 million out of the housing budget. Then they froze Ontario Works. Then they set up an eviction blitz at the Landlord and Tenant Board through an online process that disadvantages and makes it almost impossible for many people with disabilities and people with language barriers to participate and have a fair hearing.

This government is actually fuelling the homelessness crisis that we experience to an incredible degree in our ridings, which neighbour each other. Can you just talk about what the government should be doing to deal with the homelessness crisis instead of penalizing people who are trying to stop others from getting evicted?

1620

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you to the member for that excellent question. Actually, just two weekends ago, I went with the member to his riding to help deliver some food and also because I really wanted to see and meet some of the people who were living in some of the encampments. I've had tents in parks in my riding and I've met people there, but I'm talking about people who are really living on the edge, close to the water.

The other thing that really struck me when I was down there, to be honest—first of all, yes, we could just not be evicting people right now. That would be a good start. We could actually be providing real supports that will help them, like the paid sick days that we've talked so much about here. We could be providing them, maybe, with an increase in ODSP or social assistance. There are so many things that we could be addressing right now, in this crisis, rather than shutting down any of the ways that people have to advocate for themselves in a process, in a situation where they are so incredibly helpless.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** We don't have time for another back and forth. Further debate?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** As always, it's a privilege and honour to be able to rise in the chamber and speak on behalf of the good people of Niagara West. I want to thank the people of Niagara West for the support and encouragement that we've seen throughout the past year, which has been an exceptionally challenging time for many, many people throughout our communities, and of course, bring those concerns and the issues they raise with us, as their elected representatives, into this chamber.

I want to also acknowledge the hard work of so many of my colleagues on all sides of these aisles. There are issues, of course, where we don't agree, and there are issues where we are able to express that disagreement passionately and with a great deal of fervour. I always respect that, but I think, at the end of the day, we're all here for similar reasons when it comes to ensuring that our constituents are being supported.

I want to speak a little bit about why I believe the legislation that I'm rising to speak to today—although I

know I don't have as much time as I initially anticipated—is important to people in my constituency as well as to many others across the province, recognizing that there's important work ongoing each and every day with regard to the pandemic. Earlier this morning, we also heard about some of the attributes and aspects of the budget bill that has been presented, a historic piece of legislation that invests in Ontario, invests in health care, invests in long-term care and makes sure that we have a strong and stable foundation moving forward here in the province of Ontario. It's what the people of Ontario expect; it's what the people of Ontario deserve. Our government is ensuring that those commitments are met.

Speaker, as you know, and as I've referenced before in the Legislature, I was born and raised in rural Niagara. I have a great deal of love for the place. I was born and raised just outside of Vineland, Ontario. As you're driving through the QEW, if you take the off route on Victoria Avenue, you're going to be there. It's a remarkable place, where we have pretty much every kind of farmer under the sun—at least, anything you can grow in Canada. It's the banana belt. There are amazing amounts of people who are able to be serviced through value-added agriculture, who are able to be given good livelihoods, who are able to put food on the table due to the efforts of the agricultural community. As well, of course, we have diverse advanced manufacturing communities, and lately we've seen a lot of construction happening as well, as people are discovering the beauty of the Niagara region and making it their home or investing in industrial, commercial or various other aspects of the local economy.

I was born and raised on a 100-acre farm just down the road from Vineland. Growing up, my father and my mother cared a great deal about environmental conservation. One of the ways they did so was with a nutrient management system that was put in place through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. What happened was that they had a very clear plan as to what they were going to do with the nutrient management. Of course, there are other ways to refer to these nutrients; I think we can all guess where these nutrients came from, being born and raised on a hog farm. But they recognized the value of ensuring that there were proper regulations in place around particular aspects of maintaining our environmental integrity, ensuring that there wasn't any runoff into local streams and rivers, as well as ensuring that our food supply was kept safe.

I say that all with the preface that not all regulation is bad regulation. I think there's a bit of a boogeyman that we sometimes hear from the opposition and from the Liberals as well, that the Tories just want to cut regulation, cut red tape left, right and centre without consideration for the health and well-being of Ontarians. Speaker, I rise today to assure the people of Niagara and the people of Ontario that nothing could be further from the truth. We recognize the importance of thoughtful, necessary, considerate regulation. What we don't want to have is duplicative, unnecessary processes that hurt those who are trying to ensure that they're able to provide a product, a

service, a good to our community, in such a way that doesn't in fact protect the health and safety of Ontarians. We want to ensure that we're able to reduce the unnecessary burden on our small business owners.

Speaker, that's why I believe legislation such as this—which, if my memory serves me correctly, is the sixth of the red tape reduction packages that have been brought forward through the Associate Minister for Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Incredible amounts of work have gone into these, and a wide variety of ministries are represented.

I want to speak a little bit about some of the aspects of this legislation in the time that I have left. I wanted to touch on that “why.” The why is about making sure that people are able to put food on their table through increased economic activity, protecting workers, while also ensuring that our job creators are able to proceed with the projects that, frankly, employ so many of my constituents—that also employed my family growing up when it came to their ability to work in that space—and continue these types of investments for the future.

I say that because when we're looking at a lot of the things that we're doing with in regard to COVID, a lot of it is being driven by changing circumstances. We see the variants of concern, for example. We see things changing very rapidly when it comes to COVID here. That's why we're calling on the federal government right now to close the borders and make sure that we're not having international travel come here. We've seen this variant of concern also in India—the triple mutant threat, as they're referring to it there. These types of things come up very rapidly. We need to react, but we also need to be proactive. I believe legislation such as this ensures that we're setting a firm foundation, a strong foundation when, as we move into the next stage, as we move into the recovery stage through COVID, we have in place the measures, we have in place the policies and regulations that will enable businesses, will enable workers, will enable families to step forward with renewed confidence in the structures that are in place.

When we're looking at the legislation that's been brought forward today, this legislation is going to do a number of different things. We see that it's going to help consumers save money on electricity by making it easier for them to track their energy usage. We see that it's helping to ensure that Ontario remains a global leader in the connected and automated vehicle industry by supporting innovative pilot programs like consulting on adding new vehicle types such as automated farm vehicles, and removing certain restrictions around modified automatic vehicles. We see that it's modernizing Ontario by bringing more services and processes online, such as developing new applications to allow online stickers for heavy commercial vehicle licencing plates, which is something that I heard about from my constituents earlier, especially in the last wave, to make sure that we're able to see those renewals continue. It's very important that the transfer of goods and services that continues on a daily basis and that is so fundamental to so much of what we do is able to

continue without, frankly, it being illegal because they didn't have their licences or their licence plates renewed.

As well, of course, enhancing protections for workers by strengthening policies that do keep them safe, like reviewing the Working at Heights Training Program to improve standards for training, content and delivery: Again, I think that goes to the fact that we believe regulation, when it's necessary to protect the health and safety of Ontarians, is vitally important. We recognize that there's an important role for the government to play in that, but we also recognize that we can't be duplicating services that are provided by the federal government. We can't be duplicating particular regulations that are in place through other ministries, perhaps, and we need to be strengthening some of those ones where we see vulnerabilities. I think the heights training program is a perfect example of the importance of strengthening regulation in certain areas.

As was mentioned earlier by my colleague from Peterborough, schedule 17 speaks to supporting the not-for-profit sector and other corporations by allowing them to continue to hold virtual meetings during the pandemic.

Those are just a few of the areas, but I want to touch back with the agricultural sector because, growing up in agriculture, working in agriculture for some years, I saw as well the need to ensure that the rules that are in place in agriculture are easier to understand. There are a lot of farmers who are extremely busy throughout periods of the year. Right now, for example, is typically planting season, at least in my neck of the woods, but isn't, perhaps, right at this very moment, just given that there's been some of the weather we've had. Ensuring that there's easy to understand, quick access to the rules and regulations that they have to follow—because at that time of the year, time is very much money. When you're talking about putting in long days in a short period of time to be able to plant the crop that you're going to harvest that fall, you need to be able to pull up information rapidly. It needs to be clear; it needs to be concise. You don't have to go hire a lawyer in order to understand the rules that you have to follow.

### 1630

So whether it's supporting on-farm anaerobic digestion methods, something that I know we are seeing a significant investment in through the biodegradable resource sector and clean tech, important aspects like this as well are ones that can ensure that our farmers, our workers, our job creators, are able to do the work that they need to do in a manner that is effective, that is efficient and that recognizes modern best practices when it comes to policies and regulations.

We also see, Speaker, changes here that will impact a great deal of the dairy farmers in my riding. I know we've heard urban members who think that this legislation isn't important, but I can tell you that there are many, many families in my riding, small family-owned businesses in the dairy sector, who believe that allowing for more efficient on-farm bulk storage options for milk is in fact important.

So thank you, Speaker, for indulging me this afternoon. I look forward to hearing questions from my colleagues.

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

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I think it was just over a week ago we heard one of those classic announcements from this government, where they were going to do something new but without a plan. This time it was that they were going to vaccinate those 18 and over in hot-spot communities. In our community, we thought, “Hey, they’ve finally been listening,” but just a week after, there was no plan or supplies.

So since this government is obsessed with talking about red tape, why don’t they just peel it off the vaccines and get it out there to people who need it?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I’m very cognizant that the members opposite don’t want to talk about this legislation. Apparently it’s not something they’re interested in, whether it’s helping job creators or agricultural sector workers in Ontario.

But to respond to the member opposite, if he wants to be talking about vaccines, which is obviously an important issue, I would say that he needs to call on his federal counterparts in the NDP to call on Justin Trudeau and ensure that we’re getting the supply that we deserve. In March, we had 892,000 fewer vaccines delivered to Ontario than were committed to our government, and that has a direct impact in your community and in my community. That’s 892,000 fewer people who were able to be vaccinated.

Speaker, we are working rapidly to ensure that each and every vaccine that’s received here in the province is received in the arms of constituents such as yours as fast as possible, and I know that’s something we’re going to continue to do.

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

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I would like to thank the member for his comments. He talked a lot about conservation and respecting the environment and agriculture, specifically around the schedules put forward and the reduction of red tape. Over the years, the last three years, we’ve seen red tape cause a lot of harm in this province when it comes to agricultural land. The open for business act, I think it was Bill 47, that was introduced right away, made it easier to pave on agricultural prime land. We’ve also seen conservation authorities ripped apart. Yes, we want to eliminate unnecessary barriers, but at the same time we want to make sure we’re doing it in a way that allows for people and communities to be successful.

Does the member opposite have any concern about what took place over the last few years when it comes to agricultural land in regions like his and the development that took place in those communities?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Again, Speaker, it’s important to be able to recognize the unique beauty of the Niagara region and particularly in my area. I know you had an opportunity to travel through in a prior bid for a particular position—absolutely beautiful area, I would agree with you. Two of my brothers own large farms in the area, my father owns a farm, uncles own farms.

Ensuring that prime agricultural land is protected is absolutely crucial. It’s why our government is actually enhancing the greenbelt. We’re adding to the greenbelt, as opposed to a government—if I remember correctly—that over 30 times ensured that they pulled out aspects of the greenbelt, to be able to give to rich donor friends. Now, Speaker, I don’t know; I think that’s a little bit disconcerting to see, when it comes to the members opposite raising concerns and on the one hand saying that they’re concerned about it, and then on the other hand when they were in office actually being willing to remove important land from the greenbelt. Our government will not touch the greenbelt. We refuse to remove good agricultural land from the greenbelt for the sake of our rich developer friends. We’re going to ensure that farmland is protected in the province of Ontario today and into the future.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** A polite reminder to all folks to direct their remarks to and through the Chair and not to each other across the way. Thank you very much.

Further questions?

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** For months now, we have heard the official opposition criticize our government for bringing forward bills such as this. This is our sixth bill focusing on red tape reduction. We are doing this because we believe it is imperative that we bring measures and put measures in place to create an economic environment where businesses can recover, can rebuild, can rehire post-pandemic. We’re going to get through this, and we have to be prepared to get through this.

Can the member from Niagara West please share with the Legislature why it is important to do this work now so that small businesses and all businesses in Ontario can respond and grow quickly once we get through the pandemic?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I want to thank the member for Flamborough-Glanbrook. I represented a portion of your riding for a couple of years, and it’s also a wonderful area.

I’m reminded of a skyscraper. We’ve all driven past these deep, deep pits that are being dug in order to build these skyscrapers, to use a very efficient small portion of space. But what I find is the most fascinating about skyscrapers is, for the first couple of years, often you don’t necessarily see the hard work that’s going into building a firm foundation for the rest of the skyscraper. When I think of the work that we’re doing as a government, we need to ensure that the work we’re doing looks not just to where we are on the street level but looks at setting that firm foundation so that we can build a skyscraper of prosperity and opportunity here in the province of Ontario. We’re cognizant of what’s happening in our day to day when it comes to fighting COVID-19. We’re committed to doing so. But we’re also going to be building that foundation so we can rise higher and shoot farther than ever before.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Question?

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to thank the member from Niagara West for his comments. I didn’t keep an exact tally, but I think I heard “red tape reduction” about 30

times in his 10-minute speech. I think that's roughly accurate. But when I talk to small business owners in my area, they're hanging on by their fingernails. I have never heard them say that red tape reduction is their priority right now. This government waited a year into the pandemic, until we'd lost 25,000 small businesses in Ontario, before they introduced the emergency benefit for small businesses. What I'm hearing from small businesses is they want this government to manage the pandemic, to make sure that schools and workplaces and long-term-care homes are not points of transmission so that they can reopen, because that's what they need to do. They want this government to listen to the science table in order to manage this pandemic with as few deaths as possible, with as short a lockdown as possible, so that they can reopen, and then they need funding in order to reopen. They need funding to buy supplies in order to reopen. Will that be a priority for this government?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Well, I can assure the member opposite that if I walked down the street and talked to your small businesses, they're not asking for red tape addition; I can tell you that much. What we're seeing in our government—since he's talking about supports for small business—is, of course, calling on the federal government to make ensure that they're providing the supports, which they have, and we encourage them to step forward more.

But I want to list some of the things that we've been doing and that I'm hearing people in my riding speaking about when it comes to small businesses. And yes, it has been a very challenging time throughout the pandemic, but let's look at some of those measures: Whether it's ensuring that we're providing rebates for property taxes, providing rental relief, providing supports for PPE purchases, providing up to \$40,000 in no-strings-attached grants to small businesses across the province, providing hydro relief and rebates, as well as ensuring that we're cutting the business education property tax, as well as ensuring that we're reducing the corporate tax rate for small businesses, the amount of things that our government has done through the Minister of Finance and through the Premier to ensure that our small businesses are supported is second to none.

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

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I know the member opposite is talking a lot about red tape and about how it's building the economy, but if the member really does look at the statistics over the last 20 years in this province—actually, in the last 40 years—you will see that it's a bit of a myth that Conservatives have handled the economy well. In fact, in 2018, even prior to the pandemic, it was one of the lowest economic growths in the last 40 years of 1.7% or 1.8%. The truth is, you can find the balance between preserving the environment and building a strong economy.

**1640**

During the McGuinty years in this province, we saw record growth. It was 3.2%, 3.4%. Even the last year prior to the change in government, 2017, it was over 3% GDP growth.

My question to the member opposite: Does he dispute the fact that under a Liberal government in this province we didn't experience strong economic growth and, at the same time, have a nice balance between—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you.

Response?

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I want to ask the member opposite, if he truly believes that the Liberal government led to strong economic growth in this province, man, do I have the piece of waterfall to sell you in Niagara.

Speaker, I have to say that if he wants to go and talk to one of the 350,000 manufacturing jobs that were lost in the province of Ontario while that government was in office, well—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Member from Don Valley East, order.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** —economic growth was great. In Niagara, we had incredible unemployment as a result of the government the member opposite was part of and, under our government, prior to the pandemic, the lowest unemployment in over 20 years—the lowest unemployment in this millennium, Speaker. That's not because of the government that was in place when that member served here in government; it was because of the actions taken by Premier Doug Ford and his associated government.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you. On that note, a reminder to all members that we refer to any serving member by their title only or their riding.

Further debate?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** I rise today to speak on this bill on behalf of the people in Kiiwetinoong. I get up sometimes here, when we talk about things that are happening across Ontario—I just want to go back to the member from Davenport. She was pretty upset about people dying now of COVID-19 at home. While I'm up here, I'm going to spend one minute of my time just to remember the people who are dying before I get into my time for 10 minutes. Meegwetch.

*Interjection.*

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member opposite has asked for a moment of silence to remember the people in his community. I think the House would afford him a proper moment of silence to do that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** The member did not formally request a moment of silence, but—

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'm asking for a moment of silence to properly—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** The government House leader is asking for a moment of silence on behalf of the member from Kiiwetinoong for those who have died. Is it agreed? Agreed.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you. I return to the member from Kiiwetinoong to resume.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch for that. I was prepared to use my time, but thank you to the government House leader for calling that.

Yes, I was just going to say that it's a way of life, it's the way we do things. We recognize and spend some time to acknowledge the people who leave this world. It's like a teachable moment, so to speak. But I wanted to do that before I began. I knew the member from Davenport was really frustrated and I could feel it when I was sitting there, so I thought I had to do that.

Going back to Bill 276, Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, 2021: The title of this bill says that it's supporting recovery, but I'm not seeing a lot in this bill, when we talk about references to human recovery, despite the many, many schedules included in this bill. As we know, the bill is yet another omnibus red tape bill that is called a COVID recovery bill. It makes a lot of minor and technical changes in line with the government's pre-pandemic priorities. Speaker, not only does the bill fail to respond effectively to urgent pandemic-related issues, it seems to be creating some harmful policies that target people who are struggling during the pandemic, including Ontario Works recipients and tenants.

I've been here all week, and on Monday, in the debate, two members across the way spoke at length about the importance of critical minerals in this bill. For those who don't know much about critical minerals, they include chromite, graphite, nickel, platinum group elements and others. I am told that these can be used for various defence, aerospace, digital, electronics, stainless steel, energy, health and life sciences applications. These applications, I am aware, are all important to Ontario's economy. I listened to what was said by the members across the floor and that there seems to be a lot of talk about Ontario's economic recovery from the north.

In making government plans, I'd like to share with you some concerns I've heard from different First Nations and treaty people across the north. These are concerns that need to be heard and acknowledged, as no one should be making business recovery plans based in the north without engagement with all First Nations in that territory—period. These mineral opportunities have the potential to be a good thing if done in partnership with everyone across those treaty territories, so that all First Nations can equally benefit from these emerging mineral opportunities. And I know that is not happening right now, when we talk about proper engagement.

**1650**

The government has introduced a proposal that would support the Critical Minerals Strategy, which they spoke about at length on Monday. When we look at the list of the minerals, the one that stands out to me is chromite. Chromite is one of the minerals that companies want to mine out of the Ring of Fire area. I go to the communities that are part of that area. There are kids growing up with no clean drinking water. There are 25-year-olds who have

grown up without ever, ever having clean drinking water. I went to another community where it was minus 45, and these people were living in tents, tent frames, Madame Speaker. And they want to pull resources out of these territories. It's almost like you're just taking but you're not giving.

Every day I come here I ask for a partnership, to treat us as partners, but nothing happens. I ask for drinking water. I ask for better health care. I get nothing. I ask for proper mental health services for children. I see girls, young girls, dying by suicide at 12 years old. What happens? "That's a federal responsibility." That's the answer I get. What I know as a First Nations person, me being here in this place, is that when governments continue to say, "That's a federal responsibility," that is structural violence. That is structural racism. I live it. I'm living it right now when you guys tell me, "That's a federal responsibility," when children as young as nine years old are crying when they want a simple thing: clean drinking water.

I had planned on 20 minutes. Because we passed the six-and-a-half-hour mark, it goes down to 10 minutes now.

Anyway, I guess what I'm saying is, the government should not be making deep cuts. It should be working with First Nations. We're not against development; communities are not against development. We just want to be part of the benefits, the way treaties are supposed to be acknowledged. Treaty number 9 is the only numbered treaty where Ontario has their signature. Why do you have your signature there? Meegwetch.

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

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Thank you to the member opposite. One of my most memorable moments in my very short career here at Queen's Park was visiting the member's riding, when we went up with one of the committees and flew to Sioux Lookout. It was wonderful. He treated us with such respect, and we were able to visit some of the sites in Sioux Lookout.

The member mentioned chromite. As I've said earlier, my hometown is Capreol. Capreol was one of the sites that would have been where the smelter for the chromite mine would have been located, and hopefully still could be. Of course, that would have a profound impact on the economy in that small community. My question to the member opposite is: You mentioned that you're hoping for more negotiation and signoff from representatives from First Nations communities, but would you agree that this government has some support from some leaders within the First Nations community about the Ring of Fire?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** We have to understand that First Nations communities are actually constructs of a colonial system. What it does is it divides a nation. When you talk to one First Nation, when you try to work with one or two First Nations, it's a divide-and-conquer process. You have to understand that it does not work. You have to have the full agreement of the whole nation, not just a First Nation. Meegwetch.

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

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** It's always a privilege to be in the House when the member from Kiiwetinoong speaks about the realities and the priorities that he's facing from his community members. In here, we're talking about a budget that the government has brought in: potential changes to infrastructure, broadband, health care, education, mineral development—you name it. There's a lot that's in there. We're going to go back and forth about what's good, what's bad, where it could improve, what's best, what Ontario's people really need to meet their needs.

But when you take a moment to listen to the member from Kiiwetinoong, when this province hasn't even taken the opportunity to provide the basic need of water to a community, nothing else matters—nothing else matters. That is gut-wrenching to hear, that children are going without clean water.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** I think those thoughts are—it's given me an opportunity to provide a voice for the voiceless children who don't have that. I know it's been going on for decades and decades. All I try to do is—it's almost as if I'm a teacher. I'm teaching you what's happening in the backyard of Ontario. I'm teaching you what's happening in the backyard of Canada.

There should be no boundaries. Sometimes I just feel like I'm not part of Ontario, when I'm sitting across from a government that has the power to say, "You know what? Let's build a water treatment plant in this First Nation." That's all we need.

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It's always a pleasure to hear the member opposite speak. I just wanted to really drill down on one part of it. The member did suggest early on in his remarks that there are benefits that could accrue to the communities in it. I take him at his word—and if I'm wrong, he will correct me in his answer—that for him, the best approach would be to get unanimity from all of the nation.

Assuming that would be possible, I wonder if he could highlight for us, then, what some of the benefits would be to the exploration for that community, to utilizing the resources in the community, and how he would use some of those benefits to improve the community.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** When I'm here, people talk about crown lands. To me, if I say that word, that's a very colonial term. Those are stolen lands.

The treaties that were signed—we're supposed to share three ways. I talk about Treaty 9. The federal government signed it, our forefathers signed it, and again, I'm going back to Ontario: Out of the numbered treaties, 1 to 11, Treaty 9 is the only treaty that has a province signed to it.

We're supposed to share the resources three ways, not the IBAs. Whether it's 1%, 0.5%—whatever the amount is; I don't know—we're supposed to share it three ways. I think that's why it's really important. We wouldn't need any government funding if we shared it three ways, with the infrastructure crisis that's happening in our communities.

1700

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** It is always an honour to sit in this House and listen to the member from Kiiwetinoong, who brings the perspective of the northwest and the northern First Nations communities here.

I'm asking a question of clarification. What I heard is that the government wants to extract and exploit the mineral wealth that's in the traditional territories of the First Nations in northern Ontario. But there's a complete lack of trust, because for three years the member has been sitting in this House, asking this government for basic things like housing, so that people in the communities are not living in tents in the middle of the winter, and for clean drinking water. This government has taken no action on that, but they're willing to take action on extracting the minerals.

This is where the question of clarification comes in. It seems that what this government should be doing is building trust by meeting the basic living needs of the communities first and then entering into negotiations around how to share the mineral wealth that's in the communities. Is that correct?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Thank you for that question. It's really important to understand what the land means for Indigenous people, what the land means for us as First Nations people.

We're in First Nations communities and reserves to put us away from the land, because who wants access to the lands? It's the governments, right? They want access to the resources. But you have to understand that the land needs us and we need the land, because language, identity, a way of life, teachings, traditions all come from the land. Without the land, who are we? When I speak to—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Response.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** —treaty rights holders, when I speak to land rights holders, they will not allow any development on their lands without proper consultation. That's where the governments think they can just talk to the leadership, but we need to talk to everyone.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** A quick question and answer.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'll tell you, this has been a very informative speech and discussion with the member opposite, because I think we've actually heard a very important point come out of debate tonight. I think that what we're hearing the member say, if I got his last answer correctly, is that this is a resource, that we have to come to an agreement—that he agrees it's a very important resource which could create a lot of wealth for the community. I heard him say in his last answer that it would alleviate the need for transfers.

But what we have to then work on, he would agree, is that the wealth is there, but we have to work on how we get to that point where your community feels like it is sharing equally in extracting what is very important wealth for your community as well. Am I correct in how he's assessing it?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** It's called respecting treaties, and that's all you need to do. When I say "respect treaties," there are ways that you can respect treaties, and right now this government is not doing it.

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

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** It's always an honour to listen to my friend and colleague speak. He's also a very tough act to follow, I can tell you that. It is actually a window, when he does speak, and I do want to mention that a little bit, about a place I've never been and about the struggles of a people who have lived here for thousands and thousands of years—before my father emigrated here or even my mom's family, who have lived here for some generations in Quebec. We're talking thousands of years.

I can't even fathom the frustration that must be felt when you have people that have come to this land and then say to the people living there, "Let's talk about mineral rights. Let's try to find ways in which we could make money," when their children, in many cases, don't even have access to clean drinking water. And then to see questions sort of pivot in that direction—anyway, it's disappointing.

There's a lot of stuff in this bill that we're debating today that is technical. We've seen omnibus bills before. Again, I'll point out that though I'm a new member in the chamber, when it was the Liberals that had government and when they introduced their giant omnibus bills, I know Conservative members were very frustrated with it.

Again, we're here with an omnibus bill, and we're dealing with these technical details during a pandemic. There are things in here that are changes worth doing, but the government holds their cards very close to their chest. So we come in as opposition members and we find out the day of what is going to be debated, what's the next bill. Every time I walk into this chamber, every morning, I want to look down at the House sheet and I want to see the third reading of the Time to Care Act. That's kind of what I hope for every single day.

Today is another day when we're not seeing the third reading of that bill, another day when those living in long-term care, their loved ones and the residents themselves, are hoping for a future when they can receive the dignity they deserve, when thousands and thousands of PSWs could be hired so that our loved ones could live their moments, their lives, in respect. So much could have been done in advance to protect them. We had the first wave, we had the second wave and we're now in the third wave. You would have thought that we had hindsight from the first wave, to be able to implement protections in place for the second. Well, so much wasn't done.

I did mention it, and I know the government loves to go and bring forth legislation and talk, sometimes ad nauseam, about red tape. And red tape is important when it's red tape. Although I think, if colour is a spectrum, what they see as red I don't think New Democrats often see as red. What they see as red is any kind of restriction or even protection, in some cases, that would allow their friends and their developer donors, you name it, to be able to go

out there and continue to make lots of money on the backs of everyday Ontarians. For them, they're willing to rip that tape apart.

For us, we want to protect people. We want to protect essential workers. We want to protect small business owners. The list goes on and on. For them, not so much; it's always about helping the wealthy, the most affluent. Certainly, during this pandemic, those most affluent, those most rich among us, have made tens of billions of dollars.

Constituents who don't even come from my riding, constituents who come from government ridings, in some cases, will reach out to me and say, "I've sent a letter to a minister or to the Premier asking for this, asking for a meeting, asking to talk about this, wanting this sort of change." Often, they're rebuffed. Sometimes, they're met with, maybe. I know there are a lot of government members who will meet with their residents. To meet with a minister or, certainly, the Premier is a different situation, despite what we often hear about the phone and answering calls from constituents.

But the reality is, when it comes to a lobbyist, when it comes to big multinational corporations like Walmart, if they call—sometimes I think maybe Walmart has got a special phone in the Premier's pocket. If it rings, he gets it out. He answers. It's Walmart, right? But the small business—

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** And 7-Eleven too.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** There you go, right?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Order.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** But the small business owner—and so many have now closed and shuttered their businesses forever—when they reach out to this government, what do they end up with? A dial tone, at best.

A couple of things I do want to say: Again, when it comes to red tape—and I asked this to my friend and member just earlier—if you really want to deal with red tape, let's take it off the vaccines. Guys, let's take it off the vaccines. And I get it: There's a lot that could be done differently at different levels of government. I understand. You talk about a supply issue, and I know, especially early on in this pandemic, when the vaccines were available, I looked at Canada, the list—we've all looked at them online. Where were we on that list? And yet, it wasn't at the top. I think both sides can agree on that.

But once you get a supply of vaccine, you've got to deliver it equitably. That's what you've got to do. My community is a hot spot. We have had, throughout this pandemic, some of the highest transmission rates, not because of the choices people make in my community, but the choices that were forced upon them. As front-line essential workers, they were out there at the deepest moments of this lockdown, making things go, feeding their families, keeping everybody here going. They were packing onto packed buses. We've seen the pictures. They're shoulder to shoulder, someone wearing a mask, someone not. Imagine someone coughs right beside you. You're thinking, "What now? What now? What do I do?" We called, and I called, for more buses, more funding

dedicated so that our essential workers, those we call heroes, could get to work and come home safe, and we didn't see that additional funding. There were so many different things that have been needed and continue to be needed to deal with this pandemic.

**1710**

Sick pay: We're going to be getting into that, so I won't talk about that here, and we've certainly talked quite a bit. I think the government announced that they have planned to make a plan to plan to deal with it or something; I don't know.

I hope they eventually listen to those who are calling on them. Certainly, it's them at their science table, the same people who have said, "Give vaccines to the most at risk." Yes, we must give it to those who are most vulnerable. They are the ones who face some of the darkest and most dangerous outcomes. Again, I talked about long-term care—our elderly, our grandparents, our parents. But those who are at risk the most, those who are putting themselves in that situation every day, not only can they get sick—and even if they're younger and they generally fare better, all things being equal to those who are older, they could then pass it on.

I heard a health expert say some fact that every 36 vaccines that have been given, I think, save one life. That was what I was told by one of the health experts, and I was told this this past week, when we fought—because just over a week ago, there was a plan by this government, where they were facing pressure, and they said, "If you're 18 and up in a hot spot, you can have access to a vaccine," and then there was no plan. There was no dedicated supply. There was no timeline. There were no details, so we worked with health groups on the ground, and we were able to administer thousands in long lineups in chilly weather, but at least the people who came out there, and so many young people—you would be surprised to see how many young people were out there—were able to get a vaccine instead of having to wait for months for a plan to actually develop.

There's so much stuff that has to be done. There are things in here, technical details, that are okay. They're admissible. They're acceptable. But there's so much that all of us here in the opposition want to see passed, things that could change lives. I can't wait to hear a demonstrated plan to get hot spots—all of them—vaccinated. I had people coming from all over the GTA to our mobile clinics that we were doing, asking, "When is our turn? When is our time to get vaccinated?"

As I look through this, and as I've looked through many other omnibuses—in the final moments of when I speak—and I think it was alluded to, about broadband. Under this pandemic, there has been a lot of legislation, again, yes, that deal with small, technical amendments here and there. But the worst is when we're in here debating stuff that you know that they're trying to get away with, stuff that you know that if there were no pandemic, they would be in such hot water. They think, "Look, we're going to introduce stuff here to help developers and all that stuff in the midst of a pandemic," and that's where it gets really disappointing.

Again, we will support when things are supportable, and we as New Democrats will continue to fight and push for changes and measures that will help everyday Ontarians, especially those who need it the most, especially those who are most at risk, like those in my community and like our essential workers. We call them heroes. Let's respect them, and let's treat them like heroes.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Question?

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I found that the member from Humber River–Black Creek's points were really on point. I was really taken aback by the statement he made about vaccination red tape. We're in here—it's so ironic—talking about red tape, and there's a pandemic going on, and people can't even figure out where to get a vaccination shot in many cases.

A question to the member: Like my community, his community is very diverse. Does he find that there's a lot of miscommunication out there during this pandemic, and do you think it would be great if we reduced red tape when it comes to the rollout of the vaccine?

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** Thank you for that question from the member. Absolutely. For instance, throughout this pandemic, the government will get up, they'll announce something, but it will be an announcement without a plan. I'll go and talk to health care providers and they'll say, "We didn't see that coming." Then they're scrambling, trying to make it a reality. There's so much confusion out there.

In my community, there are language barriers to a lot of information they need. We have done countless workshops on addressing vaccine hesitancy, as an example. But you have to make it accessible in multiple languages. You have to bring information. We've done it; we've brought it to people's doors. But you can't assume that the way in which you deal with information is it's just something you can put out there, let's say, in the news and hope that everybody gets it.

I've been calling for direct resources. Communities that are hardest hit need the information, they need the resources and they need them to be accessible if we really want to fight the pandemic.

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member talked about not knowing what we're debating. He will know, of course, that we rise every Thursday and we outline the business of next week. We did that earlier today.

But I wanted to really drill down on something he said for the first two minutes of his speech. He talked about the previous debate, the previous speech, and he seemed to allude to the fact that he felt that the questioning back and forth was somehow disrespectful of the member. I want to know specifically what part of the questioning back and forth did he feel was disrespectful of the member in his caucus who spoke, because I think it would go a long way to help bring us to understanding what it is the NDP thinks we can actually talk about and debate in this place.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I'm not the member, but what I hoped—I think he outlined something very simple. We're

talking about mineral rights, and he talked about a water purification plant. I think what my colleague, my friend and the member on our side wanted to hear was real change for the people living in his communities.

You're talking about mineral rights, but this is always about money. It's always about making money, making money. Then perhaps, once the money is made—it's not even alluded to—maybe we'll improve the lives of those living there.

I hoped, after such a heart-open conversation about the living standards that people are facing there, that there would be a conversation to at least address the drinking water. Because that's not what happened. It was, "Okay, I heard you about the drinking water, but I don't want to talk about that. Let's try to talk about what's great about the bill." I thought it was very artfully and masterfully done, but it was one of those pivot questions to, "Let's not talk about what that is. Let's try to talk about what's good that's here," when he's clearly asking for something you don't want to answer and this member doesn't want to give.

So from that basis—I didn't exactly say it was disrespectful; I said I was a little disappointed. I wanted to hear something a little different, like I expect he did, too.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** A member mentioned that there are things in this bill that seem to be passed under the cover of COVID. While everybody is distracted with trying to get through this pandemic, the government is bringing in things.

One of the things that's in this bill that I'm wondering if the member thinks is part of that is the cutting of supports and preferential access to the electrical grid for electricity that's generated through renewable resources. This is going to be a death blow to many of the renewable energy companies in this province. It also means that we're taking a step backwards on our environmental protection.

To the member: Is that one of the actions that you were talking about this government taking?

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I guess it's very pertinent on Earth Day to ask a question about renewable energy.

I do think this government has lost opportunities along the way when it comes to being able to invest in renewable energy. I think there were plant closures pertaining to that. Money had been given out, doled out, but without any sort of restriction. Then you'll get companies taking that money, promising manufacturing of vehicles—"This is what we're going to do with that money"—and then in the end, backing off and moving elsewhere.

There's so much more that could be done in terms of renewable energy, making prudent decisions, not—well, I won't get into the past government, but certain things were pointed out. I think there are many ways in which we can invest in a very intelligent way that will be beneficial to all of us and not do some of the things that the members opposite addressed that the previous government had done. There's a way forward, and it's a green way. We, certainly, as New Democrats, are going that way.

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

1720

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** I think I've said before I have some experience driving trucks. I've driven across borders, I've driven across Canada a certain number of times. I don't know whether you know this, Speaker, but the same truck in Ontario can't be loaded the same way in Manitoba. You have to load it a different way, and if you don't do that, if you go across the scale, you're going to be fined even though you didn't think you did anything wrong. There's all types of things from province to province that you have to change if you're going to be in that business in Canada, and it could be very frustrating. Even down in the United States when I was going down there, there are different states with different regulations on how you can load a truck. That costs money, because in some states, you can't haul the same weight as you can in other states, you can't pull two trailers at once in some places and stuff like that.

So I just wonder the member's thoughts on how we should be working with other provinces to help fix these problems.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** Again, there are things that exist in bills—some of them are technical details, some of them are positions or points they're making—that we can agree upon. It's okay. I'm happy to agree with certain things. I've spoken about the things that I'd like to see, the things that would most benefit my community. If the government wants to find ways to work with other provinces to make things better for all Ontarians, I'm okay with that. In fact, I can often be happy with things like that.

What I'm not happy with is when things I agree with are put in bills, often, that have things that I certainly in my community can't agree with. I can certainly admit when I agree upon things, and I appreciate the question.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):**  
Question?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** You represent the people from Humber River–Black Creek. I represent the people from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. In my riding, we have people who are fearful, we have people who are confused, and we have people who are now outraged by the government's inaction or their contradictory, rash decisions. So I don't know what—maybe there's an alternative universe where these PC members live, but that's what we're experiencing in my riding.

The real concern is that I get emails indicating that people have lost trust in this government's moral authority to lead. What is so dangerous is that in the height of a pandemic, rather than dealing with the fact that we're building field hospitals in Hamilton and ICUs are overwhelmed, we are standing here debating a red tape bill. That is the kind of thing that contributes to the complete loss of public trust in this government. Would you agree with that at all?

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** Thank you to my friend and colleague. I certainly do agree with that. Again, if we want to talk about red tape, let's get it off the vaccines and let's have an equitable rollout.

I continue to hear from my constituents about the things they want to hear be discussed, talked about and changed at Queen's Park. These days, it's about sick days; it's about access to vaccines; it's about surety in plans, proper communications—the list goes on and on—help when they need it.

Certainly we can get up and discuss technical things, but at the end of the day, let's make change we could all be proud of, that we could yell from the rooftops. Let's fix LTC. Let's give sick days. Let's get vaccines out there to the people who need it the most, and let's respect our workers.

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

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I wanted to take this opportunity to talk about the missed opportunity here that the government's really just missed when it comes to looking to put in place some type of response to help businesses and people here in the province of Ontario.

We've seen these different schedules that have come out. I know the member from Humber River–Black Creek was just talking about the red tape when it comes to vaccinations and how communities like mine, communities like Don Valley East, and I know Don Valley West and many other communities with high density and a lot of people living in apartments, sometimes three, four, five, six, seven people—how spread has occurred differently in regions like this.

I think it would have been a great opportunity for this government to really look for ways to put in place some types of standards to look at ways to stop the spread of COVID. I was really taken aback by the member from Davenport, who talked about the fact that here we are in the middle of the crisis, probably the most extreme crisis in the history of this province in recent years, and this government is focused on other things like red tape reduction when we have such a large issue in front of us, and they're not getting that right. It would be nice if they could take some of this energy from this bill and actually apply it to building a better Ontario when it comes to fighting COVID-19. I do believe that there have been some massive missed opportunities in this bill, especially around the rollout of COVID mitigation and vaccine distribution in the province of Ontario, and I think it's a shame that we haven't gone down that path.

One of the areas that we've been talking about a lot on this side of the House is how it has impacted racialized communities, how it has impacted communities based on the amounts of resources that are going into those communities, and even the fact that this government had an opportunity to look at the science table and get the feedback from them, and what they decided to do is apply a political lens to that decision-making, and at the end of the day, they missed the mark. So it has been, really, a sad opportunity for people in Ontario, a sad day for government, when they're not focusing on what needs to be focused on.

One of the particular schedules that we talked about in this bill was the piece around how it impacts tenants. The

member from Niagara talked about how it impacts the environmental agricultural structures in Ontario. I just think that there have been a lot of lost opportunities here, and the government could have focused so much more time and effort on building a real response to COVID.

I keep thinking about what Ontario is going to look like 10 years from now because of COVID. What is our economy going to look like because of COVID? When we talk about red tape, why not think about how we make it easier for students to get back into school? How do we make it easier to invest into education and post-secondary so we can amplify the graduation rates and really add to the growth of the economy in Ontario? The priorities of this government seem to miss the mark. They're making it easier for people to be kicked out of apartments and harder for people to go to post-secondary at a time when we know that COVID-19 and this pandemic have really made our economy slow down.

I'll tell you, on this side of the House, particularly the Liberal members here, I know that if we had an opportunity, one of the things that we would be investing in is public education, and we'd be investing in post-secondary education. But this is a government that in their own budget cut—I think it was, \$1.2 billion out of public education. Imagine, at a time when we're struggling to rebuild an economy, this government decides to pull out a billion-plus dollars from public education. That is just astonishing. It's unbelievable that a government could actually take this approach. I think that there has been a missed opportunity, and I think that this government has to take a huge step back and rethink its legislative agenda for at least the next while and really focus on the issues that matter to people.

I'm happy that in probably half an hour from now we'll have a good debate about sick days. We'll talk about why sick days are important here in Ontario, and we will be able to present an option to the government to decide to go forward to support an initiative like that, which, I think, is part of the big solution.

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

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Through the Speaker to the member opposite: You mentioned that this government cut funding to education. I've got the budget right here. Can you share with me where you see that, if you wouldn't mind? Because we added—it's the most investment ever in education—an additional \$700 million. Can you point out to me, please, where you see a shortfall or a cut in education?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** A reminder to all members to direct your remarks through the Chair. Thank you.

I return to the member from Don Valley East for his response.

**1730**

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Thank you so much. They don't have to look at just the budget. They can look at their time in government over the last few decades.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Order on the government benches.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** It's been widely reported that there have been cuts, over \$1 billion in public education—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Flamborough–Glanbrook.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** —but you have to look at the Conservative governments in the past—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Stop the clock, please. Sorry to interrupt the member who was responding to a question. I would expect that the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook was interested in the answer. And the government benches: I can't hear the member speaking, who indeed has the floor. It is not your opportunity to speak. Feel free to stand in rotation should you have something important to say.

I return to the member from Don Valley East for his response. Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Thank you. Not only have they cut from public education, but this is a government that has cut from libraries. They have cut from after-school programs, student nutrition programs. They have cut direct funding per child to autism services. They have cut money from so many areas that go back towards children.

I would argue, and I have said this for the last three years, this is a government that's taken the largest cut, out of any sector, from children. So education is just a part of it. Their government is going to have a legacy of shutting down universities, or at least programs within universities. The member opposite can reference a specific section in the budget and say, "Where is it?" Obviously, I don't have the budget document here, but if anyone takes two seconds and Googles it—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you. A reminder to all members that we are debating Bill 276 at this time.

Further questions?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Just a quick question: I know that as a First Nations person, and from your background, too, I wanted to ask a question regarding discrimination, regarding racism, whether it's systemic. I'm just wondering, have you seen any work done with respect to discrimination and racism with this government?

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Thank you for the question. I truly appreciate it. When you talk about red tape, if you really want to see red tape, come into a community like mine. Go into a community, like many in this Legislature, where this government has put into place initiatives where people can just be stopped. They have actually enhanced red tape within communities—for example, carding. Imagine walking to the store to pick up milk for a little brother, a little sister, and being stopped just randomly by a police officer. Well, this is the government that did it.

The minister, the Solicitor General, who is responsible for this, is the same minister responsible for anti-racism. So you have a minister responsible for anti-racism and prisons at the same time. To me, that's just completely

unacceptable. So we're seeing it everywhere, and I think this government is actually taking advantage of people when it comes to different specific race and creed in Ontario because of initiatives like that.

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

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** My question to the member opposite is, we've seen our government invest in creating many new ICU beds to also deal with the surge that has impacted jurisdictions around the world. Frankly, it's been very difficult, obviously, to make sure that we have resources available. We're sinking billions into it. I'm just wondering why the member opposite supported a government that led to the lowest ICU per capita in the country?

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I know the member opposite hasn't sat in cabinet, but when you sit in cabinet, you're sitting with about 25 people; you get to allocate about \$170 billion and you get to change laws. It's a pretty powerful place to be at that table. His government is in charge right now and they're in power. They could make actual changes, legislative changes to law, and they can allocate resources.

For the member to talk about a government that wasn't in a pandemic and ask questions around, "What was your response," to me, it's a bit ridiculous. He should focus on—and this is the problem with this government. They need focus on the situation, not focus on everyone else. Focus on what their response is and actually take the position of representing the people of Ontario seriously.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I appreciate the comments from the member from Don Valley East, especially around education funding. He was talking about what the Liberals would do around education funding, and yet when he and I were both trustees on the Toronto District School Board in 2011, the Liberal government of that time left the school board with a \$110-million shortfall that year which led to devastating cuts from which the school board never recovered.

From 2009 to 2018, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations' report says that funding for post-secondary education in Ontario was flatlined, which equalled a \$1-billion cut relative to inflation. So the Liberal record on education funding was not much better than the record of the current government. They were both bad. Both have left our education systems grossly underfunded.

My question is, is that not correct?

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** To my former colleague from the Toronto District School Board: Those were the good old days, right, at the school board? Life was a little bit more simple, and we could focus on issues and actually make change quickly. Sometimes in this Legislature, things move very, very slowly.

I would say this: The Liberal record on education in this province is the best record in the history of this province. You cannot dispute the fact. When we came into power in

2003, when the Conservatives were in power, 66% of the kids in the province were graduating. We brought it up to 87%. I can ask either of the former Ministers of Education who are in front of me, the chair of a board—we've got lots of different folks here. But education in this province drastically improved under the Liberals. There's no denying it. You've just got to look at the stats, my friend.

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I thank the member for Spadina—Fort York for highlighting the massive cuts that were made by the previous Liberal government in education.

I wonder if the member could just comment, because he's brought it up, how his constituents will benefit from the fact that—and it's quite odd. If he's making the assumption that very soon, and with an election coming next year, he'll have the opportunity to make change, it is odd that he would choose to abandon his constituents and seek a federal nomination to run federally. I wonder how his constituents, because it is such an important time to the people of the province of Ontario, will benefit, should he be successful and leave them without a member of provincial Parliament?

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Thank you very much. I started off back in 2003. When I was around 30 years old, I knocked on 42,000 doors in my riding. I spoke to people. I was young, I had five people helping me, and I became a school board trustee. I did that again in 2006 and in 2010, and then I got here in 2011, got re-elected in 2014, served for six years as a minister, and then got re-elected in 2018. I've served the people of my riding quite well. It's been 18 years. I don't need your opinion; I need their opinion.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** A quick back and forth.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** There's been a huge issue that has been raised. From small businesses to the tourism sector, restaurants, taxicab owners—everyone has been asking the same question, and it is the insurance liability question. The previous government never dealt with the question, never dealt with the issue properly. This government was elected on a promise of addressing the liability question.

My question to the member is, how would you address now the liability question? What are your suggestions to the government to address this biggest issue that is confronting a lot of Ontario businesses?

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I just want to say that there's a lot that we need to be doing here in Ontario as legislators. We need to focus on the issue at hand. This government has obviously not been able to take control of the current situation. I hope that all members in this Legislature, in the opposition and within government, can work together to find a solution. I really want to work with all members of this House to do that.

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

1740

Mr. Sarkaria has moved second reading of Bill 276, An Act to enact and amend various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All of 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 deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

*Second reading vote deferred.*

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2021  
LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LE CONSEIL EXÉCUTIF

Mr. Calandra moved third 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 Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** I believe that the government House leader has the floor to begin debate.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'll be very, very brief on this, given the fact that it was supported by all the opposition and actually was supported to go directly to third reading without committee. This is an obvious bill that has to be brought forward in order to eliminate a problem that exists because we've been cohorting for a year. I thank the members for their support.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I listened with interest to the government House leader's remarks on this legislation, Bill 265, the Executive Council Amendment Act. I heard him refer to the fact that both the government side and certainly the opposition side have been cohorting as a result of the pandemic. We know that it is important that we reduce the number of people that we have in this building. That's a critical way to ensure against COVID-19 transmission. But I'm curious to know why this legislation retroactively applies to the entire 42nd Parliament instead of just the period of the official pandemic.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Not only does it conclude at the end of the 42nd Parliament, but it does leave a provision in place should a future pandemic arise.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I appreciate the government House leader's response to my question, but I think he missed the point of the question. The point is that this bill retroactively suspends the attendance requirements for cabinet ministers to attend question periods for the entire 42nd Parliament; it does not only apply to the period of the pandemic. I'm curious to know why the government made the decision to apply this to the entire 42nd Parliament.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member would know this is one of the first governments since Confederation that has not prorogued the House, so it would require that to be for the balance of the 42nd Parliament, Madam Speaker. At

the same time, as you will know, the bill that was before the House was fast-tracked without committee hearings, with the approval of the opposition. I'm surprised to hear that the member is now suggesting that there should be amendments to the bill. But as I said, we have not prorogued the House—this is the first government to do so since Confederation, I believe—and that is one of the reasons why it would have to be included for the balance of the 42nd Parliament.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Perhaps I could word my question a little bit differently and ask the government House leader why the bill didn't simply apply to the period that the state of emergency was initially declared in the province of Ontario. I think there would have been a recognition that there's going to be reduced attendance of cabinet ministers at question periods during the period of the pandemic, but there are lots of questions about why there should be this exemption in place for the entire 42nd Parliament. Perhaps you could explain that to me.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, I'm surprised that, if the member had a concern, she and her party allowed it to be fast-tracked to third reading without seeking amendments at a committee.

But having said that, the way that the current legislation is drafted, attendance is based on a session—our session, of course, being one of the only sessions since Confederation that has not prorogued. So there is one session. So in the calculation of that time, it would include all of that time, including the cohorting, and would make it almost impossible for members of the cabinet not to be considered to have broken the rules, Madam Speaker.

Of course, as you know, we have all agreed on cohorting in this place, so that is why the bill is drafted in the way that it is, and that's why it will include provisions, should a future pandemic in future Parliaments happen. I assume it was just an oversight. It's an important bill. It's an important piece of legislation. I believe we've addressed it in such a way that it maintains the spirit.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I am a little bit surprised at the government House leader's response. One would have thought that, working with the legislative drafters, there should have been a way to ensure that the amendments proposed in this bill applied only to the period that the infectious disease emergency was declared in this province.

I ask the government House leader, once again, why the decision was made to extend this amendment to the entire period of the 42nd Parliament, to exempt cabinet ministers from attendance from all of those question periods prior to the pandemic and, presumably, until they prorogue after the pandemic. Why did the government make that decision to apply this to beyond just the pandemic?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, the way the current legislation is drafted, it is based on a session of Parliament. Now, we have only had one session of this Parliament.

That is one of the reasons why we have all agreed to reduce the order paper, because this has been one of the longest sessions since Confederation without proroguing. That is the way the current bill is drafted, so it would have to amend the legislation as it sits on the paper.

We don't amend bills; we amend the legislation that is there. That's what this bill deems to do. Not how we want or think it should be amended: We're amending the legislation that is currently on the books in Parliament to address an oversight that we have all agreed upon with respect to cohorting. We have not prorogued, which has caused us to draft the bill in this way. It is the way that we were asked to do it through legal counsel.

I'm not sure what the member is disagreeing on. If she had a problem with that, I would suggest to the honourable member, then, that we should not have fast-tracked it through second reading and directly to third reading. The members opposite should have demanded that it go to a committee. They did not do that. We're here today to do what I assumed we all agreed upon.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I appreciate the member's response to my question. My further question is around the timing of bringing this legislation forward. It came for second reading last week, just after the province had learned of the devastating modelling projections from Dr. Brown, or in the same week. It was actually the same day, I guess, that we were hearing about this ominous modelling. Yet the government decided that this was an appropriate bill to bring forward, to use up time on the legislative agenda. So I'm curious to know if the government House leader can provide some insights as to why the government decided to bring this legislation forward now, given the enormous crisis that our province is facing.

1750

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member will recall that I informed both herself and the other House leaders many weeks ago that this problem existed because of the fact that we have been cohorting for a year and that the government was bringing a bill forward to address this problem. That is why my assumption was we have been receiving unanimous consent to move this forward. That is why I assumed that we received consent of this Parliament to move it forward, past second reading, directly to third reading, without going to committee.

I shouldn't be surprised, but I am somewhat surprised that now the member opposite is suggesting that she doesn't—that her party no longer supports this change. We have put the cohorting in place to keep this Parliament going so that there could continue to be an accountable government, and this is one of the things that has to be changed in order to facilitate that. I assume it was just an oversight of the previous government; there was no malice intended. That's why it will be left in place, should a future pandemic occur.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** There is not enough time for a back and forth.

Further debate?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I will also be brief, although not as brief as the government House leader. This legislation we're debating right now is called Bill 265, the Executive Council Amendment Act, for those tuning in to the chamber right now.

For those who have never heard of the Executive Council Act, it is legislation that requires cabinet ministers to attend a minimum of two thirds of all question periods unless they are away on international travel related to trade or economic development or absent due to a religious holiday, bereavement or illness. Those are the specific reasons that would justify a cabinet minister not attending those two thirds of question periods. If that attendance requirement is not met, then they are potentially subject to a fine of \$500 per question period that has been missed if they did not meet that two-thirds threshold.

In 2021, the year we're currently in, there are 95 sessional days on the legislative calendar. The number of days on the legislative calendar varies a little bit each year, but to put that into perspective, it would require a cabinet minister to have attended about 62 question periods in order to meet the two-thirds threshold.

Now, we all know that we are in an infectious disease emergency. We are in the midst of a global pandemic that was declared by the World Health Organization back in March, it seems like a lifetime ago. We certainly understand why cabinet ministers' attendance records would have been reduced during the pandemic. I think all of us have worked within our caucus to adjust scheduling to minimize the number of members who are in the chamber at any one time. We have implemented safety measures to enable physical distancing in the chamber. A new voting procedure was implemented. We have a standing order change to require masks. Many of us are speaking wearing masks. All of these safety measures were very important to ensure the safety of all of us in this chamber: the staff, who perform such heroic work, and also the MPPs, who come to bring forward issues on behalf of the people they represent.

We don't have a problem with changing the attendance requirements during this period of infectious disease emergency. What we do question, Speaker, is once again the overreach by this government, the decision to apply this change in attendance requirements, not just to the period that there is a declared infectious disease emergency in the province of Ontario, but to the entire 42nd Parliament. That means that cabinet ministers who missed question periods—and I have to say that ministerial accountability is really the cornerstone of our democracy.

We look at this chamber and we see the eagle and the owl. The eagle tells us that it is important for us on the opposition side to hold the government to account, and that requires government cabinet ministers being here, attending question period, to respond to the issues that are brought forward by opposition MPPs.

It really is questionable why this government decided that it was going to lift these attendance requirements for a period that goes well beyond the time that the infectious disease emergency was declared. And we have seen this over and over again. We have seen this government step back from its accountability obligations, its responsibility to respond to the issues and priorities that are brought to this place by the MPPs who sit in this House. So Speaker, it is a concern.

I want to be very clear that the official opposition did not support this legislation at second reading. We saw it very much as an inappropriate overreach by this government. There was no reason to apply it to the entire 42nd Parliament. But we also believe, as we've talked about all afternoon, that there are critical, critical legislative issues that should be dealt with by this government, and it is important that the time is available to deal with those issues.

I appreciate that we are going to be talking about paid sick days, for example, under private members' public business. Why are we talking about it under private members' public business? Why are we not talking about it as a government legislation? The government has had months to bring something forward. I understand—I read today that the Premier says that there won't be changes to the Employment Standards Act, which is, again, an abdication of responsibility. It avoids the accountability that is expected of this government when you have heard the number of health care experts, municipal councils, labour advocates and others who have been urging this government to move forward with employer-provided paid sick days.

With that, I will conclude my remarks, but I did very much want to clarify that we did not support this legislation at second reading. We see it as an overreach. It should have only applied to the period of the infectious disease emergency, and we're very disappointed that this is another example of the government trying to avoid its obligations to be accountable to the people of this province.

*Third reading debate deemed adjourned.*

#### CORRECTION OF RECORD

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** I recognize the associate minister on a point of order.

**Hon. Bill Walker:** Thank you very much. It's come to my attention that I might have inadvertently referred to the member opposite as Ottawa-Carleton when, in fact, it should be Ottawa Centre. So I apologize and want my record—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you, and all members have the right to correct their record.

Seeing the time on the clock, it is now time for private members' public business.

*Report continues in volume B.*





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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

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Peter Sibenik, William Wong

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

| <b>Member and Party /<br/>Député(e) et parti</b> | <b>Constituency /<br/>Circonscription</b>  | <b>Other responsibilities /<br/>Autres responsabilités</b>   |
|--|--|--|
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| Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)                       | London—Fanshawe  |  |
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| Begum, Doly (NDP)                                | Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest  |  |
| Bell, Jessica (NDP)                              | University—Rosedale  |  |
| Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)                         | Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York  |  |
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| Blais, Stephen (LIB)                             | Orléans  |  |
| Bouma, Will (PC)                                 | Brantford—Brant  |  |
| Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)                             | Mushkegowuk—James Bay /<br>Mushkegowuk—Baie James  |  |
| Burch, Jeff (NDP)                                | Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre  |  |
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| Cho, Stan (PC)                                   | Willowdale   | Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement   |
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| Collard, Lucille (LIB)                           | Ottawa—Vanier  |  |
| Coteau, Michael (LIB)                            | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est   |  |
| Crawford, Stephen (PC)                           | Oakville   |  |
| Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)                              | Mississauga—Lakeshore  |  |
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| Fife, Catherine (NDP)                            | Waterloo   |  |

| <b>Member and Party /<br/>Député(e) et parti</b>  | <b>Constituency /<br/>Circonscription</b>  | <b>Other responsibilities /<br/>Autres responsabilités</b>  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>  | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord   | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales<br>Premier / Premier ministre                           |
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| <b>Member and Party /<br/>Député(e) et parti</b>   | <b>Constituency /<br/>Circonscription</b>                           | <b>Other responsibilities /<br/>Autres responsabilités</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| Natyshak, Taras (NDP)                              | Essex   |  |
| <b>Nicholls, Rick (PC)</b>                         | Chatham-Kent—Leamington   | Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée<br>Deputy Speaker / Vice-président  |
| Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)                               | Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest  |  |
| Pang, Billy (PC)                                   | Markham—Unionville  |  |
| Park, Lindsey (PC)                                 | Durham  |  |
| Parsa, Michael (PC)                                | Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill                                     |  |
| Pettapiece, Randy (PC)                             | Perth—Wellington  |  |
| Phillips, Rod (PC)                                 | Ajax  |  |
| 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            |  |
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| Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)                               | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest                                      |  |
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| Schreiner, Mike (GRN)                              | Guelph  |  |
| <b>Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)</b>            | Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock                                     | Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure  |
| Shaw, Sandy (NDP)                                  | Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas      |  |
| Simard, Amanda (LIB)                               | Glengarry—Prescott—Russell  |  |
| Singh, Gurratan (NDP)                              | Brampton East / Brampton-Est  |  |
| Singh, Sara (NDP)                                  | Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre                                   | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle<br>Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle  |
| Skelly, Donna (PC)                                 | Flamborough—Glanbrook   |  |
| Smith, Dave (PC)                                   | Peterborough—Kawartha   |  |
| <b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>              | 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   |  |
| <b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>             | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre                                 | Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT)<br>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  |  |
| <b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>        | Huron—Bruce   | Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs   |
| <b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>      | 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<br>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   |  |

| <b>Member and Party /<br/>Député(e) et parti</b> | <b>Constituency /<br/>Circonscription</b> | <b>Other responsibilities /<br/>Autres responsabilités</b>  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)</b>           | Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound                     | Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie<br>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        |   |
| <b>Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)</b>        | Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke                | Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts                                  |
| Yarde, Kevin (NDP)                               | Brampton North / Brampton-Nord            |   |
| <b>Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)</b>            | 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**  
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Randy Hillier, Jane McKenna  
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa  
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly  
Peter Tabuns  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

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Amarjot Sandhu, Dave Smith  
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