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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 26 April 2021 / Lundi 26 avril 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Supply Chain Management Amendment Act (Provincial Diverse Vendor Strategy), 2021, Bill 275, Ms. Fife / Loi de 2021 modifiant la Loi sur la gestion de la chaîne d'approvisionnement (Stratégie provinciale pour la diversité des fournisseurs), projet de loi 275, Mme Fife	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	12959
Ms. Natalia Kusendova.....	12961
Ms. Jill Andrew.....	12961
Mr. Deepak Anand.....	12962
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	12963
Ms. Mitzie Hunter.....	12963
Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	12964
Mr. Dave Smith.....	12964
Mr. Gurratan Singh.....	12964
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	12965
Second reading vote deferred.....	12965

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Executive Council Amendment Act, 2021, Bill 265, Mr. Calandra / Loi de 2021 modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif, projet de loi 265, M. Calandra	
Mr. John Vanthof.....	12966
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	12967
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	12968
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	12968
Miss Monique Taylor.....	12968
Third reading debate deemed adjourned.....	12968

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Mental health services	
Ms. Jill Andrew.....	12968
Driving instructors	
Mr. Deepak Anand.....	12969
Employment standards	
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens.....	12969
Armenian genocide anniversary	
Mr. Aris Babikian.....	12969
5n2	
Ms. Mitzie Hunter.....	12970

COVID-19 response	
Miss Monique Taylor.....	12970
COVID-19 immunization	
Mr. Logan Kanapathi.....	12970
Farmers	
Mr. John Vanthof.....	12970
Aldo Lista	
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto.....	12971
Glen Abbey Golf Club	
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	12971
Emily Victoria Viegas	
Mr. Gurratan Singh.....	12971

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

COVID-19 response	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	12971
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	12972
COVID-19 response	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	12972
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	12973
Hon. Monte McNaughton.....	12973
COVID-19 response	
Mr. Gurratan Singh.....	12973
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	12973
COVID-19 response	
Mr. David Piccini.....	12974
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	12974
COVID-19 response	
Mr. Wayne Gates.....	12975
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	12975
Hon. Monte McNaughton.....	12975
Employment standards	
Mr. Michael Coteau.....	12975
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	12976
COVID-19 response	
Mr. David Piccini.....	12976
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	12976
Employment standards	
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	12977
Hon. Monte McNaughton.....	12977
COVID-19 response	
Mr. Roman Baber.....	12977
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	12978
COVID-19 response	
Mr. David Piccini.....	12978
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	12978

COVID-19 immunization

Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	12979
Hon. Christine Elliott	12979

COVID-19 response

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	12979
Hon. Christine Elliott	12980

Health care

Mr. Terence Kernaghan	12980
Hon. Christine Elliott	12980

School facilities

Mr. Jim Wilson	12981
Hon. Stephen Lecce	12981

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS**Protecting the People of Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2021, Bill 269, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2021 visant à protéger la population ontarienne (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 269, M. Bethlenfalvy**

Third reading agreed to	12982
-------------------------------	-------

Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, 2021, Bill 276, Mr. Sarkaria / Loi de 2021 sur le soutien à la relance et à la compétitivité, projet de loi 276, M. Sarkaria

Second reading agreed to	12982
--------------------------------	-------

Paid Personal Emergency Leave Now Act, 2021, Bill 247, Mr. Coteau / Loi de 2021 visant à accorder sans délai un congé d'urgence personnelle payé, projet de loi 247, M. Coteau

Second reading negatived	12982
--------------------------------	-------

Supply Chain Management Amendment Act (Provincial Diverse Vendor Strategy), 2021, Bill 275, Ms. Fife / Loi de 2021 modifiant la Loi sur la gestion de la chaîne d'approvisionnement (Stratégie provinciale pour la diversité des fournisseurs), projet de loi 275, Mme Fife

Second reading negatived	12982
--------------------------------	-------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, 2021, Bill 282, Ms. Mulroney / Loi de 2021 visant à assurer à la population ontarienne des déplacements plus sûrs, projet de loi 282, Mme Mulroney	
First reading agreed to	12983

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Social assistance	
Ms. Jill Andrew	12983

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR**Occupational Safety and Health Day Act, 2021, Bill 152, Ms. McKenna / Loi de 2021 sur la Journée de la sécurité et de la santé au travail, projet de loi 152, Mme McKenna**

Ms. Jane McKenna.....	12983
Mr. Taras Natyshak	12984
Miss Monique Taylor	12987
Mr. John Vanthof	12989
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	12991
Mr. Kevin Yarde	12993
Mr. Wayne Gates	12995
Third reading agreed to	12997

Ontario Day Act, 2021, Bill 173, Mr. Parsa / Loi de 2021 sur le Jour de l'Ontario, projet de loi 173, M. Parsa

Miss Monique Taylor	12998
Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	13000
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	13002
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	13005
Mr. Wayne Gates	13007
Mr. Jamie West	13010
Mr. Gurratan Singh	13013
Mr. Kevin Yarde	13015
Third reading agreed to	13018

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 26 April 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 26 avril 2021

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT ACT (PROVINCIAL DIVERSE VENDOR STRATEGY), 2021

LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA GESTION DE LA CHAÎNE D'APPROVISIONNEMENT (STRATÉGIE PROVINCIALE POUR LA DIVERSITÉ DES FOURNISSEURS)

Ms. Fife moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 275, An Act to amend the Supply Chain Management Act (Government, Broader Public Sector and Health Sector Entities), 2019/ Projet de loi 275, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2019 sur la gestion de la chaîne d'approvisionnement (entités gouvernementales, parapubliques et du secteur de la santé).

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 275. Before I start, I want to thank my executive assistant, Emily Trudeau, from Queen's Park, here, and also legislative counsel for their assistance with this piece of legislation.

I realize procurement is not the sexiest concept going right now in the province of Ontario, but what I do believe, and what we do know for sure, is that this pandemic has taught us some very important lessons about the importance of a procurement strategy which meets the needs of the people of this province. I want to thank everyone in advance for participating in this important debate today. This is an opportunity, actually, for us to work together and to make government work better for all Ontarians, using the existing spending to make our economy more equitable and more inclusive. I hope all members of this House recognize that that is my intent today with Bill 275.

Bill 275 amends the Supply Chain Management Act to require the development and implementation of a provincial diverse vendor strategy. Bill 275 aims to help busi-

nesses owned by BIPOC folks, women, those with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community and veterans. I want this to be a transparent process. I want the government to follow best practices from other jurisdictions and experts, so the bill allows for the Standing Committee on Justice Policy to study the issue, call witnesses and write a report to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services to aid in the creation of the strategy.

Bill 275 also calls for the minister to undertake a business case study on the potential for supplier diversity, and it establishes a diverse vendor advisory board to assist with the introduction of this program. This bill is the first step for the Ontario government and public sector to really look at their existing procurement buying power and see how it can be used to support diverse small and medium-size enterprises. And it's good timing, in my view, because of the development of Supply Ontario.

Before I get started, I want to acknowledge and thank all of the organizations we spoke with along the way who have helped inform this legislation: Claudia Dessanti, Michelle Eaton and the whole team at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Wendy Cukier and her team at Ryerson's Diversity Institute; Tabatha Bull from the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business; Cassandra Dorrington from the Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council; Angella MacEwen from CUPE; Patience Adamu and Prabh Banga from Aecon; Rob Halpin from the Ontario Federation of Labour; Silvia Pencak from the Women Business Enterprises Canada Council; and Dr. Barbara Orser from the Telfer School of Management with the University of Ottawa. I also want to thank the city of Waterloo economic development committee, Communitech, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers and the Council of Canadian Innovators, who are having conversations about this important issue.

I also had a great conversation on Friday with the new CEO of the Accelerator Centre, Jay Krishnan. He is still in India, but I think we have this shared passion about the potential of procurement and some of the lessons that India has experienced and a model that could be replicated here in Ontario. For instance, they have looked at job creation. Hub procurement can actually be an accelerator for job creation and skill development within schools to include STEAM and enablement to build small businesses and start-ups. The Accelerator Centre is more than willing to be a partner with the government of Ontario on a go-forward basis, and we'd be very lucky to have that kind of leadership here.

Also, I have sat on the OBIO all-party caucus, the life science caucus, for almost seven years now and I have heard from innovator after innovator about the challenges that they face to get their technology that we support, that we invest in, into the hospitals right down here on University Avenue. So I hope that we can agree that we can do better. I'm thinking of one innovator in particular, Armen Bakirtzian, who was with Intellijoint. All of us have met this young entrepreneur who has struggled to actually get his product into not only our hospitals, but also Ontario bodies. We need this technology. It's a health benefit for us and will make a more resilient health ecosystem.

As I've said, I've wanted to introduce a bill like this for years. This in particular was motivated by a successful construction company owner. Her name is Georgia Bolger. She reached out to me. She was able to bid on and build Google Canada space in Kitchener, but when it came to accessing a government contract to renovate a police station, she did not qualify. There is something wrong with that equation. And for various reasons, diverse business owners don't always have a seat at the province's procurement table.

I want to share some research with you about why this needs to change and why everyone in this House should support Bill 275. The Conference Board of Canada has written the business case for supplier diversity in Canada. They write, "Supplier diversity initiatives have been common in the United States for more than 55 years, but they are not widespread in either the Canadian private or public sectors.

"There is a strong business case for leveraging businesses owned by women and minorities in larger organizational supply chains. Beyond corporate social responsibility, diverse supply chains may help corporations" and government to increase their revenue and economic development.

So why aren't supplier diversity programs more common? There are lots of reasons. This report said that there's a lack of understanding of the benefits of diversifying a supply chain and the positive impact it has. There is little or no commitment among leadership to supplier diversity program revision, there's internal resistance to change—we know something about that in government—and there is a lack of awareness among senior leaders in the individual departments around procurement. Also, we heard from stakeholders who said that procurement around local job creation, be it geographical for northern communities or rural communities—that's not factored in to the selection process when determining vendors of record. It is also not well understood that procurement can drive innovation. This is something outside the traditional thinking around procurement.

The conference board report also said, "By raising awareness of the benefits that supplier diversity creates for businesses and the economy, this briefing aims to help remove or mitigate many of the barriers to its growth in Canada."

0910

The federal government has been on this road now for about four or five years. I would have to say that it's not

going very well at that level. I would like Ontario to do better. There are good reasons. This pandemic has hit Black-owned businesses hard, and there are ways to ensure that they aren't left behind.

Nadine Spencer, the president of the Black Business and Professional Association says Black business owners need to have "programs that really seek tangible outcomes to enable and strengthen Black female entrepreneurs. We would like to have policies that have a more equitable framework for Black businesses." This legislation would do that.

The Indigenous Business Survey found, "During a global crisis, it is more important than ever to focus efforts on collecting quality data to assist with targeted recovery plans.... Indigenous businesses have a unique place in the Canadian economy and will require policies and strategies that meet their individual needs."

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce wrote an amazing report, the She-Covery Project, confronting the gendered economic impacts of COVID-19. They say: "When the government of Ontario declared a state of emergency and mandated the closure of non-essential businesses, the economic impacts were immediate, acute, and disproportionately borne by women. Several economists have accordingly dubbed the crisis a 'she-cession' or 'pink collar recession.'

"In March, women between the ages of 25 and 54 lost more than twice as many jobs as men in Ontario.... Women's labour force participation rate fell to its lowest level in 30 years." So we have some serious ground to make up, Mr. Speaker

This is also from the same report: "Further, the cliché is right: What gets measured gets done. Setting targets and tracking outcomes around Ontario's she-covery builds shared accountability among stakeholders and encourages concrete actions that go beyond platitudes." That is why Bill 275 ensures that the minister is required to publish reports on program success.

"Canada Needs a Feminist Small Business Procurement Strategy." This is from Dr. Barbara Orser who wrote for Women Business Enterprises Canada. "The 'diversity dividend' creates jobs and economic growth, and is one of the most powerful tools that signatory governments have to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals."

The city of Toronto has moved down in this direction. They started with a pilot project, and it has gone very well; I think they're in year 4 or 5 now. The city of Brampton started this process. If you have read the news, they have some issues right now relating to procurement. Their journey may be stalled—or strengthened, quite honestly—because of that ongoing investigation that's currently going on in the city of Brampton.

There are allies to help government get there, partners like the Women Business Enterprises Canada, the Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council, the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

So, there are best practices—that's what I'm saying to the government. If this bill passes today, if it goes to

committee, as it should, that justice committee will be tasked with very important work that reports back through the minister and to this Legislature.

What I'm saying to this House today is that the potential of procurement in Ontario is unrealized. Procurement obviously can be a local economic generator, especially for those communities that have been marginalized by this pandemic. I think we can all acknowledge that ensuring that Ontario's supply chain should be more domestic, should be more diverse, and should ensure that this province has everything that it needs on a go-forward basis as we face future health crises.

I'm looking forward to hearing my colleague's feedback on this particular bill, I'm looking forward to its passage and I'm looking forward to getting to work to make sure that we build a truly inclusive and fair economy in the province of Ontario. Procurement is one tool that we have at our disposal. We should all be focused on ensuring that everyone in this province has a place at the table in that regard.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Good morning, everyone. It certainly is a pleasure to be back and an honour to speak to today's bill.

Our government's priority is to stimulate local economies and continue to secure a supply of essential goods and services for the people of Ontario. Creating opportunities for business owners and innovators of all backgrounds and from all regions of Ontario to bid for projects to supply our government has been a key focus of ours.

The highly fragmented procurement system we inherited from the former government was rife with barriers to entry. It was 6,000 public sector entities buying piecemeal. From day one, our government committed to changing the game and opening doors to any vendors willing to put their hand up to supply our province.

The pandemic accelerated and validated our work to support domestic supply and made-in-Ontario solutions for essential supplies that take advantage of our manufacturing and create opportunities for businesses right here at home. And this period, creating opportunities for all types of Ontario manufacturers and suppliers to participate in our procurement process, was the driving force behind the creation of Supply Ontario.

The member for Waterloo may not acknowledge this, but her bill echoes what our government has been saying all along. There is social and economic value in making Ontario's supply chain system more accessible to a broad range of businesses. That is why inclusivity is a Supply Ontario priority, and vendors of all backgrounds will be able to work with the agency, which is mandated to make it easier to navigate our government's procurement process.

Supply Ontario will be a single point of access for vendors to reach the entire provincial public sector marketplace, including the businesses identified in Bill 275. The agency will support and build on the values of the procurement process set out in Ontario's procurement policy framework, including equal access for vendors,

transparency, fairness and non-discriminatory practices. Suppliers from diverse backgrounds will be able to more easily navigate an integrated supply chain model that will streamline complex procurement processes and reduce the administrative burden that businesses may face.

ApprovisiOntario est peut-être un tout nouvel organisme, mais déjà, son leadership a établi une gouvernance et il exécute ses plans pour renforcer la capacité organisationnelle pour soutenir les opérations, pour atteindre ses objectifs fondamentaux. Il va sans dire qu'en course de route, nous devons tenir compte de nos obligations en vertu de divers accords commerciaux et lois, mais avec des dépenses annuelles et approvisionnement de dizaines de milliards de dollars dans le secteur public, rassurez-vous, ApprovisiOntario continuera de respecter ses obligations à cet égard.

Notre gouvernement et la ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs ont travaillé d'arrache-pied pour mettre en place cette agence, et nous ne le faisons pas seuls. Dès le premier jour, nous nous sommes appuyés sur l'expertise de la chaîne d'approvisionnement locale et sectorielle.

I am confident in our government's transformation of our supply chain for the people of Ontario. I oppose this bill, which seeks inflexible legislative changes for what we are already planning and doing and will continue to do through policy. Given our shared objectives, I encourage the member opposite to learn more about work underway at Supply Ontario, which is changing the game for public sector procurement.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I wholeheartedly support our member for Kitchener-Waterloo's proposed legislation, the Supply Chain Management Amendment Act and the creation of a provincial diverse vendor strategy. We must give entrepreneurs and local businesses owned by women, Black, Indigenous and racialized people and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community a fair chance at government contracts.

Government procurement and who receives or doesn't receive contracts cannot solely be based on the bidding price only. Due to institutional discrimination and socio-economic barriers, members from the aforementioned equity-seeking groups are disproportionately represented in lower-wage occupations, which, at the onset, impacts the amount of savings they may even have access to, the capital sources to start a business in the first place. Many do not have the luxury of getting a loan from the bank of parents or the family business.

As the saying goes, it's often not what you know, but who you know. And with an uneven playing field to start with, this is why it is crucial that the government support this bill to ensure businesses owned by women, BIPOC folks, queer and trans community members, people with disabilities, new immigrants and even veterans here in Ontario can have a seat at the table and a viable opportunity to contribute to economic growth and sustainability of our province's public sector.

0920

This particular bill amends the Supply Chain Management Act to require the development and implementation of a provincial diverse vendor strategy. It allows the Standing Committee on Justice Policy to prepare a report with recommendations relating to the strategy, and it requires the Minister of Government and Consumer Services to undertake a business case study and strike a diverse vendor advisory board to assist the minister in developing a strategy. This bill lays the foundation for the government to leverage their existing procurement buying power in support of diverse, small and medium enterprises.

Across our communities, COVID has ravaged our small and medium businesses. I think specifically about my community along Eglinton West, and mainly Little Jamaica, where Black-owned businesses have not been able to receive the full support of this government through the Ontario small business grant program, which has had many flaws. Case in point: You have community members creating GoFundMe pages—“Rebuild Eglinton West,” a GoFundMe page—to create opportunities for businesses to survive during COVID. Philanthropy should never, ever replace government responsibility.

That’s why, at the start of this pandemic last year, the NDP official opposition put forth a proposal to save our main streets. It included an immediate ban on all evictions, lockouts and eviction threats by commercial landlords, a utility payment freeze and a 75% commercial rent subsidy. We also demanded the Conservative government create designated emergency funds such as grants and low-interest loans for BIPOC small businesses and entrepreneurs through associations, as proposed by the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce. We demanded the creation of a retraining fund and an office to advance women apprenticeships, as recommended by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. These proposals were denied by this government.

I hope today they will support this piece of legislation, which will support the creation of a provincial diverse vendor strategy, among other benefits, as a step forward in the right direction; a direction that will strengthen and help amplify the excellent work and advocacy of councils such as the Carpenters’ District Council of Ontario, which is actively recruiting diverse young people in the construction industry, more women and more training opportunities at their training centres—for training PSWs, for instance—and refurbishing older LTC homes to get rid of multi-occupant homes in a safe way; and the Toronto Community Benefits Network, where the expansion of transit now happening in parts of our community in St. Paul’s, for instance, along Eglinton with the Eglinton LRT construction, would result in opportunities for good jobs while creating markets for new businesses that, again, marginalized communities should be able to benefit from.

A sound COVID-19 response and recovery means a continuous commitment to hiring locally and bringing in more apprenticeships. It means government investment in diverse businesses, owners and community leaders. These

apprentices will become tomorrow’s business owners, entrepreneurs and leaders, who will have a stake in creating sustainable jobs—green jobs—geared toward expanding our net-zero economy.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, I am blessed to represent the diverse riding of Mississauga–Malton, a community with a 78% visible minority population and a 61% immigrant population.

Before I begin, Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member from Waterloo for her intention to include diverse communities, something I am passionate about. I believe if every brick is strong, our wall will be strong; if every wall is strong, our whole building will be strong and we can weather any storm. Our country is built on diverse communities. When these communities grow, our country grows.

At the same time, Madam Speaker, one of the biggest challenges, of course, is the limited number of diverse suppliers in Canada. I would encourage and support more diverse suppliers to start businesses in our province, to expand, to help them participate as a vendor with Supply Ontario.

I want to acknowledge and appreciate my cabinet colleagues for actively using the fiscal firepower to support businesses from marginalized communities and supporting them to grow. For example, aside from the ongoing successful Aboriginal Procurement Program, the 2021 budget doubled investment in the Indigenous Community Capital Grants Program, which will help fast-track long-term infrastructure projects both on- and off-reserve.

Also, we held a round table earlier this year to advance racial equity in Ontario’s workplace with an investment of \$1.6 million over two years.

Madam Speaker, this bill calls for a duplicative advisory board, which will add bureaucracy and red tape. This bill mandates certain tasks to be completed within 6 months, a timeline that is nowhere near feasible. Diversity is not something that can be rushed. Supply Ontario was the result of 18 months of stakeholder engagement that has already taken place. Our government is already working to deliver principles highlighted in this bill and will do so without the unintended consequences.

To echo my colleague the member from Mississauga Centre, we’re building a policy in line with the values of Ontario’s procurement policy framework, which includes equal access for vendors, transparency, fairness and non-discriminatory practices. Supply Ontario will open doors for diverse communities as it becomes operational, and I’m very confident about its leadership.

To conclude, Ontario is home to some of the most innovative, industrious and diverse business owners around the world. Creating opportunities for businesses and innovators of all sizes and from all regions of Ontario to supply our government has always been a driving force behind the creation of Supply Ontario. I would like to thank the member opposite for her thoughts and I ask her to come on board. I want to assure you, I will be reaching

out to the organization you cited in your speech. Let's work together to support our residents and build a better Ontario. Together, let's support Supply Ontario.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Right off the top, I want to congratulate and thank my colleague the member from Waterloo for tabling this bill and bringing it forward. This is such an astute perspective on the situation that we face right now and the situation that small businesses in Ontario face. I want to thank her again also for being the champion for the she-covery. I don't think anyone in this room has mentioned the need to focus on women and female entrepreneurs, business owners, and people of colour—racialized people, Black, Indigenous and other marginalized people.

This bill is very timely and it is something that is certainly doable, but I don't have a lot of faith that this government actually understands what the issue is outside of these halls, because the comments that have been made so far from the two members opposite don't indicate an understanding of the challenges and the barriers that business owners face, and particularly marginalized business owners, in entering into the procurement system of Ontario.

This isn't about diversity for diversity's sake. This is about changing the system. This is about changing the tributaries in which those businesses access a system which they should always have had access to, but for so many reasons they have not.

The economic benefit around identifying and measuring the impact of inclusiveness and diversity in our procurement system is something that we need to know. There are certainly experts that have called on it and my colleague has received their counsel, spoken with them and received a lot of data around how important it is to diversify—to measure the impact. This government is reluctant to even do that, to take that step. I think they're hiding behind a cloak of obliviousness to keep the status quo and to make sure that those preferred vendors or vendors of record are the ones that continue to be a part of that supply chain and receive the benefit from a massive procurement policy and power behind the province of Ontario.

It is a shame that you are not willing to do that, because if it was ever more clear, it is today in those businesses that have suffered, that have developed innovative technologies, innovative products, but yet can't get access to their very own province's procurement strategy and process. It is a shame.

We certainly hope that the government members consult with their small business associations in their regions, because I'm sure they would hear a different story from that which they're getting from their cabinet officers and their backroom channels, because this is what's happening in the real world in Ontario, where people are left out of the game, and certainly not through their own actions but through systems that have been in place and entrenched in this province for years. It has to change.

0930

My colleague's bill absolutely takes us in the right direction. This government is stuck in inertia. It is paralyzed. It needs to move forward. We have seen other jurisdictions do that for the benefit of small businesses in their communities. I hope this government sees the way and the light and the benefit of this important legislation. But again, the comments made by several of the government members so far don't give me much hope that we're going to see a government that actually takes this issue seriously.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Scarborough–Guildwood to speak to Bill 275. In my community, we do not have large manufacturers or large service industries and sectors. What we have in Scarborough–Guildwood are many small and micro businesses, and they are indeed diverse. My constituents are creative. They're skilled. Many of them are essential workers. They too need an opportunity to bid fairly and compete for government contracts. They should not be excluded or written out of this process.

Organizations like the East Scarborough Storefront are looking at how to diversify the supplier network by giving access to skilled trades and opportunities, mainly for young people, working together with the University of Toronto Scarborough campus, because, Madam Speaker, we indeed need to diversify the supply chain in Ontario. This bill is calling for that. It's calling for filling a gap that we currently have in our provincial procurement system.

I particularly like the diverse vendor advisory board, where oftentimes a government would put policy in place but doesn't have the capability to actually enact that policy without bringing in those experts from the community. I'm sure the Ontario Chamber of Commerce would support that—and the Black Business and Professional Association, which is working as a non-profit, charitable organization, to relentlessly support suppliers.

Other jurisdictions—the United States, well ahead of us for decades—and municipalities are finding their way, but Ontario needs to lead. I agree: The government is moving ahead with its centralized procurement strategy, and that is a good thing. But when I look at the objectives, diversity is not part of the objectives. So how are you going to achieve it if it is not stated clearly in its goals? If you look at the board members—one woman, four men, and no discernible diversity to speak of. So how are you going to tackle this challenge without even having it as part of your beginning strategy?

I urge the government to adopt a more inclusive lens when it comes to groups that have historically been excluded. Ontario's sustainability and prosperity must be one that is inclusive, particularly in a post-COVID Ontario. So let's build back better and let's make our institutions and our systems in Ontario more inclusive for all people: women, racialized people, people with disabilities and those who are not at the table today.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to speak in support of Bill 275, calling on the government to deliver a diverse procurement strategy. We know government procurement has social, community and economic benefits, Speaker.

I would assume this is one of those bills that would have support from all parties in the Legislature, especially after last summer when so many of us sat on the SCOFEA committee, talking about what economic recovery could look like. So many people came to committee, particularly people from Black, Indigenous and people of colour communities, LGBTQ+ and women-owned businesses, talking about the systemic barriers and challenges to accessing government procurement. Also, innovators, clean-tech companies, life sciences companies and small businesses all talked about systemic barriers they face in accessing government procurement, and I can certainly attest to this.

Prior to going into politics, I led an organization that was all about using government procurement to buy more local food. I can tell you, especially for small businesses, and especially for small businesses owned by people of colour and women, they face significant barriers to accessing government procurement.

Speaker, using government procurement to support diversity and inclusion benefits our economy and our communities. Using procurement to help scale and commercialize innovation, especially when it comes to clean-tech companies, is vitally important.

I would argue that Ontario needs to have a greener and more caring recovery. One of the ways to do that is through procurement. Bill 275 delivers a strategy that would help the government do that, so I support it.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm cognizant of the fact that, after a private member's bill last week, I reached out to one of our colleagues from across the aisle and, to put it bluntly, gave him crap for not recognizing that a private member's bill is something that is about that member's vision and what that member is trying to do, and that we need to try and stay as positive as possible when we're talking about private members' bills because for that individual who is putting it forward, it's something that has meaning to them.

I thank the member from Waterloo for doing this, for putting the bill forward, because obviously there are a number of things in the bill that she feels very passionate about. What I'd like to point out is that, in our time of need, Ontario manufacturers so far have stood up and they have tried very hard to supply our province. Through two programs that we have, Supply Ontario and Ontario Together, our government's domestic procurement has resulted in good jobs and stable income for a lot of these individuals.

We have tried very hard to take advantage of what Ontario's manufacturing might is. Premier Ford said himself that Ontario can never find itself in a position again where we're relying on other jurisdictions to supply us with things that we absolutely must have. That self-

reliance that we are building towards is something that is going to take some time. We didn't have it at the beginning of the pandemic, but it has become one of the strengths that we have in Ontario now.

Whenever you're fostering that made-in-Ontario supply, you have to be cognizant that it is empowering our small businesses, it is empowering all business in Ontario, and it will help with our economic recovery because we're keeping those jobs, we're keeping that money here in Ontario. But one of the things that we also have to be cognizant of is that we are tied by some of the trade restrictions of treaties that have been signed. We have to be cognizant of that whenever we develop something that is going to improve and build upon made-in-Ontario, supplied in Ontario, purchased in Ontario for Ontario. That takes time.

With Supply Ontario, we have started that process. When I was in software prior to getting involved in government, one of the things that we said—it was kind of our mantra: "I don't have time to do it quickly; I only have time to do it right." Because if I do it quickly, I'm going to have to go back and do it again, and I'm going to have to go back and do it again and do it again and do it again. When you do it quickly, you miss things.

Some of the timelines that have been put forward in this bill are too quick, and they don't give enough time to go through and do it right. There are a lot of good things that have been brought forward in this bill—absolutely, there are, and I recognize that. But I come back to, "Do it right the first time, because then you only have to do it once." The timelines that have been put forward on this are just not realistic. We can't turn it around that quickly.

Supply Ontario has been building now for about 18 months the whole process on it. We've been doing a lot of that work. We're getting to the point now where it can move forward. We have the CEO in place, and the CEO is going through the process of building the rest of the team. We need to get it right the first time so that it doesn't have to be done again and again and again. The agency will mobilize over the next few months to get that critical capacity and those operating systems in place. It's something that previous governments have ignored. We have done more for "Buy Ontario" than any other government has done previously.

0940

This is not a time when we should be rushing something through; this is a time when we should be doing it correctly so that we only have to do it once. I appreciate that the member has brought forward a lot of these ideas, but unfortunately, the timelines are too short and I can't support it.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I want to start by first commending my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo for her amazing private member's bill that really addresses something that is so important to creating more diversity, more equity and more access for vulnerable and marginalized communities and their ability to access government

contracts, government support in this government procurement process.

Quite frankly, I'm shocked. I'm shocked that at a time when there is so much mounting evidence that those who are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 are people of colour, are women, are marginalized communities, are people from the LGBTQ+ communities, this government is very clearly indicating from their comments that they're not going to come to support those who right now, frankly, need it the most.

We know that systematically marginalized communities have borne the brunt of COVID-19, be it through disproportionate impact of contracting the virus or through the economic devastation that has followed. My colleague has clearly been a champion and articulated this issue, specifically the need for a she-covey.

The government has an opportunity right now to do the right thing, to support something that will help marginalized communities. From the comments, I don't know if the government is going to make that decision. I don't know if the Conservative government is actually going to stand up and support those who need help when they have the opportunity to do so in such an easy and positive and well-thought-out process.

It speaks to a government that has continually, from the beginning, even prior to the pandemic, supported the haves over the have-nots. This will be a clear indication of the purpose of this Conservative government, this will be a clear indication of the motivation of this Conservative government, if they choose to vote down a piece of legislation that at its heart is not partisan, at its heart does nothing other than identify communities at risk, communities that need support, communities that historically have not been able to access government contracts and procurement processes, and rectify that issue—and, quite frankly, not even solve it, because this is something that is going to require a lot more than just one PMB to solve, but begin that process, because we know that, systemically, these communities are not able to access the same resources as others.

We're beginning that process with this private member's bill that has been put together so thoughtfully by my colleague. The fact that the government is indicating right now their lack of support for something that is so needed at this moment—we need to be preparing for a she-covey. We need to be preparing to ensure that marginalized communities get the support they need. We need to support small businesses that are struggling. Do the right thing. Support marginalized communities that are right now struggling and ensure they have a more just and fair system—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. I turn to the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I should tell the government I did have a briefing on procurement through Supply Ontario. I asked them if they had put an equity lens on the new direction. Honestly, the answer that we got was, "What do you mean?" So it's not part of the model going forward. In fact, the board is Paul, George, Allan, John and Gillian.

That is not diversity. I feel badly for Gillian; she's really outnumbered.

The member for Mississauga–Malton said that diversity cannot be rushed. Nobody thinks that this government is rushing or moving quickly on diversity. In fact, your own member from Chatham-Kent said last week, "I'm standing up for those white, privileged old men in my riding and throughout Ontario." That's on the record that this government has done.

The member from Mississauga Centre said that we're doing this already. The reason I brought forward this legislation is because it's not part of the model for Supply Ontario. I was trying to help you help me help the province, and you shot it down. It really is quite something.

My colleagues, I want to thank all of them. The member from Scarborough–Guildwood brought forward an amendment to the budget on gender equality. The government—no offence to you—patted her on the head and said, "Really good effort. Thanks for trying. No." That's what they said. It's such a patriarchal, misogynistic culture that is happening right here in this province, leaving racialized women—the COVID-19-related job losses have been highest among racialized women, particularly Asian and Black women, as well as younger and lower-income women. You have the opportunity and you have a tool in your tool chest to help people in this province.

I've never had a private member's bill not pass. This is incredible to me. Missing persons legislation, Rowan's Law, fairness for realtors passed, but that procurement equity and diversifying the supply chain fails during a pandemic is a shameful moment for this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Ms. Fife has moved second reading of Bill 275, An Act to amend the Supply Chain Management Act (Government, Broader Public Sector and Health Sector Entities), 2019. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AMENDMENT ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CONSEIL EXÉCUTIF

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 22, 2021, on the motion for 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 (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It is always an honour to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the good people of Timiskaming–Cochrane and on behalf of my party, to make remarks on third reading of this bill. I do recall, the last time I was here—I wasn't here last week because of the cohort, but I was here the week before. I recall that I spoke to this bill in second reading.

The majority of this bill—and I think I made this point clear in second reading—is pretty straightforward, with a few caveats. I mentioned cohorts for a reason. We are in the middle of a pandemic. Actually, we're hopefully coming close to the end of the pandemic. But, quite frankly, I don't think anyone knows. I really don't think anyone knows, because 14 months ago, we really didn't know what was hitting us. I think there are many issues we still don't know: collateral damage and whether or not the virus will outrun the vaccine. That's something that we don't know.

But some of the things we do know is that where the transmission is in this province right now is in workplaces: workplaces where people are crowded, workplaces where people have to work—essential workers. And this is a workplace. We have taken steps, all of us, to make sure that it's not as crowded. I think that those were good steps.

I think we always need to remember that there are workplaces in this province, not that they haven't wanted to, but it's incredibly difficult to take those steps. Those are, in this part of the province, food processing plants, warehouses and distribution centres. In my part of the world, a good example is mines, where they take every step, and still, there are issues. That is part of the pandemic that we really haven't figured out yet, quite frankly.

The government talks—and I saw there was quite an effort this weekend on Twitter, saying that we have to stop international travel, international variants from other places. That's a worthy point, but when you really look at the numbers, that's not the only thing that has to be done, because if you just stop international travel and we don't address what's happening in workplaces, a lot of people are going to lose—and not just lose their jobs; they're going to lose their lives. This is a multi-faceted issue, and you can't just blame one issue for political gain and ignore the things that your own level of government has jurisdiction over.

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For a while, it was all about the vaccines, and do you know what? There are vaccines being administered. I am in that age group, and although I didn't post a selfie, it was two weeks ago Saturday. It came open in the pharmacies in our area. My wife and I are both in that age, and we both got AstraZeneca. We waited till it was our turn. It's very important, but it's not just about the vaccines. The fact that our province and our federal government were having trouble accessing vaccines made it even more imperative that we actually took steps necessary to protect people until they get the vaccine. That's something that has seized the province and I think seized the people of this province.

Many people have focused, and rightfully so, on something that we have, and that's paid sick days. If I'm sick and I don't show up, I still get a paycheque. That isn't happening for hundreds of thousands of people. Now, the government's counter is, "Well, we had this federal program." And at one point: "We're not going to double dip. There's only one taxpayer" and blah, blah, blah. Now, the government is also admitting that they knew the federal program wasn't working either, which is very frustrating. Because if you know something is not working and it doesn't have life-and-death implications, okay, you can take your time to fix it; but this had life-and-death implications, and it's not rocket science.

Under the federal program, you have to be home for a week. You have to stay home for a week, and then you have to apply after you're home for a week. But what that doesn't help you with is, if you wake up in the morning and you have a cough and you need your paycheque to feed your kids and feed your family and pay your rent—you're going to go to work with that cough. You're going to get tested, and hopefully you're negative. But if you're positive, you've already been contributing to the spread for two or three days. If you had paid sick days, you could have stayed home on day one and helped stop that spread.

One of the members across is nodding, but we have been talking about this for months and months and months. I hope the members across have also been pushing their government, because at the end—and we're expecting some kind of movement from the government; the Premier has said so, and I commend him for saying so. We're still waiting for what it's actually going to be. But steps like that could have maybe helped stop the third wave and could have maybe saved some people's lives, because again, it's not deep-thinking theory. That's what's so infuriating and so galling.

I was expecting someone from the government to say, "What has that got to do with this bill?"

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, I'm going to bring it back myself. I'm going to bring it back myself—because here, we have taken steps. We had the ability to. There are those who think we haven't gone far enough. There are those who would say that we haven't taken the preparations necessary if, in fact, we do have an outbreak here and we have to go virtual. That, I don't think, is the ability of this Legislature yet. There are issues with virtual as well, because with virtual, still, the people who conduct the proceedings—someone still has to be here. So virtual isn't a saviour for everyone, and I think that is a point that has to be recognized, that a virtual Parliament has to be safe not just for the parliamentarians but for the people who actually make this place work.

I've been here for 10 years, and I'd just like anyone who's watching this, the people who actually make this place work are the people who you don't hear speak, because without them nothing would happen here. The people who record our words, the people who actually know the rules, the people in broadcasting and all of the people behind the scenes are the people who make this place work. If we could go virtual, we would have to make

sure that those people are safe. That is the whole impetus behind this.

All these people who help make this place work are all here for a purpose, and the main purpose of this place is for the government to put forward legislation and for the official opposition to hold the government to account, to criticize—that's why we're called critics—to oppose, and to propose improvements.

I'm going to go back for a good example. We have been proposing paid sick days on behalf of the medical community, on behalf of people across this province, on behalf of business groups, on behalf of pretty much everybody except the government. We have proposed it 23 times, and this government has voted against paid sick days 23 times. That is the one policy on which they are pretty consistent. They have not made too many U-turns on paid sick days. Hopefully they're making a big U-turn now.

Miss Monique Taylor: Until.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, until. But it's our job to hold the government to account. A big part of holding the government to account is being able to question ministers. It's actually—and I spoke about this the last time: The ability for someone in the opposition to stand in his or her place and question a minister or question the Premier is pretty unique. I have spoken to other legislators from the States who find our system incredible, because in state Legislatures in America you don't get to directly question secretaries—the Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary of the Treasury—because they aren't necessarily elected legislators. So this is pretty unique.

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Having ministers at question period, which is for many the focal point of the day—it's actually not my favourite part of the day, but it is a focal point of the day. It's the time of the day that if anyone is going to look—we all post this stuff. When we do a good speech, we'll take two minutes of it and we'll put it out into social media. But the time when the average person, if the average—I hate that word. The time when people who are interested in politics—the time when the political debate is broadcast on television stations is typically question period.

To make question period function, you need ministers present. That just makes sense. We haven't had ministers present as much during the pandemic, and that is fully understandable. There are not as many people from the opposition present either, because we are making this workplace as safe as possible, and we all understand that. I think the people of Ontario would understand that as well. I think they do understand that.

This proposed legislation—I believe the government House leader talked about it being housecleaning. If ministers aren't present enough in the House, they can be financially penalized. This legislation stops that. During the pandemic, I think that's reasonable, very reasonable. That's why that part of the legislation we don't really have a concern with. That makes sense. The part that's a little bit concerning, and that I brought up the first time I spoke on this, the reason we actually voted against this bill—on the record, we voted against this bill—is because it doesn't

only cover the period of the pandemic; it covers pre-pandemic. That's a problem, or it could be a problem.

The vast majority of ministers I think want to be here. And you can make an argument that some ministers—perhaps, if you're the minister of, I don't know, trade—might have to be away for an extended period. But there are many ministers whose main functions are close to the precinct, so that argument is harder to make. The reason we voted—and I've got the votes here—against the legislation in second reading was to clarify why it covered a period greater than the pandemic. There isn't an argument, there isn't a debate to be made that we are demanding to have all the ministers here during the pandemic. That's not safe. It's not safe for us all to be here either. But the world was different pre-pandemic.

Usually, when legislation is put forward and later amended—at one point, legislation was put forward, the actual bill which this one amends, to put a penalty on so that ministers would have a financial disincentive to miss too many question periods. Do you know what? I can picture that there are days that ministers don't like coming to question period. I could picture there's lots of days they don't like coming to question period. Ministers are accountable and they answer questions, and they should.

The part about this bill that is concerning is that it covers a period greater; it covers pre-pandemic. Now, it likely wouldn't have been an issue. Maybe nobody is actually counting how many times the minister has—but the fact that it covers pre-pandemic is an issue. We voted against it. The government chose to put it to third reading right away and, quite frankly, we missed it. We should have stopped that, and we missed it. I'm not going to hide it: We missed it.

But the government was fully aware of what the issue was, because we brought it forward. We brought it forward. The government had the power to put that amendment in themselves. They know the issues there themselves, and they chose not to address them. So, we voted against it in second, and I don't think it's going to be a surprise to anyone that we will vote against it on third. We made that very clear. There's a saying: Is it the hill we're going to die on? No. But there was an issue there. We identified it, we put it forward, and the government has chosen not to change it.

This bill will pass. The government has a majority. I don't know if anybody has figured this out, but I think every bill the government wants to pass, it passes. And that is the way our system works. If you win a majority, you have the right to put forward your agenda and you have the right to pass your bills.

You should also take the opportunity to try and make those bills better. We will disagree on philosophical issues all day, but they have the right, when something is identified, to fix their own issue as well. There are many government bills that come forward that are amended by the government before they pass third reading—many of them. No one is expecting a bill to be perfect the first time.

On that, I see my time is up.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity. The member will, of course, understand that the bill seeks to

amend a bill the way it was written and is in law. The way the bill which we are seeking to amend is currently written is that it is based on a session. Because this government has not prorogued at all, we need to include the entirety of the session, and that's what this bill seeks to amend.

We can't amend a bill the way we wish it would have been written or the way we wish it would have been passed; we must amend a bill the way it is written and the way it is in law. I wonder if the member would appreciate that that is why the length of time is as it is and, with that, allow the speedy passage of this, because, as he said, whilst they might not support it for that one reason, that is why it is in the bill and that is why it's being amended in that fashion.

Mr. John Vanthof: I appreciate the comments from the government House leader. If the way the bill that this amends is written doesn't allow that, I think more time should have been put to make sure it could have been amended somehow. I am reminded of when I asked the Minister of Natural Resources about something in a bill and he told me, "Just pretend it's not there."

Again, I am not a drafter of bills, but I do believe that if the will had been there, there could have been a workaround somehow to make this so it only applied to the period of the pandemic.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's an interesting back and forth between the government House leader and our whip on this one issue. I think a lot of it comes down to trust. The House leader has said, "We haven't prorogued." Actually, that was another private member's bill I had back in 2012. It did pass, not like the one that just got voted down.

To the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, what are your serious concerns about this piece of legislation? And are you not just doing your job as an opposition member by asking a very rational question around the expansion of this time?

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Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank my colleague from Waterloo. As I said in my remarks, it is our job to critique legislation. That in its own way helps the government, because it's better that we critique it and they fix it than if it isn't fixed and ends up causing problems for the people of Ontario.

The one thing where our jobs are all similar is—and I truly believe this—in the end, we are all trying to do our best for the people we represent. I wouldn't be standing here and contributing to this process if I didn't believe that, because then we'd all be wasting our time. I don't believe we are. It's our job to critique where we see there's an issue, and that's what we've done.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Okay, Madam Speaker, I'll try again: To the member from Waterloo's point, I don't know that we're being argumentative by explaining the current law passed by this Legislature when the member for Waterloo or the member opposite were members; I was not a member. The current law as it stands on the book did not envision a pandemic, obviously—I don't think anybody did—so there's no malice in it, in any way, shape

or form. But in amending a law that is on the books, one must amend the law that is on the books, not a law that we wish would have been on the books. As such, because this is one of the longest sessions since Confederation, we are required to amend it based on the law that is on the books, which means you would go back for the entirety of this Parliament in order to do that. That is why it has been amended in this fashion.

Given that, would the member agree that we move it forward and get it off the books and move on?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to the government House leader. As I said before, the government has it within its power to move this bill forward under its own volition. It's our job to point out the problem with this bill. Once the problem is pointed out, it is the government's job, if they choose to do so, to find a way to do it within the framework that they have. If that way doesn't exist, that's not my job, to find whether it's the government's job once it's pointed out that there is an issue and how to deal with it. If you don't want to deal with it, that's your prerogative. We're pointing out there is an issue. It could be criticized in the future, and we're pointing this out. If you don't choose to act on it, that's your prerogative.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate and to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his interpretation of the legislation that's put before us. Regardless of what the government House leader is trying to tell us, what we read in legislation is what we have to depict off of. That is our job: not just to listen to their interpretation of the legislation but to what the legislation actually states.

If, by scenario, as we have no idea when this pandemic will come to an end and when it will safely be time for us to gather once again, this legislation would then cover the entire 42nd Parliament, should we not return back to normal circumstances once the health of our province allows us to do so?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, minding that it's almost time for members' statements.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank my colleague. She raises an interesting point, and it's something I raised in my debate as well: Really, none of us know when the pandemic will be officially over. None of us know that, so then none of us really know how long this pandemic carve-out will remain—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I apologize to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for having to cut him off, but it is now time for members' statements.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Jill Andrew: Everyone is preoccupied with COVID, and justifiably so. But make no mistake, people

are living through other nightmares too and need this government's help and shouldn't be ignored.

I rise today on behalf of my community member Durba Mukherjee. Ms. Mukherjee is the mother of the late Arka Chakraborty. Her only son was 12 years old when he died, reportedly by suicide, on June 21, 2019. Arka, according to his mother and his own accounts, experienced both bullying and racism at his school and in his community. This is reportedly also documented in school and police findings.

I wrote to the Minister of Education, forwarded to the Solicitor General and the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, about Durba and her fight for justice for Arka—no response. Durba has also reached out to the Minister of Education requesting a meeting and demanding a public inquiry into Arka's death—no response, almost two years to his death.

As if Durba's plate wasn't full enough, her 80-year-old father is fighting for his life in India with COVID. He has been her rock. Durba is alone in St. Paul's, her physical and mental health is in crisis, and I am personally worried about Durba and her sanity.

When will the Minister of Education and his colleagues find five minutes of humanity to give Durba a meeting so she knows her voice, her concerns are not going unheard? Please. She is begging for the government's ear, and she deserves it—

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

DRIVING INSTRUCTORS

Mr. Deepak Anand: I still remember the day when I received my driver's licence. I felt empowered. Immediately, the definition of "distance" changed for me.

Every year, driving instructors help thousands of people, like our youth, those who wait for years for that first drive of independence; new immigrants, whose job prospects could multiply with a driving licence; truckers, who need their full G before moving on to their commercial licence.

I want to acknowledge and thank driving instructors for playing an integral and important role in our communities. A special shout-out goes to APDIO and ADSIO for their Ontario spirit. During these tough times, you have stepped up and have supported the community by delivering food and PPE to the families in need.

Mr. Speaker, in Peel, in-vehicle instruction was only allowed for four out of the last 13 months, and due to the pandemic, 294,000 passenger road tests were cancelled. Once the DriveTest centres are open, driving instructors will have to work overtime to fulfill the spike in demand. Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that our office is working with APDIO to seek the possibility of helping residents looking to get vaccinated and don't have transportation options.

Through this statement, I would like to thank Ontario's driving instructors for their hard work and their community service and wish them the best of success.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Today, I rise to encourage the Premier to prioritize essential workers and workplaces now. Residents in St. Catharines and across this province—workers are essential. This is why I was not shocked to hear, on Friday, that when National Steel Car in Hamilton shut down due to an outbreak of COVID-19, it affected people in St. Catharines as their family members are essential workers there. This is because Ontario is deeply interconnected. This is why it takes provincial leadership to protect essential workers.

Jeremy Sheehan and his family are an exact example of Ontario's failure of essential workers. Jeremy works at National Steel Car. His wife and his daughter both have COVID-19 due to workplace spread. Jeremy said, "No doubt people come into work sick when they live paycheque to paycheque." His family is experiencing that same loss of income, as both income earners are now off sick.

Mr. Premier, you need to do a better job protecting essential workers. Protect the workplaces where COVID-19 is spreading. Ontario needs more consistent support for workplaces that are having outbreaks: Support companies to do more testing. They need to be vaccinated. Paid sick days are needed now.

What we do not need is another announcement of announcements. Start listening to your COVID-19 science advisory table, not your political staffers. It is your job to keep essential workers and their families safe.

1020

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Aris Babikian: As the grandson of a survivor of the Armenian genocide, it is my honour and duty to commemorate the 106th anniversary of the Armenian genocide of 1915. As both an elected official of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and as a Canadian, I am proud of the solidarity I feel with the people of Ontario and all of Canada when discussing the Armenian genocide and how Canadians helped vulnerable Armenians of 1915.

During those darkest days, the Armenian people were blessed with the generosity of Ontarians and Canadians whose moral fortitude to help stand by the grief-stricken Armenian nation—and providing them with a new lease on life. Specifically, this started with a relief effort to bring 120 orphan boys to Canada, who were brought to Georgetown, Ontario.

I am also grateful to the federal legislative and executive branches and the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta for standing up for truth and justice by recognizing the irrefutable historical evidence and upholding Canadian values and traditions.

The Armenian people need closure and healing. As long as the denial policy of the perpetrators is still entrenched in any school curriculums and indoctrinating the future generations and government circles, the peace and the closure which the Armenian people yearn for will

elude them. The Armenian people of the world want to put this tragic chapter behind them and move forward.

Thank you once again to all Ontarians and Canadians who share with us this solemn day to commemorate all of those who have lost their family tree and their loved ones.

5N2

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is an honour for me to rise in the House to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of Seema David, founder of 5n2 Kitchens and a local hero whose efforts are providing essential services in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

Seema immigrated to Canada in 2007. While working to build a life for herself and her family, she noticed the numerous food-insecure, hungry and homeless individuals in Scarborough. Seema wanted to help and make a difference in her community, and 5n2, which was launched in 2013, was the answer.

Scarborough was struggling with food insecurity even before the pandemic exacerbated the effects of poverty and hunger. The pandemic drove the need for food to unprecedented levels. Food bank visits in Toronto have increased by a staggering 51%. In Scarborough, the Daily Bread now trucks food to 26 agencies throughout the community—and that's up from 19.

Rising to meet this challenge, 5n2 added a second kitchen and grew its output last year from 1,300 to 3,500 meals and meal supports each week. The charity also started doing things like food kitchens and gardens to help residents.

To Seema David and the volunteers at 5n2, I say thank you for the 474,000 meals that you've provided to our community since 2013 and thank you for your continued heartfelt support for our residents.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, the Premier ignored the warnings of his own science table and marched us right into the third wave of this pandemic. As hospitals fill up, there are thousands of families in our province who are worried about their health—not to mention the millions of people enduring yet another lockdown. Last week, the Premier apologized, but he didn't do what was needed to get us through the third wave.

When the government fails to this degree, my office gets swamped with calls. Education workers are constantly reaching out because they cannot access the vaccines. Essential workers have to go in each and every day without sick days, and they can't get the vaccines either. I'm hearing from small businesses that still can't access the government grant program and can't even get a response to their inquiries. People have reached out, angry about the province giving police extraordinary powers. More and more people are calling because they are confused about the eligibility for vaccines and they have no idea how to book an appointment. That's because this government makes confusing announcements and our public health has to scramble to implement their plans.

Overall, the management of this pandemic has been a mess. The people of Ontario are relying on this government, and it is failing. The government must listen to experts and give people paid sick days, vaccinate essential workers and provide generous supports to workers and small businesses in Ontario.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: This weekend, I received my first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Cornell Community Centre in Markham. I want to take a moment to thank Dr. Shivani, who administered my vaccine, and all of the nurses, volunteers and clerks who made the process so seamless.

Health care workers at vaccine clinics across the province are working tirelessly each and every day to help protect the people of Ontario, one shot at a time. This has been a long and challenging year. Our health care workers, our essential front-line workers, have put their lives on the line each day to keep us safe and help get us to this point.

Mr. Speaker, my wife is a health care professional. I have seen first-hand the hardship they go through each and every day. They cannot do this alone. The vaccines are the light at the end of the tunnel.

To everyone in my riding of Markham–Thornhill and to people across the province, I encourage you to get your vaccine when your turn comes. Vaccines help to protect us and the people around us, including our loved ones and our front-line heroes. If you are eligible for a vaccine, please book your appointment at covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine or call 1-888-999-6488. Together, we can win this battle against COVID-19.

FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: It's been an incredibly tough year for everyone. We're 14 months in. But today I'd like to talk about a subject that—today, farmers across Ontario, for the last couple of weeks—and in my riding, for the first time in history—we're really going at April. It's #plant21. This is the time of year when farmers put in their seeds and when beef farmers calve their cows. It's a special, special time of year.

The farming community is facing incredible challenges, too. Now they're facing incredible challenges getting parts because of worldwide COVID disruptions. They're facing incredible challenges. But they are up to those challenges.

There is a feeling when you go in the field the first day when it's dry and when you're ready to go. You've been preparing for this for months. I think politicians could probably understand that feeling. It's the feeling of the first day of an election campaign, when all your planning is out the window and you're just going. Well, that's the feeling of the first day in the field, or calving and the first calf of calving season. It's that feeling, quite frankly, that keeps us fed, and I would like to thank the farmers across the province and the people who work for them for keeping us fed.

ALDO LISTA

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I rise this morning with a heavy heart to remember and pay tribute to a true icon in the Italian Canadian community, my friend Aldo Lista, who passed away earlier this month.

Born in 1930 in Montalto Uffugo, a mountain town in Calabria, Italy, Aldo became an aerial photographer in the Italian Air Force and a goalkeeper for the national Italian military team. He immigrated to Canada in 1954 and started a family with his wife, Noreen, though he never lost connections to Italy, where his uncle married my aunt.

1030

While still learning English, Aldo went to work as a photographer at New Paramount Studios, where he pioneered the introduction of the first colour passport picture in Canada. By 1959, he bought the business at 366 Yonge Street and became the youngest business owner on the longest street in the world. In 1965, he moved to Port Credit, a community he loved, and spent the rest of his life building and serving.

Aldo was also a visionary soccer coach and assembled teams that won regional, provincial and national championships.

In 1994, with his wife, Noreen, he founded the Old Credit Brewing Co., which became one of the best and most loved microbreweries in Canada.

Aldo's legacy will live on and have a positive impact in Mississauga for many years to come. On behalf of all members, I want to extend our sincere condolences to Noreen, Frank, Claudina, Joncarlo, Eugenia and the entire Lista family.

Condoglianze.

GLEN ABBEY GOLF CLUB

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's always an honour to rise in the Legislature and bring awareness to the importance of the Glen Abbey golf course in my community. It's not just a golf course; it's critical for our local heritage, the environment and providing green space for Oakville.

The golf course is world-renowned and has hosted the Canadian Open a record 30 times. Oakville residents and, indeed, Canadians from across the country visit the course to witness professional golfers make history.

Besides its cultural value, the significance to the environment cannot be ignored. The land plays a role as a nesting area for animals and is home to the Jefferson salamander, which is an endangered species. There are many old-growth trees that fill the property, but are now at risk of being removed for development.

I remain committed to protecting this national treasure and preserving it for future generations. The member from Oakville North–Burlington and I continue to engage with residents, local elected officials and the Save Glen Abbey group. Recently, we hosted a virtual meeting with the Save Glen Abbey group and various ministry officials to address questions and concerns. I have also presented a petition to this Legislature to explore various options to

protect the land. Importantly, it was an honour to host the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries in Oakville a number of months back to visit the course first-hand and see why it needs to be protected.

My office continues to receive thousands of emails from residents in my riding and across Ontario to save the course. I want to thank everybody who has written in. I will continue to advocate for protecting this great green space.

EMILY VICTORIA VIEGAS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton East has informed me he has a point of order that he wishes to raise. I'll recognize him.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I rise today with a heavy heart to seek the unanimous consent of this House to observe a moment of silence in memory of Emily Victoria Viegas, a 13-year-old from Brampton who has become one of the youngest Canadians to die from COVID-19.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton East is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence in memory of Emily Victoria Viegas, a 13-year-old from Brampton who has become one of the youngest people in Canada to die from COVID-19. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

The member for Don Valley East has informed me that he has a point of order he wishes to raise. I'll recognize him.

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 to immediately move a motion seeking the passage of Bill 247. Agreed? I heard a no.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Deputy Premier. We all know that COVID-19 continues to grip our province. Our ICUs are almost at 900 in terms of COVID patients. We just had a moment of silence for 13-year-old Emily Viegas who lost her life to COVID-19 over the weekend. Hospitals are now training their staff on how to talk to loved ones about the fact that their loved one in hospital is not going to be able to get the life support that they need. Dr. Isaac Bogoch said this: "The system is beyond capacity."

Speaker, why hasn't this government implemented the urgent recommendations of its own advisers from almost two weeks ago now?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, the medical advisers to the government have been helping us set the course since the beginning of this pandemic. They have advised most recently that we shut the province down with a stay-at-home order, which we have done. They have advised that we cancel all emergency surgeries to preserve hospital capacity, which we have done.

They've advised that we make sure that we are able to use the entire health system as one health system, as a total, so that we can make sure that we take advantage of every bit of capacity in our hospital system. That's why we are transferring patients from one hospital location to another: to ensure that they can receive the care that they expect and deserve. It may not be in the hospital that's the closest to home, but they will receive excellent-quality health care services as a result of this.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, time and time again, this government has failed to act urgently to save lives in our province. The media has been providing shocking reports of chaotic and disjointed cabinet meetings, which result in a groupthink mentality, where the members of cabinet seem to convince each other not to take action to save lives. As a matter of fact, one source says this: "Just about everyone said they didn't want to piss off their stakeholders."

Speaker, why was nobody at that table speaking up—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries come to order.

I'm go to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: "Just about everyone said they didn't want to" tick "off their stakeholders"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: We've been taking the advice of the medical experts since the beginning of this pandemic, starting with Dr. Williams, our Chief Medical Officer of Health; the preventive health measures table; and the science advisory table. There are numerous medical experts who have been advising us. We have been taking their advice. That's why we brought forward first the province-wide emergency brake and now the stay-at-home order.

We've been advised that we need to limit transmission in the community in order to save our hospital system and to save lives. We've been doing that. We've ramped down the emergency surgeries, which was recommended. We've transferred the patients to make sure that we have adequate capacity across the system. We are continuing to follow their advice every step along the way. They are the experts in this area. That is why both I listen to them, as Minister of Health, and our cabinet listens to them, when they're making cabinet decisions.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Unbelievably, the Premier is still putting political interests first. In fact, all weekend long, his PC MPPs were twittering and tweeting away in defence of the Premier of this province, instead of in defence of the people who are struggling for breath in the ICUs.

This government has ignored, time and again, explicit warnings and advice from the science table. Back in February, they ignored explicit advice from the science table. Just almost two weeks ago now, they ignored, and continue to ignore at this very moment, explicit warnings and advice from the science table, from their own experts.

People are dying, Speaker. People are losing their lives every day to COVID-19. When will the government implement the urgent recommendations from almost two weeks ago from their own advisers at the science table?

1040

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government has been implementing the recommendations made by the science advisory table. We have to take into consideration a variety of factors, but we have been listening. We have ramped up the capacity in our hospitals, including in our most recent budget, where we've put \$1.8 billion more into it in order to make sure that we can be ready for what's going to be happening, to increase the numbers of people in our intensive care units.

The science advisory table warned us about the variants of concern taking over as the dominant strain in our province, which they have, which we are now prepared for. We have been listening. We will continue to listen. We will continue to take their advice, and we will be able to follow that advice with every measure that we're going to take to save the health and well-being of the people of Ontario. That's been our first concern since the beginning and will continue to be.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Deputy Premier. After being ignored by this government, the science table has resorted to releasing some statements. In fact, I'm going to read from one of them right now. It says—this is advice from the science table: "Vaccines are essential in slowing the pandemic. This means immediately allocating as many doses as possible to hot spot neighbourhoods, vulnerable populations, and essential workers," specifically 50% of vaccines to 74 hot spot neighbourhoods.

The most vulnerable neighbourhoods still have the lowest vaccination rates in our province. There's lineups, and we've all seen them, hundreds upon hundreds of people in places like Scarborough, Brampton, at Driftwood Community Centre. People are not getting what they need to fight this virus. How can the government not take the advice of the science table? Will they take that advice today, and if they do not, how can this minister justify ignoring public health advice?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries has to come to order.

Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, there has been no ignoring of the public health advice we've received from the science advisory table. They recommended that we vaccinate based on age and risk and looking at priority hot spots: 114 postal codes have been identified as being hot spots in the province of Ontario. We have been allocating more vaccines to those hot spots. We are already, based on the initial recommendations made by the science advisory table, designating 25% of all of the vaccines, from the top, being allocated to those hot spots before the rest is divided up across the province among the 34 health units based on population.

That is what we've done. Those 25% levels of vaccines are making a difference. We are starting to see the numbers go down slightly. We're not able to say it's a trend yet, but the numbers are going down slightly, in large part due to that recommendation of putting more vaccines into hot spots, which we have accepted from the science advisory table.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the Minister of Health knows that she has not completely implemented what the recommendations are, and I think everybody knows that.

But here's another recommendation that the government is ignoring, and I quote from the science table: "Some indoor workplaces have to remain open, but the list of what stays open must be as short as possible. This means permitting only truly essential indoor workplaces to stay open and strictly enforcing COVID-19 safety measures in those places."

We know that the government has ignored this advice as well. In fact, Dr. Loh and Dr. de Villa had to take measures into their own hands because the government is ignoring the advice of the science table.

So will the government act on this piece of advice today, and if not, how can this Minister of Health justify a decision to ignore public health advice during a pandemic?

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you to the member opposite for this question. We continue to work very, very closely with our local public health units. We support the decisions that they're making. They are able to make individual choices for their own public health unit region.

From our ministry standpoint, I can tell you, we work closely with all public health units. That's how we determine which places of work we inspect. That's why, in the Peel region, for example, we've gone to thousands of distribution centres, warehouses, factories, agri-food businesses to ensure that we're doing everything possible to keep workers safe, to ensure that employers are held to account, that they're following all of the public health guidelines to protect their places of business.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The science table also recommends "paying essential workers to stay home when they are sick, exposed or need time to get vaccinated."

Speaker, Ontarians don't want any more excuses, and they don't want any more of the blame game. In the situation we have now, when people literally are dying by the dozens every day, will we see the government pass legislation today to bring paid sick days to Ontario? And if not, how will the Minister of Health justify to those doctors who are losing lives every day in the ICU, who are watching people die every day in the ICU—how will this health minister justify her decision not to take the advice of the public health advisers?

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: We don't want any worker in the province to have to choose between their health and their job. That's why the very first piece of action we took when COVID-19 hit the province was to bring in job-protected leave. If you are a worker who has to be in self-isolation, in quarantine, you can't lose your job for that. If you're a worker that wants to go and get vaccinated, your job is protected.

We went further. We eliminated the need for sick notes here in Ontario during COVID-19.

But, Mr. Speaker, we were really disappointed. We know that we have to have a federal partner when it comes to paid sick days to ensure that the payments get out to workers across the province, and we were disappointed with the federal budget last week—over \$100 billion in new spending and they still continue to pay workers not only in Ontario but across the country below minimum wage. The federal government has to be our partner, has to step up and do more for workers here in Ontario.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question is to the Premier. Brampton is in a crisis. We have a COVID-19 positivity rate of over 22%, making it one of the highest in the entire country. People are getting sick and dying at an alarming rate. Our only hospital, Brampton Civic, is struggling to keep up with the surge of COVID-19 patients.

Brampton has been a COVID-19 hot spot since the beginning of this pandemic, and from the beginning we were left behind by the Conservative government. We were left behind when it came to testing and getting access to the resources we need to fight COVID-19 and now, when we need it the most, we're being left behind again when it comes to getting access to the life-saving vaccine.

Per capita, Brampton has one of the fewest pharmacies giving out vaccines when compared to other municipalities throughout Ontario. We only have one COVID-19 pop-up location, which is not even located in Brampton and actually doesn't even service our entire city.

When will the Conservative government finally stop abandoning Brampton families and give us the support we need to fight COVID-19?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, Brampton has been given significant assistance during the course of this

pandemic. There is no suggestion that they're receiving any less than they're entitled to. In fact, out of the 114 hot spots that have been identified across the province, there are 25 hot spots in the Brampton and Peel area, allowing access to more vaccines. That 25% that I was speaking about before: 25% of all vaccines off the top are divided amongst those public health regions. Brampton has 25 of them.

In addition, the areas where people can receive vaccines in Brampton and Peel is over 150 pharmacies, seven of which are operating 24/7, 40 primary care sites, four hospitals, 18-plus pop-up sites in high-priority areas and countless mobile vaccination teams. We are certainly well aware that Peel is a hot spot and we are dedicating more vaccines in more places for people to receive those vaccines.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Emily Victoria Viegas was 13 years old when she became one of the youngest Canadians to die from COVID-19. Her father, Carlos, provided and described the agonizing position he was in. See, Carlos was the only member of his family of four to test negative for COVID-19. His wife was at Brampton Civic on oxygen, struggling with the sickness, and when his daughter Emily's condition started to deteriorate, he didn't know what to do.

He knew that Brampton Civic was one of the worst-hit hospitals in our entire country with COVID-19, and he was afraid that if Emily went there, she would be sent to a hospital outside of Brampton and be separated from both her parents. So, he did his best to take care of her and he thought that Emily would get better soon. The next day, Emily Victoria Viegas became one of the youngest Canadians to die from COVID-19.

1050

How many more deaths will it take before the Conservative government gives Brampton the support we need to fight COVID-19?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Emily's death is truly a tragedy, and it's something that I'm sure all of us send our sincere condolences to her family. She was a young woman who was just starting out in her life, and it is a tragic situation that she passed away.

However, we all need to remember that we are working as hard as we can to bring vaccinations to as many people as possible. We do have the resources in our hospitals to be able to care for anyone who comes in with COVID or with any other life-threatening illness. That is why we are building up the hospital capacity by creating more spaces in our hospitals and also by building up our health human resources so that anyone who needs to be in intensive care in an Ontario hospital will have a place there.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you for the opportunity to ask a question today. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Solicitor General. This weekend, the federal Minister of

Public Safety tweeted that less than 2% of Canada's COVID-19 cases have come from travel. But, Speaker, I think it is important to point out that around 70% of cases in Ontario are now related to variants of concern, including quite a number in my community of Northumberland–Peterborough South.

For many of my constituents who reached out to me over the weekend, I know this can be a confusing and a scary time, with conflicting messages. So, can the Solicitor General please remind Ontarians why variants of concern pose such a threat to the people of this province and our health care system, and what our government is doing about it?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South. This is such an incredibly important topic, as we deal with these highly contagious, highly transmittable variants of concern. We all know that they are transmitting faster and, unfortunately, are more deadly. As the Premier and our health table have said many times, this third wave in Ontario is actually like fighting a whole new virus.

Speaker, it's important that we all understand these variants of concern did not arrive at our province by chance. They came to our borders from other countries, and now they make up the vast majority of cases in Ontario. Almost 70% of new cases are actually detected each day with variants of concern.

Ontarians should know that their provincial government is doing everything possible to stop the spread of these variants, and we're on our way with 35.8% of Ontario residents over the age of 18 now having received their first vaccination.

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

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the Solicitor General for that information. I know she would agree that the suggestion by some that travel-related cases make up only a small percentage is indeed misleading. Speaker, this is a concern that has been expressed by many municipalities in my community of Northumberland–Peterborough South. In fact, this is a concern echoed by municipalities across the province of Ontario.

I know Mayor Patrick Brown, in a motion moved by council, said: They call on the federal government "to immediately develop and implement an effective strategy to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 from all destinations." Mr. Speaker, this is from a mayor in a community right adjacent to where our largest international airport in the country is situated.

It is concerning for folks in my community because these municipalities, doctors and our government know that these travel-related cases have led to variants of concern ravaging communities in our province. So, Speaker, can the Solicitor General please review what actions the government has taken since last year to address this border issue?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you again to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South. Our government has long been advocating and taking action to

strengthen Ontario's borders. Of course, it was Premier Ford and our government that instituted testing at Pearson in the early part of the year, because we felt that the federal government wasn't doing enough to protect and ensure that visitors to Ontario were actually COVID-free. So we instituted that testing program at Pearson International Airport for incoming international travellers. This was built through section 22 through the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Of course, we've also closed Ontario's borders from Manitoba and Quebec for the same reason. We understand that the variants of concern need to be stopped before they come into our communities—all of this, Speaker, while continuing to push the federal government for further action within their jurisdiction.

While it was positive news to hear that three countries have been paused for 30 days, it's not enough, Speaker. We've vaccinated over 4.7 million Canadians—Ontarians, my apologies—but we need to do more to stop the variants.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question's to the Premier. Last week, Niagara Health announced that ICU capacity is at 104%; level 3 ICU is at 164%; the ICU vented-bed capacity is at 125%, and we have 83 patients with COVID.

Front-line health care heroes are worried they'll be forced to implement the triage protocol that they've been briefed on. They don't want to make the impossible decision on who is more deserving of life-saving care, like ventilators or trained ICU nurses.

This government is directly responsible for the surge in COVID-19 cases, resulting in deaths. They have repeatedly ignored the advice of public health experts. They are more concerned with how their stakeholders may react than doing what is desperately needed to save lives and avoid having to use a triage protocol.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government listen to public health experts and stop putting politics above saving people's lives?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the member opposite that, first of all, the health and well-being of the people of Ontario has been our first interest since the beginning of the pandemic and will always be.

The second issue is that there is no triage protocol being activated in Ontario. It has not been activated because we are building capacity to make sure that we can care for everyone who comes into our hospitals and needs to be in intensive care, whether it's by reason of COVID or by another reason. We're building the physical capacity to make sure that we can have the beds to house people. We've created over 3,100 more beds, and I know I've said this before in this House, but that's also 285 more intensive care beds. That's within the last year. Even within our last budget, we allocated another \$1.8 billion to create more capacity.

But we're also creating more health human resources in order to make sure that we'll have the people to operate in

those hospitals. I'll be able to speak about that in my supplementary.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier: I just want to say that I think that's a myth.

Niagara has been a COVID hot spot, with 387 deaths. Some nurses are seeing two and three patients die per shift. This government calls them heroes, but refuses to listen to public health experts.

Last week, the president of Niagara Health said that critical care capacity at Niagara Health is "in a state of crisis.... We've opened additional critical care beds in other areas of the hospital but we have limited critical care-trained staff to further increase capacity."

The medical advisory committee briefed doctors on the triage protocol. This is a result of this government putting stakeholders' interests over public health advice.

Dr. Dhalla said, "It's very worrying ... when it becomes clear the cabinet isn't making science-based decisions." He said that, not Wayne Gates.

Speaker, when will the Premier immediately implement provincial paid sick days, ensure paid time off for vaccines, close non-essential businesses and get direct financial support for workers and small businesses in the province of Ontario?

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I thank the member opposite for his question. I think all of us, jointly together, can thank all of the people in Ontario. As of today, about 4.7 million people have received their vaccination. That is good news. That's over 30% of eligible adults in the province of Ontario. That's how we're going to work to defeat COVID-19.

But we need to have a federal partner to help us get through COVID-19, working together. That's why we need more vaccines to the province faster. That's why we called on the federal government to step up and do a better job at securing Canadian borders.

We need to have a federal partner when it comes to paid sick days. For the federal government to pay Ontario workers less than minimum wage is wrong. We're calling on the federal government, as well working with other provinces, including the BC NDP, to call on the federal government to step up and work with us. Let's get paid sick days for everyone in Ontario.

1100

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the government House leader. Speaker, the government has committed to some sort of supplement to the federal program. We learned, after the apology by the Premier, that something is coming, but details have been very limited. We haven't heard anything. Even today, we haven't heard any details.

There's no question that we need in Ontario some type of paid sick program. So I'm asking all members of this

House to support Bill 247, which we'll vote on today, for 10 paid sick days.

Speaker, through you to the minister: If the government has changed its mind and now is supporting paid sick days, will the minister, the House leader, support a free vote for all of his members in the Legislature today?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I've already indicated, and members on this side have indicated, that we will not be supporting the member's bill. I note that his own leader does not support the bill that he put forward in the House.

But more importantly, as I've said on a number of occasions, we want to ensure—and as the Minister of Labour has highlighted—that there is a regime in place that protects all workers and gets us through this pandemic. Very soon we will have something to bring forward.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: It's unfortunate the House leader has said that he will not be supporting the bill and that the government will not be supporting the bill.

Mr. Speaker, today, this will be the 21st time, either through motions or other previous bills, that the Conservative Party and the Premier have voted against paid sick days, when 83% of Ontarians agree that paid sick days are so necessary. This is not a political issue. This is not a partisan issue. This is about the best science.

My question, back to the House leader, is: What does he base this decision on today—and tell me exactly why he has decided not to support 10 paid sick days today in the Legislature.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I agree with the honourable gentleman: It's certainly not a political matter, especially when you consider that his own leader does not agree with the legislation that he has put forward to this House today.

We will be working on an important plan for the people of the province of Ontario. These essential workers who are working so hard across this province to keep this economy going, to help us get through this pandemic—they're our number one priority, Mr. Speaker. They're our number one priority, not a bill that the member has brought forward that does not meet the needs of these essential workers in these workplaces across the province.

So we're going to bring a bill forward that will be comprehensive and will protect the people of the province of Ontario, as we have been doing since the beginning of this pandemic.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. David Piccini: My question is again to the Solicitor General. Mr. Speaker, in her last response to me, the Solicitor General outlined a number of actions our government has taken to keep our borders secure and keep Ontarians safe from the new COVID-19 variants, but we know that that does not go far enough. In fact, infectious disease expert Colin Furness said this weekend that there are two problems with the federal government's proposed flight ban: (1) It doesn't go far enough; and (2) by

targeting only two countries, it actually has the unintended consequence of provoking racism.

Mr. Speaker, we need more decisive action from this federal government to prevent the variants of concern from entering our provinces, hitting an already beleaguered health care system that is dealing with variants of concern that have spread from other areas of the world. Can the Solicitor General please outline for the House some data that demonstrates why further action is needed now to stop variants of concern from entering the province—

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, I really have to acknowledge the incredible advocacy that the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South has had on this issue. He's been strongly out there explaining why, but for the benefit of the rest of the chamber, allow me to show some of the data points.

He's right: More action is needed to keep COVID-19 from crossing into our borders. For example, in the last week alone, nearly 10,000 foreign national travellers entered through Toronto Pearson airport; 22 international flights have landed at Pearson with possible COVID-19 exposures; nearly 80,000 people, not including essential commercial truckers, have crossed Canada's land borders. Clearly, more action is needed by the federal government to restrict travel and to more properly and thoroughly screen for COVID-19 at our borders.

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

Mr. David Piccini: I appreciate that response. It's clear that this is an urgent issue that demands attention now. I'll again go back to comments from infectious disease expert Colin Furness, who did rightly point out that this is deeply concerning for two reasons: that, again, it does not go far enough, and it provokes unintended racism.

Last week, when the federal government announced that they were banning direct flights from India and Pakistan—Mr. Speaker, that leads to that unintended consequence that I referenced earlier. We know that doctors like Dr. Sharkawy have said that this doesn't go far enough for residents in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we call on that government to immediately do more to secure our borders. Much more must be done right now. Can the Solicitor General be unequivocal about what our message to the federal government is today, for the people of Northumberland–Peterborough South and for concerned Ontarians across this province?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: On Friday, Premier Ford joined with the Premier of Quebec to jointly call on the federal government to put a hold on international flights. This is not just an Ontario problem; this is a Canadian problem, demonstrated by Canada's two largest provinces working together to protect lives.

We asked the federal government to strongly consider the following: first, reduce mobility of COVID-19 variants by further reducing incoming international flights; secondly, roll out further protective actions at the Canada-US land border.

Speaker, we've put in place what we can do inter-provincially between Manitoba and Quebec in ensuring that only essential travellers come into Ontario, but—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones:—the federal government needs to step up and do more. These new measures should be in place for as long as necessary. We are now vaccinating over 111,000 people a day over the last seven days. We need to have the time to protect our citizens to get properly vaccinated.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Deputy Premier. This government has had 24 chances to pass legislation that would provide paid sick days for every worker in Ontario. They just voted against it again a moment ago. ICUs in hospitals are overrun with COVID-19 patients. Variants are getting out of control, leading to more and younger essential workers needing hospitalization and dying from COVID-19.

Public health experts, nurses, doctors, business owners, mayors and city councillors, essential workers, those of us in the official opposition and the government's own science table have pleaded with this government to pass paid sick day legislation and to save lives. Paid sick days prevent workers from having to choose between paying rent, buying groceries, and going to work sick.

At every opportunity, the government has refused to take action and implement paid sick days.

Speaker, why won't the Premier and his government do the responsible thing and immediately implement paid sick days for Ontario workers? Why do they feel that it's acceptable to let people get sick and die?

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, workers in the province of Ontario shouldn't choose between their health and their job. That's why we moved decisively to bring in job-protected leave. If any worker is impacted by COVID-19, if you're in self-isolation, in quarantine, if you're a mom or dad who has to stay home and look after a son or daughter because the schools have been closed, you can't be fired for that.

Mr. Speaker, we went further. We eliminated the need for sick notes. We also ensured that there was job-protected leave for vaccinations.

But we need to have a federal partner. We heard loud and clear from the BC NDP last week, who called for the federal government to step up as well. There is a system in place that's delivering cheques to workers, but we can't have the federal government paying workers in Ontario and other workers in other provinces less than minimum wage. They have to be part of the solution.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: That response shows the complete lack of personal responsibility that is letting people get

sick and die in this province. It's shameful. Many essential workers are living paycheque to paycheque. One missed day of wages or a break in income means the devastating choice of paying rent or feeding their family.

1110

Birgit, an ICU nurse working with COVID-positive patients, shared last week that she contracted COVID-19 in October. She and many other front-line heroes don't have paid sick days. Jurisdiction Ping-Pong doesn't help workers like Birgit and won't save lives.

Last week, while COVID cases soared among Ontario workers, the Premier made a non-announcement on paid sick leave that let everyone in this province down yet again. Paid sick days could have saved lives months ago, could save lives tomorrow and in the months to come. The Premier and his government are responsible for the death of every essential worker and their family members that have passed because of COVID-19, because they refused to do what is necessary to save lives.

My question is simple: How many people have to get sick or die before this government listens to health experts, workers and many others and implements paid sick days? What is their magic number?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Well, we are going to get this right. We need to have a federal partner to help us get through COVID-19. In fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The opposition, come to order. The independent members, come to order.

Hon. Monte McNaughton:—we need the federal government to step up and get more vaccines for every adult in the province of Ontario. We need the federal government to step up and increase payments to workers in this province. It is an injustice that workers in Ontario are getting paid below minimum wage. The infrastructure is in place to quickly increase those payments to workers. Thirdly, we need the federal government to step up, secure our borders, secure our airports, prevent variants of concern from getting into the province. We're going to continue, every single day, standing up for the people of this province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the House to come to order. I need to hear the member who actually has the floor and has been recognized to speak, and I can't when there's a constant barrage of heckling on both sides of the House.

The next question.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Roman Baber: My question is to the Minister of Health. Last Thursday, the Ontario science table published a science brief entitled Behavioural Science Principles for Enhancing Adherence to Public Health Measures. The science brief advises the government to apply various aversive behavioural strategies to maintain and enhance adherence to public health measures. The measures

include persuasion and modelling of public health behaviour. It recommends the drawing of various alternatives in the event that Ontarians do not comply. It recommends instilling fear of missing out. It invites incentives to encourage obedience.

My question to the Minister of Health: Does she believe that it's appropriate for the Ontario science table to recommend that the government engage in psychological manipulation of Ontarians, and does she intend to accept these particular recommendations of the science table?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We have been listening to the recommendations of the science table from the beginning of this pandemic. They recommended that we engage in the lockdown and the emergency brake lockdown, which we then transmitted into a stay-at-home order. They also recommended we ramp down surgeries to make sure that we would have availability in our public hospitals for increased numbers of people who have fallen victim to COVID because of the variants of concern.

They also recommended that we look at the hot spots, that we allocate vaccines based on age, risk and on the basis of the hot spots—114 different hot spots were identified in 20 different public health units. We are following those measures. We are implementing extra vaccines into those areas, 25% more. They have recommended 50% more and we're studying that as well.

The recommendations that have been made by the science advisory table have been followed, for the most part, by the government, and we look forward to hearing more of their recommendations, because they do contain people who are experts in this area. They have provided us with sound modelling, which has meant they—

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

Mr. Roman Baber: To the Minister of Health: While some Ontarians were moved by the Premier's apology last Thursday for attempting to impose a police state in Ontario, the government's policy with respect to its baseless outdoor restrictions since Thursday has not moved one bit. Not a single doctor in the entire province of Ontario agrees with the government's restrictions on outdoor recreational activities. Every doctor agrees that the risk of transmission is negligible or exceedingly low. In fact, I'll challenge the minister to present one example of outdoor transmission in the province of Ontario. She won't, because she cannot.

So my question to the Minister of Health: Why is the government acting against the advice of every physician in the province? Does she agree that the risk of outdoor transmission is exceedingly low? And if so, will she give Ontarians some much-needed relief and let them play outdoors?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the member opposite, I would say, through you, Speaker, we are taking the steps we are taking to prevent transmission of COVID-19 and the variants of concern, which we all know are much more transmissible, result in more hospitalizations, more ICU admissions and, unfortunately, more deaths. So while we encourage people, especially with the weather being nicer,

to go out for a walk, get your exercise, go for a walk or a run, whatever you want to do—however, what is not good is when people are together in larger groups, because that is how the virus is transmitted. Of course, we encourage people to be outside. Of course, we encourage them to engage in healthy activities. However, it is not good for people to be in larger groups without maintaining the public health measures. That is why we brought in the provisions that we did: to maintain the health and well-being of the people of Ontario.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. David Piccini: I'm again highlighting that this week we heard the very concerning reports that the new B.1.617 variant from India has now been confirmed in British Columbia, Quebec, Alberta and right here in Ontario, with over 36 cases. The minister, in her earlier answer, outlined a number of decisive measures this government has taken to secure our borders and to implement testing at our airports.

I draw on an analogy with driving in a car with the roof open in pouring rain. You can put on a jacket, you can do a number of things inside the car, but sooner or later, you've got to close that roof to stop the water from getting in the car. Mr. Speaker, municipalities have highlighted this concern. The people of my riding have highlighted this concern. Families in Peel region have highlighted this concern.

My question to the Solicitor General is: When will the federal government do the right thing and close the border? And what more are we going to do to ensure that that happens?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you again to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South.

The B.1.617 variant of concern has been connected to what is now the largest outbreak in the world. Of course, our hearts break when we see the Indian government and the individuals dealing with this incredibly virulent strain.

Our government has taken extra precautions to protect our border entry points at both Manitoba and Quebec. Every case that comes in through the border is one too many, and that leads to further spread. We must continue to protect Ontario, even as we continue to battle the third wave of the pandemic that has already arrived, which is also why we will continue to call on the federal government to do their part by securing international entry points and further restricting international travel. The time is now.

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

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the minister for that answer. It's never too late to do the right thing: to secure our borders to prevent the next variant of concern from entering this country and ravaging our already strained health care system. The time to act is indeed now.

Notwithstanding the critical issue of protecting our border, Ontario remains in the midst of a third wave that we're seeing globally. Maintaining public health measures continues to be of the utmost importance to stopping the spread.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General remind Ontarians what they can do to keep themselves safe and their loved ones safe in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, thank you for the question and an important reminder. One of the first things that we can do is remind everyone and educate everyone on the importance of when that vaccine is available to you, regardless of the type, go get vaccinated. We've vaccinated 4.7 million Ontario residents; 35.8% of adults over the age of 18 in Ontario have received their first shot. And we're only moving forward. In the last seven days, we've had over 111,000 people get vaccinated every single day. But we cannot take our foot off the pedal at this point.

I know these restrictions require sacrifice and, for some, are very frustrating when they can't see their loved ones and their neighbours. But patients admitted to and staff working in our ICUs are even more tired of fighting COVID than we are. In order to continue to stop the spread of this deadly virus, we all know what we need to do: stay at home whenever possible, including avoiding non-essential travel; maintain a physical distance of two metres; wear a mask when required; and, of course, wash our hands thoroughly and often.

1120

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Faisal Hassan: My question is to the Premier. In my riding of York South–Weston, we are home to many essential workers and have been designated by Toronto Public Health as one of high risk. The actions—or, more accurately, the inactions—of this government towards my community are very disturbing, and it is discrimination. Unlike other communities, we have zero mobile pop-up clinics and no permanent vaccine facility.

When will the Premier acknowledge the risk our community faces and provide us with mobile pop-up clinics and a permanent facility that would help mitigate transmission, protect families and treat our community with the urgency needed and not as an afterthought?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, the 34 public health unit regions across the province of Ontario are all being treated fairly, equitably, and receiving vaccines based on population, based on risk and identification of hot spot areas.

In addition to that, we have a High Priority Communities Strategy of \$12.5 million to support high-priority neighbourhoods across the province, including in Toronto, which will assist with education and outreach, increase access to testing and vaccination and wraparound services, including financial assistance and isolation centres to support self-isolation. Those are available across the city of Toronto, particularly in those hot spot areas, and will be available to anyone who needs them across the city.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Back to the Premier: We need the government to step up to the plate and provide the mobile

clinics promised two weeks ago without passing the buck to Toronto Public Health or community health partners, or blaming the federal government. Stop putting politics over people.

This past week, a community pop-up was announced for one of the postal codes in my community. Within 24 hours it was cancelled, with supply being the issue. Many community members still lined up because the word did not get out. Why put the community through this emotional ordeal? Vaccine clinics shouldn't be announced without supply being secured.

I would like to know why the province seems to have no organization, no plan and no rhyme or reason for why it is that other communities have day after day of clinics while in York South–Weston, we have no permanent facility and no mobile pop-ups yet.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'm certainly pleased to advise the member that the reason why some of the vaccination areas were cancelled is because each of the 34 public health units receives their allocation through the ministry. They understand when their allocation is coming how many vaccines they will be receiving, and then they provide the vaccines to the mass vaccination centres, to the pop-up clinics, to some of the mobile clinics as well. In some cases, they are overbooked, even though those areas know what allocation they're receiving. I'm not certain if that's what happened in your situation, but we have seen it happen in other areas.

However, there are mobile clinics that are moving through apartment buildings, places of congregate living for seniors, where they provide notices in advance of the day, and then they come through and will vaccinate everyone who wants to receive a vaccination in an apartment building. That is happening across the city of Toronto now, because we know that there are some groups of people who have vaccination hesitancy or other reasons why they aren't coming forward. We want to make sure that everyone in Ontario who wants a vaccine can get one.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is for the Premier. This past Friday, many of us received an open letter from more than 1,800 doctors addressed to the people of Ontario. They signed onto this letter, these 1,800 doctors, to ask people in Ontario to reach out to government to express their fears about their own health care in the midst of the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a group of people who by nature or frequently are moved to political action. They're often uniquely unsuited to collective action. And so when more than 1,800 doctors are moved to speak out, I think we should listen up. They're advising paid COVID recovery days, a workplace testing and vaccination plan, more available doses of vaccine to hot spots and improved transparent public information. This is what the science table has already called for, Mr. Speaker, but these are doctors who are seeing it not happening and are calling it out. Much of what these doctors have called for is already in the public realm.

Can the Premier tell the people of Ontario how he will respond to these front-line physicians?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. We are relying on the advice of the science advisory table. We are building capacity. We acknowledge that our health system is under stress right now, and the front-line doctors, nurses, personal support workers and everyone else, are the true heroes in all of this—all of us will acknowledge and accept that—because they've been going through this for over a year.

We know that they need extra supports. That's why we're building more spaces. We're building spaces in hospitals: We have two pop-up hospitals that are happening both at Sunnybrook and in Hamilton. And we are building on the health human resources by building on the nurse extern program, by bringing in more personal support workers. We've also asked the federal government for assistance, in addition to different provinces. We have received positive response from several of the provinces to help our health human resources we have here, and we're continuing to build that so that anyone who needs to be in hospital right now will have excellent and appropriate care.

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: If, in fact, the government were doing what the science table said it should do, then nearly 2,000 doctors in this province would not be writing a letter to the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that the Deputy Premier is not going to veer from her House notes today, but the problem with that in the midst of a pandemic is that the people of Ontario are being bombarded with confusing, contradictory experiences. They're being told by their government that it is doing everything in its power and that it has been all along, and yet they look around and they see that their sons and daughters who work in factories or schools or daycare centres can't get vaccinated. People living in dense urban communities like Thorncliffe Park or York South–Weston or Scarborough–Guildwood see an inadequate number of doses of vaccine for their families, even though they know that their community is more at risk than others. People feeling unwell want to stay home, but they cannot, because they won't be able to pay their bills.

Speaker, what is the Premier and what are his colleagues going to do to demonstrate to the people of Ontario that this government is in fact doing everything possible to stem this pandemic?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say again to the member, we are taking every step possible to make sure that we can deal with the pandemic. Part of the issue, of course, has been vaccine supply; however, we know that within the next week, starting next week, we are going to receive vastly increased quantities of the Pfizer vaccine. That is really important. We're also looking at how we roll out the Pfizer vaccine in a modified pilot into pharmacies, because up until now, it has been mostly AstraZeneca that has been available in pharmacies.

We know, with this much bigger supply of Pfizer coming in, we need to be able to learn how to transport it safely, because it has very specific containment requirements, and to make sure that everyone in pharmacies is knowledgeable on how to administer it. We want to make sure that these avenues are more widely open to people, so it's not just mass vaccination clinics; it's in primary care clinics, it's available in pharmacies, it's available in specialty clinics and mobile and pop-up clinics. We want to make sure, as the supplies come in in greater quantities, that we can get more vaccines into more arms as quickly as possible—

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Speaker, over the last several weeks, London hospitals have been taking critically ill COVID patients from the GTA. With more COVID patients due to arrive this week, St. Joseph's Health Care announced they were halting all non-urgent surgeries to ensure they can care for patients from other hard-hit areas. This means that anywhere from 40% to 50% of hospital surgeries will be impacted, with a further reduction in surgical volumes, from 70% to 50%.

Speaker, the day health experts warned us about has now arrived. Surgeries have been cancelled. ICU beds are filling up. Our health care system is being tested on a daily basis. Will this government provide funding to immediately and safely address the backlog in London surgeries?
1130

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question. It is a very important issue, the fact that we have had to halt non-emergent surgeries and procedures in our hospitals in order to be able to accept the COVID patients who are coming in.

Our government has invested over \$500 million to deal with this backlog, and it's really important to also remember that we've also dealt with 430,000 scheduled surgeries that have taken place since the beginning of this pandemic. Unfortunately, we have to stop now, but we recognize that this is a very significant issue that we need to deal with. We cannot do it right now because we need those places where the ramp down of scheduled surgeries is expected to create 700 to 1,000 spaces, and we will have the staff there in order to deal with the COVID patients instead of the post-surgical patients. However, this is something that we will get back to as quickly as possible, because we know if someone is waiting for cardiac or cancer surgery, that is very important as well and we will get to it as—

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Back to the Deputy Premier: Surgery cancellations are worrying my constituents like Danielle, who should be fully enjoying her time with her new son, Jericho, but because of the third wave that

the Premier walked us into, eyes wide open, she's now more worried than ever.

Her son was born with a congenital heart defect but now his care is in jeopardy due to surgery delays and cancellations from this government. Jericho has an electrocardiogram scheduled, but now it's not clear whether this appointment can even take place, let alone the other medically important surgeries he may require.

Speaker, the minister needs to promise that people like Jericho will receive the care they need and that their surgeries will not be cancelled or delayed. Will you provide an answer today so that mothers like Danielle can have some peace of mind during this difficult time?

Hon. Christine Elliott: This is a really important issue. I'm not sure of Jericho's age, but we are not cancelling or delaying any pediatric surgeries. They are continuing, despite the pandemic, despite the fact that they are still receiving some adult patients, but no pediatric surgeries are being cancelled. All surgeries are important, but especially, I know, for parents who have children that need surgeries right away, they will absolutely continue.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question's for the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education will be aware that the Simcoe County District School Board will establish its annual capital priority list later this week and submit it to the ministry in May. We know that replacement of Banting Memorial High School in Alliston will be at or very near the top of the board's list, as it has been every year since at least 2015.

Minister, Banting Memorial was an old building when I attended there in the 1980s. Every year this project is delayed, the costs go up. If the school board once again advises the minister that a new Banting Memorial is among their top priorities, will the minister fund its replacement?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: What I can confirm is that every year this government has allocated over half a billion dollars to build new schools and renew our schools after really what was a decade of school closure policy and a \$15-billion deferred maintenance backlog inherited from the former government and Premier. That's most regrettable for young people in the province, but we're committed to investing both in the renewal of our schools, with \$1.3 billion every year to do that, and to expand and build new ones.

I look forward to hearing more from the Simcoe County District School Board as they establish their priorities so we can work with them to help identify schools that merit the need for improvement.

I know the member has raised this in the past. I also know that when we announced a federal-provincial program, the ICIP infrastructure program, \$650 million was provided for schools, of which over \$17 million is going to the Simcoe County District School Board. That's going to help improve the schools within his community.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: If the minister has any doubts about the need to replacement Banting Memorial, I want to once again extend an invitation for him to visit the 70-year-old building. New Tecumseth trustee Sarah Beitz has even offered to provide hazmat suits so the minister can do a behind-the-walls tour to see for himself that the facility is caked in asbestos.

Speaker, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin by Sir Frederick Banting and his partners. It would be very appropriate timing for the minister to visit the school named for Canada's first Nobel prize winner. Will the minister come to Alliston when it's safe to do so to make a long overdue announcement in honour of Dr. Banting and the thousands of future scientists and upstanding citizens his namesake school will produce?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I appreciate that the local community has a great interest in this particular school. We will continue to work with the Simcoe County District School Board in helping them prioritize improvements to some of their older buildings. We also know that there are many across the province. It's why every single year under this government and Premier, we've allocated over \$550 million to build new schools in every region of this province, including in Simcoe county. We'll continue to do that and we'll work with the member, the board, the community and, of course, parents to understand how this government can support better facilities for the next generation within his community.

DEFERRED VOTES

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

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

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put 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): Next, we have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for third reading of Bill 269, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

On April 20, 2021, Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved third reading of Bill 269. On April 22, 2021, Mr. Calandra moved that the question be now put.

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

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1208.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for closure of third reading of Bill 269, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes has been held.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 55; the nays are 20.

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

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved third reading of Bill 269, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection: Same vote.

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 55; the nays are 20.

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

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

Third reading agreed to.

SUPPORTING RECOVERY
AND COMPETITIVENESS ACT, 2021

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

Deferred vote 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 276, an Act to enact and amend various Acts.

The bells will now ring for 15—

Interjection: Same vote.

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 55; the nays are 20.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Sent to general government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill will be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

PAID PERSONAL EMERGENCY LEAVE
NOW ACT, 2021

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

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

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 247, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to personal emergency leave.

The bells will now ring—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Same vote in reverse.

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 20; the nays are 55.

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

Second reading negated.

SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT
AMENDMENT ACT (PROVINCIAL
DIVERSE VENDOR STRATEGY), 2021

LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA GESTION DE LA CHAÎNE
D'APPROVISIONNEMENT (STRATÉGIE
PROVINCIALE POUR LA DIVERSITÉ
DES FOURNISSEURS)

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

Bill 275, An Act to amend the Supply Chain Management Act (Government, Broader Public Sector and Health Sector Entities), 2019 /
Projet de loi 275, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2019 sur la gestion de la chaîne d'approvisionnement (entités gouvernementales, parapubliques et du secteur de la santé).

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 275, An Act to amend the Supply Chain Management Act (Government, Broader Public Sector and Health Sector Entities), 2019.

The bells will now ring for 15 minutes—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Same vote.

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 20; the nays are 55.

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

Second reading negated.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.
The House recessed from 1211 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MOVING ONTARIANS MORE SAFELY ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À ASSURER À LA POPULATION ONTARIENNE DES DÉPLACEMENTS PLUS SÛRS

Ms. Surma, on behalf of Ms. Mulroney, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 282, An Act in respect of various road safety matters / Projet de loi 282, Loi concernant diverses questions de sécurité routière.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd like to invite the associate minister to briefly explain her bill, if she chooses to do so.

Hon. Kinga Surma: No, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Jill Andrew: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Basic ODSP/OW Shelter and Basic Needs Allowances Now.

“Whereas the COVID-19 crisis means that more people than ever are relying on support from the government to help us pay rent, and keep food on the table; and

“Whereas most people in Ontario who receive social assistance aren't eligible for the \$2,000-a-month Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)—they're expected to get by on as little as” \$750 “a month; and

“Whereas affordable, subsidized, rent-geared-to-income housing is unavailable at this time and may be unavailable for the next 10 to 20 years due to a huge waiting list and zero vacancies; and

“Whereas clients need to eat as well as pay rent and since clients would still have to dip into their basic needs allowances to cover rent because even doubling the shelter allowance still won't cover all the rent at today's prices...;

“Whereas” this government's “Bill 47 erased many of the legislative gains achieved through Bill 148, the fairer labour laws and working conditions that had a particularly positive impact on women and marginalized people;

“Whereas statistics show that women, particularly women of colour, are most likely to be employed in precarious work and the Bill 47 amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000, and Labour Relations Act, 1995, create protections for millions of Ontario workers;

“Whereas” this government's “Bill 66 further erodes women and marginalized people's social economic rights; and

“Whereas the ... government continues to remove, cancel or freeze funding for other supports, programs and regulations that would increase women's equality in the workforce and beyond;

“We, the undersigned, call on the” Conservative “government to double Ontario disability support (ODSP) or Ontario Works (OW) rates to bring them in line with CERB, because if laid-off workers need \$2,000 a month to get by, so do people who receive ODSP and OW.”

I fully support the petition, and I thank our local ODSP poverty activists Liza Butcher and Shady Rofaael from along the way for providing it to us today. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH DAY ACT, 2021 LOI DE 2021 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET DE LA SANTÉ AU TRAVAIL

Ms. McKenna moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to proclaim Occupational Safety and Health Day / Projet de loi 152, Loi proclamant la Journée de la sécurité et de la santé au travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To lead off the third reading debate, I recognize again the member for Burlington.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much, Speaker. I'm excited to speak to the third reading of Bill 152, the Occupational Safety and Health Day Act. I want to thank the Liberal, independent and PC MPPs for your support at first and second readings. A special thanks to the members of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, especially our committee Chair, the great member from Mississauga-Malton.

The bill was considered by committee on March 15, 20 and 24.

Speaker, I was pleased to receive support at committee from Rob Ellis, the president of the Our Youth at Work Association, a not-for-profit organization that has been in operation for 21 years. In 1999, Rob lost his 18-year-old son on the second day of work at his summer job. He has since become an outspoken advocate for health, safety and wellness. His work with young people, parents and businesses has been widely publicized across Canada and the United States. Rob was the inspiration for the League of Champions which, over the past six years, has empowered leaders in the construction industry to be health and safety champions. He also does a yearly Courageous video on YouTube on the National Day of Mourning. This yearly educational video educates young people on the right to refuse unsafe work, recognizing a bad employer,

and speaking out for others. Rob's Stand Up to Unsafe Work video will be live tomorrow, April 27. I encourage you to register for Courageous at MySafeWork.com/courageous.

Speaker, I was also proud to receive support during committee hearings on this bill from: Wayne Brown, from Liaison College of Culinary Arts; David Frame and Craig Lesurf, from the Ontario General Contractors Association; David Johnston, chair of the Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals; John Mandarino, director of the Canadian Tri-Fund for the Laborers' International Union of North America; Michael Collins-Williams, from the West End Home Builders' Association; Bruce Bolduc and Alex Piccini, from the Ontario Home Builders' Association; AJ Bullivant, from Bullivant Health and Safety.

Bill 152 is important. It's forward-thinking and forward-looking. It's positive, and it supports the National Day of Mourning recognized in Ontario and across Canada on April 28. It also builds on the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, which is also recognized on April 28. It also builds on North American Occupational Safety and Health Week.

Speaker, I think David Frame said it best during committee presentation: Bill 152 "is about a pivot. The week before," through the National Day of Mourning, "we recognize that we've lost an awful lot of people through workplace injuries.... The fact that we have the Day of Mourning is vital and it's a vital part of what's happening. But this is about pivoting from saying 'here's the problem' to 'here's the solution.'"

The goal of Occupational Safety and Health Day is to make health and safety better, to support each other and to keep focused on safety.

Speaker, as I've mentioned in the House before—and my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence also spoke about it—the Hoggs Hollow disaster was the catalyst that forever changed the safety laws in Ontario and saved many lives as a result. For those watching at home: On March 17, 1960, five Italian immigrant workers lost their lives in a tragic accident while working on a water main under the Don River in Toronto.

Following Hoggs Hollow, the government of Premier John Robarts enacted the Industrial Safety Act in 1964, which defined safety as "freedom from injury to the body or freedom from damage to health." For the first time, employers were required to take reasonable precautions to ensure workers' safety.

1310

Then, in 1978, the government of Premier Bill Davis passed the Occupational Health and Safety Act, incorporating over 100 recommendations from a 1976 royal commission report.

Also in 1978, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety was created to provide health and safety information, training and education.

With the 1980s came even more progress. In 1985, the Canadian Labour Congress declared April 28 as the Day of Mourning, an annual day to remember workers killed on the job. Then, in 1986, Canada celebrated the first

Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Week, which was observed from 1986 to 1996.

Ontario and Canada have led the way when it comes to improving health and safety in the workplace. That's why, in the talks between Mexico, Canada and the United States leading up to the North American Free Trade Agreement, the status of workplace safety in all three countries was discussed. Canada suggested to our Mexican and American partners that their countries should consider a similar health and safety week as ours. The United States and Mexico agreed, and, together, the three nations launched the North American Occupational Safety and Health Week in June 1997. Both Labour Canada and the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering were also instrumental in making this happen.

Today we're leading the way again by passing this bill to proclaim the first Tuesday in May as Occupational Safety and Health Day in Ontario during the North American Occupational Safety and Health Week.

I've said it before and I will say it again: Each of us in this place, regardless of where we're seated, has a responsibility to help educate and share the facts on workplace safety. In the months I spent developing this bill in the fall of 2019 and in the nearly two years since, I've heard from workers, unions, labour and employers about the important role Occupational Safety and Health Day will play in sharing the facts and educating workers and employers on the critical importance of workplace safety.

I hope that we can all come together today and vote to support third reading of Bill 152, the Occupational Safety and Health Day Act.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to participate to join this debate. I'm always really pleased to talk about workers and health and safety, as it forms a lot of my background as a worker, prior to being elected in this House.

I'm sure you've heard me before in this House, Speaker, talk about my experience in the construction industry and my work as the director of training for the Labourers' International Union of North America, Local 625, in Windsor. Prior to being elected, I helped develop their training centre in conjunction with some amazing workers and labour leaders there. My friend, my brother, Rob Petroni, who is the business manager at Local 625, was a visionary who saw the need to expand the training centre and expand the union hall into a training centre. We applied for our TDA status, our training delivery agent status, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities back—man, it was 2008 when we did that. Since then, we have had thousands of young workers and workers who were transitioning from other industries go through our training centre there and understand their rights, their responsibilities and the laws that protect them. Also, we are able, through that union hall, to train them specifically in skill sets like working at heights and confined spaces, harnessing, proper PPE, fitting—a whole host of training that you can imagine that sends those workers out into the job fully aware, knowledgeable and

competent about how to perform their job, but also how to protect themselves and their colleagues. That is an effective mechanism to protecting workers, and it takes leadership, it takes vision, and it takes resources.

Training doesn't come cheap. Certainly, if you ever come down—and I would welcome you, Speaker—to visit the training hall in Oldcastle, just outside of Windsor, to see what it looks like, it is remarkable. It's state of the art. The classrooms there are interactive. The equipment that those young workers have access to to train—and the trainers themselves, who come with a wealth of experience, are able to be hands on, side by side, making sure that those workers know exactly how to perform their job safely and effectively. It makes LiUNA 65 in Windsor one of the premier training centres and certainly one of the premier labour forces behind proactive health and safety and delivering quality work in our construction industry.

I'm really proud to have had the opportunity and the experience to build knowledge from that, because it informs a lot of the discussion, the debate that I am able to participate in in this House.

There's a huge contrast between what we see on the labour side, on the unionized workers' side, and what we've seen successive governments do to actually support and protect those workers—a lot of piecemeal stuff, a lot of ad hoc band-aid solutions that don't go far enough in actually eliminating workplace injuries.

I've said it before and I will say it again: The only acceptable number in terms of workplace injuries in Ontario and anywhere in Canada is zero—a big fat doughnut hole, none, zero. We should not have one person who goes to work at the beginning of the day and doesn't come home. We should never have a person who goes to work and gets injured because of the nature of their work. I truly believe in my heart that every workplace injury is preventable, because we know the systems that have to come into place. The right to know, the right to participate and the right to refuse—those are the hallmarks of our Occupational Health and Safety Act, and they're tenets that should be ingrained in every worker's mind and heart, each and every day. But it also takes support and leadership from your government to be able to continue to put that at the forefront, to not water down regulations, to not see regulations as a barrier and impediment to productivity or growth—they aren't. Ask any business owner anywhere in Ontario—a safe and healthy workplace is a productive workplace, and ultimately, the laws of economics would dictate that it is a profitable workplace, because the more time lost you have on a job is time that isn't being done actually getting the product out there and getting the services out there.

That being said, this is a bill, Bill 152, to proclaim the first Tuesday in May as Occupational Safety and Health Day. That's all well and good, but the old adage rings quite true here: Actions speak louder than words. And only moments ago in this House, in this chamber, we saw all of the members of the government who were in the chamber vote against our colleague from the Liberal Party, whose riding is Don Valley East. He tabled a bill to bring forward

paid sick days in the province of Ontario. The government voted against it.

Time after time—actually, I think we're up to 23 individual times—this government has used its majority to vote against paid sick days for workers in the province of Ontario, in the midst of a global pandemic that has wreaked havoc across this province. It has devastated our economy. It has devastated small business. It has ripped apart families. We hear stories every day of people who can't afford to take a day off even though they feel symptomatic. People were already in an economic crunch prior to the pandemic. Now, when COVID-19 has exacerbated all of those pressures—the need between putting food on the table and paying the bills and taking a day off because you may be ill—people, by and large, are heading back into work, trying to take all the precautions they can. The epidemiologists and the scientists and the experts have told us since the beginning of this pandemic that giving paid sick days is one of the strongest public health and safety mechanisms that governments can enact to protect workers. Yet this government has ignored the science; it has ignored and abdicated its responsibilities in bringing that measure, and it is a shame. So it makes a bill like this, brought forward by my colleague from Burlington, ring a little hollow, to be fair and to be honest.

1320

I have seen this government operate in various forms throughout the years that they've held tenure here. I haven't seen a government that has any real compulsion to support workers in a meaningful way. We would see investments in public health and safety training that would put us ahead as leaders, if that were the case. We would see proactive investigations and proactive visits by health and safety inspectors to workplaces; instead, they are piecemeal. They often come—especially in the case of long-term care—with a pre-announced warning that they are going to come. That doesn't work. That doesn't help support those workers.

We have seen massive cuts to the WSIB, whereby those workers who are entitled to support under our WSIB no-fault regime, should they get injured, have their benefits either cut or clawed back. We have seen workers denied claims that were absolutely legitimate—had to fight tooth and nail to get the support that they needed. And this government cut 30% from WSIB payments for businesses to help businesses, rather than helping those workers who need those benefits. That is a shame.

I've toured this province and spoken to workers and industry groups throughout my career. I think of the trips that I took to Sarnia—Chemical Valley—where, still, families deal with the devastating affects of asbestos and the carnage that has caused families. They saw their loved ones going to work every day, developing asbestosis, and having to fight for those benefits. There has been no remedy there, although of course we ban the use of asbestos today—but it's the effects of that industrialization that governments don't want to go anywhere near, that they don't want to touch, because it is a liability and it costs money.

This government isn't in the business to be spending money on people in protecting their jobs. We've seen it quite clearly this morning. They aren't ready to extend the full force of the government to protect workers.

So it's all good that on the first Tuesday in May we will stand and declare that it is Occupational Safety and Health Day, but where are the actions behind your words? They are not apparent.

What actions could we have seen during the pandemic? We could have seen a dedicated, full-frontal approach to reducing class sizes in our schools. Throughout the pandemic, kids have continued to be jammed in classrooms, even though they were split up—sometimes half online learning, half not—within schools. We did not see that happen. We didn't see the investments in proper ventilation. We know we have a, roughly, \$15-billion deficit when it comes to infrastructure upgrades in our education system. It is reprehensible.

I remember the government, when they were in opposition, railing against the College of Trades. This was the big fight of the century—imagine that—back in the day. They didn't like the College of Trades. They wanted, I guess, self-regulation and self-determination. That is their prerogative. But the College of Trades, although they've now eliminated that, would have and could have and did set some parameters and regulations in which workers were able to work, and work safely.

We talked about ratios around apprentices. I remember quite clearly the then-leader of the PC Party, Tim Hudak, wanting a 1-to-1 ratio in the electrical apprenticeship program. What that means is that for every young worker, there would only be one journey person who would be able to shadow that worker and train them on the job. My experience is that the more experienced people there are in a workplace, the more eyes you're going to have on a young worker to anticipate problems, to be able to coach and support and mentor those workers and to make sure that they're safe. That's just the nature of construction and industrialization. That isn't the case. They wanted to make sure that young workers only had access to one journey person. There was a 1-to-1 ratio; you could hire to that ratio. It was an economic prerogative. It wasn't anything that did anything for health and safety on the job. We argued, but nevertheless, they stood their ground. And we see that ratio being expanded throughout apprenticeship programs, because that's what they're concerned about—they're not concerned about workers; they're concerned about the bottom line for corporations and large developer groups that hire these workers.

Speaker, we saw this government take action to cut \$16 million from the Chief Prevention Officer's budget. That's an office that is responsible for funding health and safety organizations. If you were serious about promoting and protecting health and safety in the workplace, you would see an office of the Chief Prevention Officer as something of a tool, an asset—someone who could broadcast that important messaging around protecting yourselves, around your rights in a workplace. Yet apparently, there was some fat able to be trimmed off of that budget,

because workers, as far as the government is concerned, get all the information they need—well, I'll tell you, they don't; if anything, they need more of it. They need support on the job. They need translation services. They need mentoring. They need access to information. Those are the things that would showcase a government that actually was concerned about workers.

I have to go back to the elephant in the room. In this House, we, as elected officials, have the luxury of taking a day off, should we feel ill, and not suffering any economic impact. What do we call that? We know we are legislated so that we can—by virtue of us being in this room, we are given privilege. We can't be denied access to this room, actually. It is our privilege to walk into this House. You can kick us out, but the next day, you can't stop us from coming back in here. Am I correct? Kind of. We have the privilege of being in this House, we have the privilege of representing our communities, but we also have the privilege of taking a day off if we feel ill. I would counsel any of my colleagues in this House, if you're feeling sick, to please go home and take a day off. You're not going to lose a paycheque. But that isn't the protection that you're offering every other worker who doesn't have the privilege of being an elected official. You're saying, "It's good enough for us, but it's not good enough for you."

This is what the government is saying: "We're going to give you a day where we say everyone should be the champions of occupational health and safety." Far be it from me to say that that shouldn't be proclaimed—it should be every day, not just one day. But the actions behind your words and the actions behind your legislation should actually give some teeth to saying that you care about workers. One way to do that would have been, of the 23 times we've given this government an opportunity to support paid sick days—someone on the government benches could have stood up and said, "Yes, we agree. That is something that's important."

1330

We've seen a little bit of backpedalling. The Premier got on TV a couple of days ago and he seemed distraught. Who knows what his state of mind is at this moment, but he now says that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the House to come to order.

I'm going to caution the member on his language and allow him to continue with his speech.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker.

I saw a Premier who doesn't seem to fully grasp the enormity of the challenges that people are facing out in the public. I see a Premier who has been given ample opportunity to do the right thing and time and time again has chosen differently. I have to question someone in a leadership role who, despite all of the best evidence and science given to them and all of the political runway to do the right thing, consistently chooses to do the wrong thing. I have to question that person's leadership, and I think Ontarians are questioning that person's leadership, as well.

So what I ask of my colleagues across the way is, in the absence of that leadership, which we all know is happening right now, in a leadership vacuum, stand up and fight for workers. Say that you're going to actually provide them with the paid sick days they need.

The member from Burlington, the other day, had the gall to stand up and call the challenges that people are facing—to refer to a Chicken Little theory, that the sky is falling, to minimize the pain and suffering that people are feeling out there. How egregious can you be to use your time in this House to actually minimize the pain that people are feeling? It is reprehensible, and it really calls into question their actual belief that this is something that's important.

We see lip service—we've heard it; we see it now in this bill. Let's see some action. Stand up. Table your own bill that has paid sick days to support those workers. You move quickly on a whole lot of other bills. Charles McVety got a full red carpet rolled out for him. But when it comes to the workers in this province, you are paralyzed; there is inertia like we've never seen.

So, Speaker, I was happy to speak to this bill, but I truly would like to see some substance behind the words presented by the government.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I was hoping that I would have an opportunity to speak to this bill once I saw that the government decided to surprise us with it this afternoon. It is an Act to proclaim Occupational Safety and Health Day, which proclaims the first Tuesday in May each year as Occupational Safety and Health Day, to recognize the importance of supporting and nurturing a safety and health culture in every workplace.

My first thought—and I did not hear the member say it—was, Wednesday is the Day of Mourning. This is a day that we have been recognizing for many, many—the early 1900s, I believe, is when the first Day of Mourning began. I thought it was so unfortunate to not hear the member recognize that very, very important day, one of the most important days to the workers of this province, a day when we mourn the loss and we fight for the living—the most solemn day for workers in Ontario, and not even to be mentioned. Is this bill supposed to replace the Day of Mourning? I'm really not sure why this was of such great importance to the member opposite to bring forward when we already have a day that is very much recognized by every single worker in this province.

When we're recognizing the Day of Mourning, I will definitely be recognizing two men who have died in the last eight months in my community.

National Steel Car in the city of Hamilton has lost two men in the last eight months. On Friday, the headlines in the newspaper were that National Steel Car closed down because of COVID-19 rates. The very same day, a man from National Steel Car died, and it didn't even hit the papers.

When I talked to our labour council president, he said to me that it's very difficult, because every year at the Day of Mourning—I'll let the members know how the Day of

Mourning works. They ring a bell and say the name of a person who died that year. I asked, "Are you ringing the bells this year? How is that working?"—because it's going to be virtual. Thank you to Cable 14 for pairing up with Hamilton and District Labour Council to be able to televise our Day of Mourning this year. He said to me, "We barely get the names. We're not able to get the names of people who died the way we did every year, so we have to go with our best guess and hope that we do enough digging and that we have enough people contact us to allow us that information."

So it's troubling that we don't even hear that a man died on Friday and that it is completely covered up by the COVID-19 mess at National Steel Car.

I spoke to Trudy, who is the former partner of Fraser. Fraser died eight months ago—51 years old. Fraser was an occupational health and safety advocate. He was the guy to go to for health and safety at National Steel Car—and then found his way to his own death on the job. I talked to Trudy, and she still doesn't have a response on the final outcome from WSIB, from the ministry, for Fraser. They're struggling because it's taking so long to get this answer and to have this closure. She's also very concerned that WSIB only pays out a maximum of \$1 million for the loss of a life of someone who went to work—and their family will never see them again.

These are the kinds of things that we should be talking about. These are the types of things that should be hitting the floor of this Legislature—things that truly impact people's lives. If you want to talk about WSIB and you want to talk about health and safety, let's talk about the trouble that people have each and every time they contact WSIB. All of your offices have to get the same amount of cases as we do. WSIB cases don't just show up in New Democrat offices, I'm quite sure. They're lengthy, they're troublesome, they're depressing—and yet they don't do anything to help correct that. Instead, they took down WSIB's payments and what they have to pay, and they think that's helping the workplace. Not even every company has to submit to WSIB—so taking down the premiums isn't helpful for everyone. That's a COVID-19 measure. It's just kind of troublesome that we're finding COVID-19 measures on the backs of injured workers.

My condolences to Fraser Cowan and his family on his loss eight months ago. And my condolences to Collin Greyer's family—43 years old, young family. He was lost on Friday in a workplace injury.

Trudy will be holding a golf tournament each and every year that will create bursaries for people who want to take the occupational health and safety course in Fraser's name, to ensure that people have access to this education in the workplace, so that we can ensure that we have more people educated and that we lose less people.

1340

I want to go back to—I'm sorry; I'm kind of skipping around here, Speaker, but there is so much that goes on with WSIB.

One of the main things that injured workers' advocates have been asking for is for this government to change deeming. Deeming is such a huge problem. If you're

injured on a job and you make, say, \$30 an hour or whatever and you'll never be able to go back to that work, they can deem you—that means they can say that you can go and be a Walmart door greeter, because you're physically capable of doing it, for \$15 an hour, and you're just supposed to live with that.

Is this how we treat injured workers? Is this how we treat people who go to work and make money and pay into our economy? Once they're hurt, we kick them to the curb and put them in poverty for the rest of their lives? Because that's exactly what happens. As soon as someone is on WSIB, forget it.

I know so many people who go to work injured every day, and they say, "It doesn't matter if this hurts and that hurts and whatever. I just have to keep working because I don't want to be in poverty and live on WSIB. I'd prefer to go to work and be injured and just come home and try to soak in a hot bath and get the A535 out and make the best of it, and then get up and struggle through it next day." They know that a ticket to WSIB is a ticket to poverty. That is absolutely shameful.

Also, you want to talk about WSIB? I put a really good bill forward a couple of weeks ago—Access to Mental Health Support for Essential Workers—that would have provided all of our front-line heroes access to the mental health services they would have needed due to COVID-19. We've heard many stories, and I have brought several of those stories to this floor myself—PSWs who talked about the horror stories that they've seen, the front-line nurses and what they're facing, the doctors. ONA is saying that they have 60% of their workforce saying that they have mental health issues: depression, anxiety, PTSD. These are all real issues that people are facing in the province of Ontario due to what they had to do and see during COVID-19—and this government just wiped it right off and said, "It's too expensive."

The mental health of our workforce, who have given everything for us, who have put themselves in harm's way, who have put their families in harm's way, who have watched people they loved and cared for die in rampant numbers—it's too expensive to take care of them, for mental health? I know our benefits aren't great, but at least we have some mental health coverage here. And we've left people with nothing.

Grocery store workers—everything that they've dealt with in grocery stores. I go into my grocery store, and I visit several of them in my riding. I ask the workers, "How are you doing?" They're typically young. They're working part-time, or they're working straight weekends, trying to go to school at the same time. They say, "We're okay." I ask, "Are people being nice to you? Is everything going okay?" "Oh, no. People aren't very nice." What effect does that have on our kids? And then you don't even want to support them when they need us. We throw them out there to the wolves and say, "We need you because we need food in our communities. You are essential, but we're not doing anything to help you after the fact."

Does that even put a twinge in any of the members across—to understand how people have felt through this pandemic?

I'm sure most of us have nice roofs over our heads. Our families are fed. We're not front-line essential workers in the heart of everything that's going on in COVID-19. We sit in this pretty nice House. We're pretty privileged, and yet we don't want to help those who have helped us. How does that even make sense? If that's the definition of the Pink Palace, boy oh boy, it sure is scary, and it sure is pretty shameful.

Paid sick days: Well, I believe today was vote 25 for paid sick days for the people of this province—something we could have actually done that was tangible, that was really something for the workers of this province. Workers have gone to work every day, and if we tell them they need a COVID-19 test, we're not paying them. "You've got to go get a COVID-19 test, but we're not paying you." "Your kids are home from school, but we're not paying you." "You've gotten COVID-19; we're not paying you. Well, maybe you can access WSIB. You can fight them to get it, but good luck with that, too."

It's the same as the member from Niagara Falls' bill, presumptive legislation for COVID-19—but no, that's not okay. WSIB will fight you tooth and nail to say that you didn't receive it in the factory where you were standing 20 deep, that you received it off doing something else. You're telling them, "I didn't do anything but go to work." Nope, WSIB denies. That would have been a good labour bill to bring forward, to allow to pass. It seems like it would have helped workers.

This bill is not going to help workers, and yet this is the priority in the middle of the third wave.

So, yes, we voted 25 times for paid sick days in the province of Ontario as of today. I'm sure that number won't end; that will continue to grow.

The Premier, on Friday, decided that he is going to now bring forward the best paid sick days North America has ever seen—ever, ever seen. It's going to be the biggest, the best.

Just pass the member from London West's bill. The bill is there. It's had all the research done to it. Everybody in this House knows if they can trust the research of that member, they can trust the research of that member. All of the stakeholders are there. She has everybody behind her. It's a bill that's already made. Just pass the bill. Do the right thing.

Instead of trying to take your time creating a new bill—how long are people going to have to wait for that? People are dying every day. Look at our average deaths. I don't know the exact—I go through the clippings every day. To me, it's really quite broad, but the average seems like—it's at least 25 people a day are dying. When I heard the coroner, the other day, say that two people every day die at home, that they don't even make it to the hospital—I think it's time for action.

If you look at the statistics of where the virus is spreading, it's workplaces and education—those are the two most avid places where people are getting COVID-19, and yet your questions, daily, are about the airport. I agree, shut down the airports; there's not a doubt. But it shouldn't be the government's focus. They want to push the federal

government to do something? Send them a letter. Get one of your Conservative members up in Ottawa to ask the questions there. Doing the work in the Ontario Legislature just doesn't make sense.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: No matter how bad they want to heckle, they know it doesn't make sense.

Do your own work. Figure out paid sick days, for crying out loud.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Instead, you criminalized playgrounds.

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes, playgrounds—and a police state is what we get from them. And then we get a Premier who cries, probably because they're plummeting in the polls, not really because anything else is happening. We know exactly where the Premier has been—

Interjections.

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

1350

Miss Monique Taylor: We know where the Premier and his caucus have been over paid sick days and all of that. There were no tears then. There are just tears when the polls are dropping. The polls drop and, all of the sudden, the tears are dropping with them. The members opposite need to get their priorities straight.

I know the member from Nepean or somewhere—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'm actually a minister.

Miss Monique Taylor: The minister. The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport—thank goodness, not the minister—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The minister of tears.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank goodness she's not the minister of tears anymore; she is now the minister of cheers. She's got a lot to say. I've got a lot to say, too. It's totally fine.

They really need to get their priorities in order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The Minister of Tourism will come to order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I'm actually disgusted. That's disgusting.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The Minister of Long-Term Care will come to order.

Miss Monique Taylor: I don't know who she's talking to. I guess I picked a bone over there.

What's disgusting is the thousands of people who are dying every day—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please.

I've asked nicely a few times. I've asked the Minister of Tourism and the Minister of Long-Term Care to come to order. I have to be able to hear the member who has the floor. Thank you.

Back to the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I know those eyes weren't for me, because, I'm sorry, but I have no lessons to learn from the Minister of Long-Term Care. Honestly, I have no lessons to learn from anybody on that side of the House.

In my riding, my constituency office is so packed with phone calls. I literally have 40 to 50 phone calls just in my constituency office every single day. That doesn't include the constituency emails, the Queen's Park phones or Queen's Park emails. Every time this government makes an announcement, the phones blow up. My staff are so overworked. They are the ones who are going to be burnt out. The work just doesn't end.

Every time the Premier has something to say and does announcement by press conference, chaos falls. We've got people who are looking for vaccines. We've got teachers who can't get vaccinated. We've got EAs who can't get vaccinated. We've got people with disabilities who are sending me emails saying, "When is my turn?" It just never ends—and then these are the priorities of the government. We need real legislation that's going to ensure that workers in Ontario truly have a chance, and this unfortunately is not going to do that.

Maybe they should pay attention to the Day of Mourning this year. I wonder how many bells are going to be ringing for the people who died because of COVID-19 on the job? How many bells are we going to hear?

You know so much; maybe you have the stats on that. How many long-term-care workers did you lose, Minister, over COVID-19?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): To the Chair, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: Maybe that's the question. Maybe she should pay attention to the Day of Mourning this year and mourn for the people she put in harm's way and didn't give the opportunities to give thought about the proper PPE, thought about sick days—and she doesn't even want to give them a sick day.

This is the government that wants to lead this province. Hopefully, they'll find better bills to do it with than this.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to stand in this House today, on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of my party, to make a few comments on the record on Bill 152, Occupational Safety and Health Day Act, 2021. I would like to thank the member for bringing it forward.

I don't know if you've noticed this, but almost every town in northern Ontario has a statue. If you drive up Highway 11, when you come to my part of the world, you come to Marten River, and they have a big fish. It's a huge fish, because fishing is pretty important to Marten River. If you come to Temiskaming Shores and you look on the side as you stop at the stoplight on Highway 11, you'll see a monstrous Holstein cow, and for the reason that cows are pretty important to that part of the world; I was a dairy farmer, and I know why. If you go a bit farther, the town farthest north in my riding is Cochrane. There you will see a huge polar bear, Chimo, the mascot of the town. If you back up a little bit, in Iroquois Falls there is a big wooden statue of a lumberjack, because Iroquois Falls is originally a paper town, a lumber town.

I love all of those statues, but the one that you have to drive a little bit off Highway 11 to see—if you ever take a

trip off Highway 11, take 112 or 66 and go to Kirkland Lake, because their statue is the miners' memorial. It's a bronze statue of miners doing what miners did—what they still do. There's a plaque next to that statue with all the names of the miners who have died in Kirkland Lake and the surrounding mines. There are still miners' names added to that plaque. Mining is much safer than it used to be—the companies try much harder, and a lot of it was forced on to them by workers organizing, and a lot of it is also because modern mining is safer—but it's still a really, really tough job.

Why I'm going there is because I'm not sure—the Day of Mourning is an incredibly powerful day, and it's celebrated differently in different parts of the province. The Day of Mourning in Kirkland Lake is a moving ceremony. I'm not opposed to a day—but what's another day? The day itself doesn't make things safer. It's not about the day.

Now, in this pandemic, we've come to see how dangerous so many other jobs are—jobs that we never really thought were dangerous. During the pandemic, they're the most dangerous jobs there are. I commend the people on the front lines, the health care workers and the people who you expect—the front-line responders who you automatically you think of as front-line responders. But now a grocery clerk is a front-line responder, or someone who works in a warehouse. I'm not sure that they're going to celebrate the Occupational Safety and Health Day Act, because, honestly, it isn't making a big difference in their lives.

What would have made a big difference in any of their lives, as my colleague who spoke just before—paid sick days would have made a big difference over the last 14 months.

I've sat here and listened to the Premier and to the House leader say that there are paid sick days, there's the federal program, there are 20 paid sick days, and they are not going to take anybody's lessons on 10, when they knew—basically they have now admitted that that program didn't work for people.

You have to be home for a week to apply for that program, to get paid less than minimum wage. So if you get a cough, you're going to go to work. You're going to get tested and wait for that test to come back, but you're going to keep going to work, because you can't afford not to go to work, because you need to pay your rent and you need to pay for groceries and everything else you need to pay for.

1400

They all knew that, and we know it, and the medical community knows it. Everyone knew it. On Friday, the Premier said he knew it, and I'm happy for that. He did say that he was going to bring in the best program in North America—but the best program in North America a year late. People died because of that. I don't think you can deny that. And that is a travesty—that this government would spend \$30 million challenging the federal government on the carbon tax but not spend the legislative horsepower to put in even a stopgap measure during a

pandemic to make sure that our true front-line workers, the people who work in the warehouses, the people who work in food processing, the people who work in the grocery stores, actually had access to the resources so they could stay home and not lose their job and not be unable to feed their kids.

Each time I've listened to the Minister of Labour, who I respect, tell that they were the first jurisdiction to actually protect people's jobs, so you couldn't get fired for not going to work—if you had COVID-19, great. But if you don't have any money, what are they protecting? They don't realize that for the majority of people in this province who work paycheque to paycheque—they can't afford to stay home a week to apply for a program that pays less than minimum wage. Why did it have to come to this?

I hope they do come out with the best program in North America, but I think, on behalf of my constituents, we all wish that they had come out with a functional program a year ago. Each time the government members said, "But there's \$700 million sitting there that's not being accessed," do you know what that told me? That told me that's a bad program. We're in the middle of a pandemic, and if there's money sitting there that people aren't accessing, that is a big red flag that there is a big problem with the program. There are times when you don't want to have money sitting, sitting, sitting. When there's a crisis out there and you know what the crisis is—transmission in workplaces—that's something that we don't have to discuss whose responsibility that is.

Workplace transmission is provincial. Labour laws are provincial. Should there be more work done in airports and international borders? Sure. Should you be pushing the federal government? Sure. Should we be pushing for quicker vaccines? Sure. But not at the expense of ignoring your own responsibilities. If you know the borders are porous and if you know we don't have vaccines, that means you have to work twice as hard to stop where it's happening under your jurisdiction—not look the other way and promise the best program in North America a year after. That's why this, creating a day—it's not terrible in itself, but it's not that effective.

The Miners' Memorial has a list of all the people who have died in Kirkland Lake, working in mines. I'm sure, when their families come look at the Miners' Memorial, it stirs something in their heart that can't really be replicated.

I think I've told this before in this Legislature, but I'm going to tell it again. There's a list that stirs something in my heart, as well. The Farm Safety Association prints a list of all the people—I'm going to back up. I talked this morning about #plant21. The farmers are out there, as we are speaking, doing everything in their power to get crops planted on time. And do you know what? Sometimes they work a bit harder than they should and a little bit longer than they should, and sometimes they pay more than they should. Every year, the Farm Safety Association prints a list of the people who have died on farms. That list always strikes a chord in my heart a little bit, too, because one year my dad was on that list. Every time I see the Miners' Memorial, I think about that list.

The reason I'm standing here—probably one of the reasons is because my dad died on a farm, and I watched him die. I'm not going to get in—but there was a reason. There was a fault in a piece of equipment. My dad made a mistake. He got off a tractor while it was running. You should never do that. He put on the parking brake and he got off the tractor while it was running. When he tried to get back on the tractor, he hit the gearshift, and it basically ran him over. But there was a fault in the tractor, too. So I went to all our organizations to get this fault fixed, and each time I was told, "Well, he made a mistake, because the tractor was running." I said, "Granted, but there are applications in agriculture where you have a tractor running and nobody is on it. So to start that tractor and stop it"—all of the organizations said, "No, no."

Finally, I got a letter back from a dairy farmer who was a head of one of these organizations, and I called him back. I asked, "Sir, you have a dairy farm?" I'm going to get a bit technical here—"You have silos?"

"Yup."

"So you have a stationary tractor blowing the forage in that silo?"

"Yup."

I asked, "Do you have somebody sitting on it?"

"No."

"Well, then, how did you start that tractor and get off it?"

"Well, nobody has somebody sitting in a blower tractor."

"Then why did you give me this bullshit?" Pardon my language.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'll ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John Vanthof: I withdraw that myself.

I asked him if he had a grain auger. I remember this discussion distinctly. He said, "Yup."

"Do you have somebody sitting in that auger tractor all the time?"

"Well, that doesn't make any sense."

"How did they get on and off that tractor if you can't get off a running tractor?"

"Well, they put the parking brake on."

I said, "So did my father. So what's the deal?"

And then I forgot about it. Life has a way of—my father died; I had to run the farm. I really didn't know how to run the farm, but I did what I had to do.

1410

A few years later, I got a call from a lawyer in Texas. A 12-year-old kid was working on the farm, and his father told him to go shut the grain auger off—the same tractor as my father's. The kid didn't come back. They went to look for him. He was lying on the ground, just like my father. The lawyer was representing that kid's family. They took the tractor company to court, and they won. Then, that tractor was pulled, and they changed the gearshift mechanism, years after the fact. We could have done that here. We could have done that if whoever was doing their jobs had said, "Hey, they have a point." But we didn't. That cost a kid's life. It might have cost more lives;

I don't know, but it certainly cost that kid his life. I had to testify on what we did, on all the complaints I'd made. That's how they found it—on my complaint, and then they did something.

Ever since that, I've become a lot more cynical. Anybody who knows me—I'm quite cynical. I laugh quite a bit, but I'm quite cynical. I always take with a grain of salt that all these things are put in place to protect you, that everybody knows the bureaucracy will protect you and everything, and that your government will protect you.

Yes, I believe in the system, and that's why I'm here. But I always take everything with a grain of salt, including the Occupational Safety and Health Day Act, 2021. I have respect for the member. I don't doubt that the member is trying to do something to bring recognition to health and safety. But from where I stand—and that day when I was watching my father die—this really won't make much difference. We have the power, here, to make a lot more difference.

On that side, you had the power a year ago to recognize that the federal program wasn't going to work and that people were going to die because they didn't have paid sick days, and you chose not to act, just like the people involved with my father's death chose not to act—and it wouldn't have saved my dad; my dad was going to die anyway. But that 12-year-old kid didn't have to die that day. And the people who are dying now because they didn't have paid sick days didn't have to die either.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House and represent the residents of St. Catharines.

I'm going to take great pleasure in trying to express how I feel about this Occupational Safety and Health Day Act, Bill 152.

Yesterday, I had the chance to go to a memorial wall that's in the city of St. Catharines, at the Welland Canals Parkway. Residents across St. Catharines and Niagara—Niagara Falls, Welland, Thorold, all across Niagara—got together a few years back and said, "We have to honour the fallen workers, the 137 men who lost their lives at the Welland Canal." This memorial was constructed at Lock 3 of the Welland Canal to serve as a reminder of the fallen workers who died while building one of the greatest engineering marvels in Canada.

Each year, on April 28, we remember workers who died, who were injured or who became ill from their job. Last year, on April 28, we did our Day of Mourning, and COVID-19 was upon us. It was a global pandemic that scared people across Canada, across this world. It's hard to imagine that we're still fighting that pandemic today.

People across Niagara have remained resilient. They have helped their neighbours. They've given to organizations. They put signs in their windows to support our essential workers, and they've lent a hand wherever.

My question here is, why are we debating for a day—just one day, out of every day of the year? As members of provincial Parliament, we have the powers to make labour

laws for this province. We have the ability and the tools in our tool box to make policies and laws that would absolutely protect every worker across Ontario. I think we should be doing that every day—taking a moment of silence and really reflecting on what laws we can bring forward, what priorities we should be dealing with within this Legislature. Today, the priority we are having is to debate one day. Occupational health and safety is something that—the government should actually be looking at stricter laws and guidelines and policies that help every worker every day. That’s what we need. We don’t need one day that makes it look good that we remember the day of occupational safety and health. We do it on April 28 already. We remember those workers who died, who were injured or who became ill from their job.

Like I said, during this crisis, our health care workers and our essential workers have put themselves at risk every day for a year and four months now—every day. They work long hours so we can get the services and the care that we need. We should be thanking them now more than ever.

Over the years, employers and workers have observed April 28 as the Day of Mourning for fallen workers. They do it in different ways. Some light candles; some will lay commemorative wreaths or wear commemorative pins; some wear black arm bands; and some pause for a moment of silence to reflect.

I think this government should really stop and reflect on what has happened over a year and four months to our workers across Ontario.

I remember standing here and debating long-term care, when the military went in. They came forward and they said, “We have PTSD from going into these long-term-care homes in Ontario.” That’s a shame. That’s occupational safety and health. They’re going to have to live with that every day—not just one day. It’s going to be every day of their life that that’s going to come back on them and they’re going to have to reflect on what happened and why.

1420

I know that April 28 is an important day and it’s when we all should stand and recognize the fallen workers.

Just last week, my husband and I were sitting watching the 6 o’clock news—and right in St. Catharines, there’s an apartment building being built. Not because of the lack of knowledge of the job these construction workers had, but they both fell through an elevator shaft—I’m not sure how many floors; I believe it was 14. They fell and landed in a pool of water, and one of the young fellows on the news said that he was holding his co-worker up with two broken arms, and his co-worker was in really bad shape.

My thoughts and prayers go out to the families who got those phone calls that day. If it was your husband or a family member and you got that phone call that day, my thoughts and prayers go out to you. I hope your recovery is quick, and Godspeed.

These are things that we as members of provincial Parliament, within this Legislature, should be looking at—stricter guidelines, stricter policy-making.

I’m going to go on to say, what about paid sick days? This morning, I actually stood in this House in question period—and I talked, over the weekend, to a fellow who worked at National Steel Car in Hamilton. He said to me, “It goes to show that there’s no doubt that people come into work sick when they have to live paycheque to paycheque.” It’s terrible that they have to go into work sick. Because this happened, National Steel Car is closed down for two weeks. We have Jeremy and his family. He contracted COVID-19 from the workplace. He went home, and now his wife has it and his daughter has it. But that’s not just one week of pay, that’s not just one person, that’s not just the essential caregiver’s paycheque that has been taken away—because the people in Ontario have to go to work sick. I know that’s hard for the other side to fathom: “Oh, they go into work sick. Why?” Well, it’s because they can’t get the food on the table, they can’t pay the rent, they can’t pay the bills. They fear that rent that they have to pay is not going to be there, that money that they need is not going to be there. Now Jeremy’s family, as I said, are experiencing that same loss. They’re experiencing two paycheques that are lost—two caregivers in the home.

You have to do, I believe, 10 days from the day you were told you have COVID-19. So you have to isolate for 10 days—that’s 10 days off work. The person who lives in the home as well—if they have tested negative, they have to still isolate for 10 days and then possibly another 14 days after that. That’s almost a whole month of no money coming into the house, except for what the federal government is going to give them, which is probably okay but not enough. The essential caregiver is absolutely without that cheque that they relied on—that they could live on paycheque to paycheque.

Getting back to the memorial wall in St. Catharines: I just want to say that when people come from all over Canada to visit Lock 3, to see the ships climb up the lock—believe it or not they do; they call it the climb up the locks—all the way through the Welland Canal—

Interjection.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: That’s right, yes.

We’ll go back to this wall that they have. It’s a beautiful wall with 137 names on it. It’s called the wall—and it’s kind of like in a V, so it looks like the locks are opening up. Behind it is a huge mirrored wall. I said to my husband, “What is that mirrored wall? I wonder what that represents.” When we went to go look—it actually represents the trees and the grass and the living around it, which mirrors that we are the living and we shall remember the 137 men who died to create one of the greatest engineering marvels in Canada.

When we’re speaking of this on April 28 and we all stand and we do our moment of silence or we do our commemorative things, I want everyone to remember that we are government here—we are members of provincial Parliament. That’s the government over there. You have to use the tools that you have, not just for one day, the first Tuesday in May, for your Occupational Safety and Health Day; it’s every day of the year we should be making policy and guidelines—not pushing them through, not making

empty promises and announcements, and another announcement. Let's get some teeth into some action. Let's make sure that we let the people of Ontario know that we can work together—I'm sure we can; we all have done it in the past. That's how things get done, working together—not one side, because we're the government and they're the opposition, and always this tension between each other. Let's communicate. If you're two children in a playground—wait a minute; it won't be in a playground, sorry. You'd be two children in—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: On a Zoom call.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: —on a Zoom call, and you communicate and you get things done.

That's the best thing about this House—that if we all get together and we all talk and we communicate, the proper things will get done, the proper tools will be used—labour laws—and there will be stricter guidelines and stricter policies. That's how we can protect the workers of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I've talked to many nurses. A lot of them are my friends. Jake Dale is a very good friend of mine. Over this pandemic, he has stressed, "My co-workers have worked so hard. They've seen families on Zoom, and they've seen their co-workers come into work, and they're stressed and their anxiety levels are high." I hear it in his voice and in the nurses' voices that I've heard. They're deeply impacted by COVID-19. They've been deeply impacted by this pandemic for a year and four months now.

The member from Niagara Falls has said it several times in this House—the member who shares a riding with me; we border on each other's—"If you would only give paid sick days, people would not have to go into work sick. Give these small businesses tools so that they can protect their workers. Give them the things they need."

But this government—you're not using all the tools you have. Instead, we're standing here debating, and priorities—I'm just not getting this, but I should. I'm getting what I'm talking about, but I'm not getting what the government is putting over here, saying, "Hey, the first Tuesday of the month, we're going to do the Occupational Safety and Health Day Act."

1430

Madam Speaker, as I've said—and I said it at the beginning—every day, as government, we should be making it a priority for workers in Ontario. We should be making sure that they have safety in the place that they work, that they don't go into work without the tools they need, proper PPE—that was what we learned during SARS here in Ontario. They needed proper PPE—the hospitals and all the front-line health care workers. There were health care workers who didn't have the proper PPE. They didn't have the proper tools. They didn't know what they were fighting. You can't go into a war if you don't see what you're fighting. We wouldn't send our army in without the proper tools, or our navy in without the proper tools, or any military into any kind of war or combat zone without the proper tools.

But here we are, standing in the Legislature today, talking about one day to commemorate, the health and safety day—like I said, I think every day should be.

We already have one day. It's April 28. We are all going to make sure that we remember anyone who has fallen, anyone who has taken ill, anyone whose life has been taken from them, and the sacrifices of our front-line and our essential workers who died or became ill during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will remember them on that day.

With each worker's tragedy, there are loved ones, there are family members, friends and co-workers who are always directly affected. They are left behind, and they are deeply impacted. Their lives are also changed forever—when you lose someone and you receive a phone call. In their honour, we should recommit to the fight to protect workers and prevent any more needless deaths here in Ontario. We should make sure, as members of provincial Parliament, that there are stricter guidelines; that when anyone in Ontario goes into work, they feel safe, they're not feeling that they are in any kind of harm's way—and that guidelines and policies should be made and put in place.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'm just going to speak for a moment, then I'll have my colleague the member from Niagara Falls speak, as well.

First of all, before I speak, on behalf of Brampton and Brampton North, I want to give my condolences to the family of the 13-year-old girl, Emily Victoria Viegas, who is one of the youngest people in Ontario—as a matter of fact, in Canada—to have died from COVID-19. As we talk about Bill 152, Occupational Safety and Health Day Act, there is a lot that ties in to the death of Emily, unfortunately.

I just want to give a little bit of history about what happened with Emily. This morning, before question period, we all stood up and talked about Emily. There was a moment of silence. But we really have to put our actions in effect. We really need to speak, and then speak to the truth of it. I know the member from Burlington, with this motion—I'm pretty sure she means well, but we really have to put our actions to words, and I don't see that happening here in this Legislature.

In the last little while, I've been getting calls and emails from people telling me to speak about what happened in Brampton—not to politicize it, but to talk about what has been going on in Brampton. The fact that we don't have mobile or pop-up clinics in an area where we have 22.2%—the largest cases in Brampton. The average is 7.9%. Mississauga has 14.5%. So Peel region is really getting hit hard by this virus.

Emily started showing some symptoms that her mother had when she was in the hospital. Her mother was having difficulty breathing, and she had a hard time standing. Her father, Carlos, is the only one in the family who went to work. They were a family of four. He tested negative for COVID-19. While he was home in Brampton with his

children, his wife was at Brampton Civic Hospital on oxygen. Mr. Viegas was told to isolate—like we're all told to do—by public health. He knew, like everybody else, that Brampton Civic Hospital was underfunded and that if he had gone there with his daughter, she may have been taken somewhere else—because we are overburdened, and that's what has been happening. People in Brampton have been sent all over the province. He didn't want to separate his daughter from the family, which is understandable. So what he did was—she was at home, and he checked her temperature, gave her Tylenol, which brought her fever down. She drank lots of liquids and ate her favourite foods. However, the next day, on April 22, she died of COVID-19—one of the youngest people in Ontario to die of COVID-19.

The government mentioned last week that they would bring in paid sick days. Mr. Viegas was the only one in the family to leave the apartment in the past months. He was the sole breadwinner, and he worked at a warehouse. Hearing these stories, I would think that this government—and seeing the Premier, last week, very emotional on TV—would bring in paid sick days. What else will it take to bring in paid sick days? I'm hoping that this government means what they say. However, the days and weeks continue to go by. This should have been brought in last year, not now. It is long overdue.

In Brampton, as I mentioned, we don't have mobile or pop-up clinics. We've seen what has been happening in Toronto and in Durham. It's amazing. You watch the TV and you see the lineups of those 18-plus getting vaccinated. However, in the hot zone, the one area of Ontario where we have the highest cases, we don't have a pop-up clinic. People ask me, "Kevin, why don't we have that here in Brampton?" I say, "Well, I agree we should have it. You have to speak to the government. Speak to the Brampton members in Brampton South, in Brampton West, and ask them to speak to their boss, the Premier, to bring pop-up clinics and mobile clinics to Brampton."

Instead of passing the buck to the feds, this government needs to take action to save the citizens of Ontario.

1440

I've talked to many nurses, and, as we all know, they're on the front lines. In the beginning of the pandemic, they were struggling to find PPE. Now they're still struggling to find protective gear. I've spoken to a few people—

Mr. Wayne Gates: N95s.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: N95s, as well. They are told not to throw them away, to keep them—

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Wash them.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Recycle them.

Mr. Kevin Yarde:—wash them, recycle them, in case they need them at a later time. This is what's happening in Ontario.

As we all know, the schools have been closed. We all would like to see them open. That's the best place for children to be. However, when you look at the schools and the fact that teachers were going to schools with students, 20 or 30 kids in a classroom—obviously, the virus is going to spread. We continue to push to make sure that we have at least 15 or fewer students in a classroom.

I mentioned that Mr. Viegas worked in a warehouse. Many warehouse workers still don't have the protection. Many of them are getting sick and going to work sick because they don't have proper paid sick days. I don't fault them, because the choice for them is to put food on the table or to go to work sick. They have been left with that choice.

Here we are today, April 26, and we still don't have paid sick days, when their own science team is saying that's what we need. When the doctors, the nurses' associations are saying we need paid sick days, this government still is not bringing it in.

In my riding of Brampton North and across Brampton, we have many taxi drivers and limousine drivers who are going to work, who are going to Pearson airport and picking up people who may or may not have COVID-19. They are not getting the protections from this government. Uber drivers and Lyft drivers—50% of their drivers have left or are waiting for COVID-19 to slow down. Why? Because they're not getting the supports and the protections from this government.

One group of people that people tend to forget is grocery store workers. They have to go to work. They're essential workers. Time and time again, they're getting sick. The majority of people getting sick now are in warehouses and at work. It used to be long-term-care homes; we talked about that for months. It took forever for this government to get it right, to get their act right. It took the military going into long-term-care homes to show just how bad things were in Ontario—the fact that of the G7 countries, we were the worst country in terms of taking care of our seniors.

I'm hopeful—but I'm not going to hold my breath—that we will get paid sick days here in Ontario. The government talks a good talk.

Just today, in question period, the Minister of Labour made it sound like they weren't going to do that. I believe they're changing their tune again, saying, "Well, the federal government—they need to add this; they need to add that." So it looks like they're going back to their original stance, regardless of what the Premier said last week when he was very emotional.

Well, the federal program is not going to work. The reason why it's not going to work is because—in order for you to get the benefits, you have to have COVID-19. As my colleague from Hamilton Mountain mentioned, in order to get the benefit, you have to have COVID-19. You can go to work with a snuffle or a cough. You may have COVID-19, you may not have COVID-19, but you have to go, because you're not going to get that paid sick day, because you don't have COVID-19. That's what has been happening in Brampton and right across Ontario—people have been going to work sick because they don't have those benefits. And the only way you're going to qualify is if you have COVID-19, if you test for COVID-19. This is why we are in the predicament we are in right now—continuing to see more and more people getting sick, more and more young people getting sick, from COVID-19.

I want to talk a little bit about deeming. My colleague mentioned earlier that somebody who gets sick or

injured—this is not in the motion, by the way; this is what they should put in this. This is a part of the Occupational Health and Safety Act that needs to be fixed. For someone who's making \$100,000 a year in a warehouse, working on really complex machinery, and they get sick or they get injured and they can't do their job anymore—what WSIB does is they say, “You can drive a cab, or you can work in another position where it's \$15 an hour.” So they have to do that job. This needs to be fixed, because they're pushing that person to work for minimum wage or less after working many years in a position where they were making a good living. This deeming portion needs to be fixed in the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The member for London West—we need to pass her paid sick day bill, plain and simple. We've been counting how many times we've voted on paid sick days here, and so far, to date, it is 25 times we have voted on paid sick days. And each time, guess what this government has done? Have they voted in favour of it? No, they voted against it. I really believe that they are trying everything possible to avoid bringing in paid sick days. Regardless of how many people die, how many people get sick in Ontario, they will do everything in their power to make sure that we don't get paid sick days in Ontario.

In Brampton, in Brampton North, in my riding, we are not getting the vaccinations that we need. This government's vaccine rollout has not worked. They're not prioritizing areas where the essential workers need to be vaccinated first. There was a poll not too long ago where 80% of Ontarians agreed that it makes sense to send the vaccines to areas that are being the most hard-hit. Say, for instance, somebody in Sudbury, where it's not a hot zone compared to the Peel region—they agree to send the vaccines down there, because that's the only way Ontario is going to get out of this mess we're in. If Peel and Toronto are not getting out of this mess, then the entire province will suffer. That's exactly what's happening.

In occupational safety and health—people with disabilities have been forgotten about. We have to remember people with disabilities. I'm hoping that this government realizes that they are people, too, and that they need the protections that are not in this Bill 152.

1450

In conclusion, I would like to say that I'm hopeful, although I'm doubtful, that this government will do the right thing when it comes to protecting workers. It's great to stand up on April 28 and bang pans and celebrate workers, but if you don't put forward the legislation, if you don't put forward the bills to actually protect workers, it's meaningless.

With that, I will let the rest of my colleagues continue with this debate.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to talk to my colleague from Burlington. She was going to have this day on the Day of Mourning, in this bill, and I raised this in committee. I talked at committee for an extended period of time on, if you really care about workers, what you really

could have done—knowing that the OFL doesn't support your bill because of the Day of Mourning; you know that.

I'm going to go through some of the things that I've come across in the last number of years, first, as the president of Local 199, which I'm very proud of—I was president for 12 years—as a city councillor, and as the chair of the United Way. And all the things around I'm going to go through—because I don't believe, quite frankly, what this government has done over the last three years has anything really to do for the health and safety of workers. I know you say you're pro-worker, but your actions speak louder than words.

I'm going to start off by talking about the Day of Mourning—something that I've gone to every year that I've worked at General Motors and belonged to the CAW, at that time, and then it went to Unifor. There was a young man in his early forties—like we all did, I worked three shifts for the plant when I was in the plant; actually, I worked steady midnights most of the time. I was their health and safety representative as well as their committee person, and I represented the skilled trades, as well. Joel was one of those guys who always called me about health and safety, asked me questions about health and safety.

One day, Joel got off to work, got up at 5 in the morning—his shift started at 6:30 in the morning. He always had a coffee. His kids were still in bed. His beautiful wife, Wendy, was still in bed. Joel went off to work. What happened? Joel was assigned a job by General Motors in the transmission area, a job he hadn't done for over a year—no retraining; no saying, “Joel, we've done this”; no talking to the other tool setters who were on those jobs. What you do at the start of the shift—I know a lot of people on that side of the House probably haven't worked in a factory too often, but you normally change your tools as soon as the shift starts. That way, you're ready for the day. Joel went in on a machine he hadn't worked on for a year, went in to change his tools. Nobody told Joel that the switch at the top had been tampered with and that, the minute that a part came from a different machine into his, the machine would cycle. Joel was in that machine bent over, and the machine cycled and it crushed Joel.

Joel was a really good father and coached his kid's hockey team in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He had a beautiful daughter, a beautiful wife, a wonderful family, a great mom and dad.

Every year since that happened to Joel 20 years ago, I would go to the Day of Mourning in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and every year Joel's parents would be there, his relatives would be there; Wendy was there; the two kids were there. I always watched them as they grew up. I kind of got old with them, really, if you want to know the truth. Wendy is now remarried. His daughter has four children. The son is a mechanic.

That day that Joel went to work, he never had the opportunity to say goodbye to Wendy; he never had the opportunity to say goodbye to his kids. He never came home for supper. It was a preventable death. Joel didn't have to die.

General Motors was fined over \$300,000. I went to the court case when they said General Motors was guilty. That

plant manager never once turned around to that family and said he was sorry. And that money doesn't go to the family; a lot of people think it does—that they get fined \$300,000, \$400,000, and it goes to the family to help the kids with schooling. That didn't happen here. That's not what happened.

When we talk about health and safety, I think of the Day of Mourning. The labour movement thinks of the Day of Mourning.

I'm not saying why you guys did this.

I'm really surprised that you're debating this today. I got a call at a quarter after 1 to tell me that you're debating this today so I would come and speak to it—no warning. For something as important and health and safety, you'd think you would have talked to us about it—nothing. I get a call—do I want to come and speak to a bill? Everybody here knows I've spoken about health and safety for the eight years I've been here. I'm passionate about health and safety. And then we debate this bill; it's supposed to be important to you—never communicated with us, never told me it was going to be debated. So what I'm doing today is I'm going off what I know: I'm talking about workplaces.

Every time I see Joel's family on the Day of Mourning—and we have a monument right at the side of the Virgil arena in his honour—I cry, because I've watched his family grow up. I've watched Wendy move on. I've watched the hurt in that community, knowing that Joel never got the opportunity to see his kids that night and he never got the opportunity to see his four beautiful grandchildren.

That's why health and safety is so important, and that's why the Day of Mourning is so important.

I'll be doing a town hall on Tuesday night with the Ontario Federation of Labour around the Day of Mourning.

I'm going to talk about long-term-care and retirement homes. I knew the minister was here earlier, but unfortunately, she had to leave. I want to talk about—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm just going to remind the member, you can't reference who is or isn't here. I'm going to ask him to withdraw.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I apologize. There was no malice intended there.

I want to talk about the long-term-care and retirement homes. Fourteen months ago, when we knew—and we didn't really know what we were up against, although I think the particular government knew in January, maybe earlier, a little more about COVID-19 than was put out to the public. That's only my opinion. I'm not saying I'm right on it, but I believe that.

We saw what happened to long-term-care and retirement homes in my riding. I had Gilmore Lodge: 20 people died. A mom and dad died within 24 hours. They didn't have PPE. Remember that, when we didn't have PPE when that all started? They were still eating in their cafeterias in long-term-care and retirement homes. So we lost our moms, our dads, our aunts, our uncles, our grandparents. Over 3,000 died—3,000. It could have been

prevented. They didn't have enough staffing. They didn't have PPE. They didn't have full-time jobs. They didn't have benefits. We all know that, but what did we do about it, as we moved into the second wave and now into the third wave? What did we do? Quite frankly, we didn't do enough. Did we hire more PSWs to the numbers that we needed to make sure they're safe? Did we have the PPE that we needed? Absolutely not.

1500

I'm going to talk about one—I think I can say this. The minister is here, and she's aware of this, because I talked to her at Christmastime, and I give her credit for that. She returned my call every time, as I watched people die in my riding. I can say she returned every one of my calls over the Christmas holidays, including, I think, Christmas Eve.

One hundred per cent of the residents at Oakwood got COVID; 100% of the staff got COVID. Some got really, really sick. Unfortunately, we lost 40 people there. We had a minister's order at the place beside it, Millennium Trail, which the minister was aware of. And when I go back and I look, and I say, "All these people didn't have to die"—and I'll talk about paid sick days, because none of them got paid sick days when they went off sick. They didn't have to die. We could have done stuff better. We could have done it better for the workers, for the residents, for our community. But not with a for-profit. They weren't as interested in the residents as they were with their profit.

I'll now move on to Greycliff, a retirement home—again, the minister is aware of it—where a young man was in a Hamilton hospital, had a stroke, had other issues. He was released—think about this, my friends—from a hospital into a retirement home that didn't have the resources to take care of him. He ended up doing assisted suicide. What was awful about that whole situation—and I've talked about it here—again, health and safety, workers. His room—when his daughter was laying in bed with him just prior to his assisted suicide, she was laying in feces. She was laying in urine. The sheets hadn't been changed for months. That's the last thing that little girl is going to see of her dad.

This is what was going on. You don't have to believe me, my friends; talk to the military. Go read the report. I asked for the military to come into Oakwood and to Millennium, and they didn't. I asked for the Red Cross, but by the time the Red Cross came and looked at it, the scope of their work wasn't what we needed there; we needed a lot more.

Greycliff is still a mess, quite frankly, with the registered retirement—we've called them. We know there are still bedbugs there. We know that they're still not doing what they should be doing. We've got to fix that, we absolutely have to fix that, and I've asked the minister to fix it.

I want to talk about what I talked about when I was at committee. My colleague talked a little bit about it. I said to the member from Burlington—and I was honest with her and I was very clear with her: "Why don't you put deeming in this bill? If you care about workers, why would you not put deeming in the bill?"

My colleague talked a little bit about what deeming is. What happens once you're deemed is the WSIB will say that you can do a job—even if the job doesn't even exist. They say you can make \$15 at a job that might not even exist, or you might have too many injuries that you can't do it, and they take that off your benefit. What happens? That person ends up losing their home. A lot of times, they lose their family. They live in poverty.

This is true stuff. You know it's accurate. Why wouldn't you put that in the bill and fix it, if you care about workers and families and community?

You know what they do? They go on ODSP. So instead of the employer being responsible for that injured worker, who is responsible? The taxpayer. Does that make sense to anybody? That's what goes on when somebody gets deemed. It's terrible.

Presumptive coverage, Bill 191: My colleague put another bill on presumptive coverage forward. You guys wouldn't do it. As our health care workers are being denied WSIB—over 700 on an appeal process right now—guess what? They care so much about health care workers they wouldn't put it in the bill. They wouldn't put it in the other bill that I asked the labour minister to put it in as well, when he reduced the premiums for companies like Amazon—which needs a break. What are they worth, \$40 billion or some ridiculous figure? They needed a break on their premiums, instead of workers.

I just happen to have a little note on Amazon so maybe I'll talk a little bit about Amazon. As we know, a couple of their workplaces have been shut down over the course of the weekend. They had 900 workers with COVID. I don't know about the last 300, but of the first 600, less than five people had claims with WSIB, from COVID. The minister continued to say that he did inspections—which they did, I'll give him credit; they did. They did 37,000 inspections up to January, and do you know how many people got fined? One teacher, for not wearing a face mask, and one company. When it did kind of hit the flame or whatever it's called—when it did finally get to a point where, “What's going on here?” is when Sara from the Toronto Star wrote an article about it. As a matter of fact, congratulations to her: She just got an award for that article.

So when you say you care about workers, you don't, because your actions say you don't. When you won't protect nurses with presumptive coverage—my colleague from Hamilton has a bill on presumptive coverage for mental health. This is what's going on in our workplaces. We come forward with a bill—instead of supporting the Day of Mourning and talking about the Day of Mourning, you come through with a bill. I'm saying to you, why would you not support the Day of Mourning, and talk to the OFL and see what we can do collectively?

It never happened, by the way; you know that.

I think the one we have to talk about—I've only got three minutes left—quite frankly, is sick days. Some 25, 26 times—how many times have you voted against it? And 11 days ago—you guys remember this; I'm sure you watched the press conference of your Premier—he said

that he is going to bring in paid sick days. What else he said was that it was going to be the best of the best. It's going to be better than the best, and it's going to be better than the best that you've ever seen. Now, who does this sound like? It sounds just like Trump.

And here we are, 11 days later, instead of debating sick days so we can save lives—you know what, Madam Speaker? It's not Wayne Gates saying paid sick days. It's the mayor of Toronto, who, by the way, is a PC; he used to lead their party. It's Mr. Brown, up in Brampton, begging for paid sick days. It's regional councils all over Ontario saying, “We need sick days.”

People are going to work, getting COVID and bringing it home to their family, and guess what's happening? Help me out here; hopefully, somebody over there is listening to me. They're dying. They're dying. The numbers are just unbelievable, how many people are dying because we won't give them paid sick days.

You guys had a meeting. I read it in the Star. I do a lot of reading in the Star. They had a meeting with their cabinet. And they come up with, “We'll shut down the playgrounds. We'll shut down golf.”

You didn't listen to the doctors who said, “You need paid sick days.” The doctors were saying it: If you want to stop a third wave—as a matter of fact, on February 11, Dr. Brown said that if we don't lock it down, we're going to be in a third wave—exactly what we're into today. You were told.

1510

So, you guys have a meeting for 16 hours, 18 hours. What comes out of the meeting? “Well, we can't make our stakeholders mad at us. We've got to do something. Let's shut down playgrounds. Let's shut down golf.” I'm saying to you I want to think that you guys care about workers, but when you won't save their lives, how can you even think that you care about workers?

Sick days: Everybody on this side, this side of us, is saying it. The doctors are saying it. The communities are saying it. Nurses are saying it. Unions are saying it. The Ontario federation is saying it. The CLC said it. Do you know who is not saying we need sick days? Do you know who? Help me out here. Yell it out: the PC Party. Their cabinet. They're the only ones who are saying we don't need sick days. We've got to do whatever we can to save lives.

I'm going to finish up by saying my granddaughter had COVID a couple of weeks ago. She's 11. That little girl who died yesterday was 13. We have to do better, and we can do better and collectively bring in paid sick days. Allow people to be—

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

Ms. McKenna moved third reading of Bill 152, An Act to proclaim Occupational Safety and Health Day. 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. It is carried.

Third reading agreed to.

ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE JOUR DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 19, 2021, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day / Projet de loi 173, Loi proclamant le Jour de l'Ontario.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always a pleasure to find out what's popping out of the box next in the Ontario Legislature. It's like the surprise club: We find out what bill we're debating as per the government's announcement. So I guess we are debating Ontario Day.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, I am a proud Ontarian. I carry it in my heart, I carry it in my daily work, and I'm proud to be able to have the opportunity to sit in the Ontario Legislature to serve the people of Hamilton Mountain. It truly gives me great pride and great joy, as well as it does my family. I know that they're very proud that I represent Ontario for a region of the city of Hamilton.

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: That's okay. Maybe if you've got a bill at the table, just to see—can I have one of the copies of the bill, please?

I have the opportunity to speak today to Ontario Day, which was a private member's bill—it's coming to me right now; thank you—from Mr. Parsa, who is a Conservative member. This bill is an act to proclaim June 1 as Ontario Day in the province of Ontario and to recognize “the contributions Ontarians have made to Ontario's social, economic, political and cultural fabric.”

Boy, the stature of political fabric Ontario is making in Canada these days is quite something else. I believe we're leading the country in COVID, something that I'm sure doesn't make anybody in this Legislature happy, including the government who has truly walked us into this third wave just from not listening and not doing as the scientific table has advised the Premier. It has left us with a lot of deaths and a lot of COVID cases on a regular basis. And now we're seeing a new strain come into Ontario, which I know is terrifying to many communities, and hopefully we will be able get that crushed before it has the ability to spread as B.1.1.7 has because, as you know—I'm going to pull up some numbers here—those numbers have just gone like wildfire and it has devastated so many communities.

I'm going to pull up the numbers for Hamilton to be able to highlight just some of what we are seeing in the city of Hamilton—why isn't that coming up?—and the effects that it's having on my community. It doesn't want to come up for me.

But I can tell you that I hear from people on a regular basis—particularly I hear a lot from teachers who are not getting vaccinated as they had hoped to do and as they had heard the Premier say that they were going to get vaccinated.

In Ontario, we have a Premier who likes to make policy and announcements by press conference, which then

leaves the rest of the province scattering. Unfortunately, it's usually our public health scrambling to figure out exactly what the Premier meant in his announcement and then try to implement the policy once they actually figure out what it meant compared to what the Premier said. That is something that happens here on a regular basis in our political statute.

One of the first things that happened when this government came into office was to cancel paid sick days, which is probably the most important need right now for Ontario workers, knowing that people are going to work sick, that they don't have the ability to stay home when they're having symptoms or think they might have symptoms because they're afraid of not having that paycheque in their bank at the end of the week, which leaves many families in a rut, not able to pay for food, maybe pay the rent on a lot of those programs that people were counting on, like a rent supplement and something to help people get through just isn't there through this third round and has left families falling through the cracks and then you can be evicted at this time. You weren't able to be evicted through the first wave and part of the second wave, but in the third wave there's been no mention of rent security. Hydro rates—nobody's talking about the hydro rates when people are home. They continue to be high.

Then we have a shutdown throughout the province of stores that are not selling essential goods. I have a young woman who messages me on a regular basis. She lives in one of our developmental disability homes, one of our Community Living homes. She told me she needed some hair ponytails and she needed a change purse. So I'm out and I'm doing some grocery shopping and I see the dollar store sign, the big sign on the window: “We're open.” So I go in and I go to buy some hair ponies. No, not allowed to buy them. I was like, “What? Hair ponies, really, a ponytail holder?” Nope: “They're not essential. You can't have them.” I said, “Do you have any change purses?” Nope: “We can't sell them.” And then I was like, “Okay, I'm heading back to the Queen's Park, and I always need pantyhose,” because pantyhose never last long in my wardrobe. I can't buy pantyhose. I cannot buy a pair of pantyhose. Children cannot get socks and underwear. They can't get shoes. We have children who are growing.

1520

I completely understand the issues, when it comes to big box stores and the unfairness that the government had created in the first and second wave, but this list of what they found was essential—I'd really love to know if they had children, if they thought about women in any way, if they thought about anything other than the food that we put on our table, which is completely necessary. But I just could not believe I couldn't get some hair ponytails, I couldn't get a change purse and I couldn't get pantyhose. I honestly have been hearing from families: “My kid's feet are growing.” Socks, underwear, all of these things that we take for granted of buying for our children when they need them, we're not able to access at this time. I thought that was pretty interesting in the province of Ontario.

It makes me think of social services, actually. We live in a province where people on Ontario Works, people on

ODSP, live so far below the poverty line that they can't even come close to meeting the average rent. To rent a basement apartment in Hamilton, probably a cheap one—a cheap one, at this point, is 1,200 bucks a month. It's \$1,200 a month for nothing spectacular. It's kind of just put together and it's in a basement and you hope that it's legal. You have other basement apartments—I talked to somebody else—they're paying \$1,900 for a basement apartment. Somebody on Ontario Works is making \$733 a month, I think, the maximum for a single person on Ontario Works, and \$733 cannot pay the rent anywhere. That is your full income. You cannot pay the rent anywhere.

People on ODSP, I mean, it varies, per couple, per children, but they're only \$1,200 or \$1,300 a month. It's not very much money. It's barely paying the rent today. Then we have renovictions happening on a regular basis, where people have lived in apartments for years. I have several—several—buildings within my riding right now that are under renovictions. Landlords are trying to kick them out, landlords are saying the renovations are too big and they've got to go. Where are they supposed to go? Where are they going to pay the rent? Because they've been there for so long that the rent is low. How are they possibly going to be able to survive?

Yet we get a budget that just came before this House, that was just passed this morning by this government, that did not give one single bit of increase to people on social services, not a cent. How shameful is that? Where is that Ontario pride today? Is that what Ontario pride is? Not a cent for those people, who have had to beg their workers for \$100 for COVID relief, and yet they have just as many extra expenses as everybody else, and if they didn't call their worker and get a hold of their worker, they didn't even get that \$100—pretty shameful for Ontario pride. Not the Ontario that I would create, that's for sure; not the Ontario that New Democrats would have.

When the government first came into power, there was a 3% increase sitting on the table that the Liberals had proclaimed before they left. As soon as the Conservatives came into power, Madam Speaker, do you know what they did with that 3%? They chopped it in half. They chopped it in half, so they gave people a 1.5% increase that has not even kept up with inflation since Harris just took the legs right out of social services in the province of Ontario. That's some Ontario pride.

I remember it quite clearly. I'm pretty sure I was on mother's allowance, which is what we called it at that time. I was a young mom. I remember the cheque getting cut, and I was trying to work at the same time and just trying to make ends meet; it was probably one of the times when I had my hydro shut off. I know the eyes are looking up like, "Wow." Yep, real person over here was elected, someone who wasn't raised with much. I was raised by a single mom and made my way here, because real people can make it here, although some others think that it shouldn't have happened. That's too darned bad, because I bring a perspective to this House that many people in this House don't have, and I'm proud to be here, very proud.

That's my Ontario: the Ontario where anyone can make it to anywhere they need to be. When we don't give increases when people need it, we hinder the chances for people to make it to this place. We make it that much harder. When times are hard and you're struggling to get through, and you feel like you're in a hole and you're kind of digging to get out of that hole and the dirt just keeps falling on your head, unless you have the opportunity of somebody throwing you a lifeline and you're just strong enough to grab on and not let go, then you're just going to get buried in that hole. Unfortunately, that's what happens to many Ontarians when they're on our social services, because they're a drop in the bucket compared to what people need to be able to survive in today's day and age.

There's no rent control. When was the last time that anybody invested in social housing, in supportive housing? People with mental health and addictions that have not seen any increase to any of those services: If you talk to any of the service providers, they are struggling. They have been working on the same budget that they've been working on for years, always trying to do more with less. And in today's day and age, they truly have to do more with less.

The opioid crisis is completely out of control. People are dying of fentanyl overdoses daily. Young men and women who have good families, maybe have great jobs, get caught up in a party, and the party doesn't end until it's really over. Once it's really over, then we're burying them. We're seeing it happen much too often. Is this the Ontario Day we're proclaiming, where people can't get into a detox; where people have to wait—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: Don't shake your head—wait 100 days to get into a rehab facility unless they have money that can pay for it, because if they don't have money to pay for it, they're not worth it; where we don't have safe injection sites like we're supposed to; where we don't have safe supply; where we don't care about whether drugs are dirty or not? If they're a drug user and they're getting used drugs, whatever's going happen to them is going happen to them: Is that the Ontario that we're proclaiming?

Bills like this just make people like me angry. I'll celebrate Ontario Day every year, but you'll also hear me standing up in this House each and every time talking about how Ontario can be better. I think that's all of our jobs, to talk about how Ontario can be better. Until we take care of our most vulnerable populations, Ontario is never going to get better. Yet they're the populations that are completely ignored and forgotten about each and every time by this government.

1530

People with disabilities are trying to get vaccines. Parents are trying to find out how that's going to happen. I'm still trying to figure out how accommodations happen for vaccines. I've got a guy in his forties who is eligible for the AstraZeneca, but he listens to all of the news, so he's afraid of the AstraZeneca. Then we can't even get him the accommodation so that his mother can be able to go

with him—because he needs that. It's not just a rubber stamp on how people have access to the vaccines. We need to take into consideration people's health and well-being and mental health and how it affects them. None of that is considered. We can do so much better.

These should be bills that we should be able to sing praise to. We should be doing things that are helping workers. We should be doing things that are helping the people of Ontario to be able to weather this COVID storm, to make people's lives better. People aren't going to say, "Ontario Day makes my life better." It's just not going to happen. Everybody is going to celebrate and find their way.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: The members across, they're shaking their heads. They just can't understand it. Yet they're probably not going to get up and speak to this bill, and if they do, I don't really know what they're going to talk about. Maybe they'll talk about the tulips that are starting to bloom in front of the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Wayne Gates: They are pretty.

Miss Monique Taylor: I love tulips. But when we're in the midst of the third wave of a massive pandemic that is killing and starting to kill our children, we have to do better than these days of proclamation by these government members' bills.

I don't think there's been a government private member's bill that hasn't passed. How many opposition members can say that? I've put some pretty good bills forward. No, no, no; they don't want no ideas but their own. They don't want no ideas but passing a proclamation day. Today, we are proclaiming Occupational Safety and Health Day and An Act to proclaim Ontario Day. I'm sure the rest of the bills that come forward will be more proclamation days.

The people of Ontario deserve to be celebrated. They deserve real legislation that's truly going to make a difference in their lives, not just another day. Give us the days when we have something to celebrate. Give people something to look forward to. People want hope; they don't want a proclaimed day.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: When we take a look at any action to undertake in this world, timing is always of the essence. Timing is always key.

Here we are, debating this piece of legislation within this chamber while we still don't have provincially funded paid sick days. Just last week, we heard the Premier very tearfully acknowledge that the province had let Ontario's workers down, that the federal government's program was full of holes, which flies in the face of everything that has been said by government members for months now in debate. It supports what the medical professionals and the science table have been saying: that paid sick days are something that Ontario needs. They are a requirement to help us curb the spread and the transmission of this deadly virus.

I, for one, will admit I believed it. I heard those words and I thought, "We're finally going to see some action."

That was on Thursday. Today is Monday. People are still being forced to go to work without proper protections, without paid sick days.

Imagine a person who wakes up in the morning and feels unwell. Now, given our current pandemic, one cannot look too lightly upon the symptoms of COVID-19. People want to do the right thing. People want to protect each other. People want to stand up for each other. Yet they're not able to because this government does not have their back.

This government refuses to support that person who wants to make the choice to help others, refuses to make that choice to support a worker who is concerned about their family, is concerned about their co-workers, but because of our current economic situation, is also currently worried about making ends meet, about paying their bills, about keeping their lights on and keeping food on the table. This government and their inaction has forced those workers to have very little other choice.

So, here we are today, talking about celebrating Ontario and, quite frankly, now is not the time for celebration. When this government stands up and supports Ontarians, when this government plugs the holes that they have acknowledged, that the Premier acknowledged, are within the CRSB, then maybe this would have some better timing. Maybe if workers could wake up in the morning and not feel as though they had been abandoned, not feel as though this government had said one thing and still failed to act, had made a tearful promise with no effort to see that come to fruition. With the timing—we're in the middle of a war against this virus. Our ICUs are at capacity.

I also wanted to add to debate the words of a nurse, a front-line health care worker in my riding. She has seen, and all residents of London will see, the newly Conservative-branded Ornge helicopters flying above frequently. They now have a blue stripe and a white stripe—kind of diminishes the name "Ornge," but that remains to be seen.

So we're in London, accepting patients from the GTA and across Ontario, which is important because we want to make sure that people get the health care that they need, and London is very much the heart of southwestern Ontario and, as well, is a health care hub. When we saw year upon year of Liberal cuts and Liberal underfunding and costs still increasing—London is very much ground zero for hallway medicine.

So now, in this current moment, we see all of these Ornge helicopters bringing in patients. Danielle pointed out to me, there is no plan to get these people home. They're removed from the health care facility within their hometown. They're brought to get the care they require, but once they've received the care and, ostensibly, when they're on the road to recovery, what happens to them? You see, this government has no plan. I highly doubt that they would be afforded yet another helicopter trip back to their location, but it just speaks of the lack of planning that is going on here.

I've also spoken with a number of early childhood educators who operate child care centres, and these are

front-line essential workers. Yet, despite this government saying it stands on the side of workers and despite the empty words saying that they support all the people who are on the front lines, here are folks who still have not yet been given the respect, been given the protection and given the care and concern of this government by being provided a vaccine.

Having worked with children myself, children are—let's face it; they do pass on germs quite easily. They don't understand the world such as we do. They don't necessarily wash their hands as much as they ought to. ECEs are right there with them, with infants, with toddlers, with little young people. They could not be more at risk, and yet they're still waiting for a vaccine. That should not be.

1540

We should not be here discussing a celebration, discussing a celebration of Ontario. I, for one, am all about how amazing our province is and how wonderful our people are, but now is not the time. People are struggling. People are worried about putting food on their table, about getting sick, about potentially dying. And this government wants to talk about a party. How utterly tone-deaf.

I've also spoken with people who are in the fight of their lives, literally: cancer patients within my riding. Now, according to this province's table on vaccines, cancer patients should be able to receive their first and second doses to ensure that they have full coverage, so that they can focus their attention, their energy and every resource they have within to fight deadly cancer. And yet, I've spoken with a number of patients who haven't been able to secure a second dose. The government could very easily issue a directive right away to make sure that these folks do not have to go to a different jurisdiction, do not have to plead with a pharmacist and do not have to badger public health units, but yet they've also been left behind.

Within this pandemic, we've also seen a tremendous rise with homeless populations. I'll say, Speaker, that I don't prefer the word "homeless." I prefer "somebody who has been denied housing," because it is on this government. It is on governments prior, and it will be on governments in the future to ensure that people have a safe place to call home. Housing is the foundation. Housing is fundamental to our entire human experience. If you don't have a place to be safe, if you don't have a place to be sheltered, if you don't have a place with four walls even just to call your own, a sanctuary, then it's almost as though you cease to exist within this world.

People who are denied housing have so many issues that they have to contend with on a daily basis. Their experience is something completely different from almost anything we can comprehend. They're in the struggle of their lives to make sure that they can protect their life, with a shelter system that is overcrowded, which is at times unsafe, with individuals who are struggling with un-addressed mental health needs, because of this province's inaction.

Housing has always been a political kickball between different levels of government. It allows different levels of government to point fingers at one another, to cast blame,

to cast aspersions, to turn their nose up and say, "Tut, tut, it's terrible that they didn't act"—which is strangely ironic, because if governments past and present truly had a team approach, they would realize that if their teammate at whatever level of government was not carrying their fair share of the weight, was not doing the right thing, that people were falling through the cracks and people were struggling and people were dying, then that team member would stand up. That team member would say, "Okay. It's not about who does what; it's about doing the right thing."

There's been a great initiative in my riding, the Winter Interim Solution to Homelessness. This has been led by Ark Aid Street Mission in my riding, and Sarah Campbell, the executive director, has been truly phenomenal. However, I think we can all look at our calendars and realize that winter is over. This initiative, also sponsored by the city of London, helped folks have a temporary housing solution. It was not elaborate, it was not necessarily glamorous, but it gave them four walls safely. There were trailers that were set up and some were actually directly across from my constituency office, right next to Men's Mission on York Street. This has helped people tremendously. It's just that simple knowledge that they know that at the end of their day they have a safe place where they can go, a place where they can be themselves, a place where they don't have to fear what's going to happen, where they don't have to sleep with one eye open.

This government, in their budget, have they addressed the homelessness crisis? But we're talking about a party; we're talking about celebrating Ontario. I for one would be the first in line to celebrate Ontario if we addressed homelessness in a meaningful way to make sure that people were not denied housing, to make sure that people were safe and that they were cared for.

We also talk about, let's never forget, this elusive, imaginary and invisible so-called iron ring that went around long-term care. People suffered and people died in long-term care. And now, with ICUs increasingly overwhelmed, we see patients who are being transferred from hospitals into long-term-care situations where they're already understaffed, where they're already at the brink. Instead, this government wants to throw a party.

We passed legislation to guarantee four hours of hands-on time per day, per resident, in long-term care. Thank heavens; it's the right thing to do. It's the moral thing to do. It's the kind of legislation where everyone should be able to look in their mirror and say, "We did the right thing." However, there is no intention of bringing that forward until—after the next election?

We're so familiar with the last government and their promises that magically transformed into stretch goals when they had no intention of being good to their word. We see that same sort of behaviour yet again.

This government is going to pretend that they're standing up for seniors by passing the legislation. They're going to make a big announcement about it and say, "Yes, we're on your side." But when the rubber hits the road, there's no intention of making sure that seniors are cared for, no intention of making sure that they are protected,

and no intention of making sure that they're treated with dignity and respect such as they deserve, as people who have contributed to our system. They have raised their family; they have raised our communities. The least we could do is make sure that is implemented here and now. Yet the government wants to throw a party for itself.

I can't even believe that we wouldn't see solid action after seeing the report after the Canadian army came in and helped our long-term-care system. It should be immediate. It should be a knee-jerk reaction. That any human being was suffering in this way should have created an automatic and instant—like I said, a knee-jerk response to do the right thing and fix it. We heard talk about it. We saw legislation pass and yet we see no action. In fact, we see worse because now that the Premier has waltzed us into the third wave with eyes wide open—eyes open, ears closed—we now see patients going from ICUs and hospitals into long-term-care facilities which do not have enough support. What is that going to do? That's going to take away from the level of care that seniors receive right now.

1550

Furthermore, PSWs deserve a raise. For years and years and years, they have been let down by this government. It is the heart, the dedication and overwhelming good nature of these individuals, these personal support workers, that have held the long-term-care system together. Families, for that matter, have also held the system together. They visit every day. They would make sure that their loved ones have companionship, because otherwise, in these for-profit situations, they're just a number—onto the next, rushing them through their daily thing. How would that feel as a person who has lived a full life, has been a caring person, has been a good person, to be treated almost like a piece of furniture? But that's down to this government.

We can go ahead and hear their words about blaming the last government, and I completely agree: The last government did let seniors down, 100%. But in 2018, prior to the pandemic, there was an opportunity to act. We saw a ministry created, but we saw inspections cut. Further to that, when there is an inspection, everybody in the home knows about it. They get prior warning, so all the floors are mopped, extra staff is brought in and it turns into a dog-and-pony show, much like this legislation: a show, pretense, something made up.

This is not going to be like the magician with one hand doing something and the other hand doing something else. This isn't going to distract folks from the lack of action on paid sick days, from the lack of protecting essential front-line workers. This is not going to distract Ontario from the fact that seniors have been neglected again and again and again.

All of those deaths in long-term care are on this government. They had the opportunity to act. We saw across this world what was happening as a result of COVID-19. We had the chance to prepare. We had the chance to make sure that there were systems in place, that there were protocols in place, but too little too late happened.

We can go ahead and hear the empty words that the buck stops with the Premier, but does it? Do tears on a

news broadcast wash away everyone else's tears? I don't think so. I don't think that's enough, Speaker. I look forward to celebrating Ontario when the time is right, when this government has done the right thing, when this government finally stands up for seniors, when they finally stand up for workers, when they finally stand up for all of Ontario, not just their insider friends.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to stand in my place as Minister of Heritage, responsible for this act, if it is proclaimed into law, to proclaim Ontario Day on June 1.

First and foremost, I want to congratulate my colleague for bringing this important piece of legislation forward. This has been a very tough year: 13 months in a pandemic. We have seen in many cases a resiliency, a remarkability, of the wonderful people of the province of Ontario and in particular our essential and our front-line workers, who have time and time again stood in the line of defence against COVID-19 to support people. But then we also saw some other kind things dating back 13 months ago, when we started to see restaurateurs who had been shuttered bringing food to our hospitals across the province, campaigns occurring with some young children doing artistry on rocks to make sure that people knew that they were very well supported and that they were very much loved. We saw the Ontario spirit this past year, and I couldn't be more proud than I am today to stand here and support the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill on his desire to celebrate Ontario when the time is right.

I do take offence to anybody who says this piece of legislation is a show. No other sectors have been harder hit and have been hit first and longest or will take the longest to recover than the sectors that I represent in Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

I often refer to the ministry that I represent as having a spectacular double bottom line. On the one hand we are an economic powerhouse, with over \$75 billion in combined economic activity, which is larger than mining, forestry and agriculture in the province of Ontario and larger than the GDP of Manitoba. So many of those people who contributed to that economic bottom line have found themselves shuttered and out of work. We have been working tirelessly in order to support them.

On the other side of that social bottom line is I think what this bill is getting to: a celebration of our diversity. It's a celebration of the people who have come here since time immemorial, beginning with our Indigenous peoples, recognizing that our shared and combined heritage has made us who we are today: resilient in the face of COVID-19.

I've often said that COVID-19 has been a triple threat, particularly for the sectors that I represent. I think this bill also speaks to that triple threat. No one is denying that first and foremost we are dealing with an international global pandemic, one that has created a health care crisis the world over, not just here in the province of Ontario.

It's also created an economic crisis. When we talk about the \$75-billion suite of sectors that I represent, many of them have been shuttered, if not over the past wave, where we've seen restrictions, some have been shuttered for 13 months completely.

That's why today I was proud to vote on behalf of myself and my constituents but, more importantly at this particular time, my sectors, which required that budget to pass today that Minister Bethlenfalvy put forward as the Minister of Finance, to get critical funding out to those sectors. As a result of today's decision, almost \$1 billion in supports will go to tourism, culture, sport and heritage.

That leads me to what this bill really is about. We haven't fully grasped the social crisis—that third pillar of this crisis—yet. Think about it: Children that we wanted to see play sports, like my own daughter, Victoria, with her Nepean Wildcats. I had to be the one to tell her, on the 12th of March, which was her birthday, in 2020 when she was turning 15, that we would be cancelling her hockey tournament that weekend. She says to me, “How did you do that, mom?” I said, “As the Minister of Sport we're taking tough decisions to keep people safe, including you.”

It's the OHL player that we wanted to get on the ice this year, before the NHL draft, but recognizing that, when Dr. David Williams told me and my team that if one of those players who was about to be drafted to the NHL, or who could have been playing for Team Canada at the Olympics some day, caught COVID-19, we couldn't be sure what the effects would be on that young athlete and if they'd ever be able to get back on the ice.

It's about Bluesfest in Ottawa, or the Labatt film festival here in Toronto, or any festival or event that we have known over the many, many years that have contributed to our joy as Ontarians to go out and support: Pride Toronto or Windsor's blues fest or the regattas that take place across the province.

We haven't been able to assemble the way that we have in the past. We have been told to stay six feet apart, wear a mask, wash our hands, keep our distance and stay home. That was necessary, Speaker, you know that. We have had to do that. It's been our mantra. And we've done this because we want to keep each other safe. We want to keep our families safe.

But there will be a day again when we can assemble and go to that music festival, go to that hockey tournament and watch the kids play baseball and basketball. There will be a day again when we'll be able to walk in and go to Canada's Wonderland or populate Niagara Falls the way she deserves to be populated, as one of the most beautiful and iconic places on the planet. When that day comes—I'm not going to suggest it's going to be June 1 this year, but as a result of this legislation, together, we're all going to recognize the significant contributions of the people of this province during COVID-19 that took us from the year 2020 to, hopefully, the end of 2021.

1600

I often say, as well, that this ministry is quite spectacular, in the sense of who we represent. Because of

heritage and culture, we represent the most diverse population, likely, in the world. I say, as the Minister of Tourism, we are the world in one province. I take great pride in that. I take great pride in this assembly, seeing the most diverse Legislative Assembly in the history of this province, with people coming not just from other parts of Canada, like myself, but from other parts of the world, and then having the ability, after being first- or second-generation Canadians, to take their seat in this Legislature, in this auspicious place, for which people fought in World Wars in order to protect our rights and freedoms.

This ministry is responsible for the Afghan war memorial, to say thank you to our soldiers. I see my colleague Jennie Stevens is here—her son being among those heroes. I think about the great debates with some of the great legislators who have appeared before us. Can you think of it? Some of the best orators in this entire country have stood on the floor, in these great walls, and had the opportunity to speak. That is who we will celebrate on June 1 as a result of this legislation.

This ministry also deals with some of the biggest brands in the world. Think of your Toronto Raptors, your Air Canada and—I've mentioned them before—Canada's Wonderland. I personally am responsible for a number of agencies and attractions. And I often say that this ministry has the crown jewels of Ontario, and they're literally stored up the street at the Royal Ontario Museum, one of the finest museums in this entire country.

We're also the ultimate small business sector. There's not a member in this assembly standing today who doesn't know a restaurateur who has given everything to their family, to their community, to their business. They have been suffering. We stand united with them. I'm proud to be working with a task force on not only tourism, but we created one just this week with our restaurateurs.

What's most important with this social bottom line is—we are also the largest volunteer and not-for-profit sector in all of Canada. What's incredible about that is it could be your YMCA up in Sudbury, it could be your local Boys and Girls Club in Oakville, it could be the Persian centre that my colleague took me to up in Markham—they're all doing their part volunteering and taking that dollar the extra way. That's why I was pleased last week to announce over \$42 million for not-for-profits in every single riding across Ontario through the Ontario Trillium Foundation's resiliency fund. We flowed in total, over the last year, over \$83 million to organizations.

I'll never forget being down in Niagara Falls with my colleague the MPP from Niagara Falls—I was making an announcement, I believe it was for the Niagara Parks Commission, and I got a call from my colleague the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, the Honourable Jill Dunlop. As I was looking out over the falls to make a significant announcement for the parks commission, Jill called me and said, “You're never going to guess. I made the five calls in my riding. Every single one of them cried”—because your Ontario government, their Ontario government, recognized the needs. We pivoted in action. We showed that we could make sure that money flowed.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation is one of those agencies that cares about every single one of your ridings and makes sure that that critical money flows.

The other thing I like about this bill—two things, actually. We're debating it today, in the week that we've extended three prestigious awards. First and foremost, every one of us gets to enjoy each year celebrating our volunteers. Last week, I made the announcement that we were extending the Volunteer Service Awards eligibility to the end of this week. I also announced, with Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, that the Order of Ontario recipient nominations would be eligible until the end of the week. We allowed for an extra month, because we recognize, in COVID-19, some of our heroes who we would expect to be nominated have been too busy continuing to volunteer, so we wanted to make sure that they had that extra time. I think it's appropriate that I address this bill today about Ontario spirit, about Ontario pride, about the pride of people, pride of place, and we talk about our volunteers who we're going to be honouring very shortly.

The other reason I'm excited to speak to this today and look at Ontario Day for June 1—and I keep looking over to my colleague; I've got great pride in this legislation—is because this year is the 50th anniversary of Ontario Place. Originally, it was opened by the Honourable Bill Davis, the Progressive Conservative Premier of the day. Now, 50 years later, I'm excited, not only as an agency of this government—in particular to this ministry. We are going to be looking at the redevelopment of Ontario Place, and we'll have more to say about that in the days and the weeks ahead, and some significant announcements. Ontario Place is going to be meant for everyone in this province. It will showcase the best that we have to offer and the people of this province who make us so unique and so proud of where we live, so proud of where we've all come from, and so proud of where we are all going together.

Last year, at Ontario Place, we were planning to do Canada Day there in a major way. Of course, that changed because of COVID-19. One of the things that we had wanted to do was to take our 18 agencies and attractions and bring them all together and have a great day, not on the grounds of Queen's Park—but to do something truly dynamic, truly exciting.

You think about the 18 agencies and attractions that we have here—the Royal Botanical Gardens. My colleague from Burlington is here. She and I have been there together many times. We've got the McMichael gallery, and I know the Minister of Education is extremely proud of that agency. Science North in Sudbury—of course, we've got my colleague from Sudbury here, who was able to join me this past summer. Despite being on different sides of the aisle, he was able to stand there with me to announce some investments. We've got two of the biggest and best convention centres, not just in Canada, but in all of North America: the Shaw Centre in Ottawa, as well as the Metro Toronto Convention Centre right here in Toronto. The Art Gallery of Ontario—exquisite, exquisite collections. And

then we've got some funding agencies, like the Ontario Arts Council, which just received a \$25-million increase last year and another \$10-million increase this year. I've just mentioned the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which got out the door \$83 million in resiliency funds, but I was able to increase the budget by \$105 million in order to support cultural, sport, tourism and heritage organizations across this great province.

We've got Ontario Creates and Destination Ontario, and I am so proud of both of these agencies. They are the economic arm of this ministry. They're the ones drumming up business so that we have not only a robust and vibrant tourism economy—but also that we're leading the way in North America in growth in film and television production. We have a suite of five very incredible cultural tax credits that are helping us with book publishers, with animators, with video gaming, with film and television. And we have our \$7-million music fund, and we're continuing to contribute there.

When I think about all of this, I think about the things that we love to watch on TV: Right now, it's Schitt's Creek; it's The Queen's Gambit. These are all made-in-Ontario films that we're proud of, that are part of this ministry, that are part of Ontario.

Think about some of the biggest names in music around the world: Shawn Mendes, Justin Bieber, Alessia Cara—I'm dating myself—Alanis Morissette. These are all people we're proud of, who call Ontario home.

That's why we have to celebrate bills like this, at the appropriate time. But we should never lose sight—and I have said this repeatedly in committee; I've said this repeatedly to my colleagues: One day, we will get through this pandemic, and there need to be thought leaders like the member from Richmond Hill, who looked beyond the pandemic and looked to the pride of people, the pride of place, the pride we all have in one another. We have to be ready for that day and it, I promise you, will come.

1610

As I said at the outset, this budget was very good to the sectors that I represent—almost a billion dollars in supports. And we're going to continue to support those iconic institutions like the Niagara Parks Commission, like the St. Lawrence Parks Commission. We're going to continue to support our festivals and events. Despite all of the festivals and events being cancelled last year, we continued to flow \$20 million to keep up community infrastructure, and also to ensure that we had virtual drive-in and drive-through events so that we could pivot and embrace our festivals and events.

Let me tell you, when the time comes that we're safe to gather again, Speaker, I will be there making sure that our events and our festivals are properly funded.

We're also going to continue to support the travel industry once it's safe to do so, with a \$150-million travel incentive—up to 20%.

My tourism, economic development and recovery task force is going to be reporting to me very shortly. The work that they're doing to prepare Ontario for full economic and social recovery within this critical sector is going to be important and it's going to speak to what this bill is about.

Our future in this ministry, within these sectors—will always put the pride of people, pride of place at the centre of everything we do.

We're going to be working on music cities, and ensuring that there are strategies to build out music across this great province so that we can continue to support our artists.

We're going to build out LGBTQ+ tourism, not just throughout North America but throughout the rest of the world, to celebrate high in the mountaintops some of the greatest achievements that we have had in human rights.

We're going to be talking about our culinary and our craft—the food and the drink you can only get here, right here in the province of Ontario.

We'll be talking about our trails and our waterways, some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. As somebody who comes from New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and who knows a few things about beaches, I have to say, travelling this province for 11 weeks this past summer showcased some of the most beautiful places in the world.

We've got to get out there, at the right time, and beat our chests, and let people know that we have the greatest province in the greatest country in the world.

I want to continue to proclaim my support for this legislation. I want to continue to make sure we talk about Frederick Banting, as our colleague from Simcoe–Grey did earlier today. I think we want to talk about the great success stories, like Shopify. I think we always want to continue to support our sport teams as well as our artists.

I'm going to conclude on this point: When I first became the minister responsible for heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries, I met a man named Allan Reid. He is the president of the Junos. He has since become a great friend, and he reminded me of this. He said, "Lisa, the things that we watch the most on TV are things that rally us together. The two most watched events in Canadian history were a sports game where Canada defeated the United States in a gold medal game—and the second was Gord Downie's last concert with the Tragically Hip." That's Ontario. That's who we are. And some days we can debate in this Legislature, some days we can argue and flat out disagree, but if there's one thing every one of us should be proud of, it's the fact that every one of us is from Ontario.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to commend the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries for her positive speech, I guess I can say.

Over here, I'm seeing this government trying to pass legislation to make June 1 Ontario Day, and it says it's supposed to be celebrating its "social, economic, political and cultural fabric." That's what we're going to be celebrating.

Well, right now, in the midst of the third wave in St. Catharines and my Niagara Health System, the ICUs are on the brink of almost—into a triage.

Businesses in downtown St. Catharines are calling me and saying, "Jen, we have done everything in our power to

keep our doors open. This government shut us down. We call them, we ask them, 'Where is our small business grant of \$10,000? We made a mistake; we made an error on this paper. We're so sorry that we did that, but we can't retract it back.'" Three months ago—and they've called, and they get endless amounts of voice mails and they get taken down this rabbit path. But they hear that businesses in other communities and other ridings got \$20,000. What?

My downtown has been decimated. They would love to celebrate the longest-running multicultural folk arts, which starts May 1 and runs for 28 days—and, yes, we get to travel the world. That's culture. That's the diverse part of St. Catharines and Niagara. We have a diverse culture with a diverse culture fabric that we celebrate.

Every riding within Ontario celebrates different celebrations, but when I see this and it says "an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the significant roles that Ontario and Ontarians have played and continue to play"—what's this? Is this going to be like another pat on the back?

Oh, 50 years ago, we had a Conservative government; in between, we had this Liberal government; and now we have a Conservative government. And now we're in the midst of a third wave because you didn't listen. I have people losing their businesses. I have people at home who are not getting paid because they work for National Steel Car, and their wife has to stay home and isolate. I have nurses who are working in ICUs, holding on to people's hands. But we're talking here on April 26, 2021, about celebrating Ontario Day.

I say to my grandchildren—I have two granddaughters. They're from Halifax, Nova Scotia. I teach my granddaughter Josephine this song: "Give us a place to stand / And a place to grow / And we'll call this land Ontario"—I'm aging myself, of course—"Ontari-ari-ari-o." She knows that song, but she doesn't want to come to Ontario. She told me that. "Granny, you're in the middle of the third wave. Keep it there. I don't want COVID-19."

Let's get this right, guys. Give us a place to stand and a place to grow. I would love my grandson, Grayson—a place to grow.

What about the MZOs? What is this government doing? Let's get down to business. Let's make sure that we have paid sick days. Let's make sure that we have people within our communities with their businesses and they can make their businesses thrive in the downtown. Let's give them those business grants that they made those small mistakes on. Let's make sure we look after these people so that everybody's downtown can thrive again.

I come from a small community within St. Catharines. I was born and raised in Merritton. I can see all of the city councillors right now giving me a little chuckle and a laugh, because Merritton is a community, it's the heart of St. Catharines—as I always say, it's God's country. Every year, we celebrate September 1—again, in St. Catharines, this is the longest-running festival. It's called Labour Day—imagine that. We celebrate Labour Day every year. We haven't been able to last year, 2020, because, of course, the pandemic hit, COVID-19—and probably not this year, but there'll be brighter days.

Do you know why we celebrate Labour Day? Because we know that the workers of Ontario are the glue of our economy. They are the people who get up every day and put those workboots on. They're the people who get up every day.

And now the essential workers, who have been absolutely—I want to say, my heartfelt thanks to them. They have been what I will call the glue of our economy, because they go every day—like I said, they put their workboots on, they go to the grocery store to work, where, in one four-hour shift, making minimum wage, they face these people coming in and the fear of maybe catching COVID-19.

1620

I remember a year ago, there was a lady at the cash; she had her bottle, and she was doing this to everything she touched with her hands—that's what they're doing now. This government, 25 times, I think, has voted down paid sick days for that grocery clerk, who probably went home with raw hands at the time because she didn't know what COVID-19 was going to do—or what fears it could do. Now we know, during the third wave, as mentioned—social distance, wash your hands, and stay home.

Ontario Day is here in front of us, to mark as a celebration on June 1 of every year—to mark the social, economic, political and cultural fabric of what Ontario is. As I said earlier, is this not a day that we should be proud of being an Ontarian everywhere we go, in everything we do—and not hang our heads down and say, “We're from Ontario”? Of course not. We're from Ontario. We have the best VQA wines—by the way, let's make sure we look after those taxes for the wineries. We have the best fruit. We have the best vegetables. We have the best cattle and dairy products. In my colleague's, my wingman's, riding, we have the best people who go to work in mines and work hard for our economy.

We have some significant milestones that we have accomplished here in Ontario—yes, absolutely.

But if you catch COVID-19 or somebody in your family catches it and the worst of that virus takes you, that family and that family member and those friends and those colleagues will not be able to ever look at Ontario Day as being a day that they take as a celebration, because somebody they loved, somebody they cared about, somebody they worked with—a co-worker who came into work because they had to pay their bills and there were no paid sick days.

So what are we celebrating here? We're celebrating a government that is saying, “We don't want to celebrate Canada Day every year. We cancelled that the first year we became government.”

Do you remember that? You cancelled Canada Day out front of the Ontario Legislature. We're a province within Canada, but you cancelled that.

The education system, which costs money, needs more educators. We need more teachers so we don't have as many children in our classrooms, to keep them safe, if we're going to look into the future—and future generations have been left with false hopes.

We need to know that this government is about making Ontario green—a green economy, making sure that the green new deal is moved forward. We need a government that's going to show future generations that they want to live in Ontario, that it's a place to grow, that it's a place to be proud of. It has to be green. It has to be where we have a future for these children, for the future generations.

The first year that this government took in—they froze public sector wages. They froze them at 1%. What's that to celebrate? Is there something to celebrate? No, I don't think so. Not when I talk to the nurses or I talk to universities or hospital employees, for example—where their wages will only increase by 1% over the next three years. Yet they're the front-line people right now. They're our essential workers, but they're not getting paid to be able to, first of all, feel like they are the empty words—of “you're our hero” knee-jerk reactions all the time. I'm getting tired of it, and I think Ontario is, too.

I think what we need to celebrate is when this government comes to a realization that people who are working in part-time jobs and people who are working in essential jobs and front-line workers—when this government realizes, we will celebrate. We will celebrate that they gave them paid sick days. We will celebrate that our classroom sizes are smaller. And we will also celebrate that we can join together at the end of this pandemic and look at a brighter day.

Speaker, I know that all ridings within Ontario are proud to be able to say, “We are from Ontario.” I know that they celebrate different kinds of festivals and they celebrate different kinds of days—labour days, for the labour movement; folk arts, for our multicultural diversity within our communities. We celebrate Remembrance Day to remember our fallen. We celebrate a Day of Mourning on April 28. But do you know what we don't need to do? We don't need to make sure that we pat each other on the back and say, “Guess what? We're from Ontario.”

When you cancel Canada Day and you want to do Ontario Day—this government, please, just give Ontarians hope. Give them something to celebrate every day. Give them something to celebrate right now, while the ICUs are on the brink of triage again. Give them something to celebrate.

With all the money that's always announced from the other side—my small businesses in downtown St. Catharines have not seen it. They need it. We need a strong downtown. Without the heart of a downtown in any of your ridings, you do not have the heartbeat—you don't have a vibrant downtown. Your riding, your city—do you know what happens? It becomes desolate. And we're not going to allow that in St. Catharines. We're going to continue to fight. We're going to continue to stand up and ask this government to please, please answer your phones. Answer them for the small businesses that have called you from downtown because they've made a small pencil error. Don't send them down that rabbit hole of voice mail after voice mail.

Like I said, I come from a small community within St. Catharines. St. Catharines is going to become vibrant

again and I know it. Our economy is going to recover. We need to make sure that we have the St. Catharines spirit.

We need this government to know that every riding within Ontario needs their support. They need teeth behind what they say. They don't need celebrations of a day to say, "Oh, we live in Ontario, and we're the government of Ontario, and 50 years ago we were the government of the day, and we've had the Liberals in between." Here we are back again, standing in this Legislature, trying to say, "Oh, we're going to have an Ontario Day because it's 50 years of Ontario—and Bill Davis was the Premier at that time and now, hey, here we are." We don't need that. What we need is for this government to stand up, put some tools in the tool box, get some paid sick days and make sure that people in St. Catharines and small businesses in every riding in Ontario are looked after.

I'm going to leave it at that. I think every day we as Ontarians are proud to say we are Ontarians, and we should keep it as that—an every-day holiday.

1630

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to start the same way that I started our health and safety day bill. This is the bill right here in front of me, and I'll show it off in case some of my colleagues haven't seen it—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm going to remind the member that you can't hold up props.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I don't have a problem debating a bill. I don't have a problem talking about An Act to proclaim Ontario Day. What I have a problem with is that we never had any dialogue around what bills are being called today. I don't understand that. If this is so important, why would you not want to include the Liberals, the Greens, the NDP and yourselves and say, "Here, this is why we're bringing it forward." Why would we not have that dialogue with our House leaders? What happens is—and I know maybe that's what you guys want. I don't think it's fair to my fellow MPPs to get a bill—and then say, "Do 20 minutes on it." Do you think that's right? I'm sure you guys knew what bills are being called. I say to the people who are watching at home that it isn't fair; it's not right.

So when you say it's important—which my colleagues had done. All you guys spoke and said how important this is, to proclaim Ontario Day. I'm agreeing with you. Quite frankly, I think I live in the best province in the country—because I know I live in the greatest country in the world, in Canada. But I would have liked to have had the opportunity to go over some things—go over maybe some tourism things, go over some manufacturing things—on why we're known for what we're known for in the province of Ontario and why we're respected around the world.

But no, you don't do that. Somebody stands up and says, "This is the bill we're doing in two minutes. Get up and speak for 20 minutes." I think it's wrong. I don't think you should be doing it. It's the second bill this afternoon that you've done that. You can take it to your caucus; you

can do whatever you want with it—but it's wrong. It's not the way to treat the other MPPs in this House. I want to get that out, and I think it's fair and reasonable and certainly accurate that you shouldn't have done that.

I'm going to get into some tourism stuff, because the minister is here and did talk about my riding quite a bit. I'm going to talk about Ontario today.

Should we be talking about what a great province we live in today with what we're going through? That's up to you guys; you guys brought the bill forward. I personally think I want to celebrate Ontario—I understand it has been 50 years. I've got the Canada Summer Games coming to Niagara in a short period of time. But is today the day? I don't know.

What I do know is that, over the course of the weekend, a little 13-year-old girl died. It probably would have helped if the father could have gotten sick days; it probably would have helped her mother. I don't know if you guys know this; I don't know if everybody knows it: The mother is in the hospital, as well, and is not doing well. We're obviously praying that she recovers.

Is this the day to be talking about what a great province we live in, when people in ICUs are fighting for their last breath? You guys all know that. I'm getting the phone calls; I'm sure my colleagues across are. I'm sure the Liberals and the Greens are getting those calls. We're getting the calls after they've passed, about how they couldn't see their loved one in the hospital, the long-term-care facility or the retirement home. Is this the time to say, "Well, we're going to pass a bill to celebrate Ontario"? Or should it be a time that maybe we debate once again—although, I know your party has made it pretty clear on sick days. You voted against it 24 times—it's got to be a record in here; I don't know. Who checks records here? Maybe the Clerks or somebody could check and see if that's a record, voting against the same issue 24 times—during a pandemic, at a time when we probably need sick days more now than any time in my lifetime, for sure; although I've always fought for sick days.

We know the Liberals brought in two sick days, and we know the Conservatives got rid of two sick days.

Right now, everybody in the province of Ontario is talking about sick days—not just Wayne Gates. I stand up here and talk about it because I think it's important to get the message out. Doctors, whom we all respect—I would think we all respect our doctors, our nurses, our elected mayors. The elected mayor here in Toronto was the leader of the Tory party. He said that we need sick days. Patrick Brown—I think I'm right on this—is the mayor of Brampton, and he's saying that we need sick days. Bonnie Crombie in Mississauga is saying that we need sick days. That's what we should be debating today.

It has been 11 days since the Premier of Ontario said that he's going to bring in the best of the best of the best. We're still waiting, 11 days later.

Whether you want to admit it or not, every day that we're waiting, somebody else is dying in our ICUs and in our hospitals—and one that really has to hit all of us hard in the heart, if you have a heart, is that some people aren't

even making it to the hospital. They're dying in their homes, because they don't realize how fast the variant is attacking their body, and they stop breathing. By the time the ambulance gets to the house, in a lot of cases, it's too late.

So is this the time to be talking about celebrating Ontario? I'm going to try to put some points together—that I think that maybe the timing is not right. Although I'm going to be very clear: I love my province, I love my country, and I think we have lots to celebrate. I'm not so sure, in the middle of a pandemic, that what I want to come to this House and be told 15 minutes before I have to stand up and talk is that we're going to celebrate Ontario.

I know, because last night I was on the phone to an ICU nurse, I was on the phone to the unions that represent their workers—they're full. They are having meetings on triage. Think about that. Some of our nurses are being moved from where they're working today into ICUs. They don't want to make this decision, my friends, but it's the decision going on in Ontario—who's going to get oxygen; who's going to live and die? Right now, I think it's happening in Toronto. I can't stand up here and say it's absolutely happening in Toronto; I've been told that it is, but I don't have any proof that those decisions are being made today. They're telling me that in the next week to 10 days, that decision is going to have to be made. I ask everybody here: If you want to celebrate Ontario—this is what could happen in a week to 10 days. You could have a 35-year-old man with two kids; you could have a 55-year-old, just retired, who has grandkids; you could have somebody who is 70 years old—and we don't have enough either oxygen or to care for him in our ICUs, and somebody is going to make that call, whether it's a doctor or somebody who works in ICU. That's going to happen in the province of Ontario.

In my humble opinion—and again, I'm sure there are people on that side of the House who disagree with me—I think it all could have been prevented if we had listened to our experts on February 11, when they advised you to shut it down, to make sure people could go get vaccines and get time off and get paid. They told you to bring in sick days. They advised you and told you, “If you don't do it, this is what's going to happen”—and we're seeing what's going to happen.

I can remember—what did we do? It wasn't a decision made by myself; it was a decision made by your government. You had all the facts in front of you, and you chose to open up our patios again, to open up our restaurants, and not lock it down like we should have and provide small and medium-sized businesses with the resources so they could survive. That was a decision that was made by you, and we're all suffering for it today, as people are dying in our ICUs and they're dying in my community.

I think I said it this morning in question period: 387 people in my riding have died from COVID-19. In February, we had one death every three and a half hours. This is serious.

Should I be debating celebrating Ontario? My heart's not in the mood to celebrate, I'll be honest with you. As I

said earlier this afternoon, I went through a real scare in my own family. My son-in-law and my granddaughter had COVID. My son-in-law got really, really sick; my granddaughter, not as much. She was still scared. She thought she was going to die—11 years old. Should I be up here celebrating Ontario? In my humble opinion, it's not something I should be doing, but I was put in a position today, with no warning, that “You're going to have to go and talk to this bill.”

1640

I want to talk about a couple of other things before I get into tourism, because I do appreciate some of the comments that were made by the tourism minister when it comes to my particular riding. I've been talking to the border guards, and your party has been saying, “Shut the border down,” and “Try to stop COVID before it gets into our country.”

I understand that, but I have border guards that have been calling me for two weeks. Do you know that our border guards, in my riding and I think in Sarnia and some of the other ones, haven't been vaccinated, when they're dealing with people coming from all over the world? Our border guards have not been vaccinated. When they called me, I was a little surprised at that.

I've had the opportunity to talk to their union president locally. I called the union president nationally, to talk to him. He said he talked to the Premier, and he did, a week ago. Do you guys remember? It was a Friday. I think it was a Friday, or a Thursday; I may have the day wrong. The Premier said at the end of his press conference that he was going to make sure that the border guards get their vaccines. Does everybody remember that? Well, here we are, 11 days later: The border guards have not had their vaccines. They've started a PR thing. They were on CHCH yesterday, and they're saying, “We're risking our lives here. We're dealing with people from all over the world.” So I say to your government, get the border guards vaccinated.

Canada Post—it doesn't make sense to me—have had workers die on the job right here in Toronto. They're not vaccinated.

So I'm saying to whoever is listening, hopefully you can do something around the border guards. When the Premier makes a promise that the border guards are getting their vaccines, I would think it would be done. Hopefully, that helps.

The tourism minister is absolutely right: We have to do everything we can to support small business. We have to make sure that not just the tourist sector, but right across the province of Ontario, our small businesses survive the first wave, the second wave and the third wave—and hopefully, we don't have a fourth wave. But what has happened is, your party stands up and says, “Oh, well, we've given money,” in the millions, maybe the billions. You guys throw out so many numbers I can't keep track of them.

But I can tell you, in my riding—and I gave a piece of paper to the associate minister this morning—I have places like Niagara Fine Wine, Coopers design, Lazy

Lizard, Fort Erie golf course, Chip n Charlie's restaurant in Niagara Falls—which I go to, by the way. They have the best press box salad anywhere. Reg's Candy Kitchen, Little Oak Lawn Care: All these people haven't got their money from the first allotment of money, and they've been told, "You're okay"—but they haven't received a penny. How does that happen? And this is going back into February. What are we on? We're almost in May now. So I've asked them to take a look at it. I gave them a list of these names. How is this happening?

We want our small businesses to survive. What should we be doing? Making sure that they get the money that they need to survive. I have small businesses—they're friends of mine. I play sports with them. I go to the IceDogs game with them that the minister talked about, the junior game. I had season tickets for the IceDogs. I love going to the IceDogs. I go to the Canucks games. And these are all my friends. They're mortgaging their houses. They're trying to get loans to survive. They don't want to shut their business down, but if you tell them that they're going to be okay to get money—and I think it's a great program; I'm not saying it's bad. I'm not saying anything bad about it. But get them the money, and get them the second part of the money, so if they're getting \$10,000, get them the other \$10,000. If they're getting \$20,000, get them the other \$20,000. But don't leave them out for months as they're trying to survive and take care of their kids.

I think I'll spend my last five minutes talking about what I consider—and I know there may be some of my colleagues who might disagree—probably the best riding, the most beautiful riding in all of Ontario.

The minister talked about Niagara Falls. That's certainly a part of it. Niagara Falls is obviously—I think we got 15 million or 16 million tourists before COVID, so, yes, we were hit hard. We were hit first, we were hit the hardest, and I remember saying that at committee during the summer.

I talked about the fact that we had the wine industry, the Shaw Festival—I know there have been some funds to the Shaw Festival—the Niagara Parks. The land around Niagara Parks is worth billions. It's beautiful. That drive down the parkway from Fort Erie through Niagara Falls into Niagara-on-the-Lake must be one of the most beautiful rides, whether you're in a car—well, you can't walk. I guess you can walk it, but I couldn't. You can ride a bike down there. It's absolutely gorgeous. We have to make sure that they're going to survive.

We're going to have to make sure that our wine industry survives. I've got a bill for it here, where our wine industry—our small and medium-sized wineries are paying 6.1% in a tax that international wines coming into our market, into our LCBOs, don't pay. That's wrong. It shouldn't happen. We should support our wine industry. Some 18,000 jobs are supported by that wine industry, and this government could pass that bill and help save those jobs.

The number that we put out—I think the minister is aware of it. We lost 40,000 jobs in Niagara—not just in

Niagara Falls; in Niagara, including Fort Erie, including Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ridgeway, Crystal Beach, St. Davids and Virgil. My entire riding lost jobs, but so did all of Niagara.

I've got three minutes left. Do you know that today the Niagara casino has been closed for a year? One year. We have two casinos in my riding. There are casinos, I think, in Sarnia, Woodbine and Windsor. Some 4,200 people work in those casinos, and the spinoff is about six jobs—when you add that up, that's 24,000 jobs. Nothing was in the budget that took care of our casino workers.

Again, I don't want to run out of time, but I want to tell you that, in the preamble here, the one thing you might want to add—if we're going to celebrate Ontario, let's celebrate with the contributions that workers and unions have made to this great province. There's nothing in this. You should mention what unions have done around vacation time, four-day weekends, fair wages, benefits, health and safety, equal pay and equal rights. I think that should be something that we talk about. I haven't heard that yet.

The last thing I'm going to talk about is something that the minister—I think it's a great program; I don't think it's the one that they should be using. I put a bill forward—domestic tourism—where if you're going anywhere in the province of Ontario, whether it's Niagara Falls, whether it's Ottawa, whether it's up north, Port Elgin, Owen Sound, and you want to go on a vacation, you would get a credit for \$1,000. So if you spend \$2,000, you get a \$1,000 credit.

I've talked to the task force on this. I've talked to Tim Hudak, who I think is chairing the task force, and I've explained to him that if you want to get tourism back on its feet, we need to get domestic tourism. Because everybody wants to get away, and we've got a choice: We can either convince them to do their tourism in the province of Ontario, or they're going to hop on a plane and go to Florida or they're going to go to some sunny south somewhere.

What I'm saying is give that tax credit to working-class families. The way it's set up now it's up to \$5,000 and you get 20% of it. If you get 20%, you'll get \$1,000. But I'm talking about the person that goes to work every day that's coming out of COVID-19 that might only have \$1,500 and may want to come to Niagara Falls, may want to, quite frankly, go to Ottawa—Ottawa is beautiful; I've been there many, many times—may want to go up north, and they'll get \$1,000 back as a credit. That's what I think we should do, rather than the program that you guys are talking about now. It's in my bill. It's very easy to read. I've talked to your task force. Let's do exactly what you're saying—there is no economic recovery without tourism in the province of Ontario. Let's make that to be sure, whether it's up north, whether it's in Ottawa or Niagara Falls.

So how do you do that? How do you make sure that people can afford to take their vacation here in the province of Ontario and not go on an international trip or go down to the States somewhere? We want everybody to

spend their dollars here in Ontario. As we celebrate Ontario, Yours to Discover, let's make sure that we're helping them with that credit, that it's a \$1,000 credit, not having to spend \$5,000 to get \$1,000. I think that's wrong, and—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: —I appreciate it. Sorry.

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

1650

Mr. Jamie West: I was giving the opposite side an opportunity to speak to their bill. I noticed earlier this afternoon, when we were doing Bill 152, the Occupational Safety and Health Day Act, that I only heard New Democrats speak about this. And then this afternoon, with the exception of the minister—and I'll talk about the minister, because I think it was an excellent speech—it's only been New Democrats speaking about this bill as well.

As my colleague from Niagara Falls said, we don't know what we're debating. We're on House duty and it says, "To be announced." Then it's, "Surprise!" I know I can't use props, but I have a binder that I flip through to find out what we're going to debate on. So when Ontarians are looking for quality debate, when they're looking for us to have a good conversation to choose the best path forward, they need to understand that we have to make this up on the fly, that last minute, we've got to talk—which is fine for some people, but for others, we need to have a good look at it.

Now, this bill about Ontario Day, the member opposite—sorry, Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill. For context, I know his name; it's just that I don't know everyone's ridings, and we're not allowed to use names. It's a decent bill. Ontario is a place to celebrate. It's exciting. It's great. He spoke passionately to it when he raised the bill and he spoke passionately to it when we discussed it at committee. There are all sorts of good things in this bill. The timing might be a little off, but you can't control that. It's a private member's bill. You get the slate ahead of time. But the difficulty I have is that this is sort of sprung on us. Then, every time, Speaker, that you stand up and say, "Further debate? Further debate?," why is it only the opposition members talking about the bill—with the exception of the minister as well?

I want to mention the minister, because, honestly, it was a great speech. Sometimes we throw barbs at each other; I'm not doing that. I'm not talking about that. I'm going to talk about some criticism I have about how I feel right now about what things I'd like to celebrate in Ontario, but the speech was great. There are times like this, when we have debate and we get to know each other on a more personal level. I know the member who introduced this bill not super well, but we talk in the hallway. I think we have mutual respect for each other. I know how important it is to him.

I have respect as well, to the minister—I'm going to read it, because I'll get it wrong: heritage, tourism, culture and sports. I know it's Nepean, but it's a mouthful for the ministry file. There are times when we say stuff in this room that resonates and reminds us that we're human.

The minister talked about having a conversation with her daughter. Her daughter is 15 years old. Her birthday was on March 12. My daughter turned 15 around the same time, on March 15 of last year. There's a connection there. Her daughter was disappointed about skating; my daughter loves dance. She has a little bit of a benefit because you can dance over Zoom. It's tough to coordinate with everybody. Every once in a while, as I'm working from home at my computer, I'll hear her instructor say, "Ella, move the laptop so I can see your feet." They're getting by, but it's tough. I'll admit, it's hard for people. We're making sacrifices.

The minister came to Sudbury. She called. I was surprised, because sometimes I don't know when ministers are coming to my riding. But she called and she said, "We're making announcements at Science North." She's been very supportive of Science North. It's a touchstone in Sudbury. It's a beautiful area on the lake. It really is beautiful.

There are so many things that have been cancelled because of COVID-19. Northern Lights Festival Boréal: It's an amazing folk festival. It's fantastic. My mom was recognized as a lifetime volunteer at Northern Lights Festival Boréal. She has a nice stained glass logo of it that she keeps in her house, and they've given her lifetime passes. My mom is in her seventies. You know the commercial with Ikea, where the lady is saying, "Start the car!" and she's rushing? Every time she gets her pass, she feels like that lady, all excited—after volunteering for more than 30 years.

The tourism, the culture, the sports—we've all been affected. We're all pivoting on this. That's why I want to acknowledge you for your speech, because it is important. Those are important things, and you have provided money to support these institutions. We have to give credit where credit is due.

I want to mention, just so I don't forget—I'm going to mispronounce his last name, because I always just say "Justin," but Justin Antheunis—I think is how you pronounce it—from Local 58 of IATSE: I met Justin at the Women's Day parade. He was walking by; I was the labour critic. I said, "Hey, how are you doing? I'm Jamie." We made small talk, and he said—this was at the beginning of COVID. We were just heading in. We had no idea how long it was going to last, what we were getting into. Justin said, "We're going to need help. We're the first ones down. We're the last ones to get up again," and the minister said this as well. "As IATSE members," he said, "we'll survive, but we need help." I want to remind the government that members of locals like IATSE, non-unionized workers like that who make their life working in theatre, film, stage production, need support. They need help with this.

We've talked a couple of times today about the lack of sick days. I just want to talk about COVID-19, because I feel like, a lot of times, the severity of it isn't made apparent. I think the members here know, but in the public, I hear that myth sometimes that it's just a flu. I hear that myth sometimes that it's only if you're vulnerable;

everyone else will be fine. We, in Sudbury, have had anti-mask rallies, people just showing up. It's a small group, but it's very, very dangerous.

I had a friend of mine—she's a wife, she's a mother. Her husband caught COVID-19 at work. She told me how terrifying it was. She was upstairs with her two-year-old, self-isolating for 14 days, with her husband in the basement. Sometimes, they'd go outside and they'd wave through the window. Her son had no idea what was going on, and how stressful and worrying it was. She told me she has almost like a PTSD now, because she was under such fear for such a long time, waiting for her results, waiting to find out if she had it, waiting to find out what happened to her husband, and the stress of all of it.

Fortunately, she has sick days, so it had no impact to her income, but imagine the workers out there who don't. Imagine the breadwinner—in this case, they're both breadwinners. But in a family, if you lose one of your breadwinners—because you need your total income; there are very few people who have two people working and they can give away 50%. There are many families that only have only one breadwinner and only one parent. But imagine this scenario: You lose one of the breadwinners—completely eliminated—and then the other one has to self-isolate and they have to sit and wait. They won't get the federal money, because they don't have COVID-19. So the idea that there are paid sick days out there is not true. It's not factual. There are, but not in this scenario, so how do you pay for your mortgage? How do you pay for your food and your bills, your heat and your hydro? How do you take care of your two-year-old son? How do you provide food? That's the need for paid sick days.

Now, I am not going to hold my breath on the iron ring around long-term care, because that has been more than a year, and I don't see it. It's been 11 days since the Premier promised the best-ever paid sick days. My hat is off if he wants to. I don't care if he wants to cross the member from London's name off the top of the bill and just table it. Just get it done. People cannot wait. Eleven days: That means that people who were isolating themselves for 14 days have lost the majority of that time. People will starve without paid sick days, and people will go to work sick, and they'll spread the disease.

One of the things I love about the debate—I call it the corner office; I have the very last seat. Because of COVID, we're in different spots, and this is the best view in this one here, because above you, Speaker, is the Franco-Ontarian flag. When we talk about Ontario Day and the Franco-Ontario flag, it springs to mind how important it is, how glad I am that it's a symbol, and how it's reflective of Sudbury. So if we are going to celebrate Ontario Day, we have to celebrate as well the Franco-Ontarian flag, which, of course, was designed in Sudbury by Gaétan Gervais, along with Michel Dupuis. I think it's important that we recognize it, and I think it's a great symbol.

As well, when I think about the Franco-Ontarian flag, I think of the University of Sudbury, where it was raised for the first time. The very first time was at the University of Sudbury, and the University of Sudbury is part of the

federated universities at Laurentian University. You have Huntington University, Thorneloe University, University of Sudbury and Laurentian—all Laurentian campuses. These four federated universities with a 60-year shared history.

1700

They are the home of the oldest Indigenous studies program in Ontario, and the second oldest in all of Canada. I mean, they were the home of that until the CCAA process eliminated it. There's a bit of a shambles, a smaller version, trying to be cobbled together, but those Indigenous professors who developed the program over decades, who put their life stories into that that program, they've all been fired. So I don't feel like celebrating, because what I have in my city is an example of colonialism—taking over a program that is supposed to teach us to prevent colonialism from happening, or what happened with colonialism.

The CCAA process at Laurentian University has never been appropriate. It's never been appropriate for a public institution. For the first time in history, since the 1800s, since we started funding public education, we've driven a public institution into the CCAA process, which has nothing to do with the public good; it has to do with paying back bankers. The devastation of this is damaging, especially at Laurentian University, which has a tri-cultural mandate and a bilingual mandate. This has been shredded apart. It's embarrassing and it's sad.

When I think of Indigenous students, when I think of a francophone student, when I think of our bilingual students, people like myself who are trying to learn to speak French—*je parle comme un bébé, mais je travaille dur avec mon professeur.*

Une voix.

Mr. Jamie West: Merci.

When I think of international students who come to my city from around the world and try to make a life and develop a life—I ran into a Sikh student telling me, when he was president of international students, that he came to Sudbury with three days to find a place to live and three days to get set up. He became the president of the international students, he said, “because I was riding the bus trying to find where to buy a cellphone.” I never thought of this before: Our cellphone companies, many of them don't have “phone” in the name and many of the symbols don't look like phones. Think of Rogers, Telus, Koodo. He had no idea where to start. Fortunately, someone on the bus saw him, asked him if he needed help, recognized his turban and asked if he needed help to get him on his feet.

Now, this was several years ago, and Sudbury has matured a lot since then. Now we have welcoming committees and we have a place for prayer. But we need to develop this. We need to assist these international students. What we've done as a result of the CCAA process is that we've stripped away one third of courses. We've promised students, “You'll be able to graduate.” You know the conversation that my son had with his academic adviser on being able to graduate? “Your minor is gone, your major is gone, but if you want just a general arts BA, you can have that.” That's not what he signed up for. That's not what a lot of these students signed up for.

I spoke with a midwifery student named Abigail Roseborough. She's a midwifery student. She felt like her program was safe, because when you think of a school that's suffering from financial insolvency, midwifery seems pretty safe. They have 300 applicants every year; only 30 get in. It's capped by the Ministry of Health. It's covered by the Ministry of Health. In fact, midwifery at Laurentian University makes money for Laurentian University; it provides income to them. It costs them nothing; they bring money in. It was eliminated.

We have six of these programs across Canada—six—one of them in my hometown of Sudbury. It is the only bilingual program in Canada and the only French program outside of Quebec. It's one of six. It costs nothing, it generates revenue and the CCAA process sliced that away.

So people like Abigail, they don't want to celebrate Ontario Day because they feel sort of stabbed in the back by the Ontario government. I don't mean to insult the government; I'm just saying that you've made a mistake with the CCAA and you've got to stop it. You've got to admit that it's not going the way that you expected.

People are estimating that the cuts from the CCAA is going to result in \$100 million lost annually for my community—\$100 million. I know the slogans, "Open for Business," and "For the People." I don't see how \$100 million lost to a community lines up with that. The economic impacts—you want to pay off debt and advance as a province? Then you need \$100 million going into the economy, not taken out. That's important. It's critical, especially in the middle of a pandemic. Imagine being laid off in a pandemic. Imagine being a student preparing to get a job and finding out your options in the future have been eliminated. That's not an Ontario you can celebrate, as much as you'd want to.

We are losing programs like physics—physics. In Sudbury, we have the SNOLAB. It is the cleanest neutrino laboratory around the world. In 2015, I believe, one of the professors working at the SNOLAB won a Nobel Prize in physics, with the help of professors and students from Laurentian University. He cannot believe that this has been cancelled. Their physics program has been damaged.

Math has been cancelled. Speaker, do you remember, in 2018-19, all the fuss that was put into changing math? How critical math was? How students had to learn math? The same government is allowing university-level math and physics to be cancelled through a CCAA process. It's unbelievable.

Environmental science: Now, I know that litter cleanup day and stickers on gas station pumps seem to be the environmental movement for the Conservative government, but I know they believe that we've got to do something about climate change. I think they do. In my heart of hearts, I believe. I want to believe that they do.

I'll tell you something about working in environmental science, and it might take a little bit to explain because you have to understand what a tailings pond is. I used to work in mining. People think I was a miner; I was a furnace operator at a smelter. But what happens when you mine is you bring ore up, and they call it "muck." You might be

thinking in your head, like mud on your boots? But "muck" really is big chunks of rock, like this table would be a little small chunk of rock. And you bring it up, you bring it to the mill and you grind it. You break it down into these small, little pieces, and they use a flotation system to separate the valuable minerals from basically the muck, so things like nickel, cobalt, copper—all the stuff that is really going to make Ontario first-place when it comes to electric vehicles. That's all happening in Sudbury. And so they separate it, and what you're left behind with is a slurry of waste rock. It's kind of gross.

What we do is we take it from the mill in these giant tubes—about this big—and we pump it and we dump it in a lake. If you go to Google maps, you can look at Copper Cliff, and you will notice that the tailings pond dwarfs the size of Copper Cliff, dwarfs the size of Lively, right beside Copper Cliff. It is a massive area. Think of a large lake—and this is a polluted lake. Every mining site has it, so I'm not picking on Vale or Glencore or anyone else. Every mining site has tailings. It really is one of the curses of mining. Mining brings a lot of things forward, but tailings is a tough, polluted job. And so what you do is you dump it and you make dams; and you dump it and you make a dam; and you dump it and you make a dam.

Now, in Brazil, one of those dams broke and buried a city and killed everyone in it. I forget the exact number—massive, massive devastation. Also, in Canada, in BC, a tailings dam broke and killed a lot of people.

Nadia Mykityczuk—I think I'm pronouncing it properly—is working on a program that will use biology to clean the tailings dams, and not just clean them, because when I talk about floating it and separating the muck from the valuables, you also sometimes get a little loss of gold, copper, nickel, precious gems that we get as well, silver, and that ends up in the tailings. This program, cutting-edge, in Ontario, will make millions around the world. We will be cutting-edge. This will be a leader. Every mining company in the world will want this, not only because they want to limit their liability of a tailings dam breaking and contaminating the forest around them or the community beside them, because lots of mining companies are relatively old and that's when you would build the city right beside the mining company—it's not only about reducing the liability; it's getting the wealth out of tailings that they could get back from it. This is something we're going to lose because of the cuts to the program eliminating environmental science. This is something we can't celebrate as Ontario.

I'm proud to be from Ontario; I really am. I'm not putting down the idea of an Ontario day, but I'm telling you, how do I celebrate this in my community with the losses that are happening at Laurentian University? We're losing our sports and athletics department at Laurentian University. Alex Baumann is from Sudbury; he won a gold medal in swimming. And they're closing the only athletic Olympic-sized pool in northern Ontario. The entire north of Ontario relies on that pool for competitions, and we're going to lose it. We're going to lose it. How do you attract students to a university that doesn't have a faculty that

runs a sporting program? I'm looking at the minister for sports for some help on this. I just thought of it at the time. I'm not trying to put you on the spot, but this would be great, if you could help.

1710

Interjection.

Mr. Jamie West: The idea of losing these—there are things that I would love to celebrate. I have 30 seconds. I'm proud that Sudbury is the home of the Day of Mourning. I'm proud that our community has been told time and time again, “You cannot have that,” by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. They told us we couldn't have a cancer centre. They told us we wouldn't have a PET scanner. They told us we wouldn't have an occupational safety and health centre. All of those things, we ignored and we fought for.

Speaker, with five seconds on the clock, I'm going to tell you we're going to keep fighting this, and we'll protect Laurentian University.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate? The member for Brampton Centre.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: East.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): East—so close.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I rise today to talk about Ontario Day, but we're talking about Ontario Day on a day where the headlines across Ontario have been about Brampton's positivity rate, about the crisis that's currently happening in Brampton, where 22% of Bramptonians are facing a positivity rate, where we have a province and a provincial government, a Conservative government, which has not given Bramptonians the support we need to fight COVID-19.

Throughout the weekend, we've heard about the tragedy, the crisis that is unfolding right now in Brampton: a 22% positivity rate for Brampton, one of the highest in Ontario, if not all of Canada. People across Brampton are getting sick at an alarming rate. People are dying at an alarming rate, and our hospital, our only hospital for over 600,000 people, is struggling to keep up with the increases in COVID-19 patients, with the increases in our ICUs. This hospital that was already overburdened, a hospital that was already struggling before COVID-19 is now struggling once again.

When you look at the situation in Brampton, it is truly staggering to think of how badly our community is dealing with this crisis right now. It is with no other, better word; it's a full-out crisis. A raging fire is happening in Brampton, and the sad reality is that if there was a fire, it would probably get more attention and focus than what Brampton has received from this Conservative government over the last year, because Brampton has been left behind since day one in this pandemic. We were left behind. Brampton has been a COVID-19 hot spot since the beginning. Brampton was a COVID-19 hot spot since almost the beginning of this pandemic, and initially, we were left behind when it came to testing. Then we became left behind when it came to the resources our city needed to fight COVID-19, and now, we're being left behind when it comes to vaccinations.

When we talk about vaccinations in our city, let's just break it down right now: Despite the fact that we are a city that has been described as a COVID-19 hot spot since day one, right now in Brampton, there is only one COVID-19 vaccination pop-up, and that COVID-19 vaccination pop-up actually isn't even physically in Brampton. The COVID-19 vaccination pop-up is outside of Brampton, and it doesn't even service the entire city. My understanding of things: There are two postal codes in Brampton that are actually allocated or allowed to access this COVID-19 vaccination pop-up.

We are a city that per capita—this is just data. This is just facts. Per capita, in Brampton right now, we have some of the lowest amounts of pharmacies that are giving out vaccinations right now, when compared to other municipalities throughout Ontario. If you look at the clear data points in Brampton right now, you will see our city is categorically being left behind, and it's a pattern from the Conservative government. This is not something new. This is not something we were just left behind in this current moment. We've been left behind since day one, and we can categorize it: testing, resources, vaccinations, paid sick days. We know that Brampton is a city that is full of essential workers, Brampton is a city full of racialized, marginalized people, and we know, based on the data, that those are communities that are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. When you don't bring in something like paid sick days, the impact on Brampton is evident. It's before us, the fact that we have some of the highest numbers of people falling sick in Brampton right now.

I want to explain to people what about Brampton and this issue of paid sick days is so important to Brampton: the fact that in Brampton you have people who live in intergenerational households. I live in an intergenerational household because I live with my mother and father, along with my wife and my daughter. That means, in other households—I have the privilege that if I ever get sick, I can stay at home. I have that ability; I have that privilege in my capacity as an MPP. But when you're a front-line worker, an essential worker who doesn't have paid sick days and you're put in this very precarious situation where you have to choose between going to work sick or paying the bills, the result is people will choose to pay their bills because they can't afford their families to go hungry. They have people reliant upon them, people who are relying on their paycheque to put food on the table, to pay for the rent, to pay for the mortgage, to pay for their car insurance premiums, to pay for whatever they're dealing with. When you have people who are put in this precarious situation and they need to pay the bills, that's why we're seeing such a huge amount of COVID-19 spread in our workplaces.

So when the government puts forward a bill called Ontario Day, I think there are a lot more pressing issues right now. In Brampton, I'll tell you right now, people are thinking about the crisis that we're living through at this very moment. This is not something that is being only modelled for the future in terms of modelling for greater cases or greater impact; we're talking about something that is live right now. We are living through a crisis right

now in Brampton, and the result is that people are getting sick at an alarming rate; people are dying. Our only hospital for over 600,000 people is currently at capacity; its ICU is filled. It is so bad, people are being shipped out to hospitals outside of Brampton. The amount of worry in people, the amount of worry that people are facing right now, the amount of concern that people have, dealing with their health care institutions, the feeling on the streets in Brampton, a city that my wife and I are raising my daughter in, a city that I call home—the impact that this crisis is having on Brampton right now is just indescribable.

And when we look at the fact that Brampton has been left behind—per capita pharmacies: we have some of the lowest in Brampton—and if you look at the track record of the Conservative government in the pharmacy rollout in Brampton, let's keep in mind that initially Brampton didn't have any pharmacies at all in the pilot project rollout. Out of 325 pharmacies where it was rolled out, Brampton didn't have one in the beginning. Peel didn't have one in the beginning.

So when you look at this makeup, this breakdown of what's happening in Brampton, of who lives in Brampton: front-line essential workers. They live in intergenerational households. I'll say this again: When you look at the breakdown in Brampton of who lives in Brampton, you have front-line essential workers, people who live in intergenerational households who have not the privilege to work from home. They have to go to work, and because they go to work, others can work from home. Brampton is being described across the board as an economic engine for Ontario, and it's being described as the place—if you order something, if you require supplies, it's the trucking, the logistics, the distribution centres within Brampton that allow others to work from home. But in Brampton right now, that is something that is causing further spread of COVID-19. And we've seen it: Pull up the numbers; I look at it almost daily. Last time I checked, it was something like over 110 workplace outbreaks in Brampton. I can't imagine how much more it's grown since we've seen a positivity rate of 22% in Brampton.

When I hear the stories of front-line workers and how this COVID-19 pandemic has devastated their lives—I spoke to someone earlier today who described how her father had worked 26 years at a factory, contracted COVID-19, and ultimately, he passed away. The daughter was describing to me how tragic and unjust the circumstances were, how ultimately he was moved out of Brampton to Newmarket, how he felt more comfortable in Brampton because of the greater cultural services that were available there—he had caregivers and staff at the Brampton Civic Hospital that spoke the language that he's most comfortable in, Gujarati. That's just one of countless stories.

1720

I talked to another individual, another front-line essential worker, whose father got COVID-19. He described the story of how his father knocked on his door one day. His father was feeling unwell one day, and his son asked him

about it. He said, “No, it's okay.” The next day, his father knocked on the door, and when his father knocked on the door, he said, “Take me to hospital. I need to go right now,” because he was having issues with his ability to breathe properly.

His son dropped him off at the hospital, at Brampton Civic. He thought he would drop him off and he'd see him shortly. Little did he know that was the last time he would ever see his father. I was speaking to him today and he said to me, “Everyone is going to pass at one time; we're all going to pass from this earth at one time.” But he wasn't even given ability to say goodbye.

That's the reality of front-line workers. That's the reality of people who are struggling with COVID-19 and their family members who are suffering from COVID-19 and who are dying from COVID-19. That is the makeup of Brampton, and that's why we're being devastated in this crisis right now. So when the government puts forward something like Ontario Day—talk to those individuals I just mentioned right now. They're not going to have Ontario Day be at the forefront of their attention right now.

The daughter whose father died from COVID-19 expressed to me the things that she wanted to see from our government. She said she wants to see paid sick days, so no one would have to be in the position of her father and have to go to work even when they're feeling unwell out of fear of not being able to pay the bills. She said workers require and deserve time off to get vaccines so we can stop the spread of COVID-19. She said that Brampton requires more vaccine pop-ups. That's what the people of Brampton are thinking about right now.

So when people look at this Ontario Day being put forward, frankly they look at it as incredibly tone-deaf. It's tone-deaf because you're in the middle of a crisis. We are all in the middle of a crisis. Brampton is struggling right now, and this Conservative government has an opportunity to act right now. This is not partisan politics; this is facts. A 22% positivity rate is a fact. You will open up your Twitter or listen to your news and all you will hear today is about Brampton's crisis. And instead of prioritizing Brampton's crisis, you're putting forward a bill called Ontario Day.

I think it's something that is just so incredibly tone-deaf at a moment when people are losing their lives at an alarming rate. You have the power to actually create impact. You have the power to ensure that people aren't struggling.

Interjections.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I hear people from the government side heckling right now. They're heckling at a time when they could instead be reflecting and thinking that they should be doing more for Brampton.

Interjections.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: You know, right now, I'm talking about a 22% positivity rate in Brampton.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPPs, please come to order. Minister for heritage and culture, please come to order.

Please go ahead, MPP from Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I ask the government to just reflect on what I've been talking about this whole time. I don't know what the government is even making mention of, because I've exclusively been talking for the last 14 minutes about data. The heckles from the member for Mississauga—I don't know if he listened to my speech at all; he's just heckling randomly.

I've talked about a 22% positivity rate. How is that politicizing something? I've talked about the fact that Brampton, per capita, has some of the lowest amount of pharmacies. That's data; that's not politicizing. I've talked about the fact that people need paid sick days. That's not politicizing; that's data. I'm talking about two individuals who lost their fathers, and those individuals explained to me that they want better from this government. That is what we're dealing with right now, and instead the government has the audacity to heckle and laugh at a time like this.

To heckle and laugh at a time when Brampton is struggling—it is disgraceful on a day like today, when you have an opportunity to reflect on what you should be doing for Brampton. If you don't like my opinion on it, that's fine. Don't. Look at the Ontario science table; look at public health experts; look at the news this evening. Open up your Twitter right now. Swipe it and tell me what's trending. You will see the crisis that's unfolding in Brampton.

It's happening in Peel, to the members from Mississauga who are heckling right now, and you're going to be held accountable to your voters when they ask you, "What did you do when Peel was in crisis?" And you're going say, "I was doing Ontario Day. I was debating Ontario Day," at a time where not just Brampton but all of Peel is suffering through a crisis. Instead, members from the government just choose to heckle when they have the opportunity to create something substantive.

Now, when we look at Brampton specifically, and we looked at this—I really want to break down this idea of the issue around vaccines. Brampton right now, despite being qualified as a hot spot, a 22% positivity rate, we only have one vaccine pop-up right now, which is not even located in Brampton, and it doesn't even service all of Brampton. The Ontario science table has been very clear: You need to put a 50% allocation of vaccines towards hot spots. That's not happening in Brampton right now. Instead, we're seeing people not pointing the firehose at the highest fire. They're instead just looking at—

Interjections.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I keep on getting heckled from a member from Mississauga, and I'm going to ask the member from Mississauga—hopefully, if there are questions and comments, I would ask him to withhold his comments, because I think heckling is a sign of insecurity, when you have the opportunity to listen. You can reply later in debate. You can still have a conversation. This is the job of the Legislature, and people are heckling when they have the opportunity to say, "You know what? Let me look at the data."

Maybe you should have had that same kind of energy with the Ontario science table when they recommended

putting a 50% allocation of vaccines toward hot spots. Maybe you should put that same energy towards advocating for more vaccine pop-ups throughout hot spots. That's probably a better, well-placed source of your energy instead of this clear sign of insecurity from the government, where they're looking and they're seeing, "Well, the data is not on my side. We've clearly messed up right now, and on a day when we should be talking about saving lives, we're talking about Ontario Day."

Honestly, if I was in your position, I would be ashamed as well, because what's happening right now is a crisis across our province and in every single action we should be focused—laser-focused—on addressing the crisis in our cities. We should have laser focus on the idea that we need to do every single thing possible to address this crisis in Brampton. But instead, what we're seeing is complete inaction.

The data is clear. Pharmacies—just look at it yourself. Per capita, Brampton has some of the lowest amounts of pharmacies when compared to other municipalities. How does that make sense? How does that make sense, when the Ontario science table and all the health care experts are saying that you need to have a 50% allocation of vaccines at hot spots? So instead of heckling, think about it yourself. Just do the numbers, do the math. You know the crisis is there, but you instead choose to focus your energies on all the wrong things.

When we look at the legacy of the Conservative government for Brampton, it has been one of failure after failure. Keep in mind that Brampton is a city that had a health care crisis declared before COVID-19. Our hospital was at capacity, operating over 100% capacity at Brampton Civic, our singular hospital. Our health centre, Peel Memorial, which is not even a hospital, was operating at something over 500% capacity. This is before COVID-19, let alone the circumstances we're in right now.

And what are people saying about COVID-19 across the board? That it's actually bringing forth the systemic inequities that existed in cities and health care systems beforehand. It's bringing it to the forefront. That's what COVID-19 did. It demonstrated that weak systems got weaker. That is nothing but more evident when we look at the situation in Brampton.

1730

Finally, in closing, with the final 30 seconds, I'm just going to say this: The government's priorities, or lack of priorities, are really clear with this bill coming forward right now. People deserve better. Brampton deserves better. They deserve the attention that all of Canada is giving us, but the Conservative government is not. They deserve the attention that the media will be giving tonight, that individuals, health care experts, non-partisan doctors—they're all giving Brampton the attention that we deserve, but we see silence and inaction from the Conservative government.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I want to thank my colleague for Brampton East. I'll continue with this debate, talking about Brampton and the inequities we have there.

Today, we're talking about Ontario Day. This is the debate that the government brought forward, last minute. People at home, just to let you know, the way it's supposed to work is they let us know a week in advance, a few days in advance what the itinerary is going to be and what we're going to be discussing. But today, we found out a mere maybe 60 seconds before what we were going to be talking about. So people at home who want to know, these are the types of shenanigans that the government has been playing here during COVID-19.

Interjections.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: The government is going to start heckling me, but we'll get through this.

Before I begin, I want to talk about the young lady who died, 13 years of age, Emily Victoria Viegas. This is what we should be talking about, what's been going on in Ontario and what's been going on in Brampton.

Emily is one of the youngest people in Ontario to have died from COVID-19, and this is terrible. If you turn on the news today, this is what you're going to hear. You're not going to hear about Ontario Day.

Before I talk about Emily Victoria Viegas, I want to talk a little bit about Ontario Day. I agree that we have to celebrate Ontario and Canada. I love my province more than anybody else here in this room. Before I got into politics, I worked at the Weather Network for 17 years. Every year, we would go up north to areas like Sudbury, where I would learn about nickel and the nickel mines. We would go to Thunder Bay as well as Parry Sound and see the Bobby Orr museum there. I was excited about going up north and showing all the great things that people in southern Ontario would want to see up north in the wintertime: going skiing, going snowshoeing, doing ice fishing. So I love showcasing Ontario and I continue to do that. However, we are in the third wave of COVID-19, and our priorities should be talking about COVID-19 and how we can keep Ontarians alive.

First of all, before I talk about Emily, I want to talk about paid sick days, which we need. Unfortunately, paid sick days have been debated here and have been shot down 25 times. In Peel region, where, as the member from Brampton East mentioned, we have the highest positivity rates in the entire country and in the entire province—Brampton has 22.2%. It's 14.5% in Mississauga. The average in Ontario is 7.9% positivity. Knowing that, I was shocked to hear that the Peel member from Mississauga—Erin Mills voted against paid sick days. The member from Mississauga—Lakeshore, knowing full well they have essential workers, voted against paid sick days. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville voted against paid sick days. The member who is across from me right now from Mississauga Centre has many essential workers, and voted against paid sick days. The member for Mississauga—Malton also voted against paid sick days. The member from Mississauga East—Cooksville also voted against paid sick days, but that member knows they have many essential workers who have to go to work and do not have paid sick days. The member for Dufferin—Caledon, the Solicitor General, voted against paid sick days, but she was in

favour of a police state in Ontario. The member who is also across from me from Brampton South, I'm surprised also voted against paid sick days, knowing full well that our positivity rate is 22.2%, the highest in Ontario. The member for Brampton West, also in Peel region, voted against paid sick days, Madam Speaker.

All these members, knowing full well that their constituents and that the workers in Peel region—we are in a hot spot, and they could not bring themselves to vote in favour of a bill that would support the workers in Peel region. I'm not sure if they're just voting along the party lines or if they actually believe that paid sick days are not warranted in Peel region. I'm hoping that the members, hearing the stories of people dying, people getting sick, will change their minds.

As I started off, Madam Speaker, I was going to speak about Emily Victoria Viegas. She was one of the youngest, at 13 years of age, from Brampton, dying of COVID-19. Her father is a warehouse worker. Her mother currently is in the hospital with COVID-19. Her father was afraid to send her to Brampton Civic, because he knew full well just how difficult it would be for her to get immediate assistance. Because for years, as we know, the Liberal government—and now supported by this Conservative government—has underfunded Brampton Civic, so we had hallway medicine even before the pandemic. The father did not want to be separated from his daughter, who could have been sent off to Windsor or Ottawa or who knows where in the province of Ontario. So he gave her Tylenol, he monitored her fever, but she just got worse. And then, on April 22, she died.

Stories like this are numerous. People are now dying at home. Two people a day are actually dying in their house before they can get to the hospital. Where is this going, Madam Speaker?

In Brampton and Brampton North, we have many families living together in one house, multi-generational families living together. So if one person gets sick, then obviously the numbers are that the others are going to get sick as well, and that is what's been happening. We have many warehouse workers and many factory workers who are going to work sick because they don't have the paid sick days that have been voted against by this government, and they're bringing it home. They're bringing it home to these multi-generational families.

People don't want to get COVID-19, but what they do want to do is pay for their mortgage, their rents, their food, their high auto insurance. But this government is not letting them do that. It's letting them make the choice to go to work sick or put food on the table. They shouldn't have to make that choice.

1740

As we know, the federal government's paid sick days are not working. For people at home, if you want to know: The only way you can qualify for paid sick days is not if you have a cold or you have a cough—you actually have to have COVID-19 to get the paid sick days, plain and simple. So people who have a cough or a sneeze, or they could be asymptomatic—they could be carrying the virus,

but since they don't have the paid sick days, they're going to go work, and they might quite possibly have COVID-19 and bring it into the warehouse, bring it into the factory.

This is not just me saying this; it's all the mayors in Peel region, it's their very own science table, it's the medical association, it's the doctors' association, it's the nurses' association—it's pretty much everybody, except for the people sitting on the other side here, who believes that paid sick days will save lives.

Now, in Brampton, as our member from Brampton East mentioned, we don't have pop-up or mobile clinics, which is a shame. I just got a message, Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order. The government side will come to order.

Mr. Jamie West: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member from Sudbury on a point of order.

Mr. Jamie West: Speaker, I want to thank you for calling for order. I am two seats away from the member, and I can't hear what he's saying.

Interjections.

Mr. Jamie West: The government side is laughing about this, but this is an important debate that they tabled. I would like to be able to hear the debate. I'm beside the member, and I can barely hear what he's saying.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. I appreciate the point of order.

Back to the member for Brampton North.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As the government wants to heckle—and a lot of them who are heckling right now are members from Peel region, which is very shameful, knowing that our positivity rates are 22.2% in Brampton and 14.5% in Mississauga. This is very serious. This is not a joke.

As I was mentioning before I was interrupted, the vaccine rollout is not working. There was a survey where 80% of Ontarians agreed that we should be sending the vaccines to the essential workers and to the hot spots in Ontario—so someone in Sudbury, say, for instance, agrees that we should be seeing those vaccines and those pop-up clinics in Brampton or in Mississauga. However, this government doesn't seem to agree with 80% of the population of Ontario.

Our hospital, Brampton Civic, which is just down the street from my house in Brampton, has been over capacity since day one. This was well before the pandemic. The Liberal government did not fund Brampton Civic properly—and this government is not. What they did decide to do was to build an additional wing to Peel Memorial, and they called that a new hospital.

Madam Speaker, the analogy is sort of like this: If you have a house and you add an addition to the house—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: —it's still the same house. It's not a new house; it's the same house—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please.

The Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction will come to order. I need to be able to hear the speaker on the other side, and if you can't hear me when I call you to order, then you are clearly being too loud.

Back to the member for Brampton North.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I just got a note here from the member from Niagara. I'm just going to read this. This is from Michael Warner:

“Just admitted another patient to the ICU with #COVID in their 40s who acquired the infection from their factory worker partner.

“The @ongov must take immediate action to protect the people who are getting sick and dying.

“There is no acceptable excuse.”

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: How about we secure our borders and stop the variants of concern?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please.

I'm going to ask the entire House to come to order. You have to stop with the back and forth across the floor. If you have something to say, then when you have time on the clock, you're welcome to get up and say it. Any comments you have can come through the Chair.

Back to the member for Brampton North.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: It's apparent that the government doesn't want to hear what I have to say, or what the member from Brampton East or the member from Niagara Falls or the member from Sudbury or the member from Hamilton Mountain or Timiskaming or for York South—Weston—because they know what we're saying is right, and it hurts them. The truth hurts.

Unfortunately, we have people in Ontario who are dying, who are getting sick, so the heckling goes in one ear and out the other for me. I'm here to fight for and to stand for the people of Brampton and the people of Ontario. If this government wants to heckle while people are dying, while people are getting sick, then that's up to them.

I was talking about the hospital situation in Brampton, where we have been over capacity since day one. I love the doctors and the nurses at Brampton Civic—it's through no fault of their own; they're doing the best they can with what they have. But when people in my community would rather stay home than go to the hospital because they know they're going to be shuffled all over the place, then you know we have a major problem.

But today we're talking about Ontario Day instead of these problems.

The member for Brampton East started talking about the pharmacies in Ontario and the disparity. In Brampton, we have eight pharmacies per 100,000 people; in Toronto, it's nine; in Mississauga, it's 10. In Kingston, it is 26 pharmacies per 100,000—where they're putting vaccines into arms. Obviously, if we're a hot spot in Brampton, this does not make any sense. It's backward thinking on the

part of the government, as to how they are dealing with this pandemic. They need to step up and provide more pharmacies in Brampton and Mississauga with vaccines.

The government shouted over there about the federal government needing to deal with international travellers. At Pearson airport, we have many workers who work in logistics, in trucking. They're essential workers. They travel to the United States, they travel across Canada, back and forth. So we have to continue to protect them, and this government is not protecting them.

Taxi drivers, limousine drivers, at the beginning of the pandemic, were getting sick, and now many of them are leaving their vehicles in their driveway because they're afraid to pick up a fare, because they don't know who is sick.

We can't get a handle on these numbers if we don't deal with paid sick days, if we don't close non-essential businesses and support those businesses that we close, as well as the employees. In our education system, we have to lower the class size to 15 students per class. There are so many things that—not just that we're saying on this side, but that their own science team was saying.

I don't know who the Premier is listening to, but we did not ask for closing playgrounds. Of course, they did an about-face and realized it just doesn't make any sense.

We did not support, nor did their science team support, a police state. Thankfully, Peel Regional Police, York Regional Police, Niagara regional police, Sudbury police—is it called Sudbury police?

Mr. Jamie West: Sudbury regional.

Mr. Kevin Yarde:—Sudbury regional police, Ottawa and 30 others all decided that they weren't going to be pulling people over at random to check, to ask them, "Give me your ID. Where are you going?"

Madam Speaker, when I first started here in 2018, I brought forward a bill to ban carding. The reason why? I personally have been carded, twice, and I know how demeaning it is to be pulled over just because of the colour of your skin. This is something that I believe the police forces saw and realized—they didn't want to be held accountable for doing something like that, because it has nothing to do with COVID-19. It will do nothing to lower the case count.

What will lower the case count and take care of COVID-19 is all the things we've been talking about here for days and days: paid sick days; closing non-essential businesses; providing them with supports, as well as their workers; and prioritizing what we talk about here in the House—things that really matter, things that are really important, to get us out of this third wave. I haven't seen that from this government.

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

Mr. Parsa has moved third reading of Bill 173, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare that carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Orders of the day? It's almost 6 o'clock.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1753.

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
France Gélinas, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Taras Natyshak
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Will Bouma, John Fraser
Logan Kanapathi, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche
Natalia Kusendova
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell