

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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Mercredi  
28 avril 2021

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
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House Publications and Language Services  
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building  
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Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires  
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement  
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
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**ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR****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**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 April 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 avril 2021

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOVING ONTARIANS  
MORE SAFELY ACT, 2021

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 27, 2021, on the motion for second 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):** Further debate? I recognize the member for Waterloo.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much, Speaker, and good morning to you. Before I get started, I just wanted to say a special congratulations to our colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh. Finally, after more than 500 days since the poet laureate bill in memory of Gord Downie was passed, just before question period today the province of Ontario will name Ontario's first poet laureate.

I want to congratulate the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. He brings a certain amount of gravitas and grace to this place. As caucus chair and on behalf of our members, we are incredibly proud of this accomplishment and proud to serve the good people of Ontario with one Mr. Percy Hatfield. This is a special day for one of our friends and colleagues, and we are extremely excited to hear the announcement just before question period.

That said, we have before us a piece of legislation, Bill 282. This is a piece of legislation—the minister spoke to it yesterday for an hour—called Moving Ontarians More Safely. Thinking of the word “safety,” I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that we are in unprecedented times in the province of Ontario, and safety is one of those top issues that almost every Ontarian is thinking about, especially the essential workers who go to our manufacturing and our warehouses, who serve on the front lines every single day in this great province. They would like us to be debating an issue that pertains to their health and safety in their workplaces. That is their top priority. We, of course, on this side of the House, in the NDP caucus, would love to

see the government bring forward a piece of legislation that is solely focused on health and safety and managing the pandemic.

About two weeks ago, the House leader said, “We’ve started the fight. We’re no longer on the defence. We’ve started the fight.” I mean, this fight would be a very different fight, we would argue with you, if the province had brought in paid sick days, if the government had recognized early in this pandemic—when PSWs were still going to work, still going to multiple locations and the original phase 1 of COVID-19 was playing itself out in our long-term-care homes.

Then, in the second wave, when we had a greater understanding of how COVID-19 was being transmitted—you’ll remember that Health Canada, at the very beginning of this pandemic, wasn’t even recommending that we wear masks. They were saying that this was optional. The focus was on cleaning our hands and sanitizing spaces.

So we have learned along the way, and now that we are in, really, the height and the darkness of wave 3, we know how to keep people safe. In fact, the science table has been very clear on how we keep people safe in Ontario, and for some reason, even yesterday, this government failed to bring forward paid sick days. You still punted that responsibility to the federal government. I think of the disappointment that the people of this province felt hearing yesterday’s announcement and hearing very clearly from the Prime Minister, “This is your job. This is your responsibility.”

Amending the Employment Standards Act is your responsibility. Negotiating a paid sick day program, a real one, is the role of the provincial government. The fact that we are debating a piece of legislation today, Bill 282, on keeping road users safe—I think that’s what it’s called; the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act—our concern on this side of the House is, how are we going to keep the essential workers safe? Because now that we are in this third wave, the variants are beating us. This is very clear. The science table has said we cannot vaccinate our way out of this mess. We must prevent the transmission, and preventing the transmission is in bringing in a made-in-Ontario paid sick day program, as we have requested for almost a year now. I truly do not understand the reluctance on the part of this government to do the right thing in this regard.

And it isn’t just the science table. I mean, the science table is your science table—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me. The point has been made with regard to paid sick days and so on. However, I want you to spin this back into the Moving Ontarians More Safely bill, the actual bill that we

are debating right now. I would appreciate your help in that matter. Thank you.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Well, I was connecting it to the issue of safety. This was actually the theme of how the debate was handled yesterday, so, with respect—because I'm not trying to be oppositional, although it comes very naturally to me—the precedent has been set on the debate.

That said, I want to say to the government on Bill 282 that two thirds of this piece of legislation our members have brought forward over the last 10 years, beginning with Cheri DiNovo, the former member for Parkdale–High Park, with the vulnerable road users. I brought forward vulnerable road user legislation in 2018. I remember very clearly that there were three weeks left in the House before the 2018 election. I went over to the Minister of Transportation, who is now the leader of the Liberal caucus, and also the former member from Burlington, Eleanor McMahon, and I said, “Listen, you’ve got three weeks. You said that you support this piece of legislation, which would increase fines for those drivers who actually physically damage and sometimes kill cyclists and pedestrians, because it is not regarded in any way, shape or form to the degree under the Criminal Code in the same respect as actually physically damaging somebody.” I went over to them; I walked across the floor and I said, “Listen, we can do this. You can do this. The legislation is very clear. Ontario is behind the times on vulnerable road user legislation.” And I said, “Who knows if we’re going to get elected?” Every election is a new election, as you know, Mr. Speaker. They both looked at me and said, “Don’t worry, we’ll be fine. We will get it done after the election.” Both of those individuals didn’t come back here.

**0910**

So here we are, almost three years later, having a piece of legislation that the government has brought forward which reflects many of our values, although there are areas that are missing on this. We just want it to get to committee.

In the middle of a pandemic, to be fair, we should be debating so many other issues that pertain to getting the economy back running, getting the health and well-being of workers in the province put on the front burner for this government, and yet here we are talking about street racing and drag racing.

When this bill passes second reading—as it should, very quickly; possibly just today—and goes to committee, we have amendments already prepared where we’re going to try to strengthen it. We’re going to try to work collaboratively with you in that regard and hopefully strengthen some of the penalties and the fines that our members have brought forward.

I just want to get one of our members on the record. The member for University–Rosedale released the following statement—I think this just happened yesterday—on the MOMS Act, including road safety improvements that she actually has been pushing for. This is a direct quote: “Cyclists are celebrating that the MOMS Act will allow for the reporting of dooring incidents to police, a key

component of” the Doored But Not Ignored Act, which was brought forward by the member for University–Rosedale. “Currently, a cyclist can end up in an emergency room after being hit by a car door, and the police won’t even turn up to report the incident.”

This is very true. This happened to a good friend of mine, a city councillor in Waterloo. The car hit her and: “Do you want me to call you a taxi?” She said, “No, you call the police; you call an ambulance,” because there’s just a different sphere of understanding, if you will, about what happens when cyclists are hit.

She said, “The police won’t even turn up to report the incident. Requiring police to report on all dooring incidents will mean drivers can be held to account and cyclists can be safer.”

I fundamentally believe this. I grew up here in Toronto, both in Parkdale and in east-end Toronto. I didn’t drive until I was 32 because I cycled. But I got doored too many times and I just had to retire the bicycle. You can only take so much.

Often, the drivers would put the cyclists at fault. They weren’t doing the Dutch reach; they weren’t doing the check for cyclists. And so in many respects, this culture has changed.

Our member from University–Rosedale goes on to say, “Every transit rider has had the frightening experience of leaving a streetcar and nearly being hit by a car because the driver failed to stop.” This is especially true. With the older versions of streetcars, if you’ve lived here for quite some time, once those doors open, cars would actually accelerate to get past the streetcar.

So when this bill, which is not a paid sick day bill, goes to committee, as the lead said yesterday, we’re supportive of it. But we’re going to table amendments to improve the bill, adding vulnerable road user provisions, as per Bill 62, or tougher penalties for all offences resulting in bodily harm or death, as per Bill 122, if such amendments are in order.

I just wish that the government had the same sense of urgency that they do with ensuring that those who are on the roads, be they pedestrians, cyclists or drivers, are safe as they did for essential workers in Ontario. What a missed opportunity, Mr. Speaker. This is our third week of a six-week rotation—who’s counting?—and hopefully at some point this government is going to wake up and say, “You know what, let’s park everything, this Ontario Day, PMBs, these private members’ motions”—we don’t even know what the government is actually bringing forward this week for private members’ bills. Just table everything else and bring a piece of legislation to the floor of the Ontario Legislature that focuses on keeping people safe, keeping people healthy, ensuring that they don’t have to go to work sick. That is the only way that we are going to interrupt the cycle of COVID-19 in the province of Ontario.

Last week—this is cohort one. Even when you’re not here, you’re sort of here. I was watching last week, and I did hear the member from Burlington in her speech talk about how we were being alarmist on the safety issue. You even referenced Chicken Little. I think we can all assume

and acknowledge that that did not go over too well, because people do feel a sense of urgency and a sense of concern out in the communities that they live in, be it Burlington; Timiskaming–Cochrane; Brampton, for sure; Peel, for sure; Oshawa; or Scarborough.

It's ironic because, being an English major—I don't know if you know this, Mr. Speaker, but when you reference children's fairy tales, they were originally designed to scare children. That was the original intent, and I learned this because I'm an English major. They were supposed to be preventive in nature. So perhaps if we're going to be talking about children's fairy tales in this place, we should be talking about the Emperor's New Clothes, because what we have here is a complete and utter lack of leadership on addressing the health and safety of essential workers in Ontario. Nobody is buying anything that this government is selling on their response to COVID-19 right now. It is very dire and dark out there.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me. I recognize the member for Mississauga–Malton on a point of order.

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** I appreciate the member talking. I'm just waiting to hear more about the actual bill, which is transportation, rather than more about COVID or paid sick days. I appreciate that.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I appreciate the reminder. I will again just remind the member from Waterloo to make your comments more relevant towards the bill that we are debating right now.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Well, I don't know if the member actually does appreciate my comments, my point being that the same urgency that the government has brought with Bill 282, the same research, the same evidence that has been cited in this piece of legislation—which, of course, we're going to be supporting, because two thirds of it has come from over almost a decade of advocacy from our side of the bench. Obviously, we're going to try to make it a better bill, which we always try to do, if you actually follow protocol here in this place and bring that bill to committee to make it stronger.

It's one thing for us to be talking about this. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh has to wait 500 days for action. The glacial pace that sometimes this government acts on—except when they have their own priorities, like interfering in the city of Toronto municipal election. That happened pretty fast, Mr. Speaker.

As I've said, the MOMS bill, as it is known, brings in some new road safety measures, and our members on this side have been very supportive of the thrust of it. Clearly, there is an emerging issue around street racing. Let's get it to committee. Let's do our due diligence with this piece of legislation. Let's park it over here and let's bring forward a piece of legislation like legislated paid sick days. Don't keep punting over to the federal government. Just do your job.

Really, you have our co-operation on Bill 282, and we're willing to partner with you to make it a piece of legislation that meets the needs of the people of this

province. What we're saying is that this is not necessarily the priority right now of the people of Ontario, in the middle of a pandemic, where the average caseload of COVID-19 is now consistently around the 4,000 mark. We are actually saying to you, we're willing. We'll stay to midnight, as long as it takes, to get paid sick day legislation on the floor of this Legislature. We will work cooperatively to fast-track, to make it an effective piece of legislation so that sick workers don't have to go to work. They can stay home and stay safe and keep their families safe, Mr. Speaker. And that's pretty much all I have to say on Bill 282.

**0920**

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Questions?

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Good morning to all. Thank you to my colleague from the opposite side for her presentation. One of the changes proposed in the MOMS Act is to include working conditions for our highway workers by allowing the use of automated traffic control devices to direct traffic at a construction site.

Does the member opposite agree that we should adopt technology like the automated traffic control devices to protect the workers who keep our goods moving?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** The answer is yes. We believe in keeping workers safe in the province of Ontario. We believe in taking every measure that is needed to keep people safe in the province of Ontario. We have been consistently fighting for worker safety. From the first time I actually came to this place, working-at-heights legislation had not been completed. There had been a 10-year study after some scaffolding workers, four new immigrants, had fallen to their deaths. There was a study. There was a round table. There was a special report. Nothing was actionable, though, at the time. We just kept talking about these workers.

We have consistently been fighting for the health and safety of workers in the province of Ontario. That is why we want you to bring paid sick day legislation to the floor of this Legislature.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Mr. Gurratan Singh:** As my colleague has clearly stated, I believe that this is an issue that we in the NDP are not in—there's no contention. We agree with this piece of legislation.

What I want to ask her is: She has brought up time and again how important it is that we focus on the pandemic that's before us. I know we've seen points of order coming from the Conservative government saying this is not relevant. Can the member please explain how everything we do in this House is relevant to COVID-19 at this time of crisis and every action that is being put forward should have a focus on how we address this pandemic that is gripping our province right now?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much for the question. That was exactly where I was trying to go with my comments. Yesterday, the members opposite talked about how, because of COVID, street racing has become more prevalent. They've responded to a specific issue

around the increase in speed, in stunt driving, in racing on our roads, and yet they haven't responded in a legislative way to COVID-19 for essential workers.

Everything that we should be talking about in this place right now should be pandemic-related. The science table has made so many recommendations that you have turned your back on, including closing down all non-essential workplaces. If you're not going to bring in a paid sick day strategy, then at least stop people from going to work if it's not essential. This is literally life and death.

Let's get this bill to committee and then bring something tangible to keep people safe in the province of Ontario to this floor.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions? The member from Mississauga Centre.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova:** Thank you. Good morning, Speaker. In my work as a registered nurse in the emergency room, I've had the unfortunate privilege of treating many patients, including victims and drivers of motor vehicle collisions. It's a very traumatic experience. The families are very often distraught. As you can imagine, the wounds inflicted on these drivers and their victims are very profound, so I think this legislation cannot come at a better time.

A key pillar of the MOMS Act is the introduction of stiffer post-conviction penalties for those convicted acts of stunt driving and street racing on our roadways. Does the member opposite agree with these increased penalties to deter drivers from engaging in reckless acts of street racing and stunt driving to keep our roads safer?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I mean, we don't think they're stiff enough.

But as a nurse and as someone who has seen first-hand, also, what COVID-19 is doing to our emergency rooms, to our ICUs—we have field hospitals. We are moving patients from downtown Toronto to northern communities, to other regions. As a nurse, why aren't you going directly to this Premier and saying, "Bring in paid sick day legislation"?

There are doctors and nurses on that side who take an oath. They take an oath, just as we say a prayer every morning, and when we take an oath as legislators, we say we're going to work for the people of the province. Why are you, as a nurse, not fighting day in and day out for paid sick day leave?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I listened intently to the member from Waterloo. Several members yesterday brought up a statistic that someone is injured from reckless driving every three and a half hours. That is a sobering statistic.

But perhaps much more sobering is the state of our hospitals now because of COVID-19. Where and how they're going to be treated is up in the air. Would you please enlighten the government on how COVID-19 is impacting the hospitals and what we really should be looking at right now?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much to the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane for that question.

Dr. Warner has said we're overcapacity. They're razor-thin in making a decision about choosing how to triage patients. It scares the hell out of them, Mr. Speaker, to make that choice and make a choice about who is going to get health care and who is not. Those are life-and-death decisions.

People with disabilities in this province of Ontario are terrified of the fact that if they got hit by a car, if they had an accident, and they go to a hospital, someone is going to look at them and have to make that choice: Who gets the health care and who doesn't? Who gets the ventilator and who doesn't? That is where we are in the province of Ontario.

Where is the sense of urgency from this government on paid sick leave, on health care resources? What is going on over there?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you to the member opposite. We are doing everything we can to protect workers in this province, and in this case, protecting people from the vagaries of stunt driving. That's what this legislation is about.

What I can't figure out, and I'm having a really hard time figuring out, is why the members opposite don't want to have a discussion about how we can fix the paid sick day issue for essential workers who are working now. All they want to talk about is that there are no paid sick days, but there are; or they want to say we haven't closed essential workplaces, but we have. That's not offering solutions. That is actually making the debate nonsensical.

What I would like to ask the member opposite is, why don't you focus on proposing some actual solutions and then we can maybe work together to resolve this issue? Because the workers of Ontario don't care what level of government pays for paid sick days. What they want to make sure is that workers don't have to go to work when they feel sick. That's what we would like to do as well.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Mr. Speaker, the flippancy of that attitude around—we brought a piece of legislation, Bill 239; we brought it in February. We have introduced paid sick day leaves 25 times in this House—25 times.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** And we don't like them—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Oh, you don't like them—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** You don't like them?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me. A lot of times, it's not what you say, it's how you say it, and I'm not liking what I'm hearing. I'm going to ask that you respond through the Speaker, not to a member over here, all right? If we can just keep this civil, I would very much appreciate that.

Back to you for your response.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Through the Speaker: We have brought 25 motions on paid sick leave to this floor of this Legislature; 25 times the government has turned it down. We brought Bill 239 legislation months ago.

Mr. Speaker, when the member says that we haven't brought forward ideas and legislation, the Hansard speaks

for itself. The legislation that has come to the floor of this House speaks for itself.

Regardless of how she says it to me, the people of this province are not buying what this government is selling, and they know who is in their corner. It is straight on this side.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much. There isn't enough time for further questions and responses.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Markham–Unionville.

0930

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you, and good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to be here in the House to speak to Bill 282, Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, 2021. As the MPP for Markham–Unionville and a parent, safety, especially when it comes to driving and our roads, lies as a priority in my mind, something I'm sure many members similarly here share and advocate for.

Ontario's roads are among the safest in North America, but that doesn't mean that street racing and stunt driving don't occur in Ontario. Unfortunately, every year we continue to see deaths and injuries caused by high-risk driving. These deaths and injuries do not only affect the stunt drivers themselves, but in many occurrences, these incidents also impose a threat to the safety of others on the road. Therefore, when I was invited to speak to the bill—a bill that will be another step to protect young drivers, vulnerable road users and our communities—it was a no-brainer.

The Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, 2021, also known as the MOMS Act, is proposed legislation that will help protect people and families by targeting those who engage in stunt and aggressive, high-risk driving. This legislation also includes measures to protect our vulnerable road users, such as our pedestrians and highway workers, and it will also impose measures to improve truck safety and strengthen provincial oversight of the towing sector.

Street racing and stunt offences have been trending upwards since 2015, and last summer we saw a massive spike. In fact, the number of driver's licence suspensions issued at roadside for these offences have increased 130% between 2013 and 2019.

While Ontarians are working together to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to protect our most vulnerable by limiting non-essential travelling, the emptier roads pose another issue that many of our communities are experiencing, which is reckless driving, and there is data that supports this. For example, the number of seven-day administrative driver's licence suspensions for street racing and stunt driving under section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act issued during the first wave of the pandemic, March to August 2020, was approximately 7,400, which was 52% higher than the 4,850 issued during the same period in 2019. And nearly 5% of drivers suspended during this period had one or more previous administrative driver's licence suspensions in the last five years.

Mr. Speaker, driving and road safety will remain serious threats to the safety of Ontarians while we are in a

pandemic, as we get out of the pandemic, and as we recover from the pandemic. So, yes, while our government is taking proactive actions to protect and support Ontarians from COVID-19, our government is also taking strong measures to protect communities and constituents who use these roads to travel from one destination to the next. This is why this bill is much needed.

As the Minister of Transportation said, driving is a privilege, and those who threaten the safety of others have no place on our roads. I agree with the minister. This dangerous behaviour should not be tolerated on our streets. It is simply unacceptable.

Based on our current data, every 3.5 hours someone is injured in a speed-related crash in Ontario. Young drivers aged 16 to 25 represented only 19% of drivers involved in collisions between March and June 2020 but represented 42% of drivers involved in collisions with a police-recorded speed of 50 kilometres per hour or more above the posted limit.

This week, a constituent in my riding reached out to my constituency office to voice her concern about speeding violations happening in Markham–Unionville on the major roads of Highway 7 and Kennedy Road.

We need more vital actions—because as a government we know high-risk driving behaviours regularly cause injuries and deaths on our roads—and Bill 282 will do just that. Under the proposed measures of the MOMS Act, it will combat street racing and speed driving by making amendments to the Highway Traffic Act, including the following:

Currently, drivers who are found street racing are subject to an immediate seven-day vehicle impoundment and an immediate seven-day driver's licence suspension at roadside. Under this amendment, it will increase the vehicle impoundment to 14 days and increase the driver's licence suspension to 30 days.

Furthermore, the MOMS Act will also propose amendments for post-conviction driver's licence suspensions. Currently, drivers convicted of street racing under section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act are subject to a post-conviction driver's licence suspension of up to two years for the first conviction and up to 10 years for a second conviction. Under Bill 282, amendments will be made to section 172 to escalate post-conviction driver's licence suspensions: for the first offence, one to three years; for the second offence, three to 10 years; for the third offence, an indefinite suspension that may be reduced at a later date to be established by regulation; and for fourth and subsequent offences, an indefinite driver's licence suspension.

This component of the amendment, which is essential to add, will also impose a mandatory driver education course to educate drivers with first to third offences on aggressive driving behaviour risks and consequences.

To combat speeding, the MOMS Act will also create a lower speed threshold for stunt driving charges of driving 40 kilometres per hour or more above the speed limit on roads where the speed limit is less than 80 kilometres per hour. And, if passed, this legislation will place a default

speed limit in unorganized territories to establish the rate of speed on a highway not within a local municipality or a built-up area to 80 kilometres per hour.

Mr. Speaker, speeding and stunt driving are issues that families and constituents across all our ridings are concerned about. These actions are rash behaviours that cause great effects towards the lives of individuals and families who are involved.

That is why I was so pleased when I saw a series of supporting statements from many stakeholders across the board, including Chief Superintendent Rohan Thompson of the Ontario Provincial Police, co-chair of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police Traffic Committee. He stated, “In Ontario driving is a privilege and operating a vehicle on our roadways safely is an important social responsibility that we all have to one another. High speeds, stunt, and aggressive driving have no place on our roads and these behaviours put us all unnecessarily at risk. We applaud these changes and hope they will lead to safer roadways in Ontario.”

**0940**

To add, Chief Jim MacSween of the York Regional Police also commented, “As a GTA police service, we welcome these new provincial measures. Longer suspensions will certainly assist us, and our law enforcement partners, as we continue to fight against racing and stunt driving on our roadways.”

Mr. Speaker, if passed, the MOMS Act will also implement measures to further protect our pedestrians who also use our roads. Like many members here, many of our constituents, families and students commute to downtown Toronto for work and study. The number of commuters who travel to downtown Toronto may be lesser due to the pandemic and working from home, but once our province is out of this pandemic and our economic engine starts roaring again, the commute will pick up again, greater than before, I can assure.

Placing the safety of Ontarians as the emphasis of this new legislation, the MOMS Act will protect passengers using streetcars by strengthening automated streetcar camera enforcement. Currently, passing a streetcar illegally is a driver-based offence. The new measures imposed in this legislation will introduce an automated camera enforcement framework to allow photo evidence of vehicles that illegally pass streetcars on the left or streetcars with the doors open to pick up or drop off passengers.

While the province has a long history of permitting automated, camera-based enforcement programs, I want to add, Speaker, that this proposed streetcar camera framework will be an opt-in program for municipalities. Each municipality will be responsible for all aspects of program administration, including procuring camera technology, processing photographic evidence and laying charges. Municipalities will also be responsible for working with the Information and Privacy Commissioner in establishing their programs and ensuring that the standards set under Ontario’s privacy laws are met.

To further protect Ontarians, Bill 282 will also make amendments to improve the collecting and retrieval of

collision data to better track collisions involving car doors hitting bicycles or e-scooters. This modification, Mr. Speaker, is much needed. The current motor vehicle collision reporting, MVCR, system was last updated over 30 years ago, and driving enforcement has changed significantly since then. For example, throughout the years, distracted driving has become a key road safety issue, but the collision report does not allow the police to record whether a driver was operating a hand-held device at the time of a collision. As our province changes, we must develop and improve as well.

Speaker, the proposed amendments to collision reporting will also ensure that the Ministry of Transportation will obtain the most accurate and relevant information possible to understand road safety trends, evaluate the effectiveness of policy changes, and support evidence-based decision-making to improve road safety in Ontario.

The proposed modification to the Highway Traffic Act will, if passed, enable changes to how we collect collision data so that we can track dooring incidents involving cyclists and stationary cars. It also means that cyclists involved in a dooring collision will be able to receive a collision report at the scene, the same as drivers who are involved in a motor vehicle collision.

While no one would want collision incidents to happen, as the weather becomes warmer, cycling and e-scooting will gradually increase on our roads. The proposed changes to the collision data will ensure that parties involved in the incident will have a record of the report to keep for their individual recollection.

Mr. Speaker, as a government, we value the input and feedback we received from our consultations with municipalities, road safety stakeholders, and enforcement, especially when it comes to high-priority and impact proposals. Therefore, when I read through the MOMS Act, I was delighted that some of the bill’s proposed amendments directly responded to the requests of stakeholders and the general public. For example, the TTC board passed a motion in 2019 to request that the province permit streetcar camera enforcement to address passenger safety concerns, and enforcement partners, municipalities, accessibility advocates and other stakeholders have requested changes to update collision reporting processes—two requests that I just touched upon.

Speaker, through consultations, our government also received support from stakeholders, including municipal partners, enforcement organizations and road safety entities such as the city of Toronto, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Ontario Safety League, regarding the proposals to enhance penalties for stunt driving, street racing and high-risk offences and the emphasis on public education and awareness. We also received strong recommendations from all stakeholder groups of a new provincial oversight regime for the towing industry, something that this proposed legislation also touched upon, but due to the time I have, I will not have the chance to highlight.

Mr. Speaker, those who threaten the safety of others have no place on our roads. This we have made clear from the start. Ontarians deserve to feel safe in their community,

whether it is going out for a walk, biking, getting off a streetcar and driving on our roads and highways. One too many people get severely injured or pass away from street racing and unsafe driving, many of which actions are preventable dangers and consequences.

As a government, we are taking strong actions to fight distracted driving, give further support to our municipalities and enforcement organizations and increase public awareness toward the terrible consequences this reckless behaviour can have toward the drivers themselves and innocent bystanders on the road. I cannot be more pleased to speak to Bill 282, the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, which will establish a series of measures that will protect people and families, if passed.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Questions?

**Mr. Gurratan Singh:** This issue put forward around making sure our roads are safe is an important issue, but does the member believe that paid sick days should be passed with the same amount of speed, commitment and direction that is being put toward the MOMS bill? Do you think that same energy should be put towards passing paid sick days in the province of Ontario?

0950

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: I think road safety is very important to the road users. I believe every single one in the chamber uses the roads every single day. When we are dealing with street racing, stunt driving and aggressive unsafe driving, increasing the roadside driver's licence suspensions and vehicle impoundment periods for drivers caught street racing or stunt driving from seven days to a 30-day driver's licence suspension and a 14-day vehicle impoundment is not enough. Therefore, in order to protect our Ontarians, we are escalating the post-conviction driver's licence suspension for drivers convicted of street racing or stunt driving.

Therefore, yes, I heard the concern of the member from the opposite, but the Ministry of Transportation also listens to the—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much. Further questions?

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** Good morning and thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening to the debate yesterday and today about this MOMS Act. This is an important act. I could tell, from my former life as a councillor, every day I fought for this issue, especially as the neighbourhood became a war zone. It was a war zone. I'm talking about tickets and tickets for the last 10, 15 years, whether in the GTA or Markham or Scarborough.

Who was driving in the neighbourhoods, Mr. Speaker? It's the people who are living in the neighbourhood—and also, especially, it's young drivers. I have three kids. My youngest one has already got a licence. I know that they are very responsible, but still, we have to bring under control the stunt driving and reckless driving.

My question to my good colleague from Markham—Unionville: The member is talking about consultation—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you. Back to the member for a response.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Markham—Thornhill: Yes, we had a lot of consultations. I think you may notice that this is a historical moment, that our government hosted historical numbers of consultations in the history of Ontario.

All the stakeholders that we have consulted, including the municipalities, the law enforcement—a lot of them responded to our consultation that they were very supportive of this enhancement, because they believe that their enforcement—they need to carry out the enforcement at roadside, but they also understand that they need heavier penalties for those who are convicted.

Thank you to the member for the question.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It's always a pleasure to rise in this House, but I want to start by saying today is the Day of Mourning, when we mourn for the dead and we fight for the living. I believe, and I wish you guys believed, that there is no better way to fight for the living than by providing Ontario with paid sick days during a pandemic.

I know the Speaker wants me to ask a question on the bill, so I'll do that as well. My question on the bill is, if you're concerned about aggressive driving, are you not sending the wrong message to drivers by having a pilot project that increases the speed on our highways?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: I hear his concern regarding the speed. Therefore, we created a lower speed threshold for stunt driving charges of driving 40 kilometres per hour or more above the speed limit on the roads where the speed limit is less than 80 kilometres per hour and introduced a default speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour on highways not within a local municipality or a built-up area. No matter if it is speeding, street racing, stunt driving or aggressive and unsafe driving, it's not acceptable and it's causing a lot of deaths and injuries to Ontarians. This bill tries to protect all the road users in Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** I'm so happy and pleased with this bill, because it is long overdue. One of the most important aspects—and I'm pleased that the bill is addressing it—is the towing industry. I have been personally at the short end of the shady practices of the towing industry, and it is time that we address this issue, because it affects a large number of our citizens in Ontario. Hopefully, when this bill is passed, we will be able to regulate this industry and make it more accountable.

So my question is to my colleague from Markham—Unionville. A CAA survey found that 90% of the respondents wanted some form of provincial oversight over the towing and storage industry. Can the member highlight how the MOMS Act speaks to this ask?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Mr. Speaker, through you, to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt: Continued instances of violence and crime in the towing and storage sectors have demonstrated the need for meaningful change in the way the towing industry is regulated. The MOMS Act also

includes a provision to enact the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act. This act, if passed, will strengthen provincial oversight of the towing and storage sector to reduce crime and fraud, promote road user and tow operator safety, improve customer protections and create a level playing field for tow and storage operators.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Transportation enforcement officers are peace officers who inspect commercial vehicles to make sure that they're mechanically safe, that they keep the roads safe, that their loads are secure and that they're following the rules of the road. They work for the Ministry of Transportation.

So I've heard within your speech that the ministry cares about safety, and yet, these workers are underpaid. They are not given the security. They work in very dangerous conditions. Some individuals they pull over have warrants or have been charged and they're flagged or violent. These staff at the highway truck inspection stations where they do the same work—they do the school buses to keep children safe and all the inspections, and yet, we're hearing from the union that their job is unsafe and that they're leaving in droves.

What does the member think about these workers that work under the same ministry? Are they protecting those workers also?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** To the member: I certainly thank the member for that very important question to protect workers. Regarding protecting workers on or near highways, it authorizes MTO transportation enforcement officers to close the road, drive along closed roads and direct traffic as part of their duties when responding to emergencies or assisting in collision investigations.

It also protects the road workers by permitting use of automated traffic control devices, such as automated flagger assistance devices, as an additional traffic control tool in construction zones to reduce the need for construction workers to physically stop traffic themselves. It permits vehicles used in highway construction to back up on the divided highway—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much. Further debate?

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**M. Guy Bourgoïn:** Bon matin, monsieur le Président. Je ne m'attendais pas de parler ce matin, mais ça a l'air que je parle ce matin. Je vais faire un effort du mieux que je peux.

Premièrement, vous savez qu'on supporte le projet de loi 282, « Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, MOMS ». C'est sûr et certain, quand ça vient à la santé et sécurité du monde—on sait que dans le projet de loi, on parle de « stunt driving », on parle de « street racing ». C'est sûr et certain que ce côté de la chambre, on est d'accord que c'est inacceptable et que, oui, il faut pénaliser les personnes ou les gens qui font du « street racing » ou du « stunt driving ». N'importe quoi qu'on peut faire, monsieur le Président, c'est sûr et certain qu'il faut garder nos routes sécuritaires. On a une obligation de protéger la population.

Les personnes qui font ces choses-là ou ces actes-là, bien, ils méritent de se faire punir.

Mais ça va sans dire qu'il faut aussi suivre les directives des experts. Il faut faire certain que les experts sont écoutés pour essayer d'enrayer ce fléau-là. On n'a rien qu'à penser à—puis de passer des projets de loi, aussi, qui ont été proposés par mes collègues : la députée d'Oshawa, le « Bill » 122; ou bien donc la députée de University–Rosedale, le « Bill » 62, le 89 ou le projet de loi 148 qui met les « brakes », si je peux utiliser le terme en français—on utilise le terme anglophone, mettre les « brakes », mais c'est mettre les freins, en bon français—sur la vitesse limite.

Pourquoi je parle de vitesse? Bien, on sait que le gouvernement a un projet pilote, qu'ils veulent augmenter les vitesses. Je crois que le projet pilote se fait dans le nord de l'Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, si tu te poses la question, sur un bord, on dit qu'il faut enrayer le « stunt driving », qu'il faut enrayer la vitesse des courses qui se font sur nos routes. Puis, sur l'autre bord, on regarde un projet pilote pour augmenter la vitesse. Si je peux utiliser le terme, c'est comme parler des deux côtés de la bouche, pour ne pas utiliser un autre terme. Ça va sans dire que ça apporte de la confusion aux personnes. Les jeunes, ils disent : « Bien, on a droit de faire de la vitesse. Le gouvernement semble nous dire qu'on a le droit de faire de la vitesse. On a un projet pilote. » Puis sur l'autre bord, c'est sûr que c'est inacceptable.

Les courses sur les autoroutes ou bien le « stunt driving », c'est inacceptable, mais il reste que ça donne une perception que la vitesse est tolérée. Je pense que c'est un message qu'on pose qu'on ne devrait pas faire. Puis ça, c'est sans oublier, vous le savez, que j'avais déposé un projet de loi sur l'entretien des chemins. Ça, c'est sans oublier que surtout le projet pilote se fait dans le nord de l'Ontario. Les conditions de la route dans le nord de l'Ontario sont pitoyables. Elles sont très étroites. On a vu les routes fermées à multiples reprises, monsieur le Président. Ça, c'est dans les meilleures conditions. Nos routes sont assez pitoyables. Ce n'est pas comme nos belles autoroutes quand on vient ici sur la 400, la 401 ou la Queen Elizabeth, qui ont deux, trois voies; nous, on a deux voies. Il y a deux voies chez nous. Puis si on tombe dans les routes hivernales, les conditions empirent.

Je peux vous dire que l'entretien des chemins cette année que j'ai vu dans ma région—la route était fermée pour deux jours, deux jours au complet. Vous ne vivez pas ça, vous autres, dans le sud de l'Ontario, mais chez nous, c'est rendu la norme. C'est rendu la norme. Ça, c'est sans mentionner aussi qu'il y a beaucoup de camionneurs qui manquent d'expérience et qui prennent le clos. Les routes sont fermées en condition régulière. C'est rendu quasiment une farce dans notre région. On dit : « Tiens, un autre dans le clos. » Ce qu'on ne réalise pas, c'est que ça nuit à toute la région.

Puis là, on va faire un projet pilote pour augmenter la vitesse. Où est la logique là-dedans, quand on a des conditions routières qui sont dangereuses? Puis le message

que ça passe quand ça vient aux jeunes—ou à n'importe quel autre conducteur qui dit : « OK, cette vitesse-là est tolérée ». On va continuer à vous le dire.

Dans nos régions, on a beaucoup de zones de 80 kilomètres. Je pense que dans la région de Sudbury, quand on part de Sudbury jusqu'à Timmins, ou bien donc de Timmins à Chapleau, ce sont des zones de 80 kilomètres. Aussi, de Hearst, on a la route 11, comme vous le savez, mais après ça, il y a la route qui s'en va vers Hornepayne jusqu'à White River, qui en est une autre de 80 kilomètres.

Nos conditions de route ne sont pas faites pour la vitesse. Puis je trouve qu'avoir un projet pilote dans le nord de l'Ontario qui va augmenter la vitesse, puis avoir un projet de loi qu'on traite avec, comme c'est là, qui parle de « stunt driving » puis qui parle de « street racing », c'est un message qui dit deux choses, qui se contredit. Ça se contredit, parce que tu ne peux pas dire, d'un bord, « Bien, on fait un projet pilote pour augmenter la vitesse » et, sur l'autre bord, avoir un projet de loi pour dire qu'il n'y aura pas de « street racing » après ça, puis qu'on met la vie en danger.

Il faut pénaliser. Je suis le premier à le reconnaître. Mais on a dit au gouvernement que pour les régions du Nord—puis les experts le disent. Dans mon projet de loi, il y avait un expert qui disait : « Guy, nos routes ne sont pas »—c'est pour ça qu'il y a des petites bosses sur les côtés pour aider la situation du monde, pour réduire la vitesse, ou pour ceux qui s'endorment, parce que les routes sont isolées. On voit beaucoup de monde qui s'endort sur les routes. C'est une situation qui se passe dans le nord de l'Ontario. Le gouvernement semble être déconnecté, très déconnecté de la réalité qui se passe dans le nord de l'Ontario.

Je regardais le projet de loi, quand ça vient aux vélos électriques. Je peux vous dire, j'ai un ami à moi, Trevor Russell, qui est un gros amateur de vélo. Puis lui, il fait beaucoup de vélo sur le long de l'autoroute 11. Mais le projet de loi est silencieux quand ça vient à—parce que nos routes sont très étroites, comme j'expliquais. Entre l'accotement il y a peut-être 10 ou 12 pouces—non, plus que ça : peut-être 16 pouces de pavé, puis après ça, de la gravelle. Mais après ça, ce sont des fossés.

Mais il reste que, si le gouvernement pouvait adresser le problème pour les cyclistes, ça serait un bon amendement pour protéger ces cyclistes-là. Il y a beaucoup de cyclistes qui en profitent, puis en particulier, Trevor. Je sais qu'il y a un motoriste qui s'est arrêté, puis ça a viré en discussion assez chauffée—assez que Trevor est venu me voir, puis il a dit : « Guy, il faut qu'on mette une pancarte » que le MTO doit approuver pour éduquer les chauffeurs d'automobiles, et autres qui prennent la route 11, qu'il y a aussi des cyclistes sur la route. Mais en ayant ce côté-là, que si le gouvernement avait adressé cette partie-là, surtout sur la route 11 où certains tronçons sont assez—parce que, entre les communautés, il y a beaucoup de cyclistes qui veulent pratiquer le sport. Je trouve que ça serait un bon amendement à ce projet de loi, puis ça adresserait un gros « concerne » de santé et de sécurité.

Il ne faut pas oublier, on parle du Day of Mourning. Je voulais mentionner que le Day of Mourning est reconnu à la grandeur du monde pour protéger les travailleurs qui sont—premièrement, c'est pour les travailleurs qui sont morts, mais aussi ceux qui sont blessés au travail. Mais pour adresser la santé et la sécurité des cyclistes dans ma région, ça serait déjà une bonne amélioration pour le projet de loi.

Mais aussi, il y a une réalité qu'on ne vit pas dans le sud de l'Ontario. On parle des cyclistes, des vélos électriques, mais si on regarde les vélos à gaz à deux roues—on a les fameux quatre roues, les « ATVs » en anglais; on a les « side-by-side » aussi—que le projet de loi ne semble pas les mentionner. Mais nous, dans le Nord, c'est une réalité qu'on voit au jour le jour. Le monde prend ces véhicules-là pour traverser les autoroutes. On a plein de sentiers. Puis nos jeunes de 16 ans qui traversent—c'est certain qu'il faut regarder l'âge de l'individu ou du conducteur. Mais il reste que, à quelque part, il faut réaliser qu'il y a une différente réalité dans le nord de l'Ontario.

Mais il me semble que le gouvernement a manqué à ça, quand ça vient à cette situation-là, parce qu'il y a un déconnecte—il y a un gros « disconnect » quand ça vient aux régions du Nord et aux régions du sud de l'Ontario, surtout quand—en tout cas, chez nous. Quand je parle de chez nous, c'est certain, c'est la région de Mushkegowuk. Je n'en connais pas gros qui n'ont pas de motoneiges, qui n'ont pas de quatre roues. Des trois roues, des quatre roues ou des ATVs, c'est la norme. Juste moi, personnellement, j'ai deux Skidoo, j'ai deux quatre roues. Ça, c'est à part de mes deux cabanes à pêche. Puis je ne suis pas unique dans ce scénario-là.

#### 1010

Donc, quand on fait des améliorations à une loi, il faut prendre en considération la réalité dans le nord de l'Ontario. Puis on semble, dans ce projet de loi, être silencieux un peu pour adresser ces « concerne », parce que les sentiers—pour nous, les fins de semaine, les familles partent avec ça puis ils traversent les autoroutes : la route 11 ou la route 17. Je parle seulement de la route 11 parce que ça, c'est plus chez nous, mais avant, quand je demeurais dans le comté d'Algoma, c'était une réalité qu'on était obligé de traverser la route 17. Il faut prendre en considération, quand on fait des projets de loi, la réalité du nord de l'Ontario, puis protéger aussi les personnes.

Puis pour revenir un petit peu au projet de loi quand on parle du « street racing » puis des conditions de nos routes—je l'ai mentionné un peu tantôt au début. Il ne faut pas oublier que nos routes, la 11 et la 17, nos conditions—écoute, la 17 c'est mieux. C'est sûr que les conditions sont meilleures. Mais il reste que c'est encore une deux voies. Mais la 11, c'est rendu que n'importe qui—j'ai rencontré du monde qui me dit : « Guy, j'ai peur de monter dans cette région-là. » Il y a des députés qui sont venus. Je pense qu'il y a une députée qui a été visiter mon collègue de Timiskaming-Cochrane, puis elle n'en revenait pas des conditions des routes hivernales. Elle n'en revenait pas que, même dans les conditions idéales dans ce temps-ci de l'été—puis vous le savez, notre hiver dure pas mal plus

longtemps que le vôtre. Encore, je suis parti de chez nous et il neigeait, quand je suis parti hier. Je suis parti hier. Parce que j'ai eu mon vaccin lundi, je ne pouvais pas être ici avant, mais il neigeait encore. Dimanche passé ou la semaine passée, on a eu une tempête de neige à Hearst qui était de près de deux pieds de neige : deux pieds de neige, et on est rendu au mois de mai. C'est commun.

C'est pour ça qu'on a une réalité que vous ne voyez pas dans le sud de l'Ontario, puis les conditions—puis on a un projet de loi qui essaye d'offrir un projet pilote. Écoute, on va tuer du monde, monsieur le Président. Si le gouvernement ne réalise pas la situation des routes hivernales, des conditions qu'on voit, ou même les conditions idéales, je peux vous dire que c'est très dangereux, puis c'est concernant. C'est concernant parce que—je me vois encore voilà peut-être deux semaines, justement, avant la tempête de neige qu'il y a eu à Hearst dont je vous ai parlé, monsieur le Président. Je m'en venais à Toronto il y a deux semaines passées. La route était fermée encore à Timiskaming. J'ai juste eu la chance—j'étais chanceux d'être là où il y avait un contour puis j'ai été capable de passer par Cobalt pour éviter l'accident qui a été créé par certains camionneurs. J'essayais de rejoindre mon collègue de Timiskaming et je n'étais pas sûr, si je prenais le détour, si j'étais capable de me rendre où je voulais pour essayer de contourner.

Mais nos conditions routières sont tellement—si on avait des autoroutes comme vous, à Toronto—la 400, la 401, la Queen Elizabeth. Puis là, on sait que vous allez avoir six « lanes ». Nous autres, on espère d'avoir un deux-plus-un. Un deux-plus-un, j'en ai parlé en Chambre : les routes se font alterner pour des déplacements. On se fait prendre derrière les camionneurs pendant des heures, même dans des conditions idéales, parce qu'il n'y a pas assez de « passing lanes ». Il n'y a pas assez de places où on peut dépasser dans nos régions. Mais le gouvernement regarde un projet pilote pour augmenter la vitesse, ce qui est très concernant. Ça, c'est une réalité qu'on doit considérer avant d'avancer des projets de loi comme ça.

Mais je vois que mon temps est terminé, monsieur le Président. Merci.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Unfortunately, the time for debate has expired. However, you will have more time when we resume this debate, as well as with the question and answer.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Over the last few weeks, countless constituents have reached out to my office to share their concerns and issues with this government's inadequate third wave response. Between choosing to expand police powers instead of an Ontario paid sick day plan, or shutting down playgrounds and golf courses despite contrary

advice from public health experts, it's no wonder that people are frustrated.

The science table has been crystal clear about what the government needs to do to slow the spread and keep people safe. Here's their advice.

They have advised to only keep essential workplaces open. Has the government done that? Nope. But the region of Peel and city of Toronto have at least stepped up to protect their communities.

They have advised to pay essential workers to stay home when they are sick, exposed or need time to get vaccinated. Has the government done that? Nope. Yesterday, the government once again failed to legislate paid provincial sick days, in the same week that we saw a 13-year-old girl die from COVID-19.

They have advised to accelerate the vaccination of essential workers and those who live in hot spots. Have they done this? Not yet.

The science table has also very helpfully told the government what won't work: any policies that harm or neglect racialized, marginalized or other vulnerable populations.

This government has a blueprint. It has been told what to do and what not to do.

So my question to my colleagues in government: Why haven't you acted on the science table's advice? The longer you wait, the more Ontario suffers.

### PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** Today, I reflect on some very important people who make a great difference in the lives of Ontarians every day. They are the public service staff and liaisons who work tirelessly for elected officials in constituency, legislative and ministry offices all across Ontario. Daily, they receive and respond to the needs of Ontarians who reach out to our offices to ask for assistance, information, guidance and support. They gracefully handle a very high volume of phone calls, emails, schedules and meetings.

On top of their routine tasks, the overwhelming amount of inquiries they deal with daily during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding health and safety measures, lockdowns, vaccines, border restrictions, and school updates, for example, is truly incredible.

Unfortunately, at times they also face the expressed anger and frustration of the public, which can be challenging and stressful. They work through it all and continue to shine because they genuinely want to help people.

Speaker, please join me in thanking all support staff for their incredible patience, kindness and hard work as they continue to help keep Ontarians and the province moving in the right direction. They are Ontario's silent stars, and their service shines bright.

### FRONT-LINE WORKERS

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Today, on the Day of Mourning, I'd like to stand and speak to the essential workers in this

province: the moms, dads, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives who have gotten up every day and gone into work to keep us healthy, safe and fed in the face of this terrible pandemic, risking their own lives to provide for their families and others.

As I look across the aisle at this government, which has led us directly into the third wave of this pandemic, with our health care system in crisis, I must say they have not only failed our front-line essential workers, but they've forgotten them entirely.

In Niagara, I speak to those workers every day. They're anxious, they're scared, and honestly, they don't know what they'll face each day when they go to work. Those workers going in, day in and day out—our border workers, postal staff, food and grocery staff, and many more—deserve better. They deserve to be vaccinated and, for the many who do not have benefits, they deserve paid sick days.

This government promised to provide North America's best paid sick days plan. This week, that has turned out to be a myth. We know the message they're giving to workers: "We don't care about you."

After it took public health officials, instead of this government, to finally take the lead and close workplaces in outbreak, we know the message they're giving to workers: "We don't care about you."

This government can call them champions and heroes until they're blue in the face, but their actions speak louder than words.

I'm calling on this government to change direction, to recognize the value and the importance of our front-line workers to our communities. Get them vaccinated immediately and provide Ontario with paid sick days.

1020

## JEUX DU CANADA

**M<sup>me</sup> Natalia Kusendova:** Hier, j'ai eu l'occasion d'assister à une réunion des organisateurs et organisatrices des Jeux du Canada 2022 et j'aimerais souligner le travail important qu'ils font.

Les Jeux du Canada 2022 se dérouleront dans la région de Niagara et apporteront beaucoup de bénéfices à cette région. Ils permettront aux résidentes et résidents de la région de profiter de nouvelles installations sportives et de loisirs, en plus d'encourager la création de nouveaux emplois et de favoriser le développement économique régional. C'est un événement très important et je remercie le gouvernement et la ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture pour leur contribution de 29 millions de dollars.

Ces jeux mettront également en valeur la francophonie ontarienne et renforceront les liens entre les francophones d'un océan à l'autre. Le drapeau franco-ontarien sera visible dans tous les centres sportifs pour les gens à voir et chaque bénévole portera le vert pour représenter la francophonie ontarienne.

Ces jeux ne seraient pas possibles sans le travail acharné des bénévoles. J'aimerais remercier toutes et tous

qui ont déjà beaucoup contribué au succès de ces jeux et j'encourage d'autres résidents bilingues à s'impliquer dans ce grand événement. Pour s'inscrire au bénévolat, envoyez un courriel à [volunteer@2022canadagames.ca](mailto:volunteer@2022canadagames.ca).

## SMALL BUSINESS

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Today I rise to amplify the many voices of small business owners in my riding of Windsor West. Small businesses are the heart and soul of my community. Many have spent the entire pandemic constantly in fear of the permanent closure of the business they have put their entire lives into. They are struggling to make ends meet while anxiously awaiting the government support they were promised to get them through the pandemic.

I have spoken to many small business owners. They require funds to pay rent, pay their bills and allow them to open in some capacity, whether that is through curbside pickup, takeout or delivery. They tell me direct and expedient aid is needed in order for them to stay afloat.

Ontario's New Democrats have supported small businesses and shared their clear recommendations throughout the pandemic through our Save Main Street plan as well as other legislative and policy recommendations.

Small business owners have told me the Ontario small business program is flawed. While some businesses have been successful in navigating the complicated process and receive the funding, many more are still anxiously waiting to receive funds or have been outright denied without an appeal process. The scope of the program is too narrow, leaving many of the small businesses in my community without proper support to continue operations.

I wrote the Minister of Economic Development asking him to immediately re-evaluate the program so that more businesses can receive the much-needed funding they deserve to stay afloat, and to actually respond to inquiries from business owners and MPP offices, which is currently a rare occurrence.

I urge this government to rectify this program so that businesses can receive the support they desperately need and were promised. For many, this support will be the deciding factor of whether they can remain open or must close forever.

## FRONT-LINE WORKERS

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Today is the National Day of Mourning, a day to remember and honour workers who have lost their lives or been injured on the job.

This past year has shone a brighter light on the systemic inequities in our economy. Low-wage essential workers, many of them women and people of colour, have experienced a disproportionate burden during the pandemic. I will never forget the PSWs having to wear garbage bags as PPE, or the workers who have had to choose between their health and the health of their families and going to work and paying the bills.

We owe immense gratitude to these workers and we must treat them like the heroes they truly are. This means

paid sick days and paid time off to get tested and vaccinated, prioritizing vaccines for essential workers who can't work from home, mandating medical-grade PPE in the workplace, rapid testing and other measures to ensure that workplaces are safe.

Too many workers have paid too high a price during this pandemic. I want to offer my sincere condolences to the family members, co-workers and colleagues of those workers we've lost during this pandemic. It's our obligation to never forget and to take the actions to ensure that workplaces are safe.

#### WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Today, April 28, is the National Day of Mourning, commemorating workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illness on the job, and I want to share a few reflections from my own riding of Eglinton–Lawrence.

Many people living to this day in my riding immigrated there in the 1950s from Italy. They or their loved ones mainly worked in the construction industry and literally built the city of Toronto that we know today. Unfortunately, many of their loved ones were injured, sometimes very seriously, or killed at their place of work as they struggled to earn a living to provide a better life for their families.

For many years, I have attended the Day of Mourning for fallen workers on April 28 at the Italian Fallen Workers Memorial in my riding at the Columbus Centre, along with my colleagues Ministers Lecce and Tibollo. I've had the opportunity to learn more about the sacrifices made by these individuals from people like Paola Breda and Marino Toppan, who have gone to great lengths to document their stories and to keep their memories alive.

This has always been a very moving ceremony. I know that the Italian Canadian community will be back there to remember and pay their respects as soon as COVID-19 is behind us, and I will be there with them.

Speaker, remembering is important. It makes us reflect on how we got to where we are today, and it gives us the knowledge necessary to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. One worker injured in Ontario is one worker too many.

#### ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

##### ORGAN DONATION

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Because we could all use some good news about some great people doing amazing things, I want to recognize a couple of amazing people.

One is Laura Soutar-Hasulo from my area of Windsor and Essex county. In response to some pretty vile acts of anti-Asian racism, anti-Semitic and xenophobic actions back home, Laura took it upon herself to develop lawn signs that clearly state, "Hate Has No Home Here." There were initially 100 orders for those signs. It's now gone national and international. There's over 600 orders for her lawn signs that spread a message of love and acceptance

and tolerance. We want to give her a great shout-out. She's an amazing leader and we love the work that she's doing.

Also, as members would know, April is organ donor awareness month. Despite the challenges that COVID presents to those who work for our amazing network at the Trillium Gift of Life Network, they're continuing to provide the services for donor and family recipients. I want to give them a shout-out: Dr. Natalie Malus; my amazing cousin-in-law, Stephanie Natyshak, who is the organ and tissue donor coordinator; and a special shout-out to Janet, Meaghan, Kelly, Tanice, Kara, Denise, Melinda, Leannah and Rachel.

Also, Kaidyn Blair: Kaidyn Blair received a liver donation 18 years ago, Speaker. He just celebrated his 19th birthday. He is an amazing ambassador for organ donation. We know that he's getting a checkup in London right now. We love him. We love his mom, Tammy, and Jeremy. Kaidyn, happy birthday from the Ontario Legislature. We're all with you. We wish you the best of health going forward, and thanks for being a hero for us.

#### MOTHER'S DAY

**Miss Christina Maria Mitas:** Today, I would like to bring attention to a wonderful day that is rightly celebrated every year and is very quickly approaching. That special day is Mother's Day.

As you all know, I'm a mom to two little ones, Sebastian and Cressida, my one- and two-year-old wild angels. While I'm still in the "up all night as your little co-sleeping baby boy kicks you and climbs all over you" phase, which translates into perma-exhaustion on my part, I can easily say that being a mom is the greatest honour and gift of my life.

I can also say that my grandmother, Litsa—God rest her soul—was absolutely right: I got it once I became a mom. And what is it? Everything about my own mom. I understand that our moms play an essential role in raising us and supporting us as we grow in life, that life changes when you become a mom, that people look at you differently and size you up differently, but you persevere and move mountains for your children and your family.

I'm very fortunate to have my mother with me to this day, and I realize how much of a blessing it is to have her. My "Andre," as I like to call her, Athanasia "Suzy" Mitas Kipros, gave birth to me two weeks before her 20th birthday. Since then we have grown up together and she has done everything to give me the best opportunities in life, encouraged me when needed, pulled me down to earth when appropriate, scolded me and banned me when I needed it, and always been my loving cheerleader. She's always put me and my sister before her own needs, and she teaches us what it's like to be selfless.

#### 1030

Over the past two years, my mom has been the greatest support I could ask for. Being a politician is not an easy job and neither is being a mother, so to be both requires a lot of help, understanding, love and emotional support. My wonderful mom fulfills all of these roles in spades.

My hope is that as we continue to move forward in these uncertain times, we will take days like Mother's Day to appreciate our loved ones and cherish them in the best way we can. To all the moms, and especially mine, happy Mother's Day. We love you and appreciate you more than we'll ever be able to put into words.

#### NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Mourn for the dead, fight for the living: That's the enduring theme of the Day of Mourning. In 1984, the Canadian Labour Congress established April 28 as the Day of Mourning. Eight years later, the Parliament of Canada passed the Workers Mourning Day Act, making April 28 the official National Day of Mourning. Today, more than 100 countries across the globe recognize this day.

On this international Day of Mourning, we remember workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illness as a result of work-related incidents. We honour the many families and friends who have been deeply impacted by these tragedies, and we collectively renew our commitment to improve health and safety in every workplace.

As we mark the second Day of Mourning during the COVID-19 pandemic, we also acknowledge the sacrifices of front-line workers who have died or become ill in their service to the public, Speaker. April 28 is also recognized by the United Nations and the International Labour Organization as the World Day for Safety and Health at Work.

As much as this day is to remember the dead, it is also a call to protect the living.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm pleased to introduce some very special guests who we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery. We have with us Randell Adjei; his parents, Esther and Fawkins Ablorh; and Rukiya Mohamed; as well as Vicki Whitmell, who is our legislative librarian.

Welcome to the Ontario Legislature. It's a real pleasure to have you here.

More about Randell Adjei in a moment.

#### POET LAUREATE OF ONTARIO POÈTE OFFICIEL DE L'ONTARIO

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, on a point of order: I just want to say that while the honour of appointing the first poet laureate is to come to the government House leader, I think we would all agree that the member for Windsor–Tecumseh truly deserves this honour, to thank him for persevering through many Parliaments to get to this point here today. He is an incredible member of Parliament and it is an honour to work with him.

*Applause.*

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I am certain that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent that the member for Windsor–Tecumseh be permitted to immediately move government notice of motion 108 to provide for the appointment, by order of the House, of the Poet Laureate of Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for Windsor–Tecumseh to be permitted to immediately move government notice of motion 108 to provide for the appointment, by order of the House, of the Poet Laureate of Ontario. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Good morning, Speaker. I move that, in accordance with subsection 1(2) and section 2 of the Poet Laureate of Ontario Act (In Memory of Gord Downie), 2019, S.O. 2019, c. 16, Randell Adjei be appointed Poet Laureate of Ontario for a period of two years, commencing on April 28, 2021.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Hatfield has moved government notice of motion number 108. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to seek the indulgence of the House to give a brief statement.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Randell Adjei as Ontario's first poet laureate.

C'est avec grand plaisir que je présente Randell Adjei comme premier poète officiel de l'Ontario.

Members may recall that the Poet Laureate of Ontario Act (In Memory of Gord Downie) was passed unanimously by this Legislature in December 2019. The bill was originally introduced by the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, with the goal of creating this position here at the Legislature while at the same time honouring the late lead singer of one of Canada's most iconic bands, The Tragically Hip, who sadly passed away in the fall of 2017.

The search to find our first poet laureate started last fall and came to a conclusion earlier this spring thanks to the dedicated work of a selection committee that included Vicki Whitmell, executive director and legislative librarian, who is here today; Rita Davies, the chair of the Ontario Arts Council; and David Tsubouchi, member of the board of directors of the Ontario Arts Council and a former Ontario cabinet minister and MPP; and me.

We were unanimous in our appreciation of the talent of Randell Adjei. Mr. Adjei is a native of Scarborough, Ontario, and he is a spoken word artist, public speaker and cultural curator. He discovered his gift and love for poetry thanks to the support and inspiration from a grade 8 teacher who introduced him to writing as a means for self-expression.

Mr. Adjei further developed his artistic skills in high school. Believing in the power of performance art to strengthen his resilience, he founded RISE, which stands for Reaching Intelligent Souls Everywhere, in 2012 as a safe and inclusive performing arts opportunity to allow youth to express themselves in a positive way. RISE is now one of Toronto's largest and longest-running youth initiatives.

A member of the League of Canadian Poets, he has performed across the globe and in support of people such as President Barack Obama and Toronto Mayor John Tory. His first anthology, *I Am Not My Struggles*, was published in 2018.

Mr. Adjei is eager to start his ambitious two-year term as our poet laureate and he plans to be extremely active. In addition to writing poetry, some of his other objectives in the post include creating more social networking opportunities for poets across Ontario, connecting with various regions across the province to host events—when we can, safely—facilitating workshops and performing spoken word poetry while using this platform to link Ontario’s diverse communities by weaving poetry into our day-to-day lives.

I know that all members will join me in congratulating Randell Adjei on his appointment. We know that he will make an extraordinary contribution to the province’s literary arts.

Je me joins à toutes les députées et tous les députés pour féliciter Randell Adjei de sa nomination. Nous savons qu’il apportera une contribution extraordinaire aux arts littéraires de la province.

Congratulations, Randell Adjei.

*Applause.*

#### TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that the following documents have been tabled: a report entitled *Explaining the Decline in Ontario Insolvencies During the Pandemic*, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario; and a special report entitled *COVID-19 Preparedness and Management: Special Report on Pandemic Readiness and Response in Long-Term Care*, from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

#### NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Leader of the Opposition has informed me that she wishes to raise a point of order.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Today is the Day of Mourning. I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the workers who have died, been injured or contracted illness at work, particularly the essential workers and front-line heroes who have struggled throughout the pandemic without paid sick days, adequate PPE and the protections they need to keep them safe on the job.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Leader of the Opposition is seeking unanimous consent of the House that the House do observe a moment’s silence for the workers who have died, been injured or contracted illnesses at work, particularly essential workers and front-line heroes who have struggled through the pandemic without paid sick days, adequate PPE and the protections they need to keep them safe on the job. Agreed? Agreed.

1040

I’ll ask the members to please rise.

*The House observed a moment’s silence.*

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

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, before I start, I just want to thank those folks who have arrived from Newfoundland yesterday and other folks who are on their way from the Canadian Armed Forces and the Red Cross, leaving the safety of their homes to come to Ontario to help us with this third wave of COVID-19, the severity of which was absolutely avoidable. We know that our ICUs are still overwhelmed; they’re overflowing with patients. We know what the experts have recommended for over a year now.

This question is to the Deputy Premier, Speaker. The Premier, last week, promised the best paid sick days program in North America, and of course, as we know, the Premier’s latest scheme has been roundly panned by all of the experts. In fact, one of the docs, Dr. Abdu Sharkawy, sums it up by saying that the program is “the definition of passing the buck. And more will die needlessly....”

When will the government stop the nonsense and put in place a paid sick days program in the province of Ontario to save the lives of working people?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the parliamentary assistant, the member for Burlington.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Let me be clear: We are disappointed that the federal government didn’t improve the programs as they said they would. But make no mistake, it is because of Ontario that this leave provision has been approved to what it is today, and it will be because of Ontario that we fix the outstanding gaps.

We were the first in Canada to introduce job protective leave. We were the first to proactively work with the federal government to extend benefits to 20 days. We were the first to proactively work with the federal government to ensure payments were brought from 12 to 14 days to three to five days.

We will continue to do whatever is necessary to support the health and safety of all workers in Ontario.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, it is very clear that this Premier has done everything he possibly can to avoid bringing paid sick days to our province. He eliminated the two measly paid sick days we had in this province back in 2018. In fact, he calls paid sick days a “waste of taxpayers’ money.” He accused critics of the federal program of “misleading” Ontario workers. He has ignored all of the evidence of the help that paid sick days would bring to Ontario workers in avoiding catching COVID-19.

It has been a week since our Premier promised the people of Ontario the best paid sick days plan in North America. When will this government stop protecting the

Premier and start protecting Ontario workers with paid sick days?

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Let me be clear again: We're very disappointed that the federal government didn't improve the programs as they said they would. But make no mistake, it's because of Ontario that this leave provision has been approved to what it is today, and it will be because of Ontario that we fix the outstanding gaps.

Again, we were the first in Canada to introduce job-protected leave. We were the first to proactively work with the federal government to extend benefits from 10 to 20 days. And we were the first to proactively work to make sure it wasn't 12 to 14 days but it was three to five days that people were getting their direct deposits.

We will continue to do whatever is necessary to support the health and safety of all workers in Ontario.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It has been a year, and this government hasn't done what was necessary to protect the safety and lives of Ontario workers. They haven't done anything that the experts have recommended. They did not close all truly non-essential businesses and support them financially to get us through this next wave that we're in. They did not bring vaccinations in any urgent way, in the numbers necessary, to our hot-spot neighbourhoods, as the experts recommended. Of course, they did not bring paid sick days into play here in this province, and they need to do it—25 times this government has voted in this Legislature against paid sick days.

We're going to have another debate—because we are never going to give up on the workers of this province—this afternoon on paid sick days in this province and other recommendations that experts have brought forward. The government has a chance to turn it all around this afternoon and do what the experts recommend. Will they support that motion this afternoon, do the right thing and save lives?

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Again, let me be clear: We are very disappointed that the federal government didn't improve programs as they said they would. But make no mistake, it's because of our Premier of Ontario that this leave provision has been approved to what it is today, and it will be because of Ontario that we fix the outstanding gaps.

We were the first in Canada to introduce job-protected leave; the first to proactively work with the federal government to extend days from 10 to 20 for benefits; the first to proactively work with the federal government to ensure payments were brought forward from 12 to 14 days to three to five.

Again, we will continue to do whatever it takes to support the health and safety of all Ontario workers.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is for the Deputy Premier. Speaker, the Auditor General's report today confirms what we all knew: Seniors in long-term

care were left vulnerable by successive Liberal and Conservative governments that didn't invest in long-term care in any way that was necessary to give people dignity and quality of life. There have been decades of neglect in long-term care.

The government knew that COVID-19 was coming, and they should have been moving heaven and earth to protect those seniors, but we all know that they didn't. Instead, what this government did was eliminate comprehensive inspections. What they did was pretend that there was going to be an iron ring around long-term care, which never arrived. They had no plan to support the residents in long-term care.

Year after year after year, this government and the previous government ignored all of the recommendations to deal with the problems in long-term care.

In April of last year, I met with the Minister of Health, the Premier and a couple of other members of this government's cabinet, and they told me at that time, even though they knew the state of long-term care, that they had everything under control, that everything was prepared for—no problem; they had everything under control with COVID-19. Are they now prepared to admit that they weren't prepared in long-term care for COVID-19?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** I appreciate the comments from the member opposite.

I will remind the House that the previous government, sometimes supported by the Leader of the Opposition—

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** —oversaw the challenges and neglected this sector. So I would like to thank the Auditor General and her office for this special report on long-term care, because it really does note that very first comment that I made, that the members seem to find humorous.

The report's key finding suggests that staffing and the lack of new development and redevelopment of existing long-term-care spaces contributed to the spread of COVID-19. To date, it's our government that has taken extensive and ongoing measures to protect the health, safety and well-being of residents, staff, caregivers and families. It is our government that inherited this broken system that was assieged by COVID-19. We will continue to—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader will come to order. The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries will come to order.

Supplementary question.

1050

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, the government knew that the situation in long-term care was a disaster waiting to happen. In fact, the minister would have known that there were many, many, many infectious outbreaks happening in virtually all long-term-care homes before

COVID-19 hit Ontario. Two thirds of the homes were breaking IPAC, infection prevention and control, rules constantly. She should have known that; she did know that. Yet this government cancelled comprehensive RQI inspections.

This government really ignored all precautionary principles. In fact, during the COVID-19 crisis—they stopped all in-person inspections during the worst of the crisis. Measures to contain COVID-19 were initially left up to home operators, is what the AG’s report says. How can it be that after explicit warnings, after knowing the state of affairs in long-term care, we still had a government that let so many seniors die?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Today’s recommendations, and those that will come from the long-term-care commission as well, inform the work that is already under way to repair a broken system, badly neglected for many years. It is our government that is modernizing and fixing the long-term-care sector.

The neglect that happened over many, many years left a system that could not respond immediately to COVID-19. We used the expertise of public health, Ontario Health, multiple ministries to address this as we went, and we started early, with guidance in January. In March, there were more measures. In fact, there were so many measures, sometimes it was hard for the homes to keep up, because there was so much work being done.

The Auditor General says, “Long-standing systemic problems in the sector were quickly and starkly amplified at the onset and during the first and second waves of the pandemic, and were contributing factors to the outbreaks and spread of COVID-19 in the long-term-care homes.” When she says that, she’s talking about what was left in the wake of the previous government—

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Seniors suffered in unspeakable conditions throughout COVID-19. In fact, the second wave was even worse than the first. This government cannot justify how they neglected our seniors. Look at the Canadian Armed Forces report to see exactly what was happening in long-term care. Four thousand people lost their lives to COVID-19. Thousands of family members have been traumatized by the experience. Thousands of other seniors were left to suffer alone, with no support, with no family. This should never have happened, Speaker, and the AG’s report clearly indicates that this government knew the state of affairs in long-term care. They knew, and they were warned.

The long-term-care system, contrary to what this minister just said, is still in crisis. It’s massively understaffed. There’s massive underinvestment, and this government is dragging its feet and saying that maybe, in 2025, we may have some kind of improvement in long-term care—not good enough. Stop dragging your feet.

When will long-term care be fixed by this government?

*Interjections.*

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

I remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

To reply, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** I will point out when the AG says, “More than 10 years later, little progress had been made and the issue remains, now with significantly greater risks and consequences for the safety of residents.” That is the Leader of the Opposition. That is the legacy left behind—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Waterloo, come to order. The member for Northumberland, come to order.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** The Leader of the Opposition sat in this chamber and had the opportunity, for many years, to address what she knew, and she didn’t. Neither did the government of the day.

It is our government that has taken responsibility for this sector, so badly neglected for many years under the people sitting right there. I will take no lessons from you as I work to repair long-term care and to support staff, residents and families, while you neglected it.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Again, please make your comments through the Chair.

The next question.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. The government knew that there were problems in long-term care left by years of neglect by the previous Liberal government, but the Auditor General’s report shows that, just like the Liberals, the PCs ignored all of them. The report states, “Actions taken over the years have been insufficient to ensure that we would be better prepared as a province for the ‘next time.’” The Auditor General says the concerns raised by experts in report after report for over a decade have been left to fester.

My question is, how much more needless suffering and death is it going to take for this government to prepare long-term care for the next pandemic?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** It is our government that’s doing the work. It is our government that has put in a monumental commitment to four hours of direct care per resident; to hiring 27,000 new hires into long-term care over the next four years, a \$4.9-billion commitment; not to mention the over 8,600 hires who we were able to put in with the pandemic pay; and the historic levels of investment, the \$1.75 billion and almost another \$1 billion recently announced for another 80 projects.

The languishing sector that was left for so many years, with only a few hundred beds built under the previous government between 2011 and 2018, left this sector at risk. It is our government that is working around the clock to repair it, not only from the neglect left behind but also from a global pandemic. It’s our government that is putting in the work.

As the Minister of Long-Term Care, I am proud of everyone who is working around the clock to protect this sector and do the work that's needed.

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

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** The Auditor General says that there are no surprises in her report. That's because, despite the Premier's bluster, there was no iron ring. Last January, they didn't prepare long-term-care homes for the incoming pandemic. They didn't properly train staff to handle outbreaks. They didn't even have gloves and masks and training for their own inspectors until after the military arrived. With two thirds of homes reportedly failing to keep infections down, a pandemic was always a question of when, not if.

My question is, why do this Premier and this minister treat seniors in long-term care as second-class citizens, without the respect that they so greatly deserve?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** That is preposterous. I spent my career looking after seniors and looking after the most vulnerable. That is an absolute insult to every physician and every PSW that is doing the hard work.

There is no doubt that this sector had cracks and that it was left open to COVID-19. We worked with public health, we worked with the scientists in Ontario—the best expert advice, and we took it early. We worked with the Ministry of Health and we worked across the ministries to shore up this system. It couldn't be turned around on a dime. The years of neglect were so bad, the staffing crisis so severe and the crowding in our homes so severe after so many years of neglect by the previous government, supported by the opposition, that we could not turn it around fast enough, but, boy, did we try, and, boy, do all those thousands of front-line workers continue to do the work—

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

*Interjections.*

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

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** My question is to the Minister of Finance. I know for months our government has been calling on the Trudeau government to implement changes to the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit program in order to ensure Canadians in my riding and across the province can self-isolate, care for an ailing loved one or get vaccinated without losing their income. Despite repeated appeals from Premiers across Canada, and in the face of advice from medical experts, the federal government has failed to fill the gaps in their program and make sure workers can access funds quickly and easily.

Given the federal government in their budget last week once again failed to deliver these needed changes for Ontarians, can the Minister of Finance tell the House how we intend to fill these gaps?

1100

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

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you to the member for Oakville. This is a critical issue. As Ontario battles a devastating third wave of this global pandemic, driven by dangerous variants that have crossed our borders, we must do everything we can to stop the spread. No one should have to choose between buying groceries and protecting the health of their family.

That's why Ontario was the first province in Canada to ensure no worker could lose their job because they were self-isolating. That's why Premier Ford worked with the federal government to provide \$1.1 billion in a paid sick leave program. That's why, after a very disappointing federal budget which failed to deliver desperately needed changes to the federal program, our government stepped up to the plate and offered to fill the gaps by immediately doubling payments for all Ontario workers, up to \$1,000 per week, \$25 per hour, for four weeks.

This government will continue to fight for Ontarians. We need our federal partners and all members of this Legislature to put politics aside and ensure that every worker in Ontario has access to adequate paid sick days.

*Interjection.*

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

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** I want to thank the parliamentary assistant for the answer and commend the minister for stepping up to supplement the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit.

I know there's a lot of misinformation out there on this program. The opposition, for a year now, has been trying to convince Ontarians that the program doesn't exist and that Ontarians do not have access to paid sick days through the federal program. I'm glad that our government is trying to work collaboratively with Ottawa to improve access, to make sure there is no gap in pay and that workers don't have to worry about losing their paycheque.

But can the minister please explain why improving the federal program is the best way to deliver paid sick days to Ontarians that we badly need in this pandemic?

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Working with the federal government is the simplest and fastest way to get money into pockets. We need them to continue partnering with us to get this job done.

Unfortunately, yesterday the Prime Minister and the federal Minister of Finance suggested that instead of delivering more money directly to workers, the province should force already struggling small businesses to pick up the tab. Our government has spared no expense in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians and supporting the struggling small businesses, the job creators, that have sacrificed their livelihoods to keep our communities safe.

Our government does not believe that businesses should bear the increased burden of a paid sick day program, as members opposite have suggested. Instead, our government will remain steadfast in our commitment to protect workers by providing this support directly. The federal government already has the means to deliver the program, and we are willing to pay the bill. I hope that they will work with us.

## LAND USE PLANNING

**Mr. John Vanthof:** My question is to the Premier. The Premier is fast-tracking a new 400-series highway that will carve through irreplaceable farmland and the greenbelt. Highway 413 will cost at least \$6 billion, but it will save drivers about 30 to 60 seconds per trip. Now research from Environmental Defence shows that the highway could lead to an extra 17.4-million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles by 2050.

It's not going to help drivers. It's certainly not going to help the environment. It will make money for powerful developers; that goes without saying. At what point is the Premier going to put the public interest ahead of the interest of his donors and cancel this wasteful and harmful highway project?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I thank the member opposite for the question. There is a strong case for moving forward with Highway 413.

By 2051, the population of the greater Golden Horseshoe is expected to grow to almost 15 million people. We need our road infrastructure to keep up. We must alleviate congestion, which is already terrible in the greater Golden Horseshoe, before it gets worse for commuters and before it gets worse for the environment.

Mr. Speaker, we want to get this right. That is why we're continuing the environmental assessment process, which the Liberals cancelled. We believe that work on this project, on the environmental assessment aspect, is essential so that we can determine whether or not we move forward with Highway 413, which could be critical infrastructure for the people of York, Halton and Peel regions.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** The minister just said there's a "strong case" to be made for the highway. We would contend there's also a very strong case to be made for the environment—and as a farmer, an even stronger case to be made for agricultural land. We lose 175 acres a day now. The 15 million people who are going to be living in the GTA in a few years are going to need food, and we're going to need farmland. You can't build it. And now we have the chance to plan ahead to protect it.

So, again, we need to look at these projects from the environmental point of view and from the feeding-the-people point of view. Is that going to be a major component in determining how you go ahead with the development of this province?

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I thank the member opposite for his comments, and I agree. That is why our government resumed the environmental assessment process, so that we could consider whether or not to proceed with Highway 413, with all of the facts and evidence that are necessary to make decisions of this magnitude. The Liberals didn't think that was important. They think we should just let people come to the greater Golden Horseshoe and not consider what kind of infrastructure is necessary.

I agree, we need to consider all environmental impacts, which we will get. We will get the information from the environmental assessment process when we need to consider impacts on agriculture, on farmland, on the greenbelt.

Mr. Speaker, we're not the only ones who think that it's important to consider this infrastructure; so does the Ontario Livestock Transporters' Alliance and so does the Peel Federation of Agriculture. Is the member opposite suggesting that I ignore their requests for me to consider whether we should move forward with this infrastructure?

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** They are speaking for their communities. They are speaking for the needs of their industry.

I believe it's important to take into account the needs of all our stakeholders as we study whether or not to proceed with this highway.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There's way too much heckling in the House this morning. Please come to order and allow the member who has the floor to make their presentation so that I can hear that person.

The next question.

## LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. John Fraser:** My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Today, the Auditor General released a report about the government's response to COVID-19 in Ontario's long-term-care homes. In the report, it details that ALC patients were transferred from hospitals to crowded homes during the first wave. Homes struggled to provide adequate space and staffing to address the surge. Simply put, they were not prepared for the influx of patients.

This morning, the Minister of Health announced that the government is now instituting an emergency order to transfer ALC patients from hospitals to long-term-care homes that are not their choice. There was some confusion this morning. The minister said that they would be transferred with their consent in her remarks, and the press release clearly says without their consent.

So can the Minister of Long-Term Care confirm that patients are being transferred without their consent?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I'm very pleased to confirm the statement that was made today and the decision that has been made.

There is a situation where, because of the crowding in our hospitals right now, there are some patients who are there who are alternate-level-of-care or no longer needing hospital services, who are waiting for their first choice of a transfer to a long-term-care home. What we are saying today is, in the situation of extreme overcrowding at a particular hospital where there is a surge, there will be a discussion with some of those people to determine whether they are willing to move to a long-term-care home.

that is not their first choice. That would be discussed in advance. It would be a very respectful discussion. It would take into consideration all of the issues that are important to people, including ethnocultural considerations. There would be no charge for the copayment. And we would ask for their consent.

But there may be circumstances, under extreme overcrowding in our hospitals, where it might be necessary to transfer someone without—

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** The bottom line is, you have the power to transfer people without their consent.

You may recall, I raised this issue with the Minister of Long-Term Care in November, about capacity in long-term-care homes. It's five months later, and now what the government is having to do is take an extreme measure because they failed to plan adequately for capacity in long-term care.

If the government is going to do this, there are a number of things that need to be in place. The homes must be able to provide appropriate care and appropriate staffing. New residents must be fully vaccinated so they don't have to isolate—so should their essential caregivers. There should be some geographic limits to this, and there should be a structure in place, an incident management structure in place, something to prevent the things that happened in the first wave from happening in the third wave.

1110

Speaker, can the minister confirm that these types of provisions, along with others in consultation with the sector, will take place to ensure that we—

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Yes, absolutely, I can confirm that. All of the issues that have been mentioned by the member have been taken into consideration, and any movement that might have to take place would only be under a situation where there is an extreme surge in a particular hospital—one we hope that we never have to use. But we have to be prepared in the event of another surge because of this third wave because of the variants.

It's important to plan ahead. That's what we're doing. We really don't want to have to use this. If we have to, of course, we would do that very respectfully and have that conversation with the family, with the person being transferred. They would still maintain their place on the list for their first choice. They would not have to pay the copayment. They would be vaccinated before they would leave.

In addition to that, we are setting up a hotline for people to call if their family member is decompensating in a new situation, for alternate arrangements to be made for them to be moved to another place where they will do better. Because we are looking for a perfect match, but there is—

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

## HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** My question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, Ontario's 2021 budget received royal assent. In that budget, which every member opposite voted against, our government invested \$16.3 billion in Ontario's health care system to build capacity, help battle the third wave of the pandemic and support our heroes on the front line.

Ontarians know that our health care system is under serious strain and is being pushed past its breaking point after years of underfunding by the previous Liberal government that left our hospitals vulnerable. Our government has invested historic amounts into Ontario's health care system. At the same time, the federal government's share of health care funding has been steadily shrinking.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us why Ontario and every single province and territory in Canada has called on the federal government to honour their commitment to the long-term sustainability of health care in Ontario and Canada?

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

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you to the member for Oakville. This is an important question. While collaboration and temporary funding has helped to address some challenges over the course of the pandemic, COVID-19 has also underscored long-standing challenges facing the health system that require urgent action on the part of the federal government.

Enhancing the Canada Health Transfer remains one of our government's top priorities. Every Premier in Canada, of every political stripe, has called on the Trudeau government to increase the Canada Health Transfer to cover 35% of health spending, a far cry from the 50% that was the original deal. With an aging population and a rapidly expanding demand for services, Ontario needs a stronger federal partner to ensure we can improve wait times, reduce surgery backlogs and provide access to more beds and better treatments, and come out of the pandemic with a stronger, more resilient, world-class health care system.

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

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for the answer. I know that my constituents are worried about the health care system and want every level of government to make sure it's protected for future generations.

For decades, past governments failed to fix hallway health care and build the capacity we so desperately need today. Health care spending is rising rapidly in Ontario, and we can see, with the shrinking Canada Health Transfer, that the cost is going to be increasing for Ontario taxpayers.

Would the minister please tell us what the members of this House can do to ensure the federal government meets their commitment and does not abdicate their responsibility on Canada's public health care system?

**Mr. Stan Cho:** You know, the Ontario NDP and the Ontario Liberals couldn't find a single issue with what was

in our government's last budget. And despite record spending, historic spending to protect the health care system, members opposite repeatedly called on this government to spend more. Yet the opposition is oddly silent, Mr. Speaker, as the Trudeau government allows the Canada Health Transfer to shrink every single year. Over the coming years, the CHT will decrease from 22% to just 18%, a gap of \$30 billion a year.

Speaker, while this government is making unprecedented investments in health care, it's the federal government that will be cutting health care funding in Ontario by \$30 billion annually.

I hope that all members of this House will stand up to protect public health care in Ontario, join this government and the leadership shown by Premier Ford, put politics aside and call on the federal government, call on the Trudeau government, to live up to their commitment and protect the long-term sustainability of Ontario's world-class health care system.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the Premier. On Monday, government members shot down Bill 275, a diverse procurement strategy supported by informed stakeholders who fully understand how women and BIPOC business owners have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. At one point during the debate, a government member said, "We cannot rush diversity." This comment coming from a government that gutted the Anti-Racism Directorate and cancelled Indigenous curriculum writing is a bit rich. It seems that when it comes to actually doing work to support BIPOC folks and address the she-cession, the government is all talk and no action. In fact, we're still waiting for the much-talked-about women's economic task force.

Bill 275 can make a real difference to Ontario's diverse businesses, and you need all the help you can get. Why would the government choose not to support Ontario's diverse small business owners in the middle of a pandemic?

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

To reply on behalf of the government, the government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. We've seen a number of bills that have been forward by the opposition that really don't address the issues as they suggest that they would. When it comes to procurement, of course, we were left with a situation by the previous government where there was no such thing as centralized procurement. It really put us in jeopardy when we started to respond initially to the pandemic. We moved quickly to ensure that that was addressed.

Going forward as well, when it comes to supports for our small and medium job creators, we saw just the other day an attack on them in this place, when the members of the Liberal Party brought forward a bill that would put

severe punishments on our small and medium job creators. We turned that down because they cannot afford to pay any more. That was supported by the opposition.

When it comes to more supporting our small and medium job creators, we will continue to have their backs. That is what—

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** We're in the middle of an entirely avoidable third wave. Small businesses continue to struggle to even access funds that were promised to them after the Boxing Day lockdown during the second wave. They're still waiting for leadership from this government. There's a laundry list of complaints from small business owners about the small business support grant.

My colleagues and I have also reached out countless times asking for support for our business constituents who employ 80% of the workers in Ontario. It has gotten to the point where the problems with this grant program are jeopardizing livelihoods and will undermine economic recovery.

To the government: What went wrong with the grant program, and why is it taking so long to fix it and to support small businesses across this province?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite. We understand that businesses have been faced with incredible pressures throughout this pandemic, but the small business support grant, as of today, has paid out \$2.4 billion in payments to small businesses: 107,000 first payments and an automatic doubling, which was committed to in the previous budget; of that, 57,000 businesses have also received their automatic second payment in that support grant for over \$873 million, just on that second portion.

In terms of some of the delays some businesses are experiencing, we have tripled the support staff on the back end to ensure that we get back to those businesses as quickly as possible and to ensure that they can get the supports and money into their bank accounts, because we do recognize this is a challenging time—but over 107,000 first payments and 57,000 second payments for over \$2.5 billion in direct support.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** My question is for the Premier. COVID has taught us that failing to follow the scientists has catastrophic consequences, with paid sick days being one example. Scientists are warning us of the urgency to act on another pending crisis: the climate crisis. A new report today shows that Highway 413 will increase GHG emissions by 700,000 tonnes per year—17.4 million tonnes of climate pollution in the next three decades.

Will the Premier listen to the scientists, not the land speculators, and cancel Highway 413?

1120

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply on behalf of the government, the Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I thank the member for the question. As I indicated earlier, we are doing the important work of completing a fulsome environmental assessment process as we consider whether or not to proceed with Highway 413. We believe, unlike the Liberals, that it's important to collect all the evidence.

The information that was published today is, of course, of great interest and will feed into the work we're doing, but we believe that the demographic growth in the greater Golden Horseshoe to come in the next few decades warrants our government taking the time to consider what the transportation needs are of the greater Golden Horseshoe, and that means continuing with the environmental assessment process for Highway 413.

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

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** An expert panel has already concluded that the cost of Highway 413 far exceeds any benefits. The report today shows that the cost of air pollution alone will be \$1.4 billion. The highway will pave over 2,000 acres of prime farmland and unleash sprawl on additional farmland needed to grow food. It will pave over 400 acres of the greenbelt, increase climate pollution to a point where we will not be able to meet our obligations, and cost taxpayers \$6 billion to \$10 billion, all to save commuters 30 seconds.

I think the evidence is clear. The scientists, the experts, now local municipal councils, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and others are saying, "Listen to the science. Cancel Highway 413 and use that money for higher priorities."

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** The GTA West highway corridor is subject to an individual environmental assessment, which is among the most stringent assessment processes on record.

As I've indicated, we're taking the necessary time to study the highway and all of its impacts. That includes taking in information from stakeholders who are looking for additional transportation infrastructure so that they can get their goods to market.

As Minister of Transportation, it is my responsibility to oversee the transportation network today and to consider what its needs are for tomorrow. We are doing that important work. We believe it's essential for drivers in the coming years, but also in the coming decades, and we will do all the work that's necessary as we study the project itself.

#### BORDER SECURITY

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** My question is to the Minister of Finance. In the past week alone, there have been dozens of flights into Toronto's Pearson airport carrying passengers with dangerous COVID-19 variants. There have been other possible exposures at airports in Hamilton and Ottawa. While Ontarians are largely doing their part to stop the spread of the virus in the communities, variants coming across our borders are making the pandemic harder to contain.

I know our government has taken action by issuing an emergency order restricting travel between the Manitoba and Quebec land and water borders, but as case numbers explode in countries around the world, international flights continue to land in Ontario every single day. Will government renew its call to secure our airports as the federal government should have done months ago?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the member for Willowdale and parliamentary assistant.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you to the member from Oakville for that question. Everyone knew that these variants of concern were a threat, but the federal government did too little way too late to protect us from them.

The difficult but necessary measures Ontarians followed to curb the first and second waves are struggling to flatten the variants during the third wave of this pandemic. Canada could have avoided these devastating variants with stricter border measures, like those in Australia, and kept variants out or with a consistent supply of vaccines to better protect people, like we've seen in Israel or in the UK.

The Trudeau government has finally halted flights from India after weeks of warnings, but all travellers, regardless of where they're coming from, may have been exposed to a variant. The federal government is responsible for our airports, and we need the federal government to secure our airports now.

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

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** I want to thank the parliamentary assistant for the answer and thank the Premier for his leadership in calling for the federal government to secure our borders.

My constituents are concerned that despite the steps our government has taken to prevent land crossings at the borders with Manitoba and Quebec, there are no measures in place to protect our province from the expansion of COVID variants through air travel, internationally or domestically. The federal government's quarantine hotels were supposed to prevent cases from entering the country, but as was reported last week by the CBC, thousands of travellers are simply walking across the border in order to avoid this failed measure.

Over 70% of the daily cases in Ontario today are confirmed as variants of concern. As we know, these variants did not originate in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, what can the Ontario government do to prevent cases and future variants from entering this province?

**Mr. Stan Cho:** The member is absolutely right. Our government has been doing our part, but the provinces cannot beat this third wave alone. We need our federal partners to step up. We need more vaccines and tighter border restrictions to prevent more variants of concern.

Minister Jones and Minister Elliott wrote to Ministers Hajdu and Blair asking for mandatory pre-departure testing for anyone on a domestic flight into Ontario. We welcome the actions the federal government has taken of late, but they have not gone far enough to prevent the COVID-19 variants of concern from entering Canada.

Speaker, to ensure that we're able to beat this third wave and finally get past COVID-19, we need the Trudeau government to get serious about closing the border, make testing mandatory for interprovincial travellers at airports, and get more vaccines into more arms in Ontario and across Canada.

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** To the Premier: I rise today for Gloria, who lives on Vaughan Road in my community. She has given over 30 years of her life to advocacy, fighting tirelessly for affordable housing and child care. Gloria, a senior, has shown up for many in our community and in Ontario. She needs this government to show up for her today. Gloria's hip replacement surgery and her CT scans have been postponed several times during COVID. Her osteoarthritis is getting worse. She is tormented physically and mentally daily by a pain that has literally stolen her mobility.

Speaker, to the Premier: Knowing full well that over \$700 million is necessary to tackle the still-growing surgical backlog, your Conservative government, in your budget just passed, only allocated \$300 million—not even half of what's necessary.

Through the Speaker: When will Gloria be able to get her surgery? What would you, Conservative government, like me to tell Gloria today on behalf of your government when I leave question period? Because I'm giving her a call right after. Please answer, Premier.

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

To reply, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** The member has raised a very important point. We have invested, actually, over \$500 million in order to proceed with the backlogs of surgeries and diagnostic procedures that we have had to postpone because of the increase in this third wave and the increase in our hospitals. This has created more space for more COVID patients, but I understand that there are many people who are waiting for their surgeries.

Notwithstanding that, we have been able to provide over 430,000 scheduled surgeries since the start of this pandemic. As soon as the numbers subside and we are able to admit more patients into hospitals, it is an absolute priority for us to proceed with those surgeries and procedures, because we know that though they're called elective, they're not really elective. People need them to be done. So that is a priority for us and something that we're going to do as soon as we see the—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. The member for Toronto–St. Paul's to ask her supplementary question.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Back to the Premier: Now let's talk about the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. This government said last month that they doubled this grant program to help out small businesses in my community and that eligible recipients were automatically entitled to a second payment. Speaker, there are countless small

businesses in St. Paul's. They've applied; they've been denied. They ask questions for a rationale, and they get no response from the government. Others are flat-out denied because their businesses are apparently too new to qualify. Some are eligible, but are still denied.

Joanne, who owns Vegwood—a Black-owned business, by the way, serving vegan food, a crowd favourite in our Oakwood Village community—was told by this government that money was on the way in 10 business days, but she's still waiting. Where is Joanne's funding? When is the government going to fix the Ontario small business grant program that is direly fraught with errors—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

1130

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We recognize that this is a significantly difficult time. There's no sugar-coating it. Businesses have been impacted.

We are processing second payments. In terms of the first payments: over 107,000 direct payments to businesses, over \$1.5 billion paid out through that. Second payments of over \$873 million have been processed. We have tripled the support staff on the back end, to ensure businesses like the ones mentioned are getting the support, are able to be attended to and to ensure that we do get that payment to them as soon as possible.

On top of that, we do have other support programs, like Digital Main Street, a \$2,500 grant for businesses, to help—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Member for Toronto–St. Paul's, come to order.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** They can access up to 90% in federal supports for the rent program, 75% in wage subsidies and also 100% of their property tax and energy costs.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Minister of Heritage, come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** When the Speaker asks you to come to order, that means you stop heckling.

The next question.

### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** My question is for the Minister of Health. It's been a month now since the first time I voiced the urgent concerns of my riding in this House regarding vaccine accessibility. Since then, the numbers have only gotten worse. Ottawa Public Health has identified Vanier, Overbrook and Lowertown as high-risk neighbourhoods, yet not a single one is considered to be a hot spot and each of those neighbourhoods has only one pharmacy to serve their high-density populations.

Why is the minister not trusting Ottawa Public Health numbers to designate hot spots in Ottawa to better target

high-risk areas? When will actions be taken to protect Ottawa hot spots that have been forgotten?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you to the member for the question. Primarily the issue has been supply of vaccines up until now. However, we are expecting large quantities of the Pfizer vaccine to come in starting next week and throughout the entire month of May. We're also receiving Moderna vaccines today as well. So we will be able to expand both within hot spots and to regions across the province of Ontario.

As the member knows, there have already been 114 hot spots identified by postal code. They're based on situations relating to high hospitalizations in the past, high ICU and, unfortunately, a large number of deaths as well. We are identifying new hot spots and we are dealing with them with these vaccines that are coming in. We're also expanding them in more pharmacies, including pharmacies that will be open 24/7 in order to be able to respond to people who, through work or otherwise, need to have that additional flexibility to be able to receive those vaccines.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** My follow-up is also to the minister. The science table has revealed that five higher-risk postal codes they recommended were left off the government's list of hot spots. Meanwhile, eight lower-risk areas were included. We're still wondering why.

The government also didn't initially follow the table's guidance on how many hot spots should be identified and how the vaccine should be allocated. Clearly, the choices of hot-spot communities were not informed by all the necessary data.

We can't take vaccines away from already targeted areas—we understand that—but it's crucial that high-risk areas that have been left out be prioritized as well. I understand the minister indicated that that was the intention. So can the minister commit to readjusting the list of hot spots to include the high-risk areas that have been excluded? And when will that be done?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** First, it's really important to note that the identification of the original hot spots was made with the clinical advice of medical experts. The medical experts on the science advisory table retained the information from Ontario Health that was provided to the vaccine task force. The vaccine task force and the other medical experts applied other criteria, including some of the barriers to vaccines, the situation which had dealt with what their situation was in wave two, vaccine hesitancy, ethno-cultural factors, sociodemographic factors, to make sure that we had a full picture to identify those vaccine hot spots.

Notwithstanding that, there are other hot spots that are being identified, and we do have vaccines available to send to those areas as well. This will be more readily available, of course, with the additional vaccines that are coming in starting next week, but we will make sure that we identify the original hot spots and deal with those, as well as new hot spots coming forward.

## EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** My question is to the Premier: Early this week, both Toronto and Peel moved to shut down workplaces because of COVID-19 outbreaks. They're shutting them themselves because the province is refusing to act to save workers' lives.

The government's own advisory committee, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, unions and business groups are saying workers need provincial paid sick days to be safe in the workplace. Yet every day, workers in hot spots are forced to choose between going to work sick and feeding their families. The choice is killing people, and this government is to blame.

Today is the Day of Mourning. In the labour movement, we mourn for the dead and pledge to fight for the living. New Democrats are fighting. Workers are fighting. Health care providers are fighting. Why won't this government join the fight, listen to the experts and provide provincial paid sick days? Why are they letting workers get sick and die?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, I don't even know how to answer that question from the member opposite. The suggestion that any member of this House on either side is wanting workers not to be safe is absolutely, incredibly preposterous, and the member opposite knows it. He does a disservice to every single member who has worked in this chamber for decades to improve the rights of workers in this province when he uses language like that.

I can tell the member opposite that I care every bit as much about workers in my riding as he does in his riding. I certainly would never rise in this chamber and suggest that any of the members opposite care any less about the people they represent than I do.

So if the member wants to ask a question, a proper question, without such insinuations, Mr. Speaker, without such language, then he'll get a proper answer.

*Interjections.*

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

Supplementary question?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Back to the Premier—and I'll respond to that, sir. People in this province are dying every day, and they're dying because they can't get paid sick days. They're dying because they can't go to work and put food on the plate for their families.

There's a reason why paid sick days are important in the province of Ontario. I believe that everybody in this House should support paid sick days, do everything we can to make sure that essential worker who is going to work every day to provide food on that plate for their family, pay rent and pay their mortgage—we can fix that. Right here in this House, we can fix that. Do you know how we fix it on the Day of Mourning? We provide provincial paid sick days so those workers can take the day off, so they can make sure that their families are taken care of.

We just had a 13-year-old girl die because an essential worker was going to work and brought COVID home. What are we doing?

You can tell me that you're upset with me for saying what I did—that's how I feel. I don't want anybody dying because they're a worker in the province of Ontario, because this government won't provide paid sick days. That's what it's about, sir. It's about saving lives, making sure that worker can go to work and perform a fair day's work for a fair day's pay safely.

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

To respond, the government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member opposite is exactly right. That is exactly what it's about. That's exactly what we are doing here. Protecting workers is exactly what all of us should be doing.

I would never, for a second, suggest that the member opposite's passion on this topic is anything but legitimate. I appreciate the passion that he brings to this debate, not only today but each and every day. I appreciate the work that he has done over his lifetime to advance the rights of workers. I know that he has worked in a union for many, many years.

I understand, through many, many years of living in a household with a parent who went to work, with family members who went to work. We just talked earlier—the member for Eglinton–Lawrence—about those Italian workers who came in the 1950s and 1960s and worked so hard to build this community, Mr. Speaker.

I understand how important it is to protect workers. This government understands that, and that's why we are going to do everything in our power to continue to make the lives of essential workers across this province safer. We will have their backs, and I hope—

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

*Interjections.*

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

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. With the variants of concern ripping through Scarborough, Brampton and the hottest of hot spots, we are not doing enough to protect our communities and to protect essential workplaces. The hospital clinics in Scarborough are still closed. You have promised a 50% increase to hot spots, and we're going to look for that.

Workers at Fiat Chrysler Automobiles reached out to me to ask what we are doing to protect people working in Ontario plants and when will they be prioritized. Many of these workers live in non-hot-spot postal codes and are, therefore, ineligible for a vaccine in their home community. But every day, they go to the hottest of hot spots.

My question to the Deputy Premier is, when will these workers, who work in the hottest hot spots, putting their lives and their families at risk, receive a vaccine?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I can certainly agree with the member opposite that there are many hot spots in

Scarborough right now. I believe there are 15 postal codes that have been identified as having hot spots. Presently, 25% of the vaccines from the top are going to the hot spots in Peel and Toronto. We are looking at 50%, because we know that if we address the transmission in the hot spots, including in Peel, in Brampton, as well as in Scarborough, that will be for the benefit of everyone in Ontario, because 80% of the transmission is happening in 20% of the locations. So we are prioritizing that.

We know that we need to deal with getting more vaccines into those areas. Now, with the increase in vaccines coming, starting next week, we will be able to do that without, in any way, taking away any vaccines that are going to any other place. So with those additional vaccines, we will be prioritizing those hot spots in Peel, as well as in Scarborough and other parts of Toronto as well.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The time for question period this morning has expired. This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.*

#### MOTIONS

##### COMMITTEE SITTINGS

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I move that, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the Standing Committee on Estimates be authorized to meet during the week of May 24, 2021, and during the month of June 2021.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader has moved that, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the Standing Committee on Estimates be authorized to meet during the week of May 24, 2021, and during the month of June 2021.

Government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Very, very briefly, just to highlight how important estimates are, especially during this time when we have been able to introduce one budget very quickly and in succession another one. We have heard from the members opposite how important that level of accountability is, so in order to ensure that we get through the estimates in due course, this motion allows the committee to meet in both May and June and complete estimates quicker than we have before.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** In response to the government House leader, estimates are a very important part of the legislative process. It's an extremely important part, and we would concur that they should have as much time available that they could finish the work in that committee and hold the ministries and the government to account. So we are in favour of that motion.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Any further comments? No.

Mr. Calandra has moved that, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the Standing Committee of Estimates be authorized to meet during the week of May

24, 2021, and during the month of June 2021. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

## PETITIONS

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas new mutations of COVID-19—known colloquially as variants of concern (VOC)—originating in other parts of the world are the main drivers of the devastating” disease “and are currently entering both Canada and the province of Ontario by way of international travel; and

“Whereas the provincial government has taken decisive action to stop the spread of new COVID-19 variants by closing interprovincial land and water borders and by instituting a first-in-Canada program of mandatory on-arrival COVID-19 testing for international flights; and

“Whereas further action is needed from the federal government to restrict international travellers who are at heightened risk of spreading COVID-19 and variants of concern from entering the province of Ontario;

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

“To immediately, through all means at the disposal of the government, petition the federal government to take swift and decisive action to curb all non-essential international travel to protect Ontario’s public health care system from the unprecedented strains currently facing it if current trends are left unchecked.”

I support this petition, and I affix my signature underneath.

## OPPOSITION DAY

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I move opposition day motion number 5 as follows:

Whereas April 28 is the National Day of Mourning honouring the lives of workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illnesses on or because of their jobs, and the families and communities impacted by these tragedies; and

Whereas COVID-19 has revealed the inequities faced by many workers, particularly racialized and low-waged workers in Ontario and the risks they face simply doing their jobs; and

Whereas workplace transmission has accounted for two thirds of community outbreaks in some municipalities, leaving workers with the added stress of potentially exposing their loved ones to infection just by going to work; and

Whereas the Ford government has repeatedly refused to take action to protect Ontario’s workers and ignores the advice of its own experts calling for paid sick days, paid time off for vaccinations, and the closure of non-essential workplaces while offering supports for the workers and businesses affected; and

Whereas previous Liberal and Conservative governments ignored lessons from SARS, failed to maintain critical stockpiles of personal protective equipment (PPE) and allowed N95 masks and other vital protective equipment to expire without making any effort to replace them; and

Whereas many of Ontario’s essential workers still have to fight for adequate personal protective equipment, and the Ford government forces workers in jobs with high risk of COVID-19 exposure to prove they contracted the disease on the job in order to receive WSIB supports; and

Whereas the Ford government still has yet to provide a clear strategy to ensure vaccination of Ontario’s essential workers despite having more than a year to develop a plan;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly calls on the Ford government to better protect Ontario’s workers by legislating paid sick days, ensuring access to high-quality PPE, developing an effective essential worker vaccination strategy with paid time off for vaccination and extending full WSIB protections to all Ontario workers.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number five. I look to the Leader of the Opposition to lead off the debate.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess I was holding out hope that we wouldn’t actually get here and have to debate the item of paid sick days once again. Of course, there are many other pieces to this motion, but certainly, the calls for paid sick days in Ontario have been loud and clear for a very long time, and here we are, the 26th time, I think, talking about the need for paid sick days in Ontario in the Legislature, the government having shot down 25 times previously the various motions and bills to bring paid sick days to Ontario.

Why do we need them, Speaker? We need them because it’s obvious that the spread of COVID-19 variants of concern is happening in workplaces in our province, and a paid sick day will allow a worker to stay home if they are experiencing symptoms, if there’s a need to isolate or if they have a family member that they have to take care of because of COVID-19. There are just all kinds of reasons why. Not only is it the moral thing to do and the humanitarian thing to do, but it’s the right thing to do to stop the spread of COVID-19.

We have watched since—I think March 1 was when we debated the member for London West’s bill, Bill 239, the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act, here in this Legislature. Since that time we’ve had 1,000 people die of COVID-19, workers who contracted COVID-19 since that bill with turned down by this government.

We know that those front-line workers in our province are the heroes of this pandemic. Whether it’s health care workers on the front lines of our health care system,

whether it's people who are working in places like grocery stores, pharmacies and convenience stores so that the rest of us can stay safe at home, or whether it's people who are driving trucks, who are transit operators or who are drivers of other types of businesses, these folks are going to work each and every day so the rest of us can stay safe and still have access to essential goods and services. The child care workers, the education workers, teachers, caretakers, and others working in our schools and other child care centres: These folks are doing what we need them to do in order to keep us going while COVID-19 is still lurking out there in our communities. Food supply chain workers—we've heard, obviously, that there have been outbreaks in food manufacturing and in warehousing and other kinds of businesses.

**1510**

There is no doubt that this Day of Mourning, particularly, has some really important observances that we need to acknowledge. We have lost working people to COVID-19 on the front lines in health care and other essential services, as I've mentioned, and so it's a very solemn day for us.

As of today, we still don't have a paid sick days program in our province, and our working folks are getting sick and losing their lives.

We all know that we saw the tragic death of a 13-year-old girl on the weekend. Her mom is in the ICU with COVID-19 as well.

These kinds of stories that we continue to hear are tragedies, but they're preventable tragedies.

That's what the Day of Mourning is all about—to acknowledge the lives lost and the illnesses attained in the workplace, but also to fight for the living, as my colleague from Niagara Falls said earlier today in question period.

We've lost nearly 8,000 lives now in Ontario to COVID-19, and many of those people contracted the virus in their workplace. That's a pretty stunning number. And it's a pretty important obligation that we have to those workers who are still on the front lines—to make sure that they can protect themselves from this virus.

We've seen the ICUs fill up. I think there are now over 870 patients in ICUs. Many of those folks are front-line workers. In some cases, whole families are in the ICU with COVID-19. That is something that is absolutely preventable.

We need to fix the holes in the systems that we have, and we need to acknowledge that people shouldn't be going to work sick and provide them with the economic stability they need to be able to not go to work sick.

We saw this government fail long-term-care residents in the first and second waves. Now we're in the third wave, with the variants of concern out of control, and the government is not stepping up to help workers, the way they didn't step up to help people in long-term care.

Time and time again, we've seen a lack of access to PPE. Of course, we didn't see the massive testing that should have been happening in workplaces in our province. I've already mentioned that paid sick days didn't ever arrive, but hopefully we can remedy that sooner

rather than later. People should also be getting paid time off to get the vaccines to keep themselves safe, to keep their communities safe, to keep their workplaces safe. These things are pretty basic. We also need to get those vaccines to the hot spot priority areas as quickly as possible—again, something for which the government is showing very little urgency.

Speaker, I can remember, back in May, when a gentleman named Leonard Rodrigues lost his life to COVID-19. He was a PSW working in home care. Leonard's death was tragic. Folks might remember that Leonard was the PSW who couldn't get PPE from his employer, and he actually stopped at a dollar store on his way to work to pick up fabric or these kinds of cheapo masks to try to protect himself from COVID-19 in the workplace. It wasn't successful. He did not manage to protect himself, and he lost his life.

I subsequently spoke to Mrs. Rodrigues, who told me the tragic, tragic story of the events that occurred once her husband got sick, which I don't have the permission to share. I will say, though, that Dorothy Rodrigues has publicly been quoted as saying, "My dead husband is living proof that they were not protected"—that PSWs and front-line workers in health care were not protected.

Terena Rodrigues, Leonard's daughter, said this:

"There are so many PSWs like him who are not being protected. My dad's dead, gone, and there are a lot of families who have lost their loved ones because they weren't being protected.

"And because of COVID, we didn't even get to send him off properly. The last thing we saw was his body on the floor"—in their house, Speaker, which is exactly how Dorothy explained the situation to me as well.

Speaker, there are still workers right now, today, in workplaces being exposed to COVID-19. We will see more people dying in our ICUs, because they didn't have an opportunity to protect themselves from COVID-19.

We all know that the severity of this wave, the third wave, didn't have to be as bad as it is. The severity was absolutely avoidable, but our Premier decided not to listen to expert advice. He opened the province up too quickly back in February, and what they predicted was going to happen is exactly what happened. So by not listening to the science, we had our Premier walk us into this third wave with his eyes wide open. He didn't need to open the province as quickly as he did and, unfortunately, he also didn't put in place the public health protections that were recommended: things like paid sick days, things like paid vaccination time off, things like making sure that people were able to get the PPE that they needed, shutting down truly non-essential businesses and providing them with the supports that they and their workers would need for the last number of weeks. All these things could have and should have been done by our Premier, but they were not.

One poultry inspector from Maple Leaf Foods said this to CTV News—Enoc Vila is the person who I'm quoting: "Every day is stressful because you don't know who is beside you. You can take care of you, but you don't know what your co-worker is doing after" the "job."

Birgit Umaigba is a critical care nurse in Toronto. She said to Al Jazeera news, “‘Every day I go in I’m scared’.... ‘I honestly sometimes don’t even want to go, but I still show up because we’re already so short [staffed], ICU nurses, and I have to also provide for my family. It’s a scary situation. There’s so much anxiety in the air’....

“‘I’m seeing a population of mostly racialized people being admitted to ICU and from what I gather, a lot of these people are working-class, underpaid factory workers who don’t have access to any paid sick leave or any day off that’s paid for them to go and get the vaccine’....

“‘I don’t have access to paid sick leave, yet I keep giving myself at the bedside to save lives. That is wrong on every level. The least the government can do for me is guarantee me paid sick leave when I fall sick when working on the front line, and for so many other people that do the same.’”

Speaker, we knew the vaccines were never going to stop the spread of COVID-19. The experts told the government that very clearly. “‘You can’t vaccinate your way out of the third wave,” is what they were told. But the government didn’t listen, and the advice from the science table has not been followed. That’s why we have continued to come here each and every day to fight for working people, to fight for Ontarians, to try to push the government to do the right thing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and save lives. We are fighting to save Ontario. We always will do that, but what we need is for the government to step up and do the right thing here. We need the government to step up. Stop listening to the polling. Stop listening to political advisers. Stop turning this into a political exercise. Stop listening to the anti-science and anti-public health members of their own government, their own caucus, their own cabinet, and start stepping up for the people of Ontario. Put in place the necessary measures to stop this spread to protect working people and to save lives.

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

**Mr. Kevin Yarde:** It’s an honour to rise on behalf of the great folks of Brampton North, as well as speaking in honour of my leader and talking about protecting workers from COVID-19. This is something that is so dearly needed in Ontario.

Speaker, this COVID-19 virus has been running out of control for quite some time. Workers have been disproportionately impacted. We’ve seen hundreds of workplace outbreaks in the Peel region, and there have been more than 100 in Brampton alone, and yet this government chooses to ignore the region of Peel. This government let down the workers of Brampton and Peel when they refused the growing calls for paid sick days from workers and health officials. They fully know that paid sick days are a critical tool in stopping workplace outbreaks, and yet they voted them down almost 30 times now. The Premier, last week, promised us the best paid sick leave in North America. But instead, we saw this government vote down paid sick days again and again and again and again.

1520

I wanted to commend Dr. Loh and Peel Public Health for taking the steps necessary to make the conditions of

workers of Peel safer during this pandemic. By closing workplaces that have five or more cases of COVID-19, Peel Public Health has shown that they are prioritizing the health and safety of the workers of Peel, something this government has neglected to do. They’ve shown this neglect by eliminating the paid sick days program that we had back in 2019. Since the beginning of this pandemic, they’ve been denying the workers of Ontario a paid sick days program. This government allowed a third wave to happen by ignoring the advice of health officials by not implementing preventive actions when they had the chance. They even failed in providing our essential front-line workers with adequate PPE on time.

The workers of Brampton recently faced a 22.4% positivity rate; in Mississauga, 14.5%. The provincial average is 7.9%. Ten per cent is bad; 15% is horrific. We are at 22.4% in Brampton. What does this mean? It means that one in five COVID-19 tests are coming back positive. As Dr. Loh said, if you’re out, maybe at a grocery store or at a gas station, just assume that the person next to you may have COVID-19 in Brampton. This is how bad it is in Brampton. We need this government to do better and give Brampton its share of vaccines and open up more pop-up clinics, just like we’ve seen in Toronto and in Durham. We need this government to work with more employers in Brampton to get their essential front-line workers vaccinated at work. This positivity rate is a dire warning, so we need this government to act fast.

This day is especially important for the health care workers of Brampton, because it was in Brampton that Ontario recently tragically lost one of its first health care workers due to COVID-19, Arlene Reid. Many more health care workers in Ontario have passed away from COVID-19 since then, and we thought this government would learn. But instead, they ignored their own science table.

My office is receiving dozens of emails from nurses in Brampton North, voicing frustration and telling us how to prevent the collapse of our ICUs. On their behalf, I’m asking this government to listen and implement a few initiatives, including maintaining the safe stay-at-home order, maintaining a moratorium on evictions, capping class sizes to 15 students and providing paid sick days for all workers. We know these measures will allow us to get this pandemic under control. I ask this government to do its part in protecting workers of Ontario.

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

**Mr. Faisal Hassan:** It’s an honour to rise on behalf of the decent and hard-working people of York South–Weston. I rise today in support of our opposition day motion entitled “protecting workers from COVID-19.” It is particularly important that we pass this motion today, on April 28, the National Day of Mourning that honours and remembers those workers killed on the job.

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has taught us many lessons, and we need to learn from those lessons to ensure we don’t repeat the same mistakes. In my riding of York South–Weston, the inequities faced by essential workers, who are largely racialized and lower-wage earners, have never

been clearer. These essential workers are getting onto overcrowded buses and finding their way to work to provide for their families. Yet these workers, in a designated hot spot like York South–Weston, don't even have access to getting vaccinated, as no mobile pop-up clinics and no permanent facilities exist in our riding of York South–Weston.

The Premier has called essential workers heroes, and they certainly are. They have gone to work every day to keep the province moving. Why, then, are these workers not given access to COVID vaccines? Why are they not provided with paid sick days so that they don't have to make the choice between going to work ill or staying home and missing a paycheque? Why is their health being put at risk by the clear neglect by this government?

Workplace transmission has accounted for two thirds of community outbreaks, and those workers have the added stress of exposing their families as well. This government has been slow to make any plan as a solid COVID response, and they are always late to the game. Every delay means people's lives are at risk.

When a hard-hit community like York South–Weston had to wait until September 28 for a COVID testing facility to be established in the area, something is clearly wrong. Now, workers and families wait on COVID vaccine access in York South–Weston. This speaks to the government's priorities and, clearly, essential workers in some of the hardest-hit ridings are not a priority.

Just days ago, the government announced that, once again, PSWs in long-term care can work in more than one workplace. I repeat: Again, PSWs in long-term care can work in more than one workplace. One would think we learned the lesson last spring, when it took too long for this government to stop the practice of workers going to multiple long-term-care homes.

Workers' safety and a serious understanding of COVID transmission are needed. Instead, the government bends to the pressure of for-profit long-term-care lobbyists at the expense of PSWs' health. It is shameful. People are dying. Workers and their entire families are being hospitalized. I urge this government to put measures in place to immediately protect Ontarian workers. Pointing the finger at the federal government or municipal partners is simply weak leadership and, frankly, neglect of their elected duties.

April 28 should make us reflect on how workers' lives are often at risk simply by going to work. COVID-19 has amplified that risk to workers, and I ask this government to make workers' protection a priority. Pay workers for the time missed to get vaccines. Close non-essential workplaces and extend WSIB protections to all Ontario workers. Show workers and their families the respect they deserve and protect workers from COVID-19.

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

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** I rise today on behalf of my constituents of Parkdale–High Park, especially all of the essential workers in my riding.

Today, on the National Day of Mourning, we remember all the workers who have been killed on the job. We also reflect on how we can be better, what we can do better to

protect workers so that no one else has to lose their life on the job. Every illness and every death at the workplace is preventable. “Mourn the Dead. Fight for the Living.” That's the slogan. Right now, the greatest workplace hazard is COVID-19.

The Ford government has ignored warnings from public health experts and walked us right into a devastating third wave that has been largely driven by workplace infections. Essential workers, who are the ones we've relied on since the very beginning to help us stay at home, are majority racialized and low-waged. They not only face the risk of getting COVID-19; they also face the tremendous stress of potentially exposing their family to infection as well. It is these essential workers and their families who are dying from COVID-19, who are struggling to breathe in the ICUs.

**1530**

Despite this awful reality, the Ford government has refused time and time again to implement the workplace safety measures that workers need—measures like proper access to PPE, ensuring essential workers are prioritized for vaccinations and get paid vaccination time, extending WSIB protections to all Ontario workers, and legislating paid sick days for all workers.

Speaker, even when it's a measure that the government publicly commits to, they create unnecessary roadblocks. Let me give you an example: There are hundreds of workers inside the Ontario Food Terminal. Many of them live in my riding in south Parkdale, a designated COVID-19 hot spot. The terminal is currently in the midst of an outbreak, with at least 24 workplace infections in just the last two weeks. Workers tell me that they are scared. They feel unsafe at work.

The Ontario Food Terminal Board has taken up an offer made by this Conservative government to employers who are willing to open an on-site vaccination clinic and fund it. But the Ontario Food Terminal's request was denied by this government.

The Ontario Food Terminal is a critical part of the food supply chain in our province. Do Conservatives even understand the crisis it would cause our food system if the food terminal were to close? More importantly, it is these essential workers, like the food distribution workers, who make it possible for the rest of us to put food on our table. They have been working throughout this pandemic. We owe it to them to ensure that they are prioritized for vaccination as soon as possible and that they get paid sick days so that they don't have to choose between going to work sick or not making ends meet. That's what “fight for the living” means: that we do everything we can to protect workers and their families, protect their health, and to do everything to make sure that anything that endangers their life is addressed.

Speaker, finally, I want to say that it is really important that we understand that essential workers—it's not just that their jobs are essential, but that we send a message that it is their lives that are important and that we will do everything to protect them.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's a pleasure to speak to this opposition day motion. I'd like to thank the leader of the official opposition for bringing it forward. We will be supporting it.

It is the National Day of Mourning today, a day when we remember people who were killed or injured at work, their families and their continued pain and suffering. It's really interesting that right now as we're having this debate, the government is announcing their paid sick days program. It's an interesting juxtaposition that we have the Day of Mourning and a sick day plan that we've waited more than 400 days for. As welcome as it might be—we don't know the details—it's too late. It's too late for too many families. Too many families have suffered. Too much damage has already been done.

It's really hard to understand how, 400 days later, we're still debating paid sick days. We all knew they save lives. It wasn't just us over here. It was the science table, public health experts, doctors and nurses. Just about everybody in Ontario was sending a message to the government.

It's hard to think about those families whose lives would be different right now if the government had chosen a different course. They didn't choose a different course. Those two paid sick days that we talk about that the government took away in 2018, that's two thirds of the gap—two thirds of the gap. The government knew, and they resisted, and they continued to resist, and people went to work sick because they didn't have a choice. They had to choose between putting food on the table, paying their rent or going to work sick.

It should never have come to this. In the middle of the third wave, the worst wave in Ontario so far, for the government to come out with its sick day plan—we have to do way better than this. Speaker, as I said earlier, as welcome as the government plan might be, as insufficient as it might be, it's too late for too many people, for too many families.

I hope what we see this afternoon will indeed fill that gap, will indeed be something that the science table approves, will indeed be something that will be immediate and on the worker's paycheque, and that will indeed last as long as the pandemic, as determined by the science table, not by some number that someone pulls out of a hat.

So, Speaker, I'm very pleased to support this motion, and I thank you for your time.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Speaker, I rise on behalf of the hard-working people of Scarborough Southwest to call on this government for better protection of Ontario's essential workers by legislating paid sick days, ensuring access to high-quality PPE, developing an effective essential worker vaccination strategy with paid time off for vaccination, and extending full WSIB protections to all Ontario workers.

Speaker, over the past year, almost 8,000 Canadians have lost their lives to COVID-19. Many of the lives lost were preventable deaths in workplaces. They were essential workers, the people that every single day, every single one of us in this room have called our heroes during

this pandemic. Today we mourn their lives, making today the National Day of Mourning.

I want to remember the lives that this pandemic has claimed of front-line workers across this province, like Maureen Ambersley, Christine Mandegarian, Arlene Reid, Sharon Roberts and many who lost their lives simply for going to work.

The entire crisis has magnified the inequities in our system, the way COVID-19 has ravaged through our racialized, marginalized, low-income communities and has shown the importance of considering the social determinants of health in how this pandemic is affecting our people. Let's ask ourselves, why are places like Scarborough and Peel on fire? What is the common denominator here?

The truth is that our communities are made up of marginalized and racialized folks, a lot of them new immigrants, essential workers who have to work and who have actually worked in places like factories, warehouses, mailing rooms, taxi drivers, Uber drivers and limousine drivers throughout this pandemic. They had no choice but to go out and work. They never got to work from home or have that flexibility. These are the people who take the crowded buses, crowded transit to go to work and come back home to their families. They have no option to take a day away from work if they're feeling sick.

**1540**

We need paid sick days We need a system-level solution, one that understands that workers need time to test, trace and isolate, if needed, to minimize their risk. Therefore, we are asking for some simple steps for this Legislative Assembly to take, Speaker: during the pandemic mandate, an additional 14 days of sick leave during any infectious disease emergency; after the pandemic, guarantee 10 personal emergency leave days per year for every worker, seven of which are paid, and provide for financial support to support businesses to cover the cost of providing paid sick leave and any additional costs that may incur.

Speaker, we know what our small and medium-sized businesses have gone through throughout this pandemic. I know that the government will come back and talk about small businesses despite the fact that they have done very little to support our local businesses. This calls for that support that our local businesses so badly need right now.

Doctors who are on the front lines in neighbourhoods like Scarborough have been advocating non-stop to the point of exhaustion to try and make this government understand and act fast by sharing so many stories that they're seeing every single day. Doctors from our community in Scarborough have repeatedly called for paid sick days and shared what they're seeing, where entire families are ending up in emergency rooms because one of their family members had to go to work because that person, if they missed work, would have lost a day's pay, or worse, faced retaliation at work.

Workplace outbreaks continue to drive infection rates throughout the province and some workplaces are harder hit than others. The Toronto Star reported in April that

warehouses, shipping, distribution, construction and food processing plants were driving workplace outbreaks across the GTA with 65% of all workplace outbreaks.

Community members in my riding of Scarborough Southwest have called me in tears, that they are scared beyond words about having to live paycheque to paycheque and having to choose between putting food on the table and keeping themselves and their loved ones safe. There's nothing protecting them; no system is watching out for them. They're the ones who have been ending up in the hospitals with COVID-19. Our government, our province, is failing these people, and it is failing places like Scarborough, Brampton and Mississauga.

We have also seen the government's failure to fully identify the concept of essential workers, and by allowing a lot of factories and places to stay open and force their employees, they have put many, many Ontarians at risk. We need a closure of non-essential businesses and support for workers.

There is no need for a chocolate factory, for example, or a makeup factory to be operating while we are in a crisis, trying to shut down the province to limit the spread—there is absolutely no reason to have these kinds of places open. It's always half measures that the government has done, and here is the result with a ravaging third wave that we're faced with right now. We needed to shut down workplaces the minute we saw the spread, but the provincial government once again failed to show decisive leadership on this and chose profits over protecting people.

Speaker, today I join my colleagues across the opposition benches and ask this government to consider again standing up for the people of this province and providing them with the support they so truly need.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I rise to speak in favour of the opposition day motion on this National Day of Mourning. It is absolutely vital that this Legislature stand up for workers, stand up to ensure that we have safe workplaces. Quite frankly, Speaker, every day that the government delays making sure our workplaces are safe prolongs the pandemic, puts more lives at risk and puts more pressure on our health care system. That's why, over and over again, I've been asking this government to actually listen to the science advisory table and to act on their advice.

On February 11, the co-chair of the science advisory table essentially said that if the government lifted restrictions we would be headed for a disaster. The government lifted restrictions, and that disaster is here. A lot of that is being fuelled, if you look at the data, by outbreaks in workplaces, workers who have to go into work, who cannot work from home, workers who we call heroes.

If we're really going to treat those workers as the heroes they are, we need to do more than call them heroes. We need to actually treat them like heroes, which is why providing them with legislated paid sick days, ensuring that people have access to high-quality PPE—and I would argue, and I said this in a motion that I filed, that we should be mandating medical-grade PPE in essential workplaces.

We need to have a vaccine strategy that targets vulnerable workers in high-risk places and hot spot areas. We need to provide workers with time off to get vaccinated, and we need to extend WSIB coverage to all workers.

Along with my colleague from Niagara Falls, working across party lines, I think the two of us both moved amendments at committee that would have brought in changes to the WSIB program to actually protect injured workers, to ensure that if you got COVID on the job you'd actually be protected, given how many claims are being denied. Unfortunately, in the same way that the government members have voted—I'm losing track of the count. Is it at 25 now? I don't know how many times now they've voted against paid sick days. They actually voted against making sure WSIB was set up to support injured workers, people who made good money to care for their family and then were hurt on the job, and are oftentimes denied benefits.

The Premier, a week ago, promised the people of Ontario the best sick-leave program in North America. I had just been watching a news conference right before I came into the chamber down in the media studio where I saw a proposal that was put forward by this Minister of Labour around a program in Ontario. Not only is this not the best paid sick day program in North America, it's not even the best one in Canada.

I would encourage the members opposite to look at what Yukon is doing. I realize it's not a province, it's a territory, but last I checked, it's a territory in Canada. In Yukon—I realize this is only temporary; I'd like to see 10 permanent paid sick days—workers and self-employed workers, so people in the gig community and self-employed workers in Yukon, now have access to 10 paid sick days. They can take time off if they're sick, they can take time off to care for a loved one, and they can take time off if they need to self-isolate or get a vaccine. After those 10 days are up, they can actually still apply for the federal program and get additional days. That program pays up to \$378.13 a day, which comes out to \$1,890.65 a week—all far better than what I just heard proposed in the media studio.

I'm assuming what I heard proposed a few minutes ago we'll likely see proposed in a bill maybe tomorrow, because I'm hoping that it can get amended overnight to actually deliver what Yukon delivers so we can at least have the equivalent—or maybe even make it better than Yukon so we can at least have the best program in Canada.

I'm almost out of time. I want to close by saying that, in addition to paid sick days and paid time off to get vaccinated and tested and to care for your loved ones, we also need to make sure that our workplaces are safe by deploying rapid testing to workplaces. The federal government has made a number of rapid tests available, and they're not being fully utilized by the provinces. We need to ensure that inspections happen and, when infractions are taking place in the workplace, that actual fines are delivered.

**1550**

We need to listen to the scientists who are telling us that there are some non-essential workplaces that shouldn't be

open right now, that we only keep open what's absolutely essential so we can contain the spread of COVID. We need to mandate medical-grade PPE in those workplaces where people absolutely have to go into work. Maybe it's to try to put food on our table; we all need to eat.

When we're talking about putting food on our table, we need to make sure that those workers who work on our farms have adequate housing, because we saw the outbreaks on farms last year in wave 1, and we don't want to repeat that now, now that we have so many migrant workers coming into the country to get ready for the next growing season.

We need to make sure that the vaccine strategy follows the advice of the science table, which is saying, "Get the vaccines to the hot spots. Get the vaccines to the most vulnerable workers," and I would argue, if need be, take those vaccines to the workplace for those workers through mobile clinics. Let's get those vulnerable workers vaccinated, many of them low-wage, women and people of colour, because if we're going to call them heroes, we have to treat them like heroes.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House today to speak on this motion. In 1984, the Canadian Labour Congress established April 28 as the Day of Mourning. Eight years later, the Parliament of Canada passed the Workers Mourning Day Act, making April 28 an official National Day of Mourning. Today, more than 100 countries across the globe recognize this day. As much as this is a day to remember the dead, it's also a call to protect the living.

Speaker, since I put forward my private member's bill to declare the first Tuesday in May Occupational Safety and Health Day in Ontario, a bill which received royal assent yesterday, I've come to work with some incredible people—people who work every day to make Ontario's workplaces safer; people like Robert Ellis, whose son, David, in 1999 lost his life at the age of 18 in a workplace accident on his second day on the job. Rob started MySafeWork, a not-for-profit organization and registered charity whose mission is to prevent people from getting killed, injured or harassed on the job. Rob's efforts remain critically important during this unprecedented time in the middle of a global pandemic.

Since the start of the pandemic, more than 142 million people around the world have been infected. Yesterday, the World Health Organization reported that there were almost as many new cases of COVID-19 last week as in the first five months of the pandemic.

The third wave of the pandemic has hit our country and our province hard. In fact, every day for nearly two weeks, Canada has reported more new daily cases per capita than in the United States. We all understand the importance of protecting workers and keeping them safe, especially during the pandemic. That's why the first action our government took at the start of the pandemic was creating a new unlimited job-protected leave under Bill 186: the infectious disease emergency leave. This was the first bill

we introduced at the start of the pandemic, and I'm proud to say that it was passed with the unanimous support of all parties. Ontario is continuing to do our part.

Speaker, there's certainly a lot of misinformation on the sick leave policies currently in place across the country, much of it put forward by the official opposition. So let's review: In British Columbia, workers receive three unpaid sickness or injury days. I want to mention that the NDP government's budget last week did not include any new paid sick day measures. In Alberta, workers receive five unpaid personal or family days. In Saskatchewan, workers get 12 unpaid personal days. In Manitoba, workers get three unpaid days for workers employed at least 30 days by the same employer. In the Northwest Territories, workers are provided with five unpaid days each year. In Newfoundland and Labrador, workers employed for three months were eligible for three unpaid sick days. In New Brunswick, workers are entitled to five unpaid sick days. In Nova Scotia, workers receive three unpaid sick days. In Prince Edward Island, workers employed three months receive three unpaid sick days; workers employed five years with the same company get one paid sick day. And in Quebec prior to the pandemic, workers received up to 26 weeks of unpaid leave and two paid sick days after three months on the job. Quebec has not introduced any new paid sick days during the pandemic. In Ontario, every worker is entitled to eight days of unpaid leave, including three unpaid sick days.

I want to just read a news release that I just received:

"Ontario to Introduce New Paid Sick Day Program...."

"While Ontario waits for the federal government to fully step up to support vulnerable workers, the province is proposing to offer up to three paid sick days per employee, filling another gap in the federal Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) program.

"Ontario continues to advocate for the federal government to double CRSB benefits by \$500 per week, for a total of \$1,000 per week, before taxes. This would ensure Ontario's workers have access to the most generous pandemic pay leave in the country.

"On Thursday, April 29, 2021, Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, will be introducing legislation that would, if passed, require employers to provide employees with up to three days to up to \$200 if they are missing work because of COVID-19. This program would be retroactive to April 19, 2021, and effective until September 25, 2021, the date the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit will expire.

"By providing time-limited access to three paid leave days, the province is ensuring employees can pay their bills as they help stop the spread of the virus, including by getting tested, waiting for their results in isolation or going to get their vaccine. The province will partner with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to deliver the program and reimburse employers up to \$200 per day for each employee.

"Our government has long advocated for the federal government to enhance the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit program to better protect the people of Ontario,

especially our tireless essential workers,' said Minister McNaughton. 'It is a tremendously positive step that the federal government has signalled their willingness to continue discussions on the CRSB. Then we can fix the outstanding gap. If the federal government updates the program, the province has agreed to provide funding to the federal government to double Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit payments to Ontario residents, adding an additional \$500 per week to eligible individuals, for a total of \$1,000 per week. Enhanced payments could begin to be sent to eligible residents as soon as the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit program is updated. For now, we are stepping up to help address the outstanding gap in the federal program so workers can get immediate support and can stay home when needed.'

'If an eligible worker learns that they must isolate for longer than 50% of the time they would have otherwise worked for the week, whether because of a positive COVID-19 test or risk of exposure, they may apply for the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit if they haven't taken a paid leave day under this proposal. This latest measure builds on other existing provincial supports like job-protected leave and access to isolation facilities, making Ontario's approach the most comprehensive COVID-19 sick leave in the country.'

**1600**

'The province has offered to provide funding to the federal government to double Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit payments to Ontario residents, adding an additional \$500 per week to eligible individuals for a total of \$1,000 per week.'

'Ontario is very proud of those working throughout this unprecedented time to keep essential parts of our economy and local communities open through the pandemic,' said Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board. 'The government of Canada and Ontario have done a historic job delivering the Safe Restart Agreement last year. New provincial funding would allow eligible individuals to receive a total of \$1,000 per week through the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit program if missing work because of COVID-19. Ontario looks forward to continuing discussions to secure Ottawa's commitment to administer the program with the top-up to all Ontario applicants. We believe that this is the simplest and fastest way to increase program uptake and make this program more effective for those people who need this program most.'

'Employers and their workers can call a dedicated COVID-19 sick days information centre hotline at 1-888-999-2248 or visit [ontario.ca/covidsickdays](https://ontario.ca/covidsickdays) to get more information and updates about the proposed Ontario COVID-19 paid leave days.'

'The province continues to visit workplaces to ensure they are adhering to COVID-19 safety requirements. Since the beginning of 2021, occupational health and safety inspectors and multi-ministry teams of provincial offences officers have conducted more than 21,900 COVID-19-related workplace inspections and investigations across the province. During these visits, more than 17,260 orders

and more than 520 COVID-19-related tickets have been issued, and unsafe work related to COVID-19 has been stopped 35 times.'

'As the Ontario government continues to do what is necessary to control the spread of COVID-19, it remains vital for the federal government to secure more vaccines sooner and close the loopholes in border restrictions that will continue to allow new, more contagious variants to enter...'

Our government recognizes the importance of paid sick days in the fight against COVID-19. We also recognize the federal government, like in so many other countries, is in the best position to deliver the program.'

But the Ontario NDP have a short memory. First, they supported federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh's push for 10 paid sick days. They later flip-flopped, calling the federal government's paid sick days "useless."

From the start of the pandemic, our government's message has been clear: If you're sick, stay home. The Ontario NDP want Ontarians to believe something different. They want people to believe other provinces are duplicating the federal paid sick day program. That is not the case. The NDP want people to believe every other province is using the pandemic to make permanent changes to their sick leave policies. That is not the case.'

Speaker, we all want to vaccinate more people faster, but across Canada, that depends on a reliable and increasing supply of vaccines from the federal government.'

Across the country, all governments have recognized that paid sick days play a role in reducing the spread of COVID-19.'

We also recognize that in Canada, paid sick days have historically been the responsibility of the employer and/or union collective agreements. But the impact of COVID-19 has been brutal and far-reaching. That's why on July 16, Premier Ford joined our federal and provincial partners in signing a historic \$19-billion Safe Restart Agreement, which included \$1.1 billion to provide Ontario workers with 20 paid sick days during the pandemic. Under this agreement, the provinces would protect jobs, and the federal government would protect income. Through this program, the Trudeau government has acknowledged that over the past 81 years, more than half the time Canada has existed as a country, the federal government has been equipped to operate and manage employment support and sick leave programs.'

Under CRSB, workers receive up to 20 paid sick days to a maximum of \$2,000. To date, over 300,000 workers have applied to receive federal paid sick days benefits and there's still—I repeat this—\$695 million in funding left.'

Speaker, I was shocked to discover a few things when I visited [andreaorwath.ca](https://andreaorwath.ca): First, the latest news feed was from 2017 and, second, that there wasn't a single reference to the federal paid sick day program. Your responsibility as the MPP for Hamilton Centre is to make sure your constituents have the information they need to succeed. Whether or not you agree with the federal paid sick day program, your constituents have the right to know, and you have an obligation to tell them. If you live in an NDP

riding, please visit [canada.ca/covid19](https://canada.ca/covid19) to apply for the federal paid sick day program.

We all know that the federal paid sick day program has significant gaps. There are barriers to accessing this program, delays in accessing the money, and the program pays less than minimum wage. Compared to the CERB, the federal sick day program is cumbersome. But throughout the pandemic, the federal government has been a willing partner. That's why across the country, provincial governments have taken the position that working with the federal government to improve the paid sick day program that already exists is the best way to support Canadians. It's hard to understand why the Ontario NDP decided against protecting all Canadian workers with a strong national paid sick day program.

From coast to coast to coast, Canadians were disappointed that no action was taken in the federal budget on paid sick days. I think BC finance minister Selina Robinson expressed the national position best when she reported that she "was disappointed that the federal government chose not to do that and we're going to encourage them to move forward on" changes to paid sick days. "It is the best way to go. It is the most efficient way to go."

While we're all frustrated that improvements were not included in the federal budget despite \$100 billion in new spending, now is not the time, according to economics professor Mikal Skuterud, for opposition parties to play politics with paid sick days, as it is "contributing to confusion."

Last week, the Ontario finance minister wrote to the federal finance minister, Chrystia Freeland, proposing to double payments for all Ontario workers immediately. This would result in workers who are off sick receiving \$1,000 a week instead of the current \$500. If Ottawa accepts our proposal, workers would receive up to \$25 an hour for up to four weeks. Since the Ontario government will provide the extra money, this would cost the federal government nothing.

Last week, the member for Don Valley East said during the debate on his Bill 247, "The federal program provides, I believe, \$500, which works out to about, what, \$12.50 an hour—much below the minimum wage. So they have set a bit of a threshold to support the base, but this is a great opportunity for this government and for the Minister of Labour to actually step up and enhance that program."

Our proposal to the federal government does exactly that. It enhances the existing national paid sick day program and it's the simplest and fastest way to get workers the financial support they need. Topping up this program is critical and an important first step in fixing the gaps. It could also serve as a model for the rest of the country.

Our colleagues across the aisle should be reaching out to their federal counterparts to push these changes. In September, the federal NDP put out a news release that said, "NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh secured two weeks of paid sick leave for every worker in Canada." It only makes sense for the NDP to work with us now to improve the federal paid sick day program for all Canadians.

**1610**

Yesterday, Prime Minister Trudeau said, "Provinces need to look at the way to deliver sick leave directly through employers, which the federal government can't do."

We know that the federal government has delivered financial aid to employers to support their workers. It's called the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. When the federal government created the CERB to support workers, they loaded a cannon full of money and spread it across the country quickly and with few hoops for workers to jump through.

Yesterday, Canada's finance minister, Chrystia Freeland, said, "When Ontario is ready to mandate sick leave in provincially regulated businesses, as we have done for federally regulated businesses, we will be there to help." This statement says a lot about the federal government's view on paid sick days.

As everyone in this place knows, the federal government made changes to the Canada Labour Code which took effect on September 1, 2019. As a result of these changes, all employees working under federal jurisdiction are entitled to five personal days of leave, with the first three days of leave paid for employees with at least three months' service.

While the Ontario NDP undermined our efforts and the Ontario Liberals said nothing to their federal cousins, we improved the federal government, together with Premier Horgan in BC, leading up to the federal budget, to improve the sick day program for workers across the country. We are committed to working with other provinces and territories to improve the existing national paid sick day program to make it easier for workers to stay home if they're sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

We know that Canada is struggling to contain rising COVID-19 cases as the country undergoes a third, variant-driven wave of the pandemic. In fact, earlier this week, Dr. Theresa Tam confirmed that health authorities have so far detected over 78,729 variants-of-concern cases across Canada, and health experts have told us, "We have community transmission because we have international travel. These cases are seeding huge numbers of other cases."

Infectious disease specialists have told us that there are plenty of loopholes when it comes to border restrictions that have allowed the UK variant to become the dominant variant in Canada. Between April 4 and 10, 39 international flights landed at Pearson International Airport with confirmed cases of COVID-19. But it's not just international flights; we know that in the US, taxi and limousine services are seeing a boom in business from customers looking to come to Canada by land to avoid the hotel quarantine that applies to air travel.

We've seen the impact of Canada's Swiss cheese approach to border control. In BC, which has the largest outbreak of the Brazilian variant outside of Brazil, and in Ontario, where over 70% of daily cases in Ontario are variants of concern, we know these variants entered through our borders, both international and domestic, and

we know it's critical to make every effort to keep these variants out.

Across the country, we're asking people to stay at home, to keep their distance from those they love. We're locking down businesses and schools, and yet the federal government continues to let holiday-makers from the UK, Brazil, India, South Africa and China come into Canada. This is putting us all at risk. We need the federal government to start showing some leadership and help us by securing Pearson and every other airport in Canada accepting international flights.

The opposition day motion fails to mention that even NDP governments failed to maintain critical stockpiles of personal protective equipment and allowed N95 masks and other vital protective equipment to expire without making any effort to replace them. Years ago, British Columbia built a stockpile of masks, gowns and gloves to prevent front-line workers from a future pandemic. But at the start of the pandemic, when BC needed it, that stockpile was badly depleted. As recently as November, a union president in BC said that nurses in that province are also "under-supplied with critical personal protective equipment needed to keep them safe on the job."

I raise this point, Speaker, because it's disingenuous for the leader of the official opposition to suggest that an NDP government handled PPE supply—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me. I am going to have to ask the member from Burlington to withdraw the comment.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Withdraw.

At the federal level, we know the Trudeau government was warned a month before the pandemic-related closures began that it didn't have enough medical masks, gloves and gowns to weather the storm in the event of the pandemic. Materials were allowed to expire without being used or even donated, and then ended up in the landfills, and when the Public Health Agency of Canada was still mistakenly assessing the risk of COVID-19 to Canadians as low, the federal government sent 16 tonnes of PPE to China. Even the federal health minister said last April, "Federal governments for decades have been under-funding things like public health preparedness..."

"Obviously, governments all across the world are in the exact same situation."

That's why the Ontario government, the federal government and every other provincial and territorial government have shored up PPE supplies in the short and the long term, Speaker.

We launched a \$50-million Ontario Together Fund to help businesses retool operations to produce PPE. We invested \$23.3 million each to help 3M expand production, and we'll see 25 million masks delivered to the provincial government every year for the next five years. We invested \$450,000 to help Viva Healthcare Packaging to retool its operations and begin making three-ply disposable surgical masks. We invested over \$1.4 million in Mississauga-based Microbix Biosystems to expand production of COVID-19 testing supplies. We invested \$2 million to help Bracebridge-based Smart Safe Science to

produce 200,000 made-in-Ontario masks monthly to protect health care and front-line workers. We invested \$2.5 million to help Guelph-based Linamar Corp. retool their assembly line to manufacture ventilator components to produce 10,000 Ontario-made e700 ventilators.

Speaker, while the Ontario NDP want to create a permanent paid sick day program that will grow Ontario's structural deficit, resulting in impossible choices down the road, and the Ontario Liberals want to implement a permanent paid sick day program paid for by employers with no consultation and no regard for the small businesses and family-owned businesses who are struggling to stay afloat, while the Ontario NDP undermined our efforts and the Ontario Liberals said nothing to their federal cousins, we implored the federal government, together with Premier Horgan, in the months leading up to the federal budget to improve the sick day program for workers across the country. Ontario knows that the middle of a global pandemic is not the time to make permanent changes to sick leave policies without consultation or understanding of what comes next. Our focus must remain on defeating COVID-19 and providing supports to the families, workers, employers and non-profit organizations who are struggling.

As I said before, if the NDP leader doesn't like the federal program, she should offer real suggestions to improve the national program. She should stand with Premier Ford, Premier Horgan and other provincial and territorial leaders. She should put forward solutions that will strengthen the national paid sick day program for everyone.

Though we will not be supporting this motion, Speaker, I can assure workers in the province that we have their backs.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It's an honour to rise today to add the voice of the great constituents in London North Centre on this National Day of Mourning.

This conversation really is about doing the right thing. When someone needs our help, it should ignite a fire within us; the response should be automatic. The question remains now: How long has it been since Ontario declared a state of emergency?

Let me start by saying that we should not be in the situation that we currently find ourselves within the third wave. A great and prosperous province of Ontario has been laid low, and it's because this government was not prepared. We had the opportunity to learn from different jurisdictions. We had the opportunity to learn from wave 1 as well as wave 2.

Instead, despite the advice from the science table, the Premier opened up the province. He walked us right back into it and put us at grave risk.

**1620**

Historically, governments who prioritize the wealthy and insider friends—we look at wages and working conditions, and they become eroded. Governments are often full of rich people who make rich-people decisions.

They claim to stand shoulder to shoulder, and they do just the opposite.

You don't ask a construction worker to show up to work without the proper equipment to protect themselves. You don't ask a welder to do their work without a face shield or gloves. In this province, in COVID-19, we know that to protect workers is to give them the proper PPE, to give them vaccinations and to allow them to take a day off sick. This government has done just the opposite. You know, we've heard the Premier tearfully promise the best program in Canada, but the bar is incredibly low.

I'd also like to say that it is the height of irresponsibility and blind adherence to ideology to hear anyone from this government suggest that any MPP in this House, regardless of party, would not suggest a resource to their constituent who is struggling. In fact, it is such disappointing language and completely disrespectful to every single MPP who has ever had the honour to sit in one of these chairs. It's a shame.

Looking at a website as though that is the only means of communication really does not address our modern world, where there is social media—some MPPs choose to delete their accounts for a variety of reasons. There are also mail blasts. There are emails. There are telephone calls. But I can tell you that it would be very rare for a person who is struggling with COVID symptoms in Ontario to call their MPP at 5 in the morning to ask whether they can take a sick day off. And I can tell you that this Ontario government let all of them down, every single one of them.

I'd like to add into the record that we've also heard from faith leaders who have called upon this province to do the right thing. Bishop Todd Townshend, the Right Reverend, of the Anglican Church of Canada, wrote an open letter to the Premier. He states, "Early in the COVID-19 pandemic that has swept through Ontario, our essential workers were hailed as heroes by many people including the provincial government. These workers kept our grocery stores and pharmacies open; they ran the factories, warehouses and farms that supply our food, medications and basic needs. But while we expect these people to continue to care for our needs through this third wave and beyond, we as a society have not cared for them."

I'd also like to point out that there are a variety of ways, as mentioned in this motion, that we can care for Ontarians. That includes paid sick days, access to PPE, a vaccination strategy, time off for vaccinations and WSIB protections for all workers.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Speaker, the Conservative government has failed our St. Paul's essential workers and failed our front-line health care heroes—who, I might add, are predominantly women and are predominantly BIPOC folks, folks with lower incomes to begin with. And while we recognize today as the National Day of Mourning to honour the lives of workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illnesses on or because of their jobs, I must tell you that for essential workers who travel within and

outside of St. Paul's on packed buses, streetcars, trains or whatnot to get to their PSW, nursing, factory or warehouse shift, every day has been a day of mourning. Workers have mourned the loss of their colleagues, their clients, their patients, and some have mourned the loss of their very own family members. In fact, the PSWs I know call their clients their family.

Today, we mourn the workers who have died from COVID, the workers who have died by this Conservative government. This government has elected to play politics, to gamble with the lives of workers who have to go to work sick because they don't have paid sick days, while here in the Legislature, our Premier got to isolate at home to the tune of, what, \$800 or so a day. In fact, all of us in the building have paid sick days. We have paid sick leave. We don't lose a penny when we get our vaccinations. So if this is good enough for us, why isn't it good enough for all Ontarians?

Let me just say this: While the government waits and is in talks, as we've all seen, with the federal government, we have legislation on the table that was put forth that was introduced last year by our member from London West, Bill 239, the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act. I can't help but wonder how many lives we could have saved if last year the government had said, "Ah, this is the idea. This is the idea that the science table is supporting; this is the idea that doctors are supporting; this is the idea that essential workers are supporting; this is an idea that the Canadian PSW Network, SEIU Healthcare, Unifor, CUPE and all kinds of hundreds of thousands of essential workers are supporting. Let's get it done. Let's not play politics." Instead, they've denied our cries and our begging for paid sick days almost 30 times.

So I stand proudly representing St. Paul's and I stand proudly supporting our leader's motion recognizing, asking, begging for protections for essential workers. Every essential worker says the same thing: Respect us, protect us, pay us. It means protect them, get them the PPE that they need. It means ensure that they have paid time off work to get the vaccine so when the vaccine opportunity comes, they don't have to say, "Oh, gosh darn it, I can't go because I'm going to miss a shift." Meanwhile, they're running to a job that might just give them COVID.

We need action and we need it now, and I am hoping that this government will pass the legislation that is already on the books and ensure Ontarians have paid sick days. Let's not waste time dilly-dallying, talking with other government officials, doing research on other provinces when we have the answer right here in Ontario to solve the crisis that's happening in Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It's always a pleasure for me to rise in the House. I'm going to start my comments offering condolences on the National Day of Mourning to all the families who have lost loved ones before COVID and during COVID.

Like I said, it's a pleasure to rise, but I just got a notice that the Minister of Labour said he acted "decisively" on

paid sick days. That almost brings tears to your eyes, quite frankly, and I'll tell you why: We've had three waves—three. This third wave could have been avoided if he listened to the command table who warned him on February 11 that if we opened everything up too soon, we would have a wave worse than the other two. And what did we do? We made a decision to open up our patios and have people get back into the restaurants, even though the experts were telling this government very clearly, “Don't do it. Provide paid sick days and make sure people can take time off and get their vaccines.” The government didn't listen.

This one here just throws me: The minister says they acted decisively.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I want everybody to hear this, including my colleagues across who are talking: In three waves, 456,000 people have been infected with COVID-19. Equally, 6,000 people have lost their lives, many in retirement homes and long-term-care homes—our moms, our dads, our grandparents, our aunts, our uncles. And we acted decisively? Are you kidding me? I don't even know how you can say that. It might have been decisive if they did it a year ago in March—that would have been decisive—and brought in paid sick days, made sure that they were taken care of, made sure we had proper PPE. If we got by the first wave when we didn't understand COVID-19, you'd think we would have made sure that they had PPE, that we hired more PSWs and we gave them paid sick days off when they got sick.

1630

I had one—one—long-term-care facility, Mr. Speaker—and I know you're listening intently; I can tell. In one of my places, 100% of the residents got COVID-19; 100% of the workers got COVID-19—they didn't have sick days. That would have been decisively—if those 100 people had gone off work and got paid sick days. No, we wait 13, 14 months later to come up with a program. It makes no sense to me.

It breaks my heart because—and I may be wrong; I guess history will tell me. The doctors are a lot smarter than me. I came out of a plant. I came out of a factory. I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a doctor. But I'm smart enough to know that I'd listen to the experts, I'd listen to the doctors. That's what I would do. They told us very clearly, “This is what you have to do to save lives,” and we made a decision not to do it. And 13 months later, we're saying, “Decisively, we took action”?

I will say, around WSIB, if they've got extra money, let's take care of the people that—like mental health in the hospitals. Let's take care of the deeming—the people who are living in poverty. There are lots of things that we could do for workers.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Today is the international Day of Mourning. It is observed on April 28 of each year. This is a day when we remember workers who have been killed, injured or who suffered illness due to workplace-related hazards and incidents. The event began 37 years ago in my

community of Sudbury, and it became officially recognized by the Canadian Labour Congress in 1984. With the passage of the Workers Mourning Day Act in 1990, the day became a national day of observance in Canada. Since its inception in Sudbury, the observance has spread to over 80 different countries around the world.

April 28 was chosen because it is the day in 1914 when the Workmen's Compensation Act received third reading.

Usually, on this day, I would have gone to the Sudbury labour council and organized a ceremony. Then, we would have gone to United Steelworkers Local 6500 for lunch, and during the lunch, they would read the names of every miner who had died.

So I decided today to read the names of every health care worker who died of COVID-19. In alphabetical order:

—Bontu Abdulahi, 44 years old, a personal support worker from Toronto;

—Agary Akaekpuchionwa, a personal support worker in a long-term-care home in Ottawa and member of CUPE;

—Maureen Ambersley, 57 years old, a registered practical nurse in long-term care in Mississauga and member of SEIU;

—Brian Beattie, a 57-year-old nurse from London, Ontario, who worked in long-term care, and a member of ONA;

—Yassin Dabeh, 19 years old, a cleaner in a long-term-care home in London and member of LiUNA;

—Maria Flores, a personal support worker from London;

—Antonio Gaerlan, 54 years old, a housekeeper in Etobicoke and member of CUPE;

—Judy Hawkins, 64 years old, an activity assistant in long-term care in Windsor;

—Jean-Géthro Joseph, a personal support worker in Ottawa and member of CUPE;

—Christine Mandegarian, 54 years old, a personal support worker from Scarborough and a member of SEIU;

—Cristina Marasigan, 49 years old, a personal support worker from Newmarket;

—Arlene Reid, 51 years old, a personal support worker from Peel region and member of SEIU;

—Sharon Roberts, 59 years old, a personal support worker from North York, a member of SEIU;

—Leonard Rodrigues, 61 years old, a personal support worker from Toronto and member of Unifor;

—Sheila Yakovishin, 60 years old, a personal support worker from Windsor and member of Unifor.

Every single one of those health care workers' deaths could have been prevented, should have been prevented. This is Ontario. Ontario has one of the best health care systems in the world. We know infection prevention and control. We know how to don and doff PPE. But those workers did not have access to PPE. These workers did not have access to paid sick days. This is what my leader wants to change with this motion. This is why this House has to support this motion: so that we don't add to this list of health care workers who have passed because we failed them.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** It's my pleasure to rise, especially on the National Day of Mourning, and speak to our NDP motion, which is again calling on this Conservative government to implement provincial paid sick days, paid vaccine time, proper medical-grade PPE for our front-line and essential workers and to change the WSIB so that it recognizes and supports workers who contract COVID-19 through their work.

I'm just going to start by echoing something that our leader, Andrea Horwath, said just moments ago outside of the chamber here. She pointed out that 455,000 people have been infected with COVID-19 since the emergency was first declared. Nearly 8,000 people have died. I hear my colleague mention how the Minister of Labour says they acted decisively. You explain to me how 455,000 people got infected and nearly 8,000 people died in this province, and almost 14 months later this government, as our leader had said, capitulates and brings forward some form of paid sick days.

The only thing that is decisive are the numbers I just read out, the number of people who have been sick and the number of people who have died. For this government to stand over on that side of the House—especially the member for Burlington—and pat themselves on the back, saying that they're doing wonderfully and that everybody else is being obstructionist, that it's the federal government's fault, it's the opposition's fault—I want to remind the people on that side of the House, you have a majority government. You could move as quickly as you want to. You certainly moved quickly and decisively when you put an iron ring around the for-profit, privately owned long-term-care operators, to protect them from liability, as thousands of seniors died in those homes and thousands of workers got sick because they didn't have paid sick days and they didn't have the PPE they needed.

This government was in government long enough to ensure that there was a proper stockpile of PPE that wasn't expired, that we were producing our own vaccines right here at home, that we were manufacturing PPE right here at home. They want to stand up and take credit for it when places like factories in my riding, in my hometown—the auto workers at Ford that are under threat of losing their jobs started producing PPE. The government wants to take credit for that. When Hiram Walker pivoted and started making hand sanitizer, the government wanted to take credit for that. That was happening all across this province. They sat by and let GM workers lose their jobs, and then, when they were back in making PPE, this government wanted to take credit for it.

Speaker, this government is responsible for where we are now. This government is responsible for those 455,000 people who have gotten sick to date and many more in the days to come because they didn't act. They're responsible for the 8,000 people who have died from COVID-19. They didn't act decisively. They stood by and let us get to where we are today, and that is shameful.

1640

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. Gurratan Singh:** I rise today to talk about the need for paid sick days and to talk about the crisis that is happening in Brampton. The reason why I talk about Brampton is because Brampton is a city of essential workers who risk their lives every single day, going to work because they don't have the privilege to work from home.

We know the science; we know the facts; we know the numbers: that workplaces are one of the greatest areas of spread of COVID-19, and Brampton has seen a COVID-19 positivity rate of over 22%. It is ravaging our city. The health experts, the scientists, the public health experts have come together and they've said very clearly that paid sick days are a way they can stop the spread of COVID-19. It is a way that can ensure that people have the dignity to not go to work when they're feeling sick, to not spread the sickness and infect others.

I've heard and I've shared these stories in this assembly of people like the father of Radhika Gandhi, Kanaiya Gandhi, who got sick from COVID-19 while going to work and died from it. She herself, the daughter of Kanaiya Gandhi, said that paid sick days would have saved her dad's life.

Over the past weeks, we have seen people across Ontario, across Canada, call out for paid sick days. Last week, we saw the Premier come forward, and he said he was going to act decisively. He said he was going to bring in what he described as the best program anywhere in North America, bar none, for paid sick days.

After a week of waiting, Ontarians get far too little, far too late. Proposing three paid sick days at a time when we know it takes far more time for people to recover from COVID-19, to get tested for COVID-19—three paid sick days is nothing compared to what workers deserve in Ontario. We deserve better, we need better. Ontarians must continually be in a position now to be put in a precarious situation. They're not going to have the support system they need.

That's why I'm so proud of the NDP. I'm so proud of the leadership of Andrea Horwath and so proud of the fact that we're continuing to listen to the experts, to the science, and fight for permanent paid sick days. Because that's what workers in Ontario deserve. They deserve permanent paid sick days. That gives them the dignity to get tested, to stay home to ensure that they're not spreading the sickness, to get better from COVID-19. That's the kind of time commitment that people need from the government, not a measly three paid sick days. That is not what people need. That is not what the science is calling for. They're calling for permanent paid sick days to ensure that people have the support they need to stay home when they're sick, to stay home when they're getting tested, to stay home when they're having symptoms so they don't spread COVID-19 further.

The NDP is fighting for a better vision for Ontario. An NDP government would have brought in, far long ago, permanent paid sick days. An NDP government would have brought in the supports that workers need to stay home when they're sick. That is the Ontario that Ontarians

deserve. That is the government that Ontarians deserve. That is the progressive government that people deserve to ensure that they have the support.

When I think of the devastation that COVID-19 has wrought across our province, it truly tears my heart apart. To think of so much death that has happened across our province, so many sicknesses; that was all preventable. If the Conservative government had listened to the science, we could have avoided this. They walked us into the third wave. The NDP is going to continue to fight to make sure that Ontarians have the dignity to stay at home and have paid sick days when they're sick.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I am pleased to be able to join my colleagues on this side of the House today to demand that this government and this Premier take action to protect workers. And the list of actions is long. Workers need paid sick days—more than three—they need time off for vaccinations, and for non-essential workplaces to close. They also need generous financial support to weather the closure of their workplace.

My colleagues and I have raised these issues in this House many times before, as we're doing here today. We've been demanding simple, common-sense things like paid sick days for over a year now, and the majority of Ontarians are in favour of this as well. Outside of this House, people are astounded that this government will not protect workers when they need it.

With my time today, I want to raise the issue of mental health for essential and other in-person workers. Earlier this month, the government members voted against my bill, Bill 267, which was the access to mental health support for essential workers act. It would have given presumptive access to WSIB mental health benefits for all workers who were asked to keep working while the rest of us stayed home. That was an easy way to show workers in this province that you had their backs and an easy way to provide mental health benefits by using the existing workplace insurance system.

These are workers that have watched their residents slowly die in long-term care and hospitals; workers like the ones at Grace Villa in my riding, which had a horrible outbreak and that hadn't been inspected since this government took power. The workers in that home told me it was like a war zone. Tammy, a worker at that home, is currently on WSIB benefits for PTSD symptoms she experienced after working at Grace Villa during the outbreak. She shared that many other workers in that home, and in many other homes with outbreaks, have experienced mental health issues also from the pandemic. Health care workers everywhere are feeling burnout, and they are not the only ones.

We also have to consider workers who have had to deal face to face with frustrated and angry customers in retail settings, who are forced to implement this government's changing rules and what items are essential and what are not, and without the required PPE and other safety measures they need to stay safe. These are workers who

got COVID-19 at work and are suffering from PTSD, have had serious experiences but can't access the benefits.

That's Josie's experience. She's a grocery store worker here in Toronto. Josie shared her story from her workplace that had had a COVID-19 outbreak. She contracted the virus and was very sick for months. Soon after she received her negative COVID-19 test, WSIB cut her off, even though her doctor said she was still recovering and was suffering from symptoms of PTSD. For her mental health issues, Josie was not able to access WSIB benefits.

There are thousands of workers across Ontario who work in retail, food processing, pharmacy and other retail settings that had new burdens and stresses placed on them. We need to recognize the contributions of essential workers and have their backs.

As we speak, workplaces are still having outbreaks today. These workers were called heroes by this government, but they've been left to fend for themselves. This third wave of COVID-19 has been allowed to run out of control by the Ford government, and it has disproportionately impacted front-line workers deemed essential and the communities they live and work in.

Today is the Day of Mourning for workers who get hurt, injured or sick on the job. This government owes it to workers in this province to pass this motion today and finally support them.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to stand in the House and speak on behalf of the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane, and today to support our party and our leader on this motion to provide better benefits and paid sick days to the workers of this province whose families are being devastated by COVID-19.

Today is the Day of Mourning, the day when we mourn the dead and fight for the living. I couldn't think of a better day to be having this debate, except it should have been last year.

The Day of Mourning has a personal connotation for me. My father died in a farm accident. I attended my first Day of Mourning ceremony after I was elected because farmers don't—it's a union thing. I took my mom. At that Day of Mourning ceremony, you could talk about your family member. My mom told my dad's story at that ceremony, and that made an incredible difference for her.

We need to respect the Day of Mourning. That's one of the reasons why we're fighting for the living, fighting for people who don't have paid sick days, fighting for people who have to go to work with symptoms because they can't afford not to. That's why this debate is so important.

**1650**

Farming is a very dangerous business, and it's dangerous for a reason that a lot of people don't really understand. Families live on farms. It's different than any other workplace because it's also a residence. We got word that an eight-year-old boy died on a farm in Timiskaming yesterday. On behalf of the Legislature, our hearts go out to the family, our hearts go out to the farm family, our hearts go out to all those who have felt that pain and are going to feel that pain.

I'm incredibly honoured to be able to relay that in the Legislature of Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate? Further debate?

I recognize the official opposition leader.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I rise on my right of reply to the debate that occurred this afternoon on the NDP motion to ask the government to step up and do what was necessary to make the changes to start protecting workers' lives in this province. It is, as we all know, the National Day of Mourning, April 28, when we acknowledge and remember all of those folks who lost their lives at work, who were injured or who contracted diseases at work. We remember all of them, and we also recommit to fighting for those workers who are alive. Mourn the dead and fight for the living: That's the phrase that we use on the Day of Mourning.

This particular Day of Mourning is quite a poignant one. You saw my colleague from Nickel Belt read through a list of health care workers who lost their lives to COVID-19, fighting on the front lines of this pandemic in hospitals, long-term-care homes, home care and other settings.

I think it's pretty clear that the government could have and should have done everything in its power to stop the virus from spreading and to protect people from contracting COVID-19, but they didn't. The experts, for a year now, a little more, perhaps, have been urging the government to do a number of things, but particularly paid sick days and paid vaccination time off for our front-line essential workers, for workers in this province. But the government just couldn't bring themselves to do it.

Let's not forget, this is a Premier who took away the two measly paid sick days that it took the Liberal government 15 years to put in place. The minute this government got elected, one of the first things they did was to get rid of the two measly paid sick days that many of us fought so hard and so long to have implemented here in Ontario. Then our Premier—another not-very-proud moment for Ontarians—basically said that the federal program wasn't something he supported.

The government is trying to rewrite history. We've all watched as they rewrite history and claim that that the Premier led the charge for the federal program. We all know that that was not the case. In fact, we have clear quotes where this Premier said that he doesn't support it, doesn't support the federal program. Now, of course, in the rewriting of history, they claim that he was leading the charge, that it's a great program, and people should be able to rely on that program instead of paid sick days, even though we all know that that program has not been an effective program. To this very day, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Labour here in our province are still trying to claim that that federal program is a good program, when we know that it doesn't work for workers and doesn't work for working people.

But it wasn't just New Democrats or labour unions that were urging the government to bring paid sick days to Ontario. Pretty much the only people who didn't think paid sick days were the right thing to do were the

government. Their own cabinet and their own government caucus didn't believe that paid sick days were the right thing to do, while we had pretty much everybody else saying that they were.

This leader of the Conservative Party that we currently have, the current Premier, diverges from the last two leaders of the Ontario Conservative Party. Both Mayor Brown in Brampton and Mayor Tory in Toronto, the last two leaders—well, maybe not the last two; there was one other in between whom I haven't spoken to about this, but certainly those other two Conservative leaders know and knew how important paid sick days are to the people of Ontario and the working folks in their communities. But unfortunately, this Premier disagreed. The mayor of Mississauga agreed that paid sick days were the right thing to do. In fact, numerous municipal councils and municipal leaders have been joining in the call for paid sick days in Ontario and paid vaccination time off. But for some reason, the Premier of this province thinks it's a waste of taxpayers' money. That's how he described paid sick days: "a waste of taxpayers' money."

So, Speaker, here we are today, after municipalities, mayors, public health experts, science table advisers, the government's own go-to guy, Dr. Williams, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, have all been calling for the implementation of paid sick days in our province—and our motion calls for that; it calls for a couple of other things as well. But what we saw today was, once again, a stunning misstep by this government.

I want to thank all those people, really, who have been fighting for paid sick days for such a long time. I think people have done an enormous amount of work pushing and pushing to try to get this government to do the right thing here in Ontario. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce and other business organizations have all said that we needed paid sick days to stop the spread of COVID-19 in essential workplaces. Why? Well, today, Speaker, we had 3,480 new cases of COVID-19. These are the ones that were caught by testing; who knows how many there really are out there? Twenty-four more people died of COVID-19 in our province, and it could have been prevented.

The ferocity of this third wave could have been curbed had the government of Ontario—the Premier of Ontario, the PC government of Ontario, the Ford government—done the right thing from day one. But they didn't listen to expert advice all the way along. They didn't pay attention to recommendations from the science table. Let's just recap what some of those were: paid sick days off for Ontario workers; paid vaccination time for Ontario workers; making sure that really non-essential businesses are closed, which didn't happen; and making sure that we had an ability for people to get vaccinated in the hot spots. All of these things have been ignored by the government for months.

Today, in a major misread of their responsibility, this government still refused to bring a significant paid sick day plan to our province. A worker who has COVID-19 needs more than three days of paid sick time to be able to put food on the table, to be able to continue to pay the rent.

How this government thinks that folks who are suffering from COVID-19 or have been asked to self-isolate for 14 days are going to be able to pay the bills on three days of paid sick days is beyond me.

It just shows once again how out of touch this government is, how the folks on that side of the Legislature have no clue as to what everyday families have to do to get by in this province, how they struggle already, how they already have a hard time paying the bills in this province in some of those essential workplaces that we so often rely on in terms of getting us through this pandemic, while the rest of us stay home safe and protected.

My colleagues have talked about the fact that we can all take paid sick time off. The Premier is doing it right now: He's getting paid to self-isolate. He's not getting docked from his pay. I sometimes think that none of these members on the government side have ever had to earn a wage in terms of jobs. Have they ever had to actually go to work and earn a wage? I don't know the answer to that. It certainly seems like that's not the case. Having said that—

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** On a point of order, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me. Point of order, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** I wanted to rise before when the member was charging another member, the Premier, with uttering a deliberate falsehood, but this time, she is insulting all of us—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you. That is not a point of order. Back to the member—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Order over here, please—on the opposition side.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The government can try any tactics they want to reduce the voice of the opposition, but I think what they've realized this time is that that voice is backed up by literally millions of Ontarians. Today, the government again shortchanged the people of Ontario, shortchanged working people with a half-baked attempt at trying to stem the political fire—not the COVID fire; the political fire is what this government is interested in. They want to stop the political fire. Instead, they've made it worse, because everybody recognizes that three days of paid sick time off is not enough for Ontario workers.

I just want to say that the Premier claimed that he was going to be making an announcement about the best paid sick days plan in all of North America. Boy, is that a fail. In New York state, they have 14 paid sick days guaranteed by their government—14 days of paid sick days. That's what this government should have done. Shame on them that they didn't.

Let's pass this motion and do the right thing by Ontarians.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The time for debate on the opposition day motion has expired.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 5. 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 vote being required, the bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which members may cast their votes.

Prepare the lobbies.

*The division bells rang from 1704 to 1734.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The vote was held on opposition day number 5.

**The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 16; the nays are 30.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I declare the motion lost.

*Motion negatived.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, I'm fairly confident that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Agreed? I heard a no.

There being no further business this afternoon, this House is recessed until 6 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1736 to 1800.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** It's now time for private members' public business. Orders of the day?

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson):** Ballot item number 77: Mr. Phillips.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** No business having been moved, orders of the day?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### MOVING ONTARIANS MORE SAFELY ACT, 2021

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 28, 2021, on the motion for second 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** It's a pleasure to be here tonight to be able to speak to this bill and for our night sitting tonight. This bill, Bill 282, is the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, or more commonly referred to as the MOMS Act. I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation for introducing this important piece of legislation to address serious problems in our province.

There is a problem in our province. It comes in the form of stunt driving, street racing and other dangerous behaviours that are done behind the steering wheel. Ontarians

continue to put lives in danger because of reckless behaviour. Action needs to be taken to protect individuals and families, and increase the general safety of roadways.

Speaker, let me go over some stories to paint a picture of why stronger measures are needed now. To put this into perspective, as we know, stunt driving is 50 kilometres above the posted speed limit. In February of last year, a 20-year-old man was charged by the Halton police for racing a motor vehicle, stunt driving and speeding. A race started in Oakville, and it stretched all the way to Milton, with drivers reaching speeds exceeding 130 kilometres an hour where the road maximums were 80 kilometres an hour.

I'm sure we all remember that unbelievable headline you may have heard last year, when an 18-year-old driver was driving 309 kilometres an hour in Burlington. A speed of 309 kilometres is 191 miles an hour, 85 metres a second, 280 feet per second. This is absolutely irresponsible. The driver only had a G2.

In February of this year, three drivers from Mississauga were charged with stunt driving in Oakville. The vehicles were clocked travelling 129 kilometres an hour in a 60-kilometre zone. I cannot even imagine the insurance rates that the individuals have to pay because of their decisions—and they should.

Speaker, flying at these speeds puts lives in danger. Not only is the driver at risk but also the family of four in front of them, a pedestrian, or workers who are working on the side of the highway to keep our highways safe. Do you know what I think when I read these stories of street racing and stunt driving posted in the news? “Thankfully, nobody died. Thankfully, the police did not have to deliver heartbreaking news to a family.” Policing is a tough job, and striking someone with a car when performing reckless actions only makes it harder for our first responders. It also can destroy families.

At speeds of 150 kilometres and higher, it is harder to control a vehicle and make quick decisions. As I have said, stunt driving and racing put lives in danger. Imagine for a minute a construction crew fixing our important infrastructure, trying to get the job done for the morning commute. A car driving over 100 kilometres an hour, when it is darker and visibility is low, approaches the worksite and slams into it. Construction crews are at risk of being harmed on the job because of careless drivers.

It's not only limited to workers. Bikers and pedestrians who are outside getting exercise are also at risk of being hurt as a result of careless drivers. I am seeing more Oakville residents outside to exercise, to get some fresh air and biking, particularly through this COVID pandemic right now. Bikers are filling the roads, and adding a new sense of security is vital to keep them safe. Protecting those who work and use our roadways is of paramount importance.

Speaker, with the COVID pandemic and the stay-at-home orders, which have caused many Ontarians to work remotely, we are not witnessing the traffic we used to. I'm sure everybody here notices it. Driving into the Legislature

every day right now is much quicker than it normally used to be. On the highway today, traffic is still significantly below normal. With highways having fewer vehicles travelling between destinations, the more risky behaviours and speeding we are likely to see. Unfortunately, this is actually occurring.

Police laid 796 stunt driving charges in Toronto between March 1, 2020, and December 31, 2020, an increase of 222% over the same period in 2019. Since 2015, there has been an upward trend, reaching a significant peak in 2020. There were well over 1,600 charges in stunt-driving and street-racing offences in 2020. In fact, roadside driver's licence suspensions from street racing increased an additional 52% between March and August 2020, compared to the same period in 2019. In all, the number of driver's license suspensions issued at roadside for street racing or stunt driving increased 130% between 2013 and 2019.

Additionally, young drivers aged 16 to 25 represented only 19% of drivers involved in collisions between March and June 2020 but accounted for 42% of drivers involved in collisions with a police-reported speed of 50 kilometres or more above the posted speed limit.

A tougher stance against individuals who are recklessly putting individuals and others at harm is needed now. I will always stand up in the Legislature and support bills that make our roadways safer.

Speaker, I'd like to get to the heart of some of the changes that are being proposed in this important piece of legislation. If passed, this bill will increase the penalty for those who engage in stunt driving. Currently, under the Highway Traffic Act, drivers who are found street racing are subject to an immediate seven-day vehicle impoundment and an immediate seven-day driver's licence suspension at roadside. In one of the earliest examples I used, of the three Mississauga drivers, their consequence was having their licences and vehicles impounded for a week. This bill, if passed, strengthens the existing measures. Specifically, it amends section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act to increase vehicle impoundment to 14 days and to increase the driver's licence suspension to 30 days. Confiscating a vehicle for longer will provide the individual with ample time to reflect on their actions.

Further, as it stands now, drivers convicted of street racing are subject to a post-conviction driver's licence suspension of up to two years for the first conviction and up to 10 years for a second conviction. Let me state again: Under the current law, upon a second conviction, the maximum licence suspension is up to 10 years.

Amendments are being made to section 172 to provide for escalating post-conviction driver's licence suspensions of, for a first offence, one to three years; for a second offence, three to 10 years; for a third offence, an indefinite suspension that may be reduced at a later date, to be established at regulation; and for fourth and subsequent offences, an indefinite driver's licence suspension.

Speaker, someone who routinely stunt drives may never get the message when they have their licence

reinstated. On a third offence, there is a real possibility that an indefinite suspension can occur. It's essential to note that, even on the second conviction, the maximum is staying the same. We are further defining the suspension window for the conviction.

This graduation system will not affect the fine and the possible jail time associated with the offence. Someone convicted of stunt driving is still liable to a fine of not less than \$2,000 and not more than \$10,000, or imprisonment for a term of not more than six months, or to both.

#### 1810

What is being altered is a more extended time period for suspending a driver's licence and impounding a vehicle. Tougher consequences mean further discouragement of the reckless actions that can happen on the road.

We are also making our roads safer by changing the limit for stunt driving. Our proposed changes would create a lower speed threshold for stunt driving charges of 40 kilometres per hour or more above the speed limit on roads where the speed limit is less than 80 kilometres per hour. Going 40 over is still an excessive speed that puts lives in danger, but we are making it easier to identify reckless drivers by lowering the limit on some roads. Packaged together with the previously mentioned changes, we are getting dangerous drivers off the road for longer.

The news stories I shared fortunately did not involve the death of anyone or cause bodily harm. However, unfortunately, not all stories do end that way. This is why our government is introducing a new requirement for individuals who are convicted of stunt driving causing bodily harm or death. There should be no easy road for an individual convicted of stunt driving causing bodily harm or death. Specifically, we are introducing a requirement, if passed, for drivers convicted of stunt driving or street racing or careless driving causing bodily harm or death to complete a driver training course before their licence is reinstated.

Street racing is not the only type of driving that can harm others. Aggressive drivers who are speeding and swerving between lanes make it difficult for other motorists to get to their destination safely. I'm sure we all witness this when we drive: someone speeding behind us, making tight lane changes and almost rear-ending every car on the road.

Steps to curb this aggressive behaviour are needed. A car crash not only affects those involved, but it causes traffic for everybody else. If passed, this bill is increasing the fines for speeding, currently between \$3 and \$9.75 for each kilometre over the posted limit, to \$6 to \$19.50, and introducing a new minimum \$40 fine for speeding. The new fines would continue to be doubled in construction zones and community safety zones.

We are proposing to establish a default speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour on a highway not within a local municipality or a built-up area. The result of speeding will be paying a larger fine. I hope this acts as a further disincentive for would-be speeders on our roads.

Mentioning construction workers earlier in my discussion, I would like to turn my attention to the proposed changes in this legislation that will result in a safer environment for this group of workers that keep our roads safe. When we pass a construction crew, we normally see a worker step out onto the road for the purpose of stopping traffic, using the slow and stop signs. This is the traditional way of stopping drivers to ensure safety of the crew. However, we have the technology and capability today to make this safer for construction workers.

This proposed legislation, if passed, would permit the use of automated traffic control devices known as automated flagger assistance devices as an additional traffic control tool in construction zones to reduce the need for construction workers to physically stop traffic themselves. These devices do the exact same thing that a worker does, which is stopping cars. Now a worker can redirect their efforts elsewhere onto the construction site.

This change may appear to be minor, but when we are overhauling existing penalties for offences with the overall purpose of making our roadways safer, this change will increase safety for an important group who work on our highways and roads.

Another amendment will also permit vehicles used in highway construction to back up on a divided highway if the movement is made safely. Currently, section 157 of the Highway Traffic Act only permits emergency vehicles and road service vehicles to back up on a roadway or shoulder of a divided highway.

The proposed amendments in the legislation that increase worker safety do not only relate to construction workers. We are also expanding the ability of transportation enforcement officers to conduct investigations safely. When responding to emergencies or investigating a collision, the existing rules only allow police officers to direct traffic around their work. In particular, Speaker, the proposed changes also provide transportation enforcement officers, who routinely encounter emergency situations or are requested to attend a collision investigation, with the authority to close a road, operate on closed roads and direct traffic during their regular duties. This is an additional way we are ensuring that work is being conducted safely on our roadways.

We are also proposing amendments with regard to streetcars. While my riding does not have streetcars, driving to the get to the Legislature has only shown the problems that riders on streetcars experience. On the streets of Toronto there are careless drivers who are not abiding by the rules and jeopardizing the safety of streetcar riders. When approaching a streetcar, motorists must pass streetcars on the right unless they're driving on a one-way road. Also, at streetcar stops, drivers must stay at least two metres behind the rear doors when passengers are getting off or on.

Stopping behind a streetcar is equivalent to stopping behind a school bus. Yet it amazes me that people continually violate these rules. We see cars passing streetcars on social media and in the news while the doors are open and

passengers are walking on and off. We are making it more effective to hold these individuals responsible for placing the health and safety of others at risk.

Notably, if passed, this legislation would introduce an automated camera enforcement framework to allow photo evidence of vehicles that illegally pass streetcars on the left or streetcars with the doors open to pick up or drop off passengers.

Speaker, residents in my riding commute into Toronto and they use the streetcars to get to their destination, and I'm proud to support this bill that will increase protections for their health and security.

When dealing with speeding tickets and stunt driving, there are thousands of different organizations that can be involved such as insurance, construction companies, unions, trade associations, police, among others. I'm glad that many associations, police agencies and other groups have come out in support of this legislation. It is being viewed for its primary purpose, which is improving safety.

Speaker, my riding is proud to have the headquarters of LiUNA Canada. The workers belonging to this union are working tirelessly to build critical infrastructure across Ontario, such as roads and bridges. I want to share a quote from Joseph Mancinelli, who is the VP and regional manager of central and eastern Canada of LiUNA:

"On behalf of the Labourers' International Union of North America (LiUNA), we applaud Minister Mulroney for taking steps to add a critical layer of protection for the men and women who build and maintain Ontario's roads. The health and safety of LiUNA members remains of paramount concern and this is an essential step forward to enhance road safety and will continue to ensure that the hard-working and highly skilled members of LiUNA and Ontario's workforce are protected."

Further, Scott Butler, the executive director of the Ontario Good Roads Association, had this to say about the proposed changes:

"The Ontario Good Roads Association applauds the steps the Ontario government has taken to address road safety concerns and issues with the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act. This is an important first step towards realizing a future where Ontarians are no longer fatally injured or seriously hurt on our roadways."

This bill is being recognized as a progressive and vital piece of legislation for families and workers in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, the title of this bill is appropriately named. There are many important changes being proposed in this legislation that will make our roadways safer. We are accomplishing this by taking dangerous drivers off the road for longer. Those who threaten the safety of others have no place on our roads. We are requiring that an education course be completed for drivers convicted of causing bodily harm while stunt driving. Through all of our proposed changes, Ontario is taking strong action to protect young drivers and vulnerable road users by introducing new measures to target street racing, stunt driving, and aggressive and unsafe driving.

The safety of our police, construction workers, motorists, is not a partisan issue. We all want to ensure that drivers get to their location safely, and that is a significant focus of this bill. There's no need for drivers to be speeding 100 kilometres over the posted limit, and they will face stricter consequences if this legislation is passed. These changes will make it safer to get to work, get to school and bike on roads.

**1820**

I'd like to give a special thank you to the Halton police for the work they are doing keeping the roads in my community safe.

As I wrap up my time, I would like to say I will proudly be supporting this bill in second reading. I call on all members opposite to join this side of the House and support these changes. We need to show Ontarians that we do not tolerate actions of motorists that risk the safety of others.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my time. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** It's time for questions.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to ask a question about the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, and hopefully, I'll have time to speak to it later tonight.

Near the end of his remarks, the member from Oakville talked about road safety for police, construction workers and others who are using the roads. I'm wondering if the member could explain to the House why there is really nothing in this bill to address the substandard, privatized winter road maintenance currently in place.

What we've seen across the province, especially in the north, is the fact that when we have snow and we have these privatized companies, they are not fulfilling their obligations. Oftentimes, they don't even have the equipment—when they place a bid on the job and are awarded it, there's no ensuring that they actually have all the tools they need in order to provide the service they're saying that they can provide. Can the member maybe point to something in the bill that addresses that?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** This bill, as is implied, is focused, obviously, on making roads safer from the perspective of stunt driving and aggressive driving, making commuters and bikers safer. I'm sure we all experience this. I drive to the Legislature every day; I used to take the GO train when it was more applicable pre-COVID. But just about every single day I come down here, there is some driver who's coming at 150, 160 kilometres right behind me, with no thought to who is in the car in front of them, what kind of accident they're going to cause. This bill is going to make people think twice about driving irresponsibly like that.

It's great to have so many stakeholders that support this bill. There are dozens, actually. I don't have time to read them all right now, but we have dozens of supporters, from the Ontario Good Roads Association to police forces.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** It's a pleasure to stand and offer a question to the member across the aisle on the government bill, the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act. My question is with regards to the crackdown. It seems that this bill is hoping to crack down on aggressive high-speed driving. That's certainly something that I would want to crack down on, too. But I'm wondering, what's the contradiction between that objective and the objective of increasing speed limits in other areas to 110 kilometres an hour?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you for the question, to the member opposite. There's no contradiction. The Ministry of Transportation has put some pilots in certain regions on four-lane highways, where there is a speed limit trial for 110 kilometres. That's a little different than driving 160, 180 kilometres on the QEW or on the Gardiner Expressway, or somebody passing through—in your riding, you have lots of streetcars; I'm sure you see many times that people drive right through that.

I've witnessed way too many injuries and deaths in my life with car accidents and people driving irresponsibly. I don't see a contradiction in that. I think this bill is a first step. It's not going to eliminate these people driving the way they are, but it's a step in the right direction.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** A CAA survey found that 90% of respondents wanted some form of provincial oversight over the towing and storage industry. Can the member highlight how the MOMS Act speaks to this?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member from Burlington for that. That's a very good question, actually. We only have a certain amount of time to talk, so we can't talk about everything in our speech. But she is correct in that this legislation will also be starting to regulate the towing industry more effectively, and I think that's really critical. Unfortunately, as much as there's a lot of great tow truck drivers out there—and they serve a very, very valuable purpose to our community—there have been some who have unscrupulously taken advantage of people, and unfortunately some criminal activity associated with some of that. This bill will bring in regulations to certify that industry to make it more accountable and, I think, safer for the folks in Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Mr. Kevin Yarde:** It's an honour to rise and speak to this bill, the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act.

As we all know, in Brampton, we pay the highest auto insurance in the country, if not in the province, as well—over \$3,000 a year. We're in a pandemic right now where—the member just mentioned a second ago—there are fewer cars on the road. He agreed with that.

So my question to the member is, why is there nothing in this bill related to auto insurance—to lower the auto insurance rates for constituents of Brampton and across Ontario, when there are fewer cars on the road, fewer accidents on the road, fewer claims, and insurance companies are raking in billions of dollars? I'm wondering why they didn't put anything in here with regard to auto insurance, to relieve the pocketbooks of Ontarians,

because a lot of them have lost their jobs or are on CERB, and they're having a hard time paying for their food and for their rent—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Question?

**Mr. Kevin Yarde:**—their high auto insurance.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member opposite for bringing that important issue up.

As was mentioned in my speech, this is a bill that's focused on road safety. It's the Ministry of Transportation that is focused on protecting the lives of Ontarians, who are driving their cars, who are walking, who are riding their bikes. That's the focus of this bill. We want to ensure road safety for construction workers.

And to your point, while there are less cars on the road today, unfortunately, what that has caused is a lot more stunt driving, a lot more aggressive driving. I've noticed it myself. This is the reality of the situation. Unfortunately, it's bringing out the worst in some people. This pandemic has brought out a lot of good in people and, unfortunately, a lot of bad, and you see it on the roads every day right now—people driving without concern for the other drivers. So this bill is focused on trying to make a dent in that negative behaviour.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** As the Associate Minister of Transportation highlighted in her leadoff remarks, every three and a half hours in Ontario, there's a speed-related crash that results in an injury to a road user.

So can the member explain how the MOMS Act proposes changes to address these type of crashes and why it's important to reduce these types of incidents?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member for the question.

Again, this legislation is focused on road safety—the safety of individuals who are out walking, the safety of construction workers, the safety of police officers. He is correct that there are serious incidents of aggressive driving and accidents every couple of hours in this province—and believe me, those are the accidents. Just go out on the highways here and you can see it every minute.

This bill, if passed, I believe, will make a dent and put consequences to the negative behaviour of those individuals who are putting our lives and our families at risk.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions?

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** I'm glad again to stand, on behalf of our constituents in St. Paul's, to speak on the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act.

I've got a question here, as well. The member across the aisle had mentioned that there are less cars on the roads because of the pandemic. Certainly, in a place like St. Paul's or even in a place like Eglinton–Lawrence, where the member across the aisle presides, we have a lot of cars and a lot of traffic still happening. So I guess I'm just wondering, what is in this bill that's going to help keep us here in Toronto safe—where the streets are still very packed, there's plenty of non-essential construction still

happening and, of course, there have been delays on public transit projects? How is all of that congestion keeping us safe in midtown?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** To the member from Oakville for a final response.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member opposite. I think in terms of Toronto specifically, there's one major piece of this legislation which will keep people safe, and that's basically the cameras with the streetcars. There are so many people who are driving by right now,

not paying attention, and I think this is so critical. I've seen it so many times, people driving by, and I've witnessed people get hit. I've witnessed people biking. I had a good friend of mine who was hit by a car—that wasn't in Toronto with a streetcar. But as it pertains to the streetcars, I think that will help—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Response? Thank you very much. There isn't any further time for questions and responses.

*Report continues in volume B.*





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

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

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna Skelly  
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Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto  
Randy Hillier, Jane McKenna  
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa  
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly  
Peter Tabuns  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts  
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David Piccini, Jeremy Roberts  
Amarjot Sandhu, Dave Smith  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner  
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey  
Guy Bourgouin, Stephen Crawford  
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover  
Mike Harris, Sheref Sabawy  
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner  
Daisy Wai  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

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Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson  
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe  
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Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh  
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
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Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi  
Michael Mantha, Jim McDonell  
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff  
Kaleed Rasheed, Donna Skelly  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
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Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller  
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts  
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai  
Jamie West  
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Jeff Burch, Amy Fee  
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden  
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth  
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche  
Natalia Kusendova  
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Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson  
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth  
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin  
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park  
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh  
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell