

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

F-67

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

F-67

**Standing Committee on  
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Protecting the People  
of Ontario Act  
(Budget Measures), 2021

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament  
Friday 16 April 2021

**Comité permanent  
des finances  
et des affaires économiques**

Loi de 2021 visant à protéger  
la population ontarienne  
(mesures budgétaires)

1<sup>re</sup> session  
42<sup>e</sup> législature  
Vendredi 16 avril 2021

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Chair: Amarjot Sandhu  
Clerk: Julia Douglas

Président : Amarjot Sandhu  
Greffière : Julia Douglas

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## CONTENTS

Friday 16 April 2021

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Protecting the People of Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2021, Bill 269, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2021 visant à protéger la population ontarienne (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 269, M. Bethlenfalvy..... | F-3283 |
|--|--------|



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES  
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES**

Friday 16 April 2021

Vendredi 16 avril 2021

*The committee met at 0900 in room 151.*

**PROTECTING THE PEOPLE  
OF ONTARIO ACT  
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2021  
LOI DE 2021 VISANT À PROTÉGER  
LA POPULATION ONTARIENNE  
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)**

Consideration of the following bill:

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

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting to order. We're meeting today for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 269, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes. We have MPP Thanigasalam with us in the committee room, and the following members are participating remotely: MPP Arthur, MPP Cho, MPP Fife, MPP Hunter, MPP Kanapathi, MPP Mamakwa, MPP Piccini, MPP Roberts and MPP Babikian. Julia Hood from legislative counsel will be here on the call to assist us with our work, should we have any questions for her.

To make sure that everyone can follow along, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Since it could take a little time for your audio and video to come up after I recognize you, please take a brief pause before beginning.

A copy of the numbered amendments filed with the Clerk has been distributed electronically. The amendments are numbered in the order in which the sections and schedules appear in the bill. If a member indicates that they wish to move additional amendments, we'll take a short recess to allow the member to consult with legislative counsel to draft a motion. Are there any questions before we start?

Seeing none, as you will notice, Bill 269 is comprised of three sections and 10 schedules. In order to deal with the bill in an orderly fashion, I suggest that we postpone the first three sections in order to dispose of the schedules first. This allows the committee to consider the contents of the schedules before dealing with the sections on the commencement and the short title of the bill. We would return to the three sections after completing consideration

of the schedules. Is there unanimous consent to stand down the three sections and deal with the schedules first? Agreed. Thank you.

Before we begin schedule 1, I will allow each party to make some brief comments on the bill as a whole. Afterwards, debate should be limited to the section or amendment under consideration. Are there any comments? MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you, Chair. Thanks for allowing me to say a few words about Bill 269. As you will see, the official opposition didn't even try to amend this bill because we feel so strongly that it misses the mark on addressing the pandemic and the economic and health care crisis that the province is experiencing. There is no additional funding to address or recognize that the iron ring that was supposed to be around long-term care had been addressed, and this is even more worrisome, as we heard yesterday the government is now contemplating moving patients back into long-term care because the hospital system is so overstretched right now.

As you know—it won't be a surprise to any of the members on this committee—myself and my colleagues felt very strongly that paid sick days should have been recognized in the official budget to address the ongoing workplace outbreaks that continue to haunt the people of this province. Nor did the budget even build in the concept of paid vacation time off so that those workers who are essentially holding the province together—the budget did not recognize in any meaningful manner their need to have time paid so that they could actually get vaccinated, so that they could stay healthy and so that the economy can stay open.

I think for us, as well, and it won't surprise the members of this committee at all, but not addressing the she-coversy and the strategic investments that are needed to ensure that women are part of the economic recovery for the province—this was an opportunity for the government to really demonstrate that they understood what was happening in the province of Ontario to women and that our economic recovery will not be fulsome if women are not part of that, and that includes a very strong investment in early learning and care.

I'm going to be attending a protest later on, where child care workers are still fighting for vaccine priority status, and they are essentially holding the system together. And on the business front, businesses across this province really lobbied this government hard for tax deferrals and

tax relief and forgiveness, because they have borne the brunt of this economic downturn—and with further measures happening actually on this day.

So we obviously are not going to be supporting the budget. This will not surprise the members of the government at all. Quite honestly, this entire process was truncated. I've never seen a budgetary process that had such tight timelines, so much so that people during a pandemic didn't have enough time to respond to even appear before committee to share their views.

One delegation in particular left me feeling, obviously, very worried for the province. It was when Sheila Block from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said that she's absolutely ashamed that Ontario is letting, allowing, permitting—intentionally—some of the most essential workers in the province to fall by the wayside. We should know better by this time in our history.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'll conclude my comments. As I've said, this is not a budget that meets the needs of the people of this province, it does not invest in the people of this province, and it certainly does not address the pandemic that is overcoming this province.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Cho.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you to all members for being here this morning to go through clause-by-clause on a very important budget. Obviously, we are unfortunately not through COVID-19 yet, and so this budget is the third phase of our response to COVID-19 and outlines historic spending to protect our health and to protect our jobs. That spend is up nearly \$187 billion, \$51 billion in direct response to COVID-19, and obviously, not the least of which—the biggest priority, actually—is the \$16.3 billion dedicated to protecting the health and safety of Ontarians, \$5.1 billion dedicated to increasing hospital capacity during these difficult times.

We are absolutely focused on making sure we protect Ontarians, the most vulnerable, the most affected, and this budget has gone through many consultations—consultations that began at the beginning of this pandemic and have continued throughout this very difficult year.

I will say, Chair, through you, that I appreciate the efforts of the independent members. With limited resources, they put forward amendments. I understand that the job of members is to represent constituents, and we're not going to see eye to eye on everything. But I appreciate that the members of the independent Liberals made an effort to put forward amendments. Though we don't see eye to eye, they put forward some suggestions.

We don't see that from the official opposition here. We see nothing. We see no attempts to put any amendments in writing. What we hear from the members is that they disagree, or, "This should be in the budget. That should be in the budget," but we see no attempt whatsoever to constructively contribute to that conversation. It's a little disappointing and a little surprising to hear that the stance of the official opposition is simply to say, "We don't like this budget, so we're not going to even try to improve this budget."

For us on the government side, we know this isn't the priority that Ontarians want politicians to focus on. The

priority is to protect their health and safety and their jobs and get through this pandemic. So this budget outlines a series of supports. We moved quickly because we need to get those supports into the hands of parents, individuals, our front-line health care workers and our small businesses. I look forward to getting through clause-by-clause, I look forward to getting the relief to the people of this province, and I look forward to getting through COVID-19 once and for all.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thank you, everyone. It's important, when we have a budget in front of us to consider the spending of \$176 billion, that we really give it the thoughtful consideration that it deserves. This bill, Bill 269, falls short. It does not address the things that Ontarians need and expect from their government.

One of the biggest gaps that I see in the government's presentation of the budget is that a billion dollars has been set aside for spending, but it assumes that the pandemic will end. I don't know where that information is coming from, from the government, and why there aren't resources set aside in case we have to continue to vaccinate, in case we have to continue to wear protection and in case we have to continue to do certain measures to keep our population safe. I believe that that was a missed opportunity by the government.

There are other aspects that I feel are also missing. I tried in many ways to ask the committee to allow the independent FAO, the Financial Accountability Officer, to present his views on the budget to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, because it is one of the roles that he has as an independent officer of the Legislature, to be able to offer a view and a perspective that is based on the facts. We were not able to agree on that. The government did not want to hear that as part of these proceedings, and I think that is unfortunate because there are insights and information there that could have informed our discussion at committee.

**0910**

The projections that are in this budget—I have concern with that as well. There is not a path to balance that's based on the realities that we're seeing on the ground when it comes to keeping up with the rate of inflation and the needs of our population as our population ages. That's a concern. It would have been actually very good to hear from the FAO about his views on these things so that we can plan and ensure that we don't have deep program cuts to things like health care and education that the people of the province depend on.

When you look at education, another area in the budget that is not really meeting the needs, there was a joint statement put out by the teacher unions, the federations that represent education workers. I just want to quote it, because I think it's important. It states that it "fails to even keep education spending in line with the rate of inflation and enrolment growth," the natural enrolment growth. Per-student funding in the province will decline without more investments.

There is a call for the government to lower class sizes, to enhance safety measures and to provide mental health

supports and supports for students with special education needs. Those requests were not met in the design of this budget. In fact, what the government is proposing is a cut to public education. At a time when we need to invest in public education, when our students and staff have had such a difficult year in our education system, we should be investing and thinking ahead to what are the needs, what are those new mental health needs. We heard about the increase in the need for mental health support for students and young people, and it's not reflected in the education budget, the realities that they are facing.

When it comes to long-term care and to home care, it is also shocking to me that in the midst of a global health crisis, of the crisis of a generation, we don't see steps being taken to protect long-term care, to add the required amounts for the four hours of care and to address the staffing concerns.

Yet we now hear that the government is going to rely on these 6,000 empty beds in long-term care as a place to off-load patients from hospitals. How is that going to happen when the staffing needs in long-term care are so concerning for the existing people who reside there? How are they going to cope? I would say families would be very concerned, given the fact that that was the place where they lost so many thousands of their loved ones in long-term care because there were not adequate protections for PPE, protections for staff, and enough trained staff in those facilities. It just doesn't seem like a likely solution, but it is up to the government to provide that assurance to the people of this province that their loved ones are going to be cared for, whether in hospital or in long-term care.

There is also a concern that there are aspects to this budget that were completely left out. There was no green recovery in the budget. It was an opportunity to perhaps put forward solutions as targets for greenhouse gas. How are we going to meet those targets? Why was it not reflected in this budget? So there's a huge missed opportunity for a green recovery.

When you think about post-COVID, you want to integrate the environment into the economic recovery and make sure that those two things are tied together. That was just simply not done, and it reflects the path that we've seen from the government to not have an environmental plan. The Auditor General has said that there's no plan in place for Ontario to meet its target commitments.

In terms of housing, there was no funding for social housing; once again, another missed opportunity. When we look at the impact of the pandemic on the housing sector and the incredible pressure that is being experienced there by families for housing affordability and the need for secure housing, that was just not addressed in this budget. It's a huge missed opportunity once again.

I also want to say that the consensus around what essential workers and front-line workers need has been established. I did hear the government members say that with this budget, in preparation, they consulted and they listened to people. I don't know that, because this committee was not brought in as a resource to do consultations and to hear in an independent, all-party way from people

across the province about their budget and what they wanted to see as priorities. Instead, the government had private meetings and meetings that were not open to everyone to be part of to get information for the budget, and that's unfortunate because we need good ideas.

One of the great ideas that has been brought forward to help essential workers is paid sick days, and there was just no provincial support for that in this budget. We know that employers [*inaudible*] paid sick days. We know that there is a federal government program that people have to apply to and wait, and there are many front-line and essential workers that cannot do that. They have to meet their obligations for their families, pay their rent, put food on the table, and they just don't have the space in which to do that. So the call for paid sick days was to make it possible for people, when sick, to stay home, knowing that this is helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community and that people would not fall short of their obligations for their families because they'll have the continuity of pay.

The former Liberal government had put in two paid sick days and, unfortunately, when this government took office, they eliminated the two paid sick days that were in place, and those worker protections. We see now in the midst of the pandemic how important it is to have paid sick days, and we should be doing even more during a pandemic, not less, and certainly not turning our backs on Ontario's essential and front-line workers by not offering those protections that public health officials across many municipalities—I know here in Toronto, the GTA, that public health, as well as the municipal leaders, the mayors and chairs, have called for sick days because that is how we reduce the spread, particularly in hot spot communities where many essential workers are exposed. Certainly in my community in Scarborough, it is a big problem that we don't have this workplace protection in place.

Small and medium-sized businesses have not seen this government be responsive. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business was very disappointed in this budget and recognized that the government has not expanded the eligibility to include businesses that were forced to close or who lost income as a result of the closures and the lockdowns, and this is now our third one. An example would be a dry cleaner, for instance.

#### 0920

I actually want to speak up, because even a taxi driver came up to me, saying, "Why are we not eligible, given the fact we were so hard hit by this pandemic?" He said, "It's just unfortunate that the government has not recognized our contribution and has not allowed us to be able to participate in the small business grant as well," given how hard hit they have been. So more supports are needed.

I certainly recognize that the government expanded one of the sectors to include the tourism and hospitality sector, which is important. But there are many others that were not included, yet we are just automatically renewing the grant that was given in the first round. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce presented to this committee and

agreed with me that that puts at a disadvantage those many, many companies that were not able to participate, for whatever reason, in the first round and did not have an opportunity to fairly participate in the second round, because, though I wrote to the associate minister of small business and to the Minister of Finance about extending the application deadline from March 31, the response by the government was to extend it by one week, to April 7—after delivering a budget on March 30, which gives people basically one week. That's not enough time to even inform them, let alone for them to turn around and apply.

We know that there were challenges with the application process, particularly early on with the portal. I heard from many small businesses that could not smoothly complete their application through the portal or there were glitches in the portal. And so giving people just a week to be informed that they could participate is just not enough time. I really urge the government to rethink that approach. We want our small businesses to survive and we want them to do well.

We also know that there are many small businesses in the Black community, Indigenous community, other diverse racialized groups who are small business owners, who were not even able to hear about the grant or participate in the grant, despite the fact that their businesses are suffering and many are closing. So this is a way to help those businesses as well.

I would also say that there is a real issue and that is women's economic recovery and the she-covery. This has been a constant. I've been talking about this for a year now—over a year, really—when I looked at the labour market assessment and how women lost more jobs and were slower to regain jobs month over month. Then we see that women are now abandoning the job search altogether and not participating in the labour market. We see many studies that really affirm the concern. The government has an opportunity to step up in this area and to ensure that women are able to participate fairly in the labour market.

I think that one of the big areas of gap here is that there is no comprehensive plan from the government for child care in terms of new funding. The funding that is in place is temporary and does not go far enough to meet the huge demand and the huge need for child care that is affordable, accessible and quality. People like Janet Yellen, the US Secretary of the Treasury, and Chrystia Freeland, the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, have said that child care is about the economy and those two things are tied. So where is Ontario on this in terms of stepping up and supporting a comprehensive child care program that gives families the supports that they need and, in particular, allows women to have the choice to participate fully in the labour market without having to worry about their families?

These are some of the aspects that I really felt needed to be included. I believe that the government should be spending in a way that meets the priorities and meets the real needs of the people of this province.

Young people, for instance, have had an outsized impact because of the pandemic. The youth unemployment rate, the FAO tells us, is at 22% in Ontario. Where is

the program for youth? Where is the program to create entrepreneurship opportunities this summer so that they can save for post-secondary education? Where are the grants to post-secondary education so that we can see the student financial aid meeting the need and the demand and getting into the hands of those young people who need skills building and retraining to take on the challenges, post-pandemic? There just doesn't seem to be foresight and vision there at all. The amount that was given to universities and colleges does not meet the need that the universities and colleges said that they required to close the [inaudible], and it's going to cause pressure.

I also want to say that the training grant—when I saw it in the budget, I was encouraged because we need to invest. This was something that I certainly had proposed to the government as areas that they should invest in, and so I was pleased to see it in the budget. But then I realized it was for one year. That's not nearly far enough, when you think about the [inaudible] and the need to re-skill, post-pandemic.

Also, it's based on a tax credit. People have to find, particularly low-income people—you know, some of those women that we talked about who want to retrain and re-skill, who have been extraordinarily impacted—forcing them to come up with thousands of dollars up front and wait a year to be able to see a tax credit on their taxes for that retraining is a burden that many people cannot afford. It does not meet the need for those low-income workers who you really do want to give the opportunity to re-skill, upskill and retrain so that we can have as productive a workforce as possible in Ontario. Why wouldn't we do that?

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** One minute.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Also, lastly, I have to talk about innovation. It's something that I feel is very important. There were ideas that were presented from Communtech and others on the need to recognize that post-pandemic innovation is going to be something that is important, and the government should be investing in our centres of excellence, in our incubators and our hubs for tech innovation and other types of innovation, and be inclusive of Black, Indigenous, other racialized communities and women in that investment in innovation.

I want to say thank you to the Chair for giving me the opportunity to speak to Bill 269.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Thank you so much. Any discussion? Seeing none, we'll go to the schedule now, schedule 1 of the bill.

There are no amendments to sections 1 and 2 of schedule 1. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Agreed.

Is there any debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 1, sections 1 and 2, inclusive, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Schedule 1, sections 1 and 2, is accordingly carried.

Shall schedule 1 carry? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Schedule 1 is accordingly carried.



We'll now move to schedule 2. There are no amendments to sections 1 and 2 of schedule 2. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Agreed.

Is there any debate? Are the members ready to vote? Shall schedule 2, sections 1 and 2, carry? All those in favour? All those opposed? It's accordingly carried.

**0930**

Is there any debate on schedule 2 as a whole? Shall schedule 2 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Schedule 2 is accordingly carried.

We'll move to schedule 3 now. There are no amendments to sections 1 and 2 of schedule 3. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Agreed.

Is there any debate? Are members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 3, sections 1 and 2, inclusive, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Schedule 3, sections 1 and 2, inclusive, carried.

Any debate on schedule 3 as a whole? No debate. Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 3 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Schedule 3 is accordingly carried.

We'll move to schedule 4 now. There are no amendments to sections 1 to 4 of schedule 4. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Agreed.

Is there any debate? Seeing none, are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 4, sections 1 to 4, inclusive, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Schedule 4, sections 1 to 4, inclusive, carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 4 as a whole? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 4 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Schedule 4 is accordingly carried.

We'll move to schedule 5 now. There are no amendments to sections 1 to 14 of schedule 5. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Agreed.

Is there any debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 5, sections 1 to 14, inclusive, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Schedule 5, sections 1 to 14, inclusive, carried.

Any debate on schedule 5 as a whole? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 5 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? It's accordingly carried.

We'll now move to schedule 6. For schedule 6, section 1, I see there's an independent amendment. Can I have a motion? MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I move that the definition of "regional partner" in section 1 of schedule 6 to the bill be amended by adding the following clause:

"(e.1) a non-profit corporation, including any non-profit corporations that represent the interests of youths, Black and Indigenous people and other people of colour,"

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** A motion has been moved by MPP Hunter. Is there any debate? MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I thought maybe Mitzie was going to speak to it first. Mitzie, did you have your hand up?

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Hunter, do you want to speak to your motion?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Sure, I can speak now—or is this the right time?

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Yes.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Okay. Sorry about that.

This is, as I was saying, an opportunity to be inclusive in our budget in terms of economic recovery. The Ontario non-profit association has asked for that. We know that youth and Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities need an opportunity to be supported in terms of the outsized effects that the pandemic and the economic downturn have had on them. So I was looking, in my amendments, for an opportunity to make this a more inclusive recovery and to be able to reflect that. This schedule gives us an opportunity to do that, so I do hope that the government members and all members, and the opposition members, can support these amendments that I have submitted today.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Fife?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Obviously, MPP Hunter has brought forward an attempt to try to make this actually an inclusive bill, and I appreciate your efforts. I want to let you know that.

We'll be supporting the language change, but we still have, obviously, serious concerns about the lack of investment to address racism on the whole in Ontario. They didn't even mention in the budget speech the whole anti-Asian racism issue, which obviously you've spoken about, MPP Hunter, as well as the official opposition.

Language does matter, and so we're happy to support it at this level, but it doesn't change the actual intent of this piece of legislation, which actually misses the mark, as the YWCA has said, particularly for women and gender equality. But we will be supporting the amendment that you brought forward, so thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? MPP Cho.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I want to thank MPP Hunter for bringing this amendment forward. I think it's very well intended. I am a person from a racialized community. My family is suffering through anti-Asian racism today and over the last year. I know that the member is very passionate about fighting discrimination and racism in all its forms, so this is very well intended.

But I do want to just elaborate on the other initiatives that the government is working on. This particular schedule refers to Invest Ontario. This is an organization established to promote the province as a key investment destination, to make Ontario more competitive and send a strong signal to investors around the world that Ontario is open for business. We know when COVID-19 is behind us, it's world economies that will be competing for an edge, and so Invest Ontario is very much designed to be a

one-stop shop for businesses and investors, and it's going to move with the speed of business. The aim is to drive greater economic growth, support strategic domestic firms and attract businesses, as I said, from around this world. This is job creation in Ontario.

While it's going to initially focus on important sectors for COVID-19 recovery, in areas where Ontario has a competitive advantage, such as advanced marketing, life sciences and technology, when it comes to the non-profit sector, our government is looking at other means and has invested in other means—for example, the Ontario Together Fund, adding another \$1 million to the \$2 million in funding to support francophone and non-profit organizations; in terms of looking at a task force chaired by the Minister of Finance and the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues to look at inclusive economic growth, making sure that that's achieved. The mandate of this group is to seek and address the unique and disproportionate economic barriers that women face, particularly in an economy that will look different after COVID-19. This work will be informed by diverse voices from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors as well.

To address anti-Black and Indigenous racism, we have the Black Youth Action Plan: \$60 million over three years to help these important initiatives to create culturally focused parenting initiatives, mentorship programs, support for young people's wellness and programming that takes preventive measures, and investing in community outreach.

So to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, I really appreciate this amendment. It is incredibly well intentioned, and I want to work with that member to achieve some of these goals. But I do believe that it is a separate initiative from this particular schedule, so I won't be supporting this amendment, albeit well intentioned, because our government is absolutely working on the outcomes that the member is seeking to achieve.

I look forward to having those discussions in the future to make sure that we do just that. Thank you to the member for bringing this forward.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? Seeing none, are the members ready to vote on MPP Hunter's motion? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed? The motion is accordingly lost.

Shall schedule 6, section 1, carry? Any debate? Seeing none, all those in favour, please raise your hand. Schedule 6, section 1: All those opposed? It's accordingly carried.

**0940**

We'll go to schedule 6, section 2. Is there any debate? Seeing none, are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 6, section 2, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed? It's accordingly carried.

We'll now go to schedule 6, section 3. I see there's an independent amendment. Can I have the motion, MPP Hunter?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I move that section 6—am I reading the right one? That section 6 of schedule 6 to the bill be amended by—oh, sorry.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Section 3, MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Yes, sorry about that, Chair. I double-sided my printout.

I move that section 3 of [*inaudible*] to the bill be amended by adding the following clauses:

“(a.1) to consider issues of gender equality in securing investments described in clause (a) and ensure that the investments have an equitable impact on women, Black and Indigenous people and other people of colour;

“(a.2) to consult with regional partners who represent women, Black and Indigenous people and other people of colour and ensure that their interests are reflected in the investments described in clause (a);”

I'd like to speak to it. Is that okay, Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Just for clarification, can you repeat the first part where it says, “I move that section 3”?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I move that section 3 of schedule 6 to the bill be amended—

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** That's good. Thank you so much.

Is there any debate? MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Yes, Chair, I respectfully want to say to the members of the government that women, youth and racialized groups have been waiting to be recognized in this very section as a place to invest, a place to scale up, a place to create jobs, and this is an opportunity for the government to be inclusive in its language to make that clear. So I would urge the government members to utilize this opportunity to do so as it relates to Ontario's economic recovery and to not limit it.

I want to say that the Ontario non-profit association has also explicitly asked to be included. The way that certain legislation and programs are put out oftentimes excludes non-profits and, therefore, they're not eligible to participate, despite the fact that their activities are creating employment and are driving important needs of the community as well. This is an opportunity to be inclusive in our economic recovery.

There were very few ways of providing ideas and suggestions into the bill as it was drafted, so here is an opportunity for us to accept these amendments and to really be true to the word of the members of the government who claimed to want to support women and youth and racialized groups. Well, now is a chance to demonstrate that.

I also want to say, Chair, that I'd like to have this vote recorded at the appropriate time as well.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Thank you. Further debate? MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thanks once again to the member, MPP Hunter, for bringing forward an amendment. I have to say, I feel like you've captured a gap that the government has left open around Invest Ontario. I'm trying to address the same gap in Supply Ontario with my private member's bill to actually diversify the supply chain. So if you have an opportunity to correct something that is missing or that has been intentionally left out, then why not take the opportunity to address it?

But I feel like the government is just digging in on these things and not willing to accept the fact that—while Invest Ontario is at its very early inception, why not build it right, right from the very beginning, and address the gender inequality and the gaps around inclusiveness at this stage of the legislation? As I said earlier, language does matter, and omitting that inclusive language signals to the community and the province as a whole that the government is not interested in moving in that direction.

We will be supporting the amendment from MPP Hunter, and hopefully I'll also get your support on my private member's bill to make the supply chain more diverse and inclusive.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Piccini.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Can you hear me?

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Yes.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thanks, Chair. I just wanted to offer my input on this and Invest Ontario. Coming from a background where I've worked extensively internationally, standing up different organizations, trade associations with an import/export eye, I know the importance of just standing this agency up. I think, going forward, as the agency is stood up, we'll have some important conversations about what that agency can do and how it will target specific initiatives. MPP Hunter, I think your input on that will be critical going forward.

I think to some of the big budget measures, though, and measures that we've put in place to increase competitiveness in a real holistic manner—I know expanded OSAP eligibility, for example, for Indigenous institutes is going to give important Indigenous communities in my riding, from the chiefs I've worked with and into the north, a strong and supportive step forward. This is in a culturally responsive manner that I have spoken to in the House at length. I think that's really critical. That's a meaningful commitment that we have made in keeping with the principles of reconciliation.

Also, going forward, as well, I think as someone being very passionate about the trades—the reason I connect this, Chair, to Invest Ontario and to growing our manufacturing capabilities abroad, is a number of the important initiatives Minister Dunlop has done around empowering and unlocking that competitiveness, that skilled trades gap, but really doing it in a manner that empowers women. That's been really welcomed, I know, by a number of schools—Minister Dunlop has joined me in my riding—and empowering young women to get involved.

This is really important if we're going to be a leader. We're not only going to attract investment but have the workforce behind that attracted investment to support really standing up that capability. So I think this is a really important step in the right direction. I think to steps this government has made with Ontario Together, for example, that have really pre-positioned us for success. I really do think that post COVID, we will be firing on all cylinders, unlocking that skilled trades potential—a fast-growing Indigenous youth population, many of whom are in my community—Alderville, Hiawatha—really empowering them forward with expanded OSAP eligibility and things

of that nature. As that ties into the invest strategy here in the schedule, I'm very confident for a strong recovery.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? Seeing none, are the members prepared to vote on MPP Hunter's motion? All those in favour, please raise your hands—MPP Hunter, do you have a comment to make?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Yes, I just wanted to make sure that the vote was happening in a recorded way.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Yes.

#### Ayes

Arthur, Fife, Hunter, Mamakwa.

#### Nays

Babikian, Stan Cho, Kanapathi, Piccini, Roberts, Thanigasalam.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** It's accordingly carried—oh, sorry; I apologize. It's lost.

#### 0950

Shall schedule 6, section 3, carry? Is there any debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Schedule 6, section 3: All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Accordingly carried.

There are no amendments to sections 4 and 5 of schedule 6. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Agreed. Is there any debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 6, sections 4 and 5, inclusive, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? It's carried.

We'll now go to schedule 6, section 6. I see there is an independent amendment. MPP Hunter, can I have a motion, please?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I move that section 6 of schedule 6 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“Required members

“(1.1) The board of directors must include at least,

“(a) one member who is a woman; and

“(b) one member who is Black, Indigenous or a person of colour.”

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Is there any debate?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Yes, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** With all that has been said today—and I appreciate all of the comments—I do want to say, just as I have a chance to speak to MPP Piccini, as the former CEO of the Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance, one of the agencies that I helped to found is Toronto Global, which is responsible for the coordination of foreign direct investment. It has replaced the former Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance and is doing an excellent job on attracting investment to the GTA, working with local municipalities. So I have a lot to say about the role that investment attraction plays in our province and a lot of years of experience directly with that,

which is why I am suggesting that it is at the governance level where transparency and inclusiveness are most important.

When you think about who is leading and guiding the organization—and Invest Ontario is going to have a very fundamental front-forward-facing ambassador role of what our province represents. Our province should be representing, in its business activities, the full diversity and strength of our province, which is the people of Ontario. That includes women. That includes Black people, Indigenous people and people of colour. They should be at the table in terms of leading this organization.

In all of our discussion today, this amendment—you can go further than just one woman and one person of colour on this board. You can definitely go further, but it's setting a minimum. So I do very much hope that the government can see this as something that they can stand by, the sentiments that have been shared today of being an inclusive province, and actually put it in the legislation in a way that will make sense to people in terms of, yes, we want to be inclusive in our governance and in our leadership for Invest Ontario.

I thank you, and hopefully all members will support our amendment. Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? MPP Cho.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Before I get to the debate, I think the Clerk is aware that the livestream has gone down.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Yes. We're working on it.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Okay, perfect. I thought I'd just flag that.

Again, thank you to the member from Scarborough—Guildwood for the amendment. I think once again it's well intended, and I spoke to some of the reasons why I think it's well intended. Again, I look forward to working with that member to make sure that we are a more inclusive province. That includes in our boards, agencies and commissions. I think great strides have been taken to achieve that goal. A lot of work here in this particular agency has also taken place.

I want to just point out some of the members of the board of directors. They are absolutely leaders in the business community. These members were chosen based on their individual merit, their private sector experience and their business development experience. They are the right individuals to attract large-scale, high-quality investments that will drive our economy forward.

I'm really proud that the current board includes two female members with the breadth of experience, board chair Elyse Allan and board members Janet Ecker and Anna Barrett. The board also features Dr. Ajay Virmani, who is the president, CEO and founder of Cargojet, who is also a person of colour. Not only am I proud that these individuals are on the board, I want to stress that a lot of work is being done to make sure that we are looking at both merit and inclusivity, that diversity that represents the people we serve in this great province of ours.

Our government is always going to continue to factor in diversity when choosing future Invest Ontario board members, in a manner that's consistent with existing requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive. But I'm encouraged to see the member take this as an important initiative. Perhaps when we are done with clause-by-clause, we can have further discussions on advancing achievement of these sorts of outcomes, because I do agree that it is extremely important that we have solid representation of the people of this province in our agencies, boards and commissions.

Having said that, and for my reasons earlier, I won't be supporting this amendment.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I just want to make we have a recorded vote.

#### Ayes

Fife, Hunter, Mamakwa.

#### Nays

Babikian, Stan Cho, Kanapathi, Piccini, Roberts, Thanigasalam.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** The motion is accordingly lost.

I see there is another amendment, an independent amendment—MPP Cho?

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I'm just wondering, until the live feed is fixed, out of respect for the viewers at home who might want to follow along with the proceedings, may I request a recess until the technology is repaired? I feel it's important for those watching at home to hear the debate and exchange between members.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Sure, if there is an agreement from the members of the committee to recess. Let's recess for 10 minutes and then we'll come back after 10 minutes to see if it's fixed—at 10:10.

Thank you.

*The committee recessed from 0959 to 1010.*

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Good morning and welcome back. Before we move to our business, I would like to do an attendance check. MPP Smith, can you please confirm your attendance?

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I am MPP Dave Smith, and I'm in beautiful God's country, Peterborough.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Thank you.

Members, we have checked with the broadcast team, and the issue is at the service provider's end. They are aware of the issue and they are working on it, but in the meantime, the TV broadcast is still going on—it is unaffected—so I would recommend that we continue our business. We don't have a timeline for when that livestream will be fixed, but they are working on it. Are the members agreed that we continue? Agreed. Thank you.

We were on schedule 6, section 6. MPP Hunter was about to move a motion, the fourth amendment. MPP Hunter?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Sorry, Chair. I'm just getting my headset in. Can you hear me?

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Yes.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Okay.

My fourth amendment: I move that section 6 of schedule 6 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“Importance of gender equity to be considered

“(2.1) The minister shall consider the importance of gender equity in designating the chair of the board of directors.”

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Thank you.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Should I speak to it, Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Yes, please.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** So this is once again on the governance side and the transparency side. It is important for the government to establish in legislation and in this bill the importance of gender equality and equity. It's an opportunity for the government to do so, and this is about go-forward, as well, so that the expectations of the board are there.

It is about considering it so we understand from a human rights and equity perspective. We want to have fairness for everyone to be considered, and we want to make sure that women are considered as part of that as well, given the fact that there is not an appropriate representation of women on boards, both for government agencies as well as the private sector across the province. There is an issue there that needs to be addressed in terms of gender equity, and here is a strong opportunity for the government to take a step to address that and to correct that gap.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? No debate. Are the members prepared to vote on MPP Hunter's motion? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? It's accordingly lost.

Any debate on schedule 6, section 6? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 6, section 6, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? It's accordingly carried.

We'll now go to schedule 6, section 7. I see there is a government amendment. Can I have a motion? MPP Cho.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I move that subsection 7(1) of schedule 6 to the bill be amended by striking out “Subject to the minister's approval” at the beginning.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Thank you. Any debate? MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'm just wondering if the government can give us some sense as to why they've made this amendment.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Cho.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you, MPP Fife. The motion should be considered in conjunction with motion 6 below, the next motion, because it retains the requirement for the minister to approve the board's bylaws.

This proposed amendment to section 7 will enable the agency to deliver on its mandate to operate at the speed of business. Currently the minister is required to approve all of Invest Ontario's board of directors' resolutions. There are several practical concerns with maintaining this approach, including the volume of potential resolution on administrative items and the ability for the corporation to operate in an efficient manner.

We need this agency to move quickly. We need to make sure we achieve the recovery and economic growth goals, as I said, because the world will be competing for that outcome once we are through COVID-19, and this helps that agency to achieve its mandate in a more efficient and expedient manner.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thank you very much for the explanation as to why the change has been put forward. I would say, though, that there would be some concerns, ultimately, around accountability and oversight. I only mention this because there have been some instances where, ultimately, somebody has to take responsibility for the actions of the board and of the chair. We've seen this through the Auditor General's reports on a number of other government agencies, so I think that we would have some—I'm just articulating the fact that we have some concerns with that.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? MPP Cho.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Yes, thank you, MPP Fife. That's a very valid point, and I want to make it clear that there is still accountability. The minister will still have to approve the bylaws, as listed in the next motion that we'll see. But absolutely, accountability is hugely important. I know the member from Waterloo has sat on other committees where we've seen what a lack of accountability can result in, and that is absolutely not what we want to have happen here. We just, as I said, need Invest Ontario to move at the pace of the private sector and be as efficient as possible.

To put the member's concerns at ease, yes, the accountability is a huge concern and I think this will be clear in the next motion.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? Are the members prepared to vote on MPP Cho's motion? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? It's accordingly carried.

There's amendment number 6 from the government. Can I have a motion? MPP Cho.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I move that section 7 of schedule 6 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“Minister's approval

“(2.1) Despite subsection (1), bylaws of the board are subject to the minister's approval.”

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Is there any debate? Are the members prepared to vote on MPP Cho's motion? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? It's accordingly carried.

Is there any debate on schedule 6, section 7, as amended? Seeing none, shall schedule 6, section 7, as amended, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? It's accordingly carried.

We'll now move to schedule 6, section 8. I see there's an amendment number 7, from the independents. Can I have a motion? MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I move that section 8 of schedule 6 to the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“Importance of gender equity to be considered

“(2.1) The board of directors shall consider the importance of gender equity in appointing the chief executive officer.”

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Any debate?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Chair, if I may, I can't stress enough the discussion that we're having today—we can make it concrete. All members seem to agree that gender equity is an important aspect, and here is a chance to make that concrete in one of our very critical agencies that is globally facing as well as representing the Ontario business community. So this is, of course, respecting human rights and equity. We want to have a consideration of that importance built into the legislation, which is a strong signal that inclusivity and equity is an important aspect.

1020

We know, as we've said time and time again, that the she-covery is an important part of Ontario's economic recovery. We cannot leave women behind. Women have a lot to contribute, and this is a clear signal in support of that. So I hope that all the members, in particular the government members who carry the majority on this committee, are able to support this suggested amendment to enhance this legislation and make it more inclusive and gender-balanced.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Piccini.

**Mr. David Piccini:** I just wanted to say that I know when we start to look down the road to when we get this agency stood up, in the important MOU and terms for the agency, all of which are still to come—the minister's MOU and important measures with respect to competencies and subsets from different industries; all of these important pieces that define a good board—MPP Hunter, you've raised, obviously, considerations that must be factored in. PA Cho has spoken about some of the numbers to date. But I think in the fall, when that goes forward, that's a good opportunity to have this and to put it in writing and in a specific directive that is there and that doesn't go anywhere—that's there and stands the test of time after that. So I hope, MPP Hunter, we can stay engaged at that point in the fall.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Thanks, MPP Hunter, for bringing forward yet another amendment to try to make schedule 6 more inclusive, prior—listen, I think the intent of the amendment is very clear, because you may not be the government on a go-forward basis, and so if you can build it right at the very beginning, then the government could signal to the broader community and the province as a whole that the intent always was for it to be inclusive. There have been some serious concerns around some of

the appointments at government agencies. You just have to watch who comes through that agency, who gets appointed, to indicate and to tell a story of how these things are actually happening.

I think, to date, you have not accepted any of the amendments from the independent member, which I am pretty sure she probably expected from the government, but this is an opportunity just to signal it right now. I referenced earlier that we're in the process of trying to do the same thing with Supply Ontario through a PMB. It makes more sense to actually make the entire process inclusive from the very beginning. I mean, it's 2021. This is a reasonable amendment to—we should all be looking at legislation and policy through a gender equity lens in this day and age. So we will be supporting the amendment.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? MPP Hunter?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I just wanted to add, I believe we should record our vote here as well.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** A recorded vote, yes.

Just to let the members know, the livestream is up now, just for your information.

Are the members prepared to vote on MPP Hunter's motion?

#### Ayes

Arthur, Fife, Hunter, Mamakwa.

#### Nays

Stan Cho, Kanapathi, Piccini, Roberts, Dave Smith, Thanigasalam.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** The motion is lost. Any debate on schedule 6, section 8, as a whole? MPP Hunter?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Sorry, Chair. I thought you were asking about the whole.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** No. Shall schedule 6, section 8, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

There are no amendments to sections 9 to 29 of schedule 6. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Agreed. Is there any debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 6, sections 9 to 29—MPP Hunter?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Sorry, Chair, really quickly, and you're not hearing—but I would like a recorded vote on this schedule.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** I haven't asked for the vote yet.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I just wanted to put that in because it sometimes goes quickly.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Sure. All right, so a recorded vote has been requested. Shall schedule 6, sections 9 to 29, inclusive, carry?

**Ayes**

Stan Cho, Kanapathi, Piccini, Roberts, Dave Smith, Thanigasalam.

**Nays**

Hunter.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** It's accordingly carried.

Any debate on schedule 6, as amended? MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thank you, Chair. I want to thank you for considering these amendments. I believe that the amendments were certainly put forward in good faith to this committee—that we have huge challenges when it comes to gender equity on boards and in governance in this province. When it comes to women's participation in the economy, we see that women have been most impacted by the economic recession and the downturn in the economy, and we see that the participation of women in the labour market is dropping.

This was an opportunity for the government to put in this bill and in this legislation strong language and signals around gender equity and inclusion. There has been a lot of really good words said today, but nothing to back it up in terms of the legislation before us, even though there were many opportunities to do that in the proposed amendments.

Similarly, when it comes to diversity and inclusion, when it comes to the impacts of the pandemic on Black, Indigenous, and other racialized and diverse communities who have borne the brunt of the pandemic—80% of the people affected by COVID-19 are racialized people. I saw a post today by an ICU doctor, and he said no patient that has come through ICU was not a racialized person; every single person was a person of colour.

To not take the opportunity to make it clear that this agency will be inclusive, that there's legislation to support that inclusion at the governance level, at the board level and in its activities—it's an unfortunate missed opportunity that wouldn't have cost the government anything to do.

When we talk about anti-Black and anti-Asian systemic racism, when we talk about discrimination and all of those realities, part of it is changing the fundamental systems that provide governance and provide oversight. So we can say things, but if we don't back it up with changes to legislation, changes to law, then, really, that change isn't going to happen and it's not lasting, and it doesn't provide the examples that we need.

I believe that it is unfortunate that we did not make these amendments today. Of course, I respect the process here today. I know that the government has a majority and the government is using that majority to put forward the bill in the way it wants to, but it could have been better. It could have sent an important signal to Ontario's diverse populations that they are part of Ontario's economic recovery and here are ways in which we're making sure

their voices are at the table; unfortunately, we didn't take the moment to do that. It's disappointing.

**1030**

I can't tell you enough—we had all of those hearings last summer, and we talked about it. We have organizations that come forward to us, like the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and tell us how important it is to have an inclusive recovery, and here we have an opportunity to do something about it, and we don't. Really, the government members choose not to, and it speaks. It really speaks, and it is unfortunate.

With that, Chair, I just want to make sure that we have a recorded vote on this schedule as well. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? Seeing none, are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 6, as amended, carry?

**Ayes**

Stan Cho, Kanapathi, Roberts, Dave Smith, Thanigasalam.

**Nays**

Arthur, Fife, Hunter, Mamakwa.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** It's accordingly carried.

We'll go to schedule 7 now. There are no amendments to sections 1 and 2 of schedule 7. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Agreed. Is there any debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 7, sections 1 and 2, inclusive, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? It's accordingly carried.

Any debate on schedule 7 as a whole? Seeing none, are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 7 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

We'll go to schedule 8 now. There are no amendments to sections 1 to 4 of schedule 8. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Agreed. Is there any debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 8, sections 1 to 4, inclusive, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

Any debate on schedule 8 as a whole? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 8 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? It's accordingly carried.

We will now move to schedule 9. There are no amendments to sections 1 to 42 of schedule 9. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Agreed. Is there any debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 9, sections 1 to 42, inclusive, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

Any debate on schedule 9 as a whole? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 9 carry? All those in

favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

We'll now move to schedule 10. There are no amendments to sections 1 to 6 of schedule 10. I therefore propose that we bundle these sections. Is there an agreement? Any debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall schedule 10, sections 1 to 6, inclusive, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

Any debate on schedule 10 as a whole? Are members ready to vote? Shall schedule 10 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

We are going to move back to section 1 of the bill. Is there any debate on section 1? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall section 1 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

We'll go to section 2 now. Any debate on section 2 of the bill? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall section 2 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

We'll go to section 3 of the bill. Any debate on section 3? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall section 3 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

We'll go back to the title of the bill. Is there any debate? Are the members prepared to vote? Shall the title of the bill carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed? Carried.

Shall Bill 269, as amended, carry? Is there any debate? MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Thank you, Chair. It's important to speak, I believe, to this bill on behalf of the people of this province. A budget bill and a budget reflect the priorities of the government and what you believe is important. There are many aspects to this bill and to the budget that leave people out. It leaves people not reflected, and that's an unfortunate thing.

I want to just read some comments by the YWCA of Ontario. The YWCA states, "There are few new or significant investments to support the economic empowerment and well-being of women." We spent a lot of time today talking about ways to do just that. With the amendments that I tried to put forward on Invest Ontario—it's just one agency of government and it's just one signal that could talk about women's economic empowerment and women's economic opportunities in a tangible way that was very much missing from this budget in terms of recognition of the she-covery and the effects of the downturn on women.

The YWCA further goes on to say, "The budget contains considerable tax credits and infrastructure funding; however, it falls desperately short of a concerted effort to set the province on course to a full recovery." As an agency serving people in the community, that's of concern, because if we're not on the path to a full economic recovery and meeting those fiscal targets, then that will spell deep cuts to *[inaudible]* services in health, in education, that people rely on.

**1040**

It also notes that there is a lack of specific allocation for child care, and the focus of a 20% enhancement to the child care access and relief from expenses tax credit instead, which is a short-term measure; a failure to include paid sick days and to reinstate wage enhancements for front-line workers, many of whom are racialized women and immigrants.

The lack of mention of Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program: Where is the support for people with disabilities who have been very affected by the pandemic in terms of their ability to even access goods and services? We have not seen this government reflect the adequacy needs of people on Ontario Works and ODSP. In fact, you've made it harder. When you provided an emergency amount, people on Ontario Works had to go through a caseworker, many of whom had shifted their work because they were not in an office and accessible to people who had concerns, and people weren't answering phones. A lot of those people came through to my office, looking for supports and looking to understand where the emergency benefits are—rather than just making it something you provided to people, given that everyone was feeling the effects of the pandemic, including people on ODSP and Ontario Works. Why create that layer of unnecessary burden for those individuals?

We also hear from the YWCA the inadequate funding and planning to address the increase in the rate of domestic violence and *[inaudible]* violence and the lack of funding for the non-profit sector, recognizing that the non-profit sector is just not part of the priorities of the government.

I've talked a lot about the small business sector and the importance of expanding the eligibility criteria for the small business support grant. I support the submission from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce that a third amount be allocated to that grant, with the proviso that there is a fair opportunity for people to apply for the grant, and that they are well informed that it is now available to them and that the eligibility has been expanded to include those sectors of the economy that were left out.

The Ontario non-profit association has provided some recommendations to that effect that could make the grant more accessible and available. ONN recommends that the eligibility criteria should be expanded. ONN is really saying to the government to include micro-grants for volunteer-only non-profits, which are not defined as employers and thus ineligible for the small business grant. We need to recognize the contributions that they are making and the fact that they need support moving forward. So that can be improved. I know that it's there; you've renewed it for those who got the first amount, but you've left a lot of people out, so please correct that.

The housing sector: Municipalities have said, city of Toronto officials have said that they were disappointed by the lack of funding for social housing. This is, of course, a sector that needs a lot of support, so it needs to be addressed.

Long-term care is definitely a missed opportunity, given the fact that the government now wants to rely on



the 6,000 spaces in long-term care to move patients out of hospitals. Where is the support for the staffing? Where is the support for the training, the equipment, the PPE? It's not there. It's not in this budget. It's not part of the plan.

Also, where is the planning for the health care sector in general when it comes to the pandemic, when it comes to the rollout of vaccines? In my community, hospital-based clinics that are supposed to be the stable place for people to get their vaccines had to close this week; 10,000 appointments had to be cancelled because of the lack of planning and the lack of accountability for distribution from this government.

In this budget, yes, you're estimating it's a billion dollars for the pandemic, but you're only assuming that it's just a one-time thing and it's going to end, not putting in place a plan for what happens if things continue on beyond people getting vaccinated, if they have to be vaccinated a third time—not just the first and second shots, but a third shot. What about an annual shot of the vaccine?

Where is the planning in this budget to keep Ontarians safe and the population safe? I just don't see it here. It's just a missed opportunity, and it really shows the lack of foresight and the lack of planning and that the priorities are just not aligned with the people of Ontario.

Look at our education system. It has dissolved into complete chaos. One minute, the Minister of Education is sending a letter to school boards saying, "In-person learning next week." The next minute, the Premier is saying, "No in-person learning. Everyone is moving online." What is happening? Why are we not taking the advice of the experts, of the doctors, who are trying to advise the government on how to keep the people of this province safe? It just really shows a lack of planning.

The same thing with the hot spots. I was very pleased to support the announcement—I did it publicly on my social media—around the 50-plus in hot spots being able to get vaccinated, to accelerate those individuals. And then, the next minute, the Premier himself is announcing 18 and over in hot spots get vaccinated, with no mechanism to plan the distribution of vaccines to hospital clinics, no plan of how people are going to be registered. It was so poorly communicated that people didn't even realize it was eligible through a pop-up clinic only and not widely through the hot spot postal codes. There's of course concern around those postal codes themselves and how communities were selected for that.

I'm raising these concerns because it's an illustration of the lack of planning and lack of priority of the government on what matters most, what is most important. Right now, it is a generational issue, the global pandemic that we're experiencing. We should have had a budget that was bold and that was impactful in the areas that are important to the people of this province; that is inclusive of all people in the province; that doesn't leave out people with disabilities, people who get service from non-profits, women and their prospects for economic recovery, and those who are from diverse communities—Black people, Indigenous people, people of colour—who have been

most affected by the effects of COVID-19. If you look at the data and you look at the numbers, you'll see that, and yet we just chose to ignore it.

I also want to just close off by saying the environment as well is another really big missed opportunity for this government—just not having a plan. The Auditor General has said that. There's no plan to meet our targets, and definitely, it's not a priority if it wasn't part of this budget in terms of a green recovery. We only have one planet that we all share. and it is up to the provincial government to make that a priority so that we preserve it for future generations, and I believe that was also another missed opportunity.

Chair, I want to thank you for the opportunity to address my concerns with respect to Bill 269. Unfortunately, I can't support the bill because I believe it leaves too many people out and the budget does not reflect the needs of all Ontarians.

**1050**

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Any further debate? Seeing none, are the members—MPP Mamakwa?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** I know that sometimes in northern Ontario, Indigenous communities, First Nation communities in the north, are not always a priority on some of the issues. One of the things that I always talk about—an example is, I see announcements of long-term-care facilities in PC ridings, and all I've got are long-term boil-water advisories; I've got 13 of them.

Time and time again, I talk to this committee and I say to invest in some resources, perhaps infrastructure, on reserves. And they say the good things but do the opposite and vote against these types of things. I see that happening just today when we talk about equity issues, brought on by MPP Hunter. They say something, they say a good thing, but they do the opposite and that we'll talk about it later.

I know I dealt with that with kids wanting clean drinking water in their communities and that's what I was told; nobody has talked to me since. The committee around the table on the government side, that's what they told me. That's the continued—I'm not sure—structural violence, structural racism that continues to exist. That's all part of it. Even saying it is even worse: Saying that you're going to do something and then voting against it—actions speak louder than words. It's so clear.

I remember, I was sitting during the budget speech—that was my third budget speech and that was probably the better one since this government formed. I almost crossed the floor that day. It just was so good. But those are just words again. Those are just words. I hear it here at the table, and that's not a good thing. That's just continued oppression, continued collateral violence that happens.

I know all the men voted against the equity issues on women. That's just not right.

I just wanted to make those comments. I think that's one of the reasons we didn't put forward any amendments as part of the official opposition. It's clear. I had suggestions. But we know we would do the same thing, and it's not—that's the way it is, I guess. That's the way whoever's pulling those strings in the back—I think that's

the way the system is and that's the way this government is going to wear these decisions.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Cho, and then I'll come to MPP Fife.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I appreciate everybody's time today. Most importantly, I appreciate the time of the people of this province, some who may be watching from their homes right now.

I'd like the people we serve to be the judge themselves. For those who haven't seen the budget yet, you can go to [budget.ontario.ca](http://budget.ontario.ca), and I encourage you to look through the priorities yourself, because this government has made it clear—this is the third phase in our response to COVID-19. We are not through this pandemic yet. That is clearly outlined in the priorities that we've set forward, with record investments into health care.

For those of you following along, you can reference the page numbers I'm about to share, but you'll have to add 20 if you're seeing it online, because the online version doesn't count the index pages. So if you refer to, for example, page 149, as I'm about to—it will actually be 169 if you're following online—that shows our commitment to being transparent with the people of this province. It's so important, because from the beginning of this pandemic, we said, "You're going to see what we see. You're going to see the numbers. You're going to see the investments," and all of those are transparently outlined for you in this document. You can see on page 149 that we have committed to every single financial reporting period. We have not missed one. That's a stark contrast to the last government, who missed eight of its last 14 financial reporting periods. That's important, because that shows that this government is sharing the information of investments and important initiatives that the people of this province expect.

I'll point to page 9 of the physical document—online, it's page 29—which will show you, contrary to what the members opposite said at the outset of these concluding remarks, that there is nothing but investments into the programs and services that Ontarians rely on now more than ever. I'm not going to go through these specific numbers, but you can see substantial increases in base program funding every single year—not just this year; every out-year that you can see in the budget. That's crucially important, because we know that the recovery from COVID-19 isn't going to be overnight, unfortunately, and you can see that people are going to rely on our health care system, on our education system, on our long-term-care sector—none of which see any austerity measures, contrary to what the member opposite is asserting. And that's here for you to read at home, in plain black and white.

I encourage you to be the judge yourself, because page after page show those investments. If you want to look at long-term care, you can see that commitment to establishing the four hours of daily care per resident, a nation-leading standard of care. That is clearly outlined on page 43—page 63, if you're looking online—with investments every single year, in the out-years, to make sure that we protect seniors, the ones who built this province. And \$5.1 billion in additional hospital capacity, addressing the

surgical backlog. Our Minister of Finance says all the time we can't have a healthy economy without healthy people, and he's absolutely right. That's why this budget outlines \$16.3 billion of investments into our health care system.

I could spend a lot of time going into these individual numbers, but I won't, because they're clearly outlined. If you want to see the program spending, you can see that on pages 173 to 179, inclusive—pages 193 to 199, if you're following online. Later in the document, in the last half, you can see our growth projections for GDP and how we're going to move through this pandemic. But of course, now is not that time, because we need to continue to protect our jobs and protect our health, which remains our top priority. There will be a day when COVID-19 is behind us, but we are being prudent and measured and transparent with the people of this province: "Here's where your money is going, and here's how we're going to recover from this."

I'll conclude by saying, yes, this is a record-spend budget, and there are those who believe that the only way you could pay for all of this is through austerity measures. And there are others, as we've heard from some of the deputations in this committee, who believe that the only way to pay for all of this is by increasing taxes and burdening the individuals and job creators of this province further. But our government has chosen a third path, and that path is to bet on the people of this province, that we will see that economic prosperity return to this province, the level of job creation we were seeing previous to COVID-19. So we are continuing to make sure to lay the groundwork with a series of permanent tax reductions for job creators, with hydro relief for the smallest of small businesses, with elimination of payroll tax for the smallest of small businesses—again, a permanent measure. This is going to provide relief to 30,000 businesses in Ontario.

It's a long list, and as I've said, it's all here for you to view at [budget.ontario.ca](http://budget.ontario.ca). If there are any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to any government member for assistance. We look forward to making sure that we continue to protect our number one priority here in this province—you, the people we serve—until COVID-19 is behind us, and certainly, I know we all look forward to that day. Until then, stay safe, and we'll look forward to hearing from you very, very soon.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Fife.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** In total, this is my ninth budget that I've walked through as an opposition member. I would have to say it was one of the most negative experiences that I've ever had as an MPP. It does speak to the controlling nature of this government in who they listen to, what they don't listen to and how they make decisions about where they're investing or where they're not investing.

**1100**

Dr. Boozary yesterday said—and this is a quote—"What we decide not to do will continue to haunt us as it has over the last few weeks." He is referring to the lack of paid sick days and the lack of funding to ensure that folks can actually take the time off with pay to get vaccinated. That seems to be the theme of this government to date.

The parliamentary assistant also forgets to mention that the government did withdraw one-time funding for COVID-19 that broadly came from the federal government. We won't have a clear sense on a go-forward basis of where this government is making strategic decisions or not-strategic decisions about investment until we actually see the estimates. Hopefully, the Financial Accounting Officer, who my colleague had asked to appear before the committee to give us a broader sense of where the funding is going—and where, really, the missed opportunities are.

How this government thinks that having sick workers continue to go to work sick is going to be a way that we can somehow get out of this cycle of transmission, especially now with the variants—we've heard both the finance minister and now the parliamentary assistant say, "Don't bet against the people of this province," and yet this government is gambling against the people of this province by not putting in measures that their own science table recommended, which is paid sick days—even for the period of this emergency, which we are currently one week into.

When Sheila Block came to the committee, she said that this treads water on health care in a pandemic and retreats on education—a \$1.8-billion retreat on education funding. Who does that, knowing that education has been completely disrupted over the last year? Who thinks that we're just going to go back to some sense of normalcy without funding and resourcing our students, our educators and our entire system? Who thinks that we can recover as a province without those resources? Well, apparently this government does.

On the education front, I want to also acknowledge that being an MPP—I have two universities in my riding of Waterloo and Conestoga College, all excellent facilities. To watch what has happened to Laurentian University this year and to see that the minister is absolutely—not even missing in action, because there is no action. He's just missing. I feel for my colleague who's on this call, MPP Piccini, because he's been left holding the bag, if you will, and there's no money in that bag for this university.

But cutting that midwifery program, which is an employment generator for northern Ontario, makes no sense at all. No economist would recommend it; no health professional would recommend it. And if you are talking about women and equity—which, based on the way this government has refused to accept the amendments that were brought forward by my colleague around gender equity, building that into a budget, building that into a government agency, is a complete betrayal. I do believe that women are going to get activated in this upcoming election.

The parliamentary assistant says, "Go to the budget," and, "As you read through the budget..." That, in and of itself, is a statement that indicates such a disconnect from the trials and tribulations and stress that the people of this province are experiencing. Nobody is watching this budget; they're trying to survive. They just found out that they're going to have to find child care for next week because the education system was so sorely underfunded

and mismanaged through this COVID-19. They're waiting today for more measures of control from this government.

Between the education file, between the lack of paid sick days, between this promise that we're going to move patients into our long-term-care system—which is, by all accounts, broken and still underfunded—we actually are going to see the people of this province lose hope, and that should be concerning to all members of this finance committee, Chair.

With that, I just want to echo what my colleague MPP Mamakwa said with such clarity and articulation: that actions matter. What people are experiencing today in the province of Ontario is very different than the rhetoric that we're hearing from this government. So we will proudly be voting against this budget.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Further debate? Seeing none, are the members prepared to vote? MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Recorded, please, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** A recorded vote has been requested. Shall Bill 269, as amended, carry?

#### Ayes

Stan Cho, Kanapathi, Piccini, Roberts, Dave Smith, Thanigasalam.

#### Nays

Arthur, Fife, Hunter, Mamakwa.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** It's accordingly carried.

Shall I report the bill, as amended, to the House? Is there any debate? Seeing none, are the members prepared to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? Carried.

Thank you so much. I would like to thank all the committee members and committee staff for their assistance. This is all our business for today. This committee stands adjourned until—

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** MPP Hunter?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Sorry, Chair. I just really wanted to also thank the committee Chair and the committee staff; in particular, research, who were very helpful when I had made my request for the FAO to have an opportunity to present to committee. They reached out to me and were just very helpful. I know that, because we continue to do our work in this manner, they also have to put themselves at elevated risk of the virus. I just want to thank them, as well, Chair, for the great work that they do in supporting this committee. So thank you, and thank you, Chair, of course.

**The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu):** Thank you so much, MPP Hunter.

This committee stands adjourned until further notice. Thank you so much. Stay safe.

*The committee adjourned at 1108.*

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