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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, 2021, Bill 282,
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 18 May 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 18 mai 2021

The House met at 0900.

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

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

Ms. Mulroney moved third 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): I'll recognize the Minister of Transportation to lead off the third reading debate.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be splitting my time with the Associate Minister of Transportation and my parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park.

I'm pleased to have this opportunity to rise in the House today to once again discuss the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act. At the outset, I want to thank the Associate Minister of Transportation and my parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park, for their help in developing this legislation.

I also want to thank the stakeholders who worked with us on the development of this bill. In particular, I want to thank the Ontario Good Roads Association, CAA South Central Ontario, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Ontario Road Builders' Association, the Ontario Trucking Association and the Ontario Safety League for their contributions to the development of this bill before the House.

J'ai dit lors du débat en deuxième lecture que la sécurité routière est une question non partisane, et c'est vrai. Tous les membres de cette Assemblée sont unis dans notre objectif, qui est de rendre les routes de l'Ontario plus sûres. Et c'est l'intention de la Loi visant à assurer à la population ontarienne des déplacements plus sûrs.

We have heard the calls from across the province to do more to reduce the risks on our roads. This bill, if adopted, would strengthen penalties for stunt driving, street racing

and other high-risk driving behaviours. It would also enhance protections for vulnerable road users, improve commercial vehicle and highway worker safety, and strengthen the province's oversight of the towing and vehicle storage sectors.

We're proposing a series of escalating sanctions for aggressive driving behaviours that focus on the most severe repercussions for the worst offenders. These are people who regularly disregard the law and put the lives and safety of other road users in jeopardy. This bill will send a clear message: Driving is a privilege, and those who threaten the safety of others have no place on our roads.

Our government is committed to improving Ontario's road safety record. For 20 years, Ontario's roads have consistently been among the safest in North America. Even as our population has grown and the number of drivers and vehicles on our roads have increased, Ontario's roads remain among the safest on the continent.

We have approximately 10.6 million licensed drivers in this province, and we've had them for 20 years running. During that time, Ontario has ranked among the top five jurisdictions for road safety in North America, and that's a record that we can all take pride in.

Despite our strong record, the costs of unsafe and aggressive driving are too high. In 2017, the direct cost of motor vehicle collisions in the province was an estimated \$4.6 billion. This figure includes the cost of property damage, health care, police and ambulance services, traffic delays and more.

The human cost, Mr. Speaker, is even higher. Despite our outstanding road safety record, on average, one person is killed on Ontario's roads every 14 hours. That means that every day someone leaves their house, goes to work, goes to the grocery store or goes out for another routine reason, and never returns home, leaving a family shattered. The fact is that we need to do more now, especially as we're seeing an increase in high-risk and aggressive driving. It's time that we say enough is enough, and that is the intent behind the proposed legislation before the House today.

If passed, this bill contains measures to combat stunt driving, aggressive driving and street racing. The Associate Minister of Transportation will discuss these measures in more detail, but I also want to spend some time discussing them, given their importance. As I mentioned earlier, it's clear that the current consequences for these irresponsible and illegal choices are not working. Our government recognizes this fact and has worked closely with road safety organizations, municipalities and enforcement agencies to make the necessary changes and ensure we get it right.

To start, drivers caught street racing will face a 30-day roadside vehicle licence suspension and a 14-day vehicle impoundment—an increase to the current penalties of seven days for both a driver’s licence suspension and vehicle impoundment. We’re also proposing escalating post-conviction driver’s licence suspensions for individuals convicted of street racing, to align more closely with those imposed for impaired driving. On top of that, we’re proposing a lower speed threshold for stunt driving offences on municipal roads to reflect the increased danger that exists when people engage in this behaviour in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, more must be done to protect all road users. No one should have to worry about getting hit by a car when they’re getting off a streetcar, cyclists should not have to worry about being doored, and the hard-working people who build and maintain Ontario’s roads and highways should not have to worry about the aggressive drivers on the roads around them.

The Moving Ontarians More Safely Act would allow municipalities to use cameras to enforce illegally passing streetcars with doors open to pick up or drop off passengers, creating new vehicle-based offences. Proposed amendments to the Highway Traffic Act contained in this bill, if passed, would improve the quality and integrity of how we collect and report data for cyclists involved in dooring collisions, and the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, if passed, will introduce an additional layer of protection for construction workers near roads and highways by authorizing the use of automated flagger assistance devices. These devices will reduce the potential for serious injuries and fatalities by allowing workers to control traffic through construction zones from a greater distance from passing traffic. These measures represent concrete action that we can take together to ensure people and families get to where they need to go safely.

0910

There are also some concerning trends that we have seen in the towing and storage industry that we set out to address through the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act. Continued incidents of violence and crime in the towing and storage sectors have demonstrated the need for meaningful change in the way that the industry is regulated. Last June, we struck a provincial task force that worked closely with stakeholders to find ways to make the towing industry safer. They heard concerns about a confusing patchwork of requirements that resulted in regulatory gaps that bad actors have exploited, left people without meaningful recourse when they have been treated unfairly and resulted in safety concerns for both road users and tow truck operators.

One of the task force’s key recommendations was to bring forward legislation to strengthen provincial oversight and enhance standards in the industry. This bill is a response to that recommendation. The Moving Ontarians More Safely Act would improve provincial oversight of the towing industry by establishing a province-wide certification system that will require tow operators and tow truck drivers and vehicle storage

operators to have a certificate to operate, creating a level playing field with clear requirements for all.

La loi sur la sécurité et l’encadrement du remorquage et de l’entreposage des véhicules, si elle est adoptée, permettra de créer un poste de directeur des normes du remorquage, des véhicules et de l’entreposage. Elle améliorera la protection des clients et assurera un traitement équitable des conducteurs lorsqu’ils sont victimes d’une collision ou d’une panne. Elle contribuera également à réduire la criminalité et la fraude et à promouvoir la sécurité des usagers de la route et des opérateurs de remorquage.

Mr. Speaker, last week the Standing Committee on General Government studied the bill, and I thank them for their work. I also want to thank them for the time that they took in hearing from witnesses—33 in all—as well as reviewing the written submissions. Like us, the witnesses share a common goal of making our roads safer, and they made a number of suggestions on how we can do that. I want to assure members of this Legislature and the province that this bill is not the final word on road safety. While the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act is intended to respond to emerging trends, we know that we have additional work to do when it comes to addressing stunt driving. And as we work on those additional pieces, we will take into consideration the ideas that were tabled at the committee. With respect to the amendments that were proposed at committee, some of them, we believe, are already addressed in this legislation; some are best addressed through the development of regulations and policy; and some require more study and more consultation.

I want to spend some time talking about e-bikes, because this was a topic of great interest at the committee and in the written submissions. I know that there is some concern about the way the legislation was drafted. Our government consulted extensively on the proposed changes to the e-bike definitions before drafting this bill. Between 2019 and 2021, my ministry engaged with over 100 stakeholders on our e-bike proposal, which included hosting multiple consultations and posting our proposal to the Regulatory Registry three times between October 2019 and just last week in May 2021. In general, stakeholders were supportive of the e-bike proposals, particularly as the proposal was updated multiple times to be responsive to, and incorporate, new stakeholder feedback. We have taken the comments into consideration and drafted a bill with the primary intention of ensuring that all e-bikes currently permitted today will be permitted in the future. These amendments are anticipated to increase ridership and support Ontario’s commitment to the environment.

In transferring responsibility for regulating the use of e-bikes to municipalities, we are ensuring that, within a provincial framework, cities and towns can make the choices that are most appropriate for them and their citizens. We believe this is the right way forward, and it is consistent with how our ministry approaches expanding transportation options. Our government knows that municipalities are in the best position to decide how to safely integrate the use of larger e-bikes in their communities.

The e-bike redefinition proposed in this bill would introduce three classes of e-bikes and allow municipalities to choose which classes of e-bikes to permit on their infrastructure, and where. This approach will enhance safety and mobility while allowing for the consideration of specific municipal needs.

Additionally, this approach has been supported by tourism and industry stakeholders as a way to allow for e-bikes to provide greater access to transportation infrastructure—and safely—within close proximity of vulnerable road users, such as on paths and on scenic trails.

A bicycle-style e-bike class with a maximum weight of 55 kilograms also allows us to open this class of e-bike to younger riders in a more measured fashion, thereby reducing the current age requirement for operators from 16 to 14 years of age. This change will also permit passengers under the age of 16, allowing children to be passengers on e-bikes, enabling parents to legally use their e-bikes or cargo e-bikes to transport their children.

The new helmet requirements proposed in this bill more closely align with the bicycle rules in place today and will also allow riders 14 years and up to operate a bicycle-style e-bike, which will further encourage the use of these vehicles as an even more attractive alternative to traditional motor vehicles.

It's crucial that stakeholders understand that the terminology used to define bicycle-style e-bikes is required to allow for a clear delineation between Ontario's larger and smaller e-bike styles. While the wording used within this legislation defines what a bicycle's appearance is, it in no way limits those e-bikes used today, such as the reverse tricycle and a variety of smaller types of cargo e-bikes.

Monsieur le Président, le ministère a été clair dans son intention, et nous serons tout aussi clairs dans la communication de cette intention à nos intervenants et aux utilisateurs de bicyclettes électriques. Avant la mise en oeuvre des changements, des documents de communication seront diffusés pour s'assurer que l'intention qui sous-tend la proposition est claire et respectée. Le ministère des Transports continuera de consulter les intervenants et de travailler en étroite collaboration avec eux dans le cadre de ce projet de loi.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the bill, as it has been presented to the House, will have real and immediate effects in making our roads safer, but as I have said, we will not stop here. This is our government's second road safety bill in less than three years, and we will continue to consult with road safety stakeholders and members of the public to ensure that we have the right system of education and enforcement in place to improve our safety record, because there is always more to do, Mr. Speaker. The Moving Ontarians More Safely Act allows us to deal with some of the imminent challenges that will face the province as we approach the summer.

0920

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the work that we have done to date, and I look forward to continuing that work alongside all the members of this House, to work towards safer roads for this great province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister did say she would be sharing her time. We turn to the Associate Minister of Transportation with responsibilities for the GTA.

Hon. Kinga Surma: It's an honour to rise in the House to continue the debate on the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, which, if passed, will protect road users against stunt driving and street racing. Also known as the MOMS Act, this proposed legislation is another step in our government's ongoing efforts to keep Ontario's roads among the safest in North America.

Each year, millions of people travel along the province's roads and highways, and thankfully most of those trips pass without incident. Whether it's going to an appointment or a truck delivering essential goods, we are lucky to have a highway network where everyone can feel safe while travelling. But our success doesn't mean we can become complacent and rest in our pursuit of making our roads and highways as safe as possible.

The proposed legislation before the House today is the next step in that ongoing pursuit. As the Minister of Transportation mentioned earlier, a safe and efficient transportation network is essential to a well-functioning society, and given the current state of road safety across the province, there's never been a better moment to bring this legislation forward.

Among the countless impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a disturbing increase in incidents of high-risk driving. Let me repeat some of the troubling statistics. Between March and August of last year, driver's licence suspensions issued at roadside for stunt driving and street racing increased by 52% compared to that same period in 2019. Between March and June 2020, a driver involved in a collision was 65% more likely to be speeding compared to the year prior.

This picture becomes even more worrisome when looking at the numbers related to young drivers. Nearly one in five drivers involved in a collision between March and June of last year were aged 16 to 25. And, more concerning yet, these young drivers represented 42% of collisions where the recorded speed was 50 kilometres per hour or more above the posted limit. The dangers of such reckless behaviour are devastatingly real and life-altering.

COVID-19 did not cause these troubling trends. It's true that with lower traffic volumes we've seen an increase of reckless driving behaviours on our roads and highways, but we had seen these trends starting to go up well before the pandemic. For example, there was a 130% spike in the number of roadside licence suspensions due to street racing and stunt driving between 2013 and 2019; and between 2014 and 2019, there was also a 46% increase in the number of repeat suspensions for stunt driving or street racing.

Imagine thinking you have the right to drive 50 kilometres per hour or more above the posted speed limit simply for your entertainment, all while putting the general public at risk. The impacts of such reckless behaviour are devastatingly real and life-altering. The risk of fatality or serious injury is approximately 11 times

greater when vehicles are involved in a collision at 50 kilometres per hour or more above the speed limit. And, unfortunately, this is becoming more and more of a common occurrence.

We've all seen someone going 150 kilometres per hour on the 401, or 90 kilometres per hour in your local school zone. These stories and the data tell us it's time to reassess the effectiveness of Ontario's existing penalties and sanctions in deterring stunt driving, street racing and other high-risk driving behaviours. We cannot sit idly by and do nothing while bad actors break the law. If passed, the MOMS Act will serve notice to the drivers who put public safety at risk.

Our government will target these irresponsible drivers with increased suspensions and penalties that ensure Ontario's roads remain as safe as possible. Let me be clear: Driving is a privilege, not a right. If someone is going to abuse that privilege, they will face tough consequences. That's why the MOMS Act contains a series of severe penalties to address street racing and stunt driving and to protect Ontarians from those who engage in this irresponsible behaviour. If passed, this legislation sends a strong and clear message that stunt driving and street racing will be treated with the same severity as alcohol- and drug-impaired driving.

To start, we are proposing to increase the period of immediate roadside driver licence suspensions from seven days to 30 days. The duration of immediate roadside vehicle impoundments would be extended as well, from seven days to 14 days. To those who are careless enough to drive dangerously, we will take away your ability to make that mistake again.

Another trend that has emerged throughout this pandemic is an increase in repeat offenders caught street racing and stunt driving. These are the people who have already been caught and sanctioned for their actions but fail to get the message and continue to display poor behaviours on our roads and highways. Their persistence further proves we need to do more to deter reckless driving, so they don't consider any penalties or sanctions as a mere slap on the wrist.

That's why we are targeting repeat offenders by introducing escalating post-conviction licence suspensions for drivers convicted of street racing and stunt driving, similar to the suspensions imposed on drivers convicted for driving while impaired. These suspensions range from a minimum of one to three years for a first conviction all the way to a lifetime driver licence suspension. And it's not just a matter of taking away your car or your ability to drive. You may also face six months in jail. Again, Mr. Speaker, driving is a privilege, and if that privilege is abused, we must stop it in its tracks.

We are also proposing to lower the threshold for stunt driving charges on roads with lower speed limits. The reality is, stunt driving and speeding are not the same across the board. We need to combat this behaviour where it is most dangerous to our road users, pedestrians and the general public.

Under the MOMS Act, if passed, drivers caught going 40 kilometres per hour or more above the posted speed

limit on roads with a speed limit of less than 80 kilometres per hour will be subject to stunt driving charges. This means those who are speeding on roads within our towns, our cities, our neighbourhoods, where the public is most vulnerable, are held to a tougher threshold for their irresponsible behaviour. These substantial increases to the existing penalties send a strong message to reckless drivers: Your behaviour will not be tolerated.

As I mentioned earlier, street racing and stunt driving offences are often committed by young and novice drivers. We recognize this fact. That's why the measures described today will work in concert with existing sanctions and conditions imposed on these drivers under MTO's graduated licensing system, as well as other programs, because we also know that the driving behaviours learned at an early age can become habitual and regular practices. We have a responsibility to take action early and often so that young drivers engaging in this type of reckless behaviour are quickly taught that there is zero tolerance for it.

To help get this message across, young or novice drivers who consistently commit high-risk driving offences, including street racing and stunt driving, are subject to the ministry's Novice Driver Escalating Sanctions Program. This program applies in addition to the new penalties proposed under the MOMS Act. Under this program, they risk their licence being cancelled for engaging in street racing, stunt driving and other threatening behaviours that put the public at risk.

0930

Mr. Speaker, addressing these types of issues is not just about punishment. It's also about public education and ensuring that everyone, especially our young people, understand the risks and consequences of their actions.

Our government will continue to work with stakeholders on public education and communications to further deter and denounce high-risk and aggressive driving behaviours. We will not only be communicating the dangers, but we will also be implementing a mandatory driver education course for those convicted of stunt driving or street racing. This training will include educating individuals on the risks and consequences of these behaviours so that those caught face the reality of the devastation their actions could cause.

Thankfully, our government has many partners who all share the goal of improving road safety throughout the province. The fact that we have so many hard-working people and organizations dedicated to tackling these critical issues is a credit to our collective resolve to make a difference, and we enlisted their help, the help of their valuable network, when we were developing the measures within the MOMS Act. Municipalities, road safety stakeholders and enforcement officials were all consulted to ensure that the proposed measures strike the right balance to address these issues and effect change. We are extremely grateful to our safety stakeholders, municipal leaders and law enforcement for their support throughout the drafting and throughout the presentation of this bill.

By presenting this legislation, we're already raising more awareness of the dangers of stunt driving and

aggressive driving. And to those supportive stakeholders, I say, please do not stop there. Keep the conversation going. We need everyone to be aware of the harsher penalties, and we need your help in educating our young drivers.

Our government will continue to engage this network and leverage their many valuable perspectives, experiences and resources. To that end, we will be launching further consultations on stunt driving to ensure that we effectively reach the public, especially our young people. I will personally be holding these consultations to ensure we are taking a strong, meaningful and intelligent approach in our language to put the brakes on these unacceptable behaviours. We all have a right to feel safe while driving.

Mr. Speaker, while my remarks have focused primarily on stunt driving and street racing, we know other unsafe driving habits need to be addressed. As the Minister of Transportation described earlier, the proposed legislation before the House today takes decisive action to protect road users against unsafe and aggressive driving and establish oversight for the provincial towing and vehicle storage industry. If passed, the measures in the MOMS Act target the bad actors on Ontario's roads who put everyone's safety at risk and help protect vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and highway construction workers. We will also be launching a public education campaign to educate the public on the dangers of distracted driving, to support the measures in this proposed legislation.

There's no question that responsible driving makes roads safer for everyone, and while Ontario has much to be proud of when it comes to our road safety record, we must never stop pursuing ways to combat reckless and unsafe driving. That's why MTO officials are continuously monitoring trends and driving behaviours to identify concerning trends as they emerge. Their hard work and dedication will allow our government to make the necessary changes to the rules and penalties based on evidence.

Again, this is work we're pursuing in a highly collaborative manner. We will continue to work closely with stakeholders, municipalities, enforcement agencies and other jurisdictions to better understand the data and trends and ensure that we utilize all the best available research and tools to help combat this issue. We will use this research and data to continue to explore further measures aimed at reducing and preventing unsafe driving.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that safety is important to all members in this House, and I thank the members for their interest in improving safety on our roads. Road safety, particularly for vulnerable road users, is a shared concern. Since forming government three years ago, we have presented two pieces of legislation aimed at improving safety on our roads, which also includes the Getting Ontario Moving Act, to ensure our roads are safe and to protect our most vulnerable. I want to assure the members opposite that this is an ongoing conversation.

Mr. Speaker, again, I will close with one last statistic—*Interjections.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. I apologize for interrupting. I want to say to the members opposite: Your conversations are starting to bother me. I've been very lenient up to now. Please stop it. I'm trying to listen. Thank you.

Back to the associate minister.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one last statistic to share with you: Every three and a half hours, someone is injured in a speed-related crash in Ontario. That means that at least six people will have been injured by the end of today due to reckless driving. I think all of the members of this House will agree that even one death or serious injury on our roads is one too many. That's why our government will never end our pursuit to make Ontario's roads the safest in North America. The more robust road safety measures put forward in the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act will help put us in a better position to achieve that outcome.

And Mr. Speaker, there's something I would like to add: I am very much excited to continue hosting consultations on this matter. I can tell you that the stakeholders, particularly our safety stakeholders as well as law enforcement, have been very clear about the concerning trends we have seen prior to the pandemic and, in fact, during the pandemic. It is getting warmer outside. I know that when it's warmer outside, people like to get outdoors as well as like to enjoy driving and going to different trails, but we need to do this now so that we can ensure that we don't see another spike in stunt driving and aggressive driving and distracted driving. So I will continue to consult with safety stakeholders. I am very much happy that this will be in place for the summer period, and I look forward to hearing from the parliamentary assistant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park—

Interjection: —is just on time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): —and ready to take part in the debate. I turn it over to him.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and stand here before you and my colleagues today to discuss the proposed legislation, the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, also known as the MOMS Act, at third reading.

The fact that our roads are among the safest in North America should be a point of pride for everyone across our great province. Every day, people can get into their cars, ride their bikes or take transit and have confidence that the rules and laws of the road are helping to keep them and their families safe.

Our government is very proud to be road safety champions. That's why we must take decisive action to address the rise of concerning incidents and trends that threaten public safety. We have all witnessed aggressive driving, heard the troubling reports of street racing on our roads and read the news of the violence in the towing industry. In each instance, we always think that we must do more. If passed, the MOMS Act will help address these recent challenges and ensure that Ontario continues to

meet the highest safety standards for both users and those who work on the province's roads and highways.

A key element of this proposed legislation is the introduction of new measures that target the dangerous acts of street driving, stunt driving, and aggressive and unsafe driving. Unfortunately, we have seen an increase in aggressive driving, like street racing and stunt driving, over the past five years, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this concerning trend.

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As I listened to the Associate Minister of Transportation's remarks, I was struck by the shocking list of statistics and examples of stunt driving and street racing seen in Ontario recently. That someone would knowingly choose to drive a car at such drastic speeds, sometimes twice and even three times the speed limit, just for their entertainment is reckless, irresponsible and will not be tolerated. I think she put it best: Driving is a privilege, and if you abuse that privilege, we will stop you from hurting yourself and everyone on the road around you.

Drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike share Ontario's roads, and everyone has a shared responsibility to follow the rules of the road, but drivers need to be more aware of their speed, slow down and be respectful of our collective responsibility to keep our roads safe, because there's no question that speed kills. Where speed is a factor, collisions are more likely to cause serious harm, which is why these selfish acts of street racing and stunt driving are so dangerous.

Nobody wants to be a victim of somebody else's careless speeding. It's quite frightening to imagine losing a loved one because of someone's reckless choices, yet every day many of us witness drivers, often young drivers, risking public safety simply for a cheap thrill. We've also seen vehicles smashed and set ablaze on the side of a highway because of this type of aggressive driving. Each time we see these brazen acts of unsafe and irresponsible driving and their results, whether it's in person, on the news or on social media, we hope that our loved ones never have to experience these consequences.

Mr. Speaker, these aggressive and selfish actions have no place on Ontario's roads. There's a reason why road safety experts don't use the term "accident" to describe collisions, especially when they involve drivers speeding, street racing or driving aggressively on our roads: because these incidents are preventable. The proposed measures within the MOMS Act, if passed, will help us stop drivers who choose to engage in aggressive and unsafe driving, especially those who take part in street racing or stunt driving.

One way we can achieve this goal is through the implementation of more severe consequences for their unacceptable, aggressive and unsafe driving behaviour. That's why, if passed, the MOMS Act introduces escalating post-conviction driver's licence suspensions for those convicted of street racing or stunt driving. Under this new penalty structure, an individual would have their licence suspended for at least one year on their first conviction. Should there be a second conviction, they

would see an increased minimum three-year suspension. A third conviction would result in a lifetime suspension that may be reduced if certain conditions are met. And a fourth, and any subsequent convictions, would earn offenders a lifetime suspension.

But we cannot wait for drivers to be convicted of these offences to stop them from repeating their bad choices. Right now, drivers caught street racing or stunt driving can have their licence suspended and vehicle impounded for seven days on the spot. If passed, the MOMS Act would increase these sanctions to a roadside licence suspension of 30 days and a 14-day vehicle impoundment. These more serious on-the-spot consequences reflect the severe and deliberate disregard for public safety shown by those who engage in street racing or stunt driving. Our government is sending a clear message that Ontario will not tolerate driving behaviour that puts people at risk.

The people who work to build and maintain Ontario roads and highways are integral to our growth and prosperity. They keep our highway system working, whether it is paving the roads, building new lanes or filling potholes. They are the people we often see as we pass through construction zones, no matter the weather outside or the time of day. They are the people we often see whenever we drive by. Without them, without our highway workers, our highways would grind to a halt.

Our government values their hard work and dedication and believes that everyone deserves a safe place, no matter where you work. If passed, the MOMS Act would permit the use of automated traffic control devices to help control the flow of traffic around a construction zone. We have all passed a construction zone where workers at the job site are standing on the road, holding signage to direct traffic to stop while work is going on up ahead. The use of this automated solution can improve safety for these workers.

Ontario's construction industry has responded positively to our proposals. Bryan Hocking, chief executive officer of the Ontario Road Builders' Association, said, "Although sometimes considered as an inconvenience by drivers, construction zones are workplaces first. Our members have noticed increased incidents of stunt driving, speeding and distracted driving. Initiatives that crack down on stunt driving, that allow for the use of automated flagger devices are important tools that will make construction zones safer for workers and make our roadways safer for all Ontarians."

Mr. Speaker, tow truck drivers provide a vital service for drivers throughout Ontario's roads and highways; ask anyone who has found themselves stuck on the side of a busy road or highway waiting for help, or anyone stuck waiting in traffic behind a collision or a breakdown. Ontario's tow truck drivers play a critical role in keeping our roads safe and supporting traffic flow on our highways. But unfortunately, we have seen that some within the tow truck industry are operating illegally, with dangerous consequences for both the public and tow truck drivers. Tow truck drivers shouldn't have to worry about being assaulted on the job or whether or not they will make it home safely at the end of the day.

As I said before, everyone deserves a safe workplace, and drivers who have been in a collision or are stuck with a broken-down car shouldn't have to worry about calling a tow truck driver for help. But we have all heard the recent news about violence in the industry, which adds more stress to an already difficult situation. When someone needs to call for help, they must be assured that the tow truck driver arriving on the scene has only their best interests in mind.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are many tow truck drivers and operators who provide trustworthy and reliable services. But we will not tolerate the ongoing violence and criminal activity we have seen from the bad actors in Ontario's towing industry. That's why, last year, our government struck a provincial tow truck task force to help promote road user and tow truck operator safety. The task force also looked at ways to prevent crime and fraud throughout the towing experience and create a level playing field with clear requirements that allow legitimate operators in the towing industry to prosper.

Through the MOMS Act, we are using the findings that came out of the towing task force to propose much-needed changes in Ontario's towing industry. Under the proposed legislation, our government would establish a director of towing and vehicle storage standards to oversee the certification process and appoint towing inspectors to enforce the legislation and investigate complaints. That means tow operators, tow truck drivers and vehicle storage operators would be held to a higher standard and need a provincial certificate to operate, ensuring a more level playing field between different tow operators.

These changes will also help to protect drivers and give them confidence that when they are waiting by the side of the road for a tow, a capable and reputable tow truck driver will be there to help them and get them to a safe place. Everyone deserves to know that they are in good hands, no matter which tow truck driver arrives on the scene to help them or their loved ones.

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Another change we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic is a big increase in the number of cyclists on our roads. As summer approaches, and considering the bicycle industry's record-breaking sales, more Ontarians will be cycling to get around than ever before. According to Bike Share Toronto, a network of 6,850 bikes and 625 stations across the city, 2020 was the busiest year in its 10-year history, with Torontonians taking 2.9 million trips across its network.

Also in 2020, Bike Share Toronto launched the largest expansion of its network, bringing more bikes and stations to across the city. My constituents in Scarborough–Rouge Park benefitted from the expansion, as Bike Share expanded its infrastructure to the Highland Creek Trail and the Waterfront Trail to the Rouge Hill GO station.

Bike Share Toronto also launched an e-bike pilot program, which added 300 pedal-assist e-bikes and 10 charging stations to the Bike Share network. E-bikes offer an affordable, convenient, active and green way to travel while also helping to reduce congestion on roads. For

example, our government recently introduced a pilot program for cargo e-bikes earlier this year. Cargo e-bikes offer businesses an environmentally friendly alternative for transporting goods locally, and we are looking forward to seeing how municipalities introduce cargo e-bikes on their roads.

As the popularity of bikes continues to grow, the safety of cyclists remains a top priority for our government. We are proposing measures within the MOMS Act that will update the definition of an e-bike. By updating the definition of an e-bike to create three distinct classes—bicycle-style, moped-style and motorcycle-style—municipalities will choose which class of e-bikes to allow on their transportation infrastructure, and where, to ensure people's safety.

When it comes to cycling infrastructure, we know there is no one-size-fits-all solution. What works in one community may not work in the next. By defining e-bikes into three distinct classes, we are giving municipalities another tool to protect the safety of the people on their roads and in their communities.

Ontario is home to some of the best trail and road cycling in the world, including in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge Park. During the pandemic, record numbers of Ontarians have taken to cycling to exercise and enjoy the outdoors while following public health advice to physically distance. At the same time, the number of people choosing cycling as their primary means of transportation has also increased. Combined with the benefits to one's health and the environment, I can understand why so many people are turning to this green, sustainable form of transportation.

But anyone who regularly rides a bike knows about the hazards of drivers opening car doors in the path ahead. Also referred to as dooring, these incidents can result in serious injuries to cyclists, and they are entirely preventable. That's why we're making changes that will improve how the province collects data on collisions involving bicycles. Proposed measures in this legislation will better track collisions involving car doors hitting bicycles or e-scooters. This information will provide our government with more insight into dooring collisions involving bikes and consider what we can do to stop them from happening.

Another all-too-familiar incident for people who use transit to get around—especially Torontonians—are drivers that illegally pass a streetcar when its doors are open. People shouldn't run the risk of being hit by a car as they exit a streetcar. That's why we are proposing to allow the use of automated camera enforcement as evidence against a vehicle owner who illegally passes a streetcar on the left or passes a streetcar with its door open to pick up or drop off a passenger. As a transit rider myself, I know this is a long-awaited change that Toronto transit riders will welcome.

When it comes to Ontario's road safety record, we have so much to be proud of, but there's always more we can do. The Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, if passed, will target those who engage in unsafe and aggressive acts of

driving and take meaningful action to address collisions on our roads. We're also proposing changes to Ontario's towing industry to improve safety for customers, tow truck drivers, tow operators and vehicle storage operators. We are considering the safety of those who build and maintain Ontario's roads and safe highways. We are taking action to make bikes and e-bikes safer to use. Our government is taking concrete action to protect people and families on our roads across Ontario.

Before I wrap up, I would like to thank the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation for their commitment to improving the safety and reliability of the province's transportation network. I look forward to hearing the rest of today's debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time now for questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: There are a few things that I know are reflective of some of the discussions and ideas that the opposition party have brought many times to the floor of this Legislature, so it's nice to see that in this legislation as well.

I will always come to the floor of this Legislature with a lens from a northern perspective, and when I hear the minister make comments that every 14 hours, a person is killed on our highways, that's concerning. I drive from Algoma-Manitoulin into Toronto every week, like everybody does from their constituency. I see some of those drivers who are just flying by me. Yes, we need to address those individuals.

However, I'm going to bring something else to the floor of this Legislature, that from northern Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I hope it's a question; please pose it.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Every snowstorm, we are losing community members as well. This was a perfect opportunity to get something done in regard to winter road maintenance. Why did we not do that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you for your comments. The minister to respond to the comments. I didn't hear the question. Minister?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know what the question is, because the member raises his concerns and I understand that.

We have been talking about winter maintenance in this House for some time. Our government has taken action, Mr. Speaker, on improving standards for winter maintenance. We take road safety very seriously across the province and especially in the north where winter conditions make driving much more challenging. That's why we began a pilot project this year to study how we can improve clearance on Highways 11 and 17 in the north. Obviously as the winter season has come to an end, we're reviewing the information that was collected through that pilot project, and we'll be looking at ways to improve our winter clearance standards in the north.

Mr. Speaker, that's just one of the things we have done, one of the actions that we've taken to improve winter clearance in the north by our government. And we're going to continue to do more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Hon. Bill Walker: I want to thank Ministers Mulroney and Surma and also PA Thanigasalam for all of their efforts.

We've had significant issues with this stunt driving in our riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, particularly in the summer tourist season, on all of our highways. I want to thank them so much for listening. They accepted a number of delegations with municipalities from my riding who gave their impact.

I just wonder if they would please tell me all of the enhanced measures, or at least some of the enhanced measures because they've done so much, to protect the people on our roads across this great province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the associate minister to respond.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Now I don't know if I should start with the previous legislation that was led by the former Minister of Transportation in terms of getting Ontario moving again, but in terms of stunt driving, this is a shared concern across the province of Ontario, and it is especially a concern here in the GTA. I have spoken to law enforcement both at the city of Toronto and in York region who have just seen a huge escalation of these trends.

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When we were having consultations with safety stakeholders, one of the things that they emphasized very much to me was to please extend the vehicle impoundment and licence suspensions. We've done both of those things. We certainly hope that it truly will be effective, but it's more about that we need to raise the awareness, we need to educate our young drivers, and we also need to educate repeat offenders to certainly not do this again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Mr. Joel Harden: I listened closely when members of the government were talking about the impacts of e-bikes for this legislation, because e-bikes are very popular back home in Ottawa Centre. I'm a cargo bike user myself. I've flirted with the idea of electronic assistance to that machine as I age.

Felicity Borgal recently did an interview with CBC Ottawa asking the government if a cargo bike, as per this legislation, is over 55 kilograms in weight and she already possesses it, is it now illegal? Is the government, through this legislation, asking our police to take those bikes off the road? What about the freight companies, the delivery companies, whose bikes may be declared illegal? I know the government has met with a lot of e-bike advocates; they have been telling this government to bring in the California legislation, which is pioneering. I see aspects of that in this bill, but there are also aspects of this bill that would make existing safe e-bikes illegal.

I want the minister or another government member to clarify: Is that the intent of this bill? I sure hope it isn't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the parliamentary assistant to respond.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. As you know, the ministry has added the minimum weight limit of more than 55 kilograms for a Cargo E-Bikes Pilot Program to align with the maximum proposed weight limit with bicycle-style e-bikes. Both proposals were considered together last October 2020 and November 2020, and posted to the regulatory body as well.

As you know, this proposal right now doesn't change the definition. It will be under the Cargo E-Bikes Pilot Program so that, this way, we will not take away what's already in the system. We will give more options to the city so that, either e-bike or cargo e-bike, the municipality will have the option to decide where and how they can enforce this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Mr. David Piccini: I'd first like to congratulate the minister, associate minister and PA for the work that they have done on this. It's important, both personally and professionally, seeing the impact that this has had on too many in my community, including some very difficult realities in the last few months that have gripped our community.

I have a proud trucking industry, and this act proposes measures to improve truck safety. So, I'm wondering if the minister could elaborate a little more on some of the measures to improve truck safety and why this is good for truckers in Northumberland–Peterborough South.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the minister to respond.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: First of all, our drivers have been doing so much for all of us throughout the pandemic. They never stopped working. Since the beginning, they have been heroes, keeping food on our table and goods on our shelves. Our government has been consulting with trucking stakeholders throughout the pandemic to know what we can do to assist them as they continue to work, but also what we can do through legislation to assist them.

We have responded to their requests to address the hours-of-service declaration and make sure that we can create an out-of-service declaration that would be issued by police and MTO enforcement officers to prohibit a driver from driving a commercial motor vehicle for a designated period of time, and it will create a legal obligation for the driver and the operator to comply. This is consistent with regulations that will be coming in to improve driver safety and the overall safety of our roads.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Many communities in Ontario have been what I call victims of car meetups and street racing. I know in Hamilton, in September, we had a massive gathering in a parking lot in Ancaster. They took over our streets. While I understand that this is a problem across the province, in Hamilton we have seen no charges laid.

I understand that there's a multi-jurisdictional team that includes the OPP and Hamilton Police Service. My question to you is, what has happened to charges that were

being—were there no charges laid in this particular incident in Ancaster that happened way back in September?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the associate minister to respond.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member opposite. I certainly cannot speak on behalf of law enforcement, but we will raise the issue with Minister Jones, the Solicitor General, to provide you with some clarity on that particular instance.

But one of the reasons why we also included places like parking lots for folks to be able to be charged for stunt driving was exactly for that reason. In fact, I actually went up into a helicopter with law enforcement with York Regional Police—which I have to admit was one of the best, most informative experiences in being an MPP. We witnessed that happening in a Tim Hortons parking lot. Thankfully, law enforcement was able to break that up before anyone got hurt, but in a span of two hours, there were three incidents of stunt driving. One can only assume what is happening on our roads and highways, which is why this legislation is so critical.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We don't have time for another question and response, so we turn to further debate.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am very glad to be able to start my remarks, as the official opposition critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways, as we are discussing here at third reading the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, or the MOMS Act, Bill 282.

Speaker, I will tell you, this is my very first opportunity as critic to speak to this bill in this House. Interestingly, when it was first introduced, it was introduced in such a rush that, because we're cohorting, I was not here or able to be. And it just passed through within days to committee, which is a bit frustrating when we want to take the time to be thoughtful. As we saw at committee, there was a lot to talk about that came from the community, fine-tuning some concerns that were raised. I will take the opportunity later this afternoon—as I look at the clock, I think the bulk of my one-hour lead is going to be later today—to share a number of those specific concerns.

This is a bill that makes changes to the Highway Traffic Act. We've spoken at length in this House and across our communities about the need to address stunt driving in a thoughtful way, in an effective way. We did hear some folks at committee both grateful that we're moving forward on this but also, again, with some suggestions that are maybe more for regulation and for the government to consider as they are moving forward on that. So, I hope they will take that into consideration.

But also, a lot of safety pieces that we talk about, that we want to crack down on folks who are breaking the law, that we want to have either stiffer penalties or we want to have more prevention when it comes to the education side—I think about the successful Mothers Against Drunk Driving campaigns that we all grew up with about drunk driving, the perils of that. I think that there is conversation to be had around what stunt driving education campaigns

look like, about the dangers. Again, we had fantastic input at committee, and beforehand, folks like MADD have really worked hard to keep our roads safer on this issue and others.

There are issues in here about dooring. We've talked about dooring, and we brought some thoughtful amendments to committee that were defeated, unfortunately. But I don't think we've closed the door on the dooring conversation, because as we are starting to track those collisions—I won't call them accidents because they're preventable—and being thoughtful, hopefully, we'll realize that the amendments that were brought forward, as suggested by community and the NDP-tabled amendments—hopefully, the government will reverse course and actually adopt those.

There was a lot of talk—and I actually think that the government was surprised by it. They can correct me, but I think they were surprised by the backlash or the reaction from the e-bike-using community, the e-bike enthusiasts, because I think, if I'm being generous, Speaker—and I cannot impugn motive, so I have no idea what the government was thinking, but I did believe the minister when she came to committee and said that the government's intent, and she's repeated it today, was to support e-bike use across communities.

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However, what we have heard from retailers, from folks and families, businesses and grandmas that are using their e-bikes or cargo bikes and whatnot, is that they are very concerned that now those bikes will be deemed illegal because of some of the technical pieces of this bill.

I'm telling you, I was not an e-bike expert before this bill got tabled on that Monday morning, what, two weeks ago. I was not. I don't have one; I don't know. I do now. Wow, they're a really, really not just vocal group, an educated group. They know and love their e-bikes—certainly, those who are connected to the industry, whether they're looking to import new bikes that meet the needs of communities and business and tourism, or whether they're retailers who are connecting folks with the power-assisted support they need to get around as they age, like my colleague from Ottawa was suggesting; he's right on the cusp there. However, their concerns are legitimate.

As we get into the nitty-gritty of the bill and the technical pieces, and we'll talk about that this afternoon—about the weight of the e-bike itself, or whether it's the gross vehicle weight or if it's just the bike alone. The government is out of step with other jurisdictions. They're out of step with international standards. I don't know what this is going to look like now.

Now that this bill has passed to third reading, we can't amend it again. We had that chance at committee. We were able to amend it. The government chose not to amend any part of it, and there were—well, I guess it would be a prop if I were to show you all of my amendments. But these are all of the amendments, Speaker, and none of them passed. They were thoughtful, and they were based on experts. They weren't just that the member from Oshawa decided she had better ideas about e-bikes. No, she didn't. No, I have had to learn that.

We're going to get into it this afternoon, amendment by amendment. I know that the e-bike community are quite eager to hear what it is that was suggested. They're going to continue to hold the government not just to account, they want to know if it's okay for them to ride their bikes, if it's okay for them to use their e-bikes in their communities. Are the retailers now—they're in limbo—going to be in trouble for selling something that is deemed illegal? Are the police now responsible for driving around with micrometers to measure wheel size?

This was problematic heading into committee. Committee was disappointing. The canned messaging that we heard from the government over and over did not indicate that there is that specific understanding. We've missed our opportunity to amend the statute. I heard the minister when she just said something about there being three types of amendments: those that they disagree were needed—fine, they're the government, they can disagree—those that can be left to regulation, and that third column or third category of some amendments that we proposed that require more study and consultations. Well, that's all well and good, but the time has passed. Right? The time has passed for amending the statute, so that's frustrating and disappointing.

But this bill also, of course, deals with towing and storage safety and enforcement. Everyone in this House has heard local stories or has read the paper, seen it on TV. It has been a chaotic system—I say “system” loosely—for towing and storage. What we have here is enabling legislation, which is important, but the regulations could still be years away. So, it remains to be seen whether we see an improvement in safety on our roads when it comes to towing and when that will happen.

Those are reassurances we'd like from the government, not just as debate continues but as we have the opportunity to hear from them on those regulations, whether they will be years away or not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I apologize for interrupting the member from Oshawa, who will have an opportunity later today to conclude her hour-long lead, but the time for debate in this matter this morning has expired.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Burch: People in my riding of Niagara Centre are concerned about the future of their eye care. After decades of underfunding, optometrists and their patients are suffering. In Ontario, the government only covers an average of 55% of the cost of an OHIP-insured visit, the lowest rate in Canada. Now, as of September 1, OHIP-covered eye exams are at risk.

Georgina from Welland is a kindergarten teacher. She has seen countless young students struggle to learn until they received an eye exam and it became apparent they

needed glasses. Georgina said, “Their parents ... are often struggling financially and do not have extra funds to pay for an eye exam or glasses. I have spent money from my own pocket to purchase glasses or replace broken or lost glasses for my students.”

Georgina’s mother is a senior on a very fixed income. In her regular eye exam, her eye doctor observed that her retina had detached. Without this intervention, her mother might have lost her sight completely. Georgina is not alone in her concern. Countless seniors have reached out to my office, worried about the future of their eye care.

Speaker, eye care is health care. I urge this government to provide the financial supports necessary for optometrists to continue to keep their doors open and provide OHIP-covered eye examinations.

TAMIL GENOCIDE EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I stand here with a heavy heart and heart-wrenching memories of Tamils who perished during the last stages of the brutal war in Mullivaikkal in May 2009. This is a very emotional moment for the Tamils, including myself, having been brought up in the Vanni region during my early childhood.

Today marks the 12th year of Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day.

Bishop Rayappu Joseph, a passionate human rights advocate and a respected religious leader who recently passed away, witnessed Sri Lankan armed forces suppress over 147,000 people, including women and children. Mr. Speaker, the war ended 12 years ago. Injustice done to them still remains unpunished today. Sadly, until now, the United Nations hasn’t set up a mechanism for independent international investigation. There is no road map to end the ongoing oppression on Eelam Tamils. We urge the Canadian government to involve with the United Nations to end this.

Through Bill 104, we are seeing new hope and our voice is being heard. Thank you to the members of the Ontario Parliament for passing this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I pay my deepest respects for those who have lost their lives. I understand and share the pain of those who have lost their loved ones. Our prayers go out to them, and their memories live with us.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Jennifer K. French: One of the first things my office staff checks each day is who is eligible for vaccines. There is so much new information, and it is a challenge for anyone to keep up. When we know that there are appointments available, my office circles back to people who have reached out for help, to get them to try again to book appointments. We have been very glad to do the vital work of helping neighbours get vaccinated.

Speaker, since the beginning, health units have had to figure things out for themselves, because while the province is responsible for the distribution of vaccines, they have not shown organized leadership. What we have is a patchwork system of programs across the province.

None of the government announcements have come with more people or more funding, and if the government really wants to focus on these hot spots and divert vaccines to them, then they need to provide the needed support to make sure they can get a lot of people vaccinated in those hot spots.

When the province announced their list of hot spots, many were surprised by how many priority areas were missing. Oshawa has been missing. The Durham health department has found that the L1L neighbourhood in north Oshawa has the lowest vaccination rates in Durham region and a high rate of COVID transmission. Beginning May 17, it has been deemed by public health to be a local hot spot, and people who live or work in L1L will be able to book vaccine appointments.

I am glad more people will be vaccinated, but south Oshawa also needs special consideration. The health department has told me: “We support vaccine prioritization in south Oshawa, along with other areas in Oshawa.”

I know that the health department was not given the opportunity to recommend areas to the province for “hot spots.” Well, Speaker, I am recommending Oshawa neighbourhoods now to this government. Let’s ensure folks who need protecting can have access to vaccines.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning. Mr. Speaker. I rise today to express my gratitude to our pandemic heroes. These men and women, boys and girls come from all walks of life, Ontarians who have stepped up to support their communities and help their neighbours weather the storm.

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This spring, I will be hosting a virtual award ceremony to recognize and to honour some of these outstanding individuals in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook. The award recipients have been nominated by members of the community who have observed or been touched by their efforts. These inspiring individuals include:

—Kevin Keyte, a dedicated volunteer at Glanbrook Community Services, who, with his positive spirit, has delivered meals to isolated residents;

—a group of women known as the St. James United Church mask makers, who have created over 4,000 masks and donated proceeds of the effort to organizations that support the community;

—the small army of volunteers at the Food with Grace Waterdown food bank, who have gone above and beyond to collect and distribute donations to those in need; and

—John Gatto, the head custodian at St. Matthew Catholic Elementary School in Binbrook, who has been the first line of defence against the virus, keeping the school clean and staff and students safe.

As we persevere in our efforts to bend the curve once and for all, let the sacrifices of these and countless other pandemic heroes remind us all of our responsibility to do our part just a little while longer.

NURSES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good morning, Speaker. Down my way during Nursing Week, we honour an outstanding individual who has served the community through excellence in delivering patient care. Because of COVID-19, for the second year, the dedication of each and every nurse in Windsor and Essex county is being recognized.

The local president of our RNAO chapter is Crystal Hepburn. She says, “This year, this award recognizes the extreme dedication, loyalty and hard work that all of our nurses are providing to ensure our community continues to be safe and healthy during this pandemic.”

Speaker, as a symbol of their service to our community, there will be a dedicated bench in Leamington’s Seacliff Park to recognize the valuable contribution of the nurses in Windsor and Essex county. The nurses have already established a similar bench in Windsor’s Jackson Park and at the health and wellness centre in Amherstburg.

Our nurses have been recognizing one of their own since 2008. The nurse of the year award carries the name and honours the contribution of a former president of the ONA, Lois Fairley. She spent her career as a nurse and head nurse looking after patients at our former Salvation Army Grace Hospital.

Speaker, as you know, this year’s theme to Nursing Week is “Still Standing. Still Strong. Still Proud.”—a theme that reflects the challenges that nurses have withstood throughout this pandemic and their remarkable resilience and dedication. During this pandemic, nurses have worked hard each and every day and night, every single shift, month after month. They are exhausted, yet they have persevered and continue to care for all of us in need. The courage, professionalism and compassion they display is humbling.

Nurses are loved, trusted, respected and appreciated by their patients and by all of the people in Ontario and in this House, our provincial Parliament.

MIKE NEMESVARY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My statement today is about a constituent of mine named Mike Nemesvary, who I had the pleasure of speaking with on March 18, 2021. Mike started out with a dream to become the premier freestyle skier in the world, and he was well on his way to achieving it. For well over a decade, Mike competed at the highest levels in Canada and internationally, winning dozens of championships, including world cups as well as Canadian, European and British skiing titles.

Mike was reaching the pinnacle of his world-class skiing career when his entire world changed. A tragic accident in 1985 left him a quadriplegic.

The ‘Round the World Challenge is a six-month, 40,000-kilometre, 20-country journey to raise awareness and funds for enabling technologies which will improve the freedom, independence and acceptance for people with disabilities, especially those with spinal cord injuries. In March 2001, Mike became the first quadriplegic to

independently drive his heavily modified truck around the world, completing the ‘Round the World Challenge.

In March 2021, Mike celebrated the 20th anniversary of this project with a virtual tour around the planet, retracing his tour and highlighting the accomplishments of two decades ago. More importantly, it compared where the world was then to where it is now.

To find out more about Mike and the challenge, you can visit www.roundtheworldchallenge.com.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It’s been a very difficult year for our kids. This morning, I rise to recognize the strength and the resilience of the children and youth in Ontario.

After more than a year of disruption, we know that online learning doesn’t work. Students are frustrated and falling behind, and some are just not showing up. Parents and educators are exhausted trying so hard to make it work, and 70% of teachers surveyed worry the kids won’t catch up academically. Yet we continue to see this government flat-lining education funding and now proposing a hybrid model of learning for next year, but without additional funding.

Tragically, we are seeing the devastating impact of social isolation on children’s health and well-being. Bruce Squires, the president of McMaster Children’s Hospital, reports that the number of youth being admitted after a suicide attempt has tripled this year. An Ontario Soccer survey found that without youth soccer, 40% of respondents reported feeling anxiety, stress and worry, while 20% noted depression.

Our kids are not okay and we need to start listening to them. Students are calling on the Ontario government to allow COVID-safe outdoor graduation ceremonies. Kids are pleading, “Let us play.” Unfortunately, the PC government just voted down our motion to safely re-open outdoor recreational facilities to boost physical and mental health. The Premier just teased that summer camps will be open, but so far has provided no details.

Kids don’t need to be held in suspense. They don’t need more empty words without a plan. We must act to prioritize the mental health of Ontario’s three million children and youth now.

TAMIL GENOCIDE EDUCATION WEEK

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Today, May 18, marks the 12th anniversary of the Mullivaikkal genocide. This is a day when Tamils in Canada and around the world will join together in remembering the end of the 25-year-long civil war that claimed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians on both sides.

As Tamils commemorate those who were lost, it is also important to acknowledge the process of rebuilding, which is ongoing today. Today, I’ll also reflect on the pain and suffering of this atrocity. It is also apparent that significant steps have been taken towards the preservation and expansion of the cultural heritage of the Tamil people, including here in Ontario. In this House, we unanimously

passed the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park’s Bill 104, which dedicates a week to educating about genocides so we never repeat them.

Notably, a campaign to establish a chair in Tamil studies at the University of Toronto Scarborough—the first of its kind in Canada—has reached its \$3-million philanthropic goal. More than 3,800 donors contributed to the grassroots campaign, which was spearheaded by the Canadian Tamil Congress and Tamil Chair Inc. in 2018.

Tamil is among the world’s seven classical languages and it reflects a rich cultural heritage that spans more than 2,000 years. The east part of Toronto is home to the largest concentration of Tamil people outside of the Indian subcontinent. I’m inspired by the strong ties of kinship shared between members of the Tamil Canadian community and the dedication Tamils show to improving the lives of their neighbours.

As a member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough–Guildwood, I truly appreciate the strength and perseverance of the Tamil Canadian communities across Ontario, and I stand here and join with all of you in wishing them a peaceful and prosperous future.

SPORT A RAINBOW

Mr. Dave Smith: Yesterday was International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. Today, I’d like to introduce you to a very good friend of mine, Rose Powers.

Rose is an absolute force for good in our community. I first met her when we were both involved in hockey in Peterborough. Rose was the president of the Peterborough Girls Hockey Association, and at the time I was director of player development for the Peterborough Community Church Hockey League. Rose helped me immensely with a number of projects, like the Under the Lock tournament and Hockey Day in Canada. She has a reputation that if you want something done well, you enlist Rose’s help.

Rose has a project that she’s been working on for the last couple of years, and it’s one that everyone needs to know about. It’s called Sport a Rainbow. The concept is really simple: You take the pledge and you sport a rainbow sticker to show your support. Here is the pledge: “By Sporting a Rainbow, I understand that all athletes, coaches and competitors deserve to participate in sport free of judgment. I will help by speaking up against hateful speech and actions in my sport.

“Because it’s about more than just the game.”

1030

Speaker, I proudly took the pledge when Rose first started it, and I encourage everyone to go to www.sportarainbow.ca, take the pledge and get behind this fantastic initiative because, as Rose says, it’s more than just the game.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr. David Piccini: Today, I rise to highlight the phenomenal work being done by Northumberland Manufacturers’ Association and a recent virtual career fair that

they held. A special thank you to the phenomenal team: Fred, Darla, Melissa and the entire team at NMA for doing this.

The fair was an industry-led event to recruit college, university and high school graduates looking at a rewarding career in manufacturing. The purpose of the event was to hire new talent; open new connections and relationships; learn about and promote internships, apprenticeships; and to continue to build relationships between industry and post-secondary institutions.

The event included a keynote speaker who gave a virtual plant tour of Charlotte Products in Peterborough. Both items focused on careers and manufacturing, and it was directed towards students in my community.

The event had 27 manufacturers in attendance, 170 graduates, six post-secondary schools and high schools, Speaker. This was truly a remarkable event. I’m told students have already been in for internship interviews. Students have been asked to come and many are well on their way to a rewarding career in manufacturing. I also know that local high school teachers are now in direct contact with manufacturers in our community. Building these important linkages is critical, Speaker.

This event, along with Mirmil’s recent expansion to Campbellford, hiring now to grow their company to over 100 employees with well-paying jobs, like machine operators, drafters and engineering personnel, shows that manufacturing in Northumberland is alive and well.

Speaker, I would again thank the remarkable team at NMA. Thank you for the work you do, and thank you to all manufacturers in Northumberland–Peterborough South.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our members’ statements for this morning.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin has informed me he has a point of order he wishes to raise.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. On a point of order, I want to welcome Natalie Mehra, along with the Ontario Health Coalition, who packed the gallery, and all the guests who are joining us today, particularly

—from Sudbury: Shawn Mathe, Krystal Martin, Eric Boulay, Amanda McGaughey, Melissa Wood, Roma Smith, Dot Klein, Laura Ann Varey;

—from Val Caron: Joanne MacNeil, Monique Mussar;

—from North Bay: Sue McIntyre, Ann McIntyre, Robert Lawrence;

—from Sault Ste. Marie: Juanita Wood-Arbus, Shirley Sinclair, Marie DellaVedova;

—from Blind River: Al Dupuis, Jo Arnold;

—from Manitoulin Island: Christine Mick;

—from Iroquois Falls: Frances Anne Côté, Ben Lefebvre;

—from Thunder Bay: Evelina Pan, Paul Pugh; and the many more from northern Ontario. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you for the introduction of the virtual visitors.

The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order: I, too, would like to welcome the guests who are in the gallery today virtually. There are over 500 of them. The Ontario Health Coalition has brought them in. I'll just say welcome to Christine Collins from Ottawa. There are so many other people from Ottawa. Thank you very much for being here, and I do—

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

TAMIL GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Rouge Park has a point of order he wishes to make.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to rise for a moment of silence to honour and remember the lives lost in the Tamil genocide as we mark Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Rouge Park is seeking unanimous consent of the House for a moment of silence in recognition of the Tamil genocide. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As has already been mentioned, there are hundreds of families and residents of long-term care watching across Ontario today, and they're demanding answers from the Ford government. We've offered to put their questions to the government today, hoping, on their behalf and our own, that the Premier and the Minister of Long-Term Care will answer those questions.

The first one is from Sherry Coulson Hutchinson in Warton, and Sherry says this: "I have been watching with horror how this government has ignored conditions in" long-term-care homes, "even after the military said that residents were dying not just with COVID, but because they were dehydrated, starving and lying in their own urine and feces."

On behalf of Sherry and so many others, why did the Premier break his promise of justice and a full investigation of those deaths from neglect and dehydration?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: As I've said on a number of occasions, not only for Sherry but for all the people of the province of Ontario, we certainly were put on the defence during the first phase of this battle with COVID. That is why, even prior to the pandemic, we began to reform the long-term-care system in Ontario. We began renovating those outdated homes that still had ward beds. We put in thousands of additional spaces throughout the province. We knew that there was also an issue of staffing in the sector. That's why we began a study into the staffing, what were issues that were being faced. Of course, we increased pay. We knew that pay was an issue. We increased pay for the PSWs through pandemic pay.

That work continued not only before, but during and after. Obviously, when we had vaccines—despite the shortfall in the early months, when we had vaccines, the very first people who we vaccinated were those people in our long-term-care homes.

There is a lot of work left to be done. We will continue that work for future generations of the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I just would like the members of the government side to look around these galleries and imagine these people actually here, because I can tell you for sure that if they were able to be here, they would be.

Here's what Pamela says. Pamela lost both of her parents to a COVID-19 outbreak in Pinecrest Nursing Home in Bobcaygeon. Her dad, Ted, was a resident there. Her mom was a frequent visitor and volunteer. She says this:

"My elderly mother felt compelled to volunteer her time daily, so my dad had the care he needed.... She became a front-line volunteer for a 'for-profit home'!!"—her emphasis, not mine.

"After losing both" of them, the "Premier ... passed a bill that has made it significantly difficult for us to seek compensation from these million-dollar corporations."

On behalf of Pamela and so many others, why was it this Premier's first act to protect the for-profit owners and operators of these homes and himself from legal liability?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Leader of the Opposition will know that that's actually not the case. The Premier undertook a commission of inquiry to understand what it was that happened.

Look, we knew in advance of the pandemic that there were significant issues in long-term care. I just mentioned that. There needed to be a build-out of long-term care. We needed renovations in some of the older homes, including in Bobcaygeon. We put millions of dollars, frankly—hundreds of millions of dollars—into doing that in advance of the pandemic. We wanted to know why staffing wasn't staying in long-term-care homes. We started that work before the pandemic.

1040

But we've gone further, Mr. Speaker. We said there have to be four hours of care. We're hiring 27,000 additional PSWs, 2,000 additional nurses, building out thousands of beds. We've engaged the coroner so that we

can act on the recommendations of the commission of inquiry. Those families that want justice will be guaranteed that justice, and we will get to the bottom of this and make sure that these long-term-care homes are working for the people of Ontario for decades to come.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, on the contrary, it actually did happen, and it was Bill 218, in case the government members forgot.

This is from Joyce Maxwell in Barrie: “I live in Barrie, just blocks from Roberta Place where my mom was a resident until her passing.... It is also the place where all but one of the 129 residents entrusted to its care were infected by COVID-19 ... and where 71 residents subsequently died....

“I am here to demand justice and accountability for the residents of this home, and of the other homes in Ontario that failed our senior citizens so miserably.”

My question on behalf of Joyce and many, many others is, why has the government not provided justice? Why have they not provided accountability to the residents and to their family members in long-term care?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think the Leader of the Opposition would expect that, first and foremost, what we have to do is ensure that, as we are still in the midst of a pandemic, we make sure that our homes and the people within those homes have the highest level of service and protection that they can get. That is why one of the first groups of people that we vaccinated in phase 1, Mr. Speaker, when we finally started to get vaccines from the federal government were the residents of long-term-care homes, and the impact of that has been dramatic.

But also, at the same time, we undertook a commission of inquiry. We knew that we had to get to the bottom of what it was that happened, and the commission of inquiry has helped us identify historical and systemic problems in long-term care that had not been addressed in the many years prior to this government taking office.

That’s not an excuse, Mr. Speaker, for not taking action. That’s why we took action: 27,000 additional PSWs are going to be hired, four hours of care, thousands of homes being built, older homes being renovated. There’s a lot of work to do. We will get it done, Mr. Speaker.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. But I can tell you, those hundreds of family members and residents watching are probably insulted and disgusted by the fact that the Premier and the Minister of Long-Term Care refused to answer their requests.

But I’m going to put another one forward. This is from a front-line hero in long-term care from the Peterborough area, who says, “I sat in full PPE with a 92-year-old Navy veteran of” World War II “who survived his ship being bombed twice. He cried telling me he would rather die than live in isolation because this wasn’t living; this was

what they used to do to punish people in the war, this was worse than jail.”

Melodie McCullough from Peterborough says this: “Why did you make it so ordinary people can’t sue long-term-care homes? Why was there no investigation into the deaths ... that were caused by neglect?” Does the Premier have an answer to Melodie’s question?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I would hope that the Leader of the Opposition would agree that the very first thing that the government should do in the midst of a pandemic is make sure that the people of the province of Ontario, including the residents of long-term care, are taken care of. That is why the vaccination effort started with long-term care.

We also understand, Mr. Speaker, that there is a significant amount of investments that had not been made in the years leading up to the pandemic. That’s why, before the pandemic, we started making those investments. During the pandemic, we continued to make those investments. And after, we’re budgeting for 27,000 additional PSWs, over 2,000 new nurses for the system, thousands of beds, to build new homes, and to fix and renovate those old outdated homes. At the same time, we’ve engaged the coroner on this. We’re the first province to have a commission of inquiry into long-term care.

Those are the first steps, Mr. Speaker. Not one person who wants to seek justice will be stopped from seeking that justice, not by this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, does the government House leader hear his own drivel? Four thousand people died in long-term care because they waited over a year for this government to do anything, anything at all, to take care of them.

Here’s another quote from somebody who is watching, June Casselman of Markham, Speaker: “Our 90-year-old mother is in long-term care in Unionville. Her home was in lockdown from December 2020 to present, with the exception of approximately 12 days when the residents were able to leave their rooms. I can see the light in my mum’s eyes dimming.... It is worse than jail for these residents.”

Speaker, my question on behalf of June and many others is, why are these residents still being kept separate from their families and loved ones?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, as I said on a number of occasions, and I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition might not agree, our first priority, obviously, is the safety and security of the people in long-term care and their families.

We are in the midst of a third wave in the province of Ontario. Despite the fact that our vaccination efforts have been very, very successful, with over seven million Ontarians receiving their first dose—and if I’m not mistaken, it’s close to 90% of those in our long-term-care homes—there is still work to be done. But our first priority

is to keep those people safe, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are trying to do.

That is also why we are making historic investments in the long-term-care sector, Mr. Speaker. I have been there with the people who have suffered. I have had homes in my own riding that required the attention of the Markham Stouffville Hospital.

I do not need the Leader of the Opposition to suggest that I don't care about people in our long-term-care homes. It is why we're fighting so hard to increase investments in the sector, so that the devastation over the last 15 years is not the hallmark of the next 15 years.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this government utterly failed residents in long-term care and their loved ones. They should have, in fact, made them their first priority, but they didn't. They should have moved heaven and earth to protect those seniors in long-term care. They should have provided the justice and accountability for those folks when the homes failed them.

Instead, they protected the for-profit owners and themselves from legal liability. Instead, they left residents abandoned. Instead, they've broken their promises, time and time again. And to this very moment, they have not committed to implementing all of the recommendations of the long-term care commission.

Speaker, on behalf of all of the families watching today and so many others, I want to ask this government: When will they take the profits out of long-term care? When will they stop protecting the for-profit owners and operators and themselves from legal liability? And when will this Premier finally show some commitment to change and fire his Minister of Long-Term Care?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: This is an opposition leader who, between 2011 and 2014, held the balance of power in this Legislative Assembly. She could have focused on long-term care. She could have focused on health care. Instead, she chose to focus on a stretch goal for insurance, accomplishing nothing.

When we took office in 2018, and even before, we understood that there was a problem in long-term care, Mr. Speaker. That is why we moved immediately to build thousands of new spaces for long-term care, so that we could bring down the waiting list. That is why the Minister of Health moved towards the creation of Ontario health teams. That is why we started to increase ICU capacity. That is why we looked at a staffing strategy, and right now we're hiring 27,000 additional PSWs. That is why we announced last Friday the hiring of 2,000 new nurses. That is why we have said that we're going to build 30,000 spaces over the next 10 years.

Our priority is making sure that we get it right, that we put the 15 years of the past behind us and that the next 15,

20 and 30 years are the best in long-term care. We'll get the job done for those—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sara Singh: Good day, Speaker. My question is to the Premier.

Thousands of Ontarians are watching today and every single one of them deserves answers from Conservatives and this Premier. Suzanne Baril is one of those people. Here is what she has to say:

"I'm raising my voice in memory of my mom, Viviane Baril.

1050

"My mom passed away on April 15, 2020. She was alone for a month before her passing.

"I was at my mom's side for 12 years except for the last month. My mom was an RN who provided exemplary care to her patients.

"She did not deserve to die the way she did. I fought for 12 years bringing issues within the LTC to the attention of management.

"I was lied to repeatedly and promised that these things would change.

"It only got worse. Please be responsible and fix the LTC system."

Speaker, after decades of Liberal neglect, Conservatives have only made the crisis in long-term care even worse. When will this government listen to people like Suzanne, take responsibility and start fixing Ontario's broken long-term-care system?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I thank the member for that question, because it highlights what we have been talking about for weeks in this place. Suzanne, in her email, I suspect, to the member, highlights it very much more effectively than I ever could have. For 12 years she had been working and expressing some of the problems that we found when we took over, when the people gave us the awesome responsibility and the privilege of governing in 2018. Exactly what Suzanne has talked about is what we have found, Mr. Speaker. There was not enough staff; there had to be a staffing strategy. There were not enough homes, so we moved very quickly to build 30,000 new spaces.

I had a 118-year waiting list in my riding for long-term care—unacceptable in one of the richest provinces in the country, if not North America, and we could do better. But that's what these reports highlighted for us, whether it was the Auditor General or the commission of inquiry, that for decades leading up to this and in particular over the last 15 years, the lack of investments, the lack of attention by the previous Liberal government made it even more difficult to address the pandemic. But we won't stop, Mr. Speaker. We'll get the job done for the future generations.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Well, Liberals neglected long-term care, I think we all understand that, but this government has only made the situation worse. Their inaction throughout the pandemic cost us precious lives in the province of Ontario.

That's why Sharon Robbins is also joining us today in the gallery; she's listening in from Kawartha Lakes. She says to the Premier, "You keep calling us 'friends,' you keep talking about an 'iron ring' around LTC, but you don't do anything.

"You almost eliminated in-person inspections of homes and those homes where there have been disastrous outcomes during COVID and where the military ... identified abysmal conditions have faced no consequences!"

Speaker, Sharon has a question for the Premier: When is he going to hold for-profit companies who run these long-term-care homes accountable, and when is he going to start protecting the citizens of Ontario instead of protecting his friends on the boards of those long-term-care homes?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, the very first step in accountability was the commission of inquiry, Mr. Speaker. A number of recommendations were received through the commission of inquiry, many of which have already started to be taken care of by the government. Also, the Auditor General's report—very, very important. At the same time, we've engaged the coroner. I think these are steps that people would expect their government to take, Mr. Speaker.

At the same time, we understand the challenges in the system: not enough staff, not enough time spent with patients or with residents of long-term care. That is why we have a North American-leading four hours of care for long-term care. That is why we're hiring 27,000 additional PSWs. That is why we're building 30,000 new spaces. That is why we're hiring 2,000 new nurses.

It is a great first step. There is more work to be done, Mr. Speaker, as we come out of the pandemic. That is why we vaccinated our seniors in long-term-care homes first. There's more work to be done, absolutely, but for the first time in decades, this is a government that's committed to getting it done.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to rise in the House today. My question is to the Solicitor General.

We know that stricter border measures stop the spread of COVID-19. This reality is backed up by hard evidence and data. Countries from around the world have implemented strict border policies to stop the entry of COVID-19, with great success. But we also know that this isn't just about international travel from overseas. COVID-19 can enter Ontario from the United States as well. I read today that the Prime Minister is considering opening our borders with our southern cousins.

Can the Solicitor General remind the House what our government's position is on opening our borders so soon?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the question from Sarnia–Lambton. He's absolutely right, and he has every right to be concerned. I think it's really important for the members opposite to understand that it was one individual who travelled into Ontario and devastated the long-term-care home in Barrie. I would hope that the members opposite would join us in asking—no, demanding—that our federal government keep border restrictions in place while these variants of concern continue to put our friends and families at risk.

I would plead with the members opposite: Please join us in our fight to ask the federal government to keep the borders closed until we can deal with COVID-19 and shut down the variants travelling.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I, too, was shocked reading in the National Post of plans that are being devised by Minister Bill Blair's ministry. Although we all look forward to our American friends being able to visit once again, now is not the time.

Back to the minister: Can she provide any examples of why she has concerns about a return of our American travellers?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We do know that, in fact, mobility is a factor in the spread of COVID, which is why now is not the time to open our borders. According to the Centre for Disease Control, only 47.3% of US citizens have received one dose of the vaccine. We are over 56% here in Ontario, and we really are not ready to open up yet. As of May 10, the Centre for Disease Control forecasted between 84,000 to 406,000 new COVID cases will likely be reported during the week of June 5.

On May 17, just one day, the US had over 16,000 new cases of COVID-19. Some of the hardest-hit states, according to the Johns Hopkins centre, are right on our border: Michigan, New York, Illinois and Wisconsin. It's not the time for the federal government to open our borders. They need to do the right thing and keep the variants out of Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. This past April 20 marked one year since Mary Walsh died from COVID-19 at the Orchard Villa long-term-care home in Pickering. Her daughter Marie Tripp says she is "sure she was dehydrated and starving." Marie has video proof of PSWs not wearing full PPE during the outbreak. She believes that if management had provided personal protective equipment and proper training, things would have been different. Marie wants to know who is at fault. She wants to know which ministers in this province will take responsibility for the circumstances at Orchard Villa.

Speaker, I want to know why this government looked away for so long. We've all read the reports, and families know that more should have been done. Marie's message to the government is: "We the families of deceased loved

ones need answers, clarification, and justice. Will we get answers? Will we get justice?"

Will this government take any responsibility for its failure to keep people safe?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, Mr. Speaker. That is why the Premier launched a commission of inquiry before any other province had. There's a significant number of recommendations in there that are already well under way in the province of Ontario.

Look, we understood how difficult the first phase of this pandemic was. As was highlighted by the Auditor General and by the commission of inquiry, we were left in very challenging circumstances during the first part of this battle, because the previous government had left us so underprepared. But we're making a difference. We've added nursing care. We've added 27,000 PSWs. We're adding thousands of beds, and we're well on our way to ensuring that the next generation of Ontarians have the best long-term-care system in the world. That does not alleviate anybody from what has happened during the first wave, but that is why we had a commission of inquiry, and we will get to the bottom of it.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Peter Morris in Oshawa lost his mother to COVID in the second wave in November of 2020. She had been living in long-term care in Peterborough. Peter believes COVID was brought into the ward by staff. His message to the government is this: "Her death was preventable. No restrictions on LTC employees working in multiple settings were in place. No paid sick leave was available to LTC workers who could avoid work if they experienced COVID symptoms.

1100

"I blame my mother's death on a government which failed to act with foresight and common sense in the face of predictable outcomes. There was no iron ring."

Speaker, the Premier promised an iron ring to protect the vulnerable seniors, but instead what he delivered was an iron ring around for-profit operators. So, I will echo Peter Morris's words in asking whether or not this government will indeed take responsibility for their failure to protect seniors, and if they will indeed take the profits out of long-term care.

Hon. Paul Calandra: As I said, the initial response, of course, was to ensure that there was a commission of inquiry so that we could understand what happened during the first wave. The Auditor General concluded a report as well. What was significant in both of these reports was the highlighting of the fact that the previous government, over 15 years, failed to make the important investments in the long-term-care system. That's what we understood, and that's why we moved very quickly, even before the pandemic, to address some of the shortfalls in the system.

I understand Peter. I understand that the fact that we're adding thousands of nurses and PSWs to the system does not diminish the pain that he feels right now. It doesn't

diminish the pain that anybody feels who lost a loved one. But what we can do is make sure that we have the best system in place, with the best quality of care. That means four hours of care. That means new homes. It means refurbishing the old homes and the wards that had been left unrefurbished for years. That means adding thousands of nurses. We'll get the job done for future generations, without sacrificing our understanding of the past.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Roman Baber: To the government House leader: The Canadian Paediatric Society quoted a student yesterday saying that kids are depressed, suicidal and lonely. They need school, and they need sports. But yesterday, government MPPs were whipped to vote with the government against a motion to open outdoor sports. For those watching at home, "whipped" means the MPPs were forced by the House leader, under the direction of the Premier, to vote for the government against the motion to open the outdoors. Every doctor is telling them that the outdoors is safe and they actually want to open the outdoors. But to avoid admitting they were wrong, they vote against the opening. So they force MPPs to vote against the motion, or else they'll have a seat for them right here next to me.

My question to the government House leader: Without telling us that they're listening to the experts or reciting the months of the year again, was yesterday's vote in which the government refused to open outdoor sports the right thing to do for our kids? And was it good for our democracy?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Actually, Mr. Speaker, that gentleman will know quite well what it feels like voting with the government, because he did so on every occasion. When we initially brought in the state of emergency, that member was very happy to vote in support of that state of emergency. All of the measures that we have brought in to keep the people of the province of Ontario safe, that member was very happy to vote in favour of. He stood in his place and went through the lobby in a very safe way, wearing a mask to ensure that we could continue working on behalf of the people of Ontario in a safe, effective way. He was supportive of every single one of those measures. So, he would know how important it is to keep the people of the province of Ontario safe, because on so many occasions he did the very same thing.

Now, he has changed his mind, Mr. Speaker. But one thing that will remain consistent with this government is that we will put the people of the province of Ontario first. We will put the health and safety of the people of the province of Ontario first; that, I can guarantee him.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: I'm not sure of the government House leader's reasoning behind that. He knows full well that I've opposed the lockdown since May. He knows why I'm sitting on this side of the House. He threatened to kick me out when I opposed the lockdown in June.

The response by the government House leader is exactly what you'd expect from the government by now. They keep pretending that they're not told that the outdoors is safe. They keep pretending that they don't hear anything or read anything, and they stick to their ground until it becomes impossible—and then he recites the months of the year. Then they roll over and they pretend like it's a victory of some sort, like with sick days. They will open the outdoors on their terms, and then they'll have their MPPs do photo ops about how much they enjoy the outdoors or how great it is for mental health.

Now, all of this would be funny if it weren't tragic for our kids, so my question is: The doctors already told them that the outdoors is safe. They don't need to wait for that. So, when will you capitulate, own your failure and open the outdoors?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: As I indicated yesterday, yesterday was not the day to open the outdoors for all of the recreational amenities. But we encourage everyone to go outdoors to enjoy this warm weather. The parks are open. Please use them. Please go for a walk, a run. Walk your dog. Take your children and grandchildren out. We want people to go outside and enjoy the outdoors.

As you know, we still have high levels of hospitalizations, high numbers of people in our ICUs. We want to make sure that when people do go out, they use the proper public safety measures that we've asked people to do and that they have been doing for over the last year. But please, go outside and enjoy the outdoors.

PIPELINES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question today is to the Associate Minister of Energy. Mr. Speaker, my constituents remain very concerned with the Michigan government's ongoing efforts to close line 5 and endanger their well-being and livelihoods. In the United States, a ransomware attack recently shut down the Colonial pipeline. It's an 8,800-kilometre pipeline that carries 2.5 million barrels per day from Texas right through to Pennsylvania. The unexpected shutdown of this major pipeline led to shortages and price hikes of diesel, gasoline and jet fuel in the United States. It has created an absolute mess, with several states declaring a state of emergency.

Can the Associate Minister of Energy tell this House, in the aftermath of the Colonial pipeline attack a sign of what awaits Ontarians if Michigan governor's actions to shutter Enbridge's line 5 are successful?

Hon. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, through you, I want to thank sincerely the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his question and for all of his tireless advocacy on behalf of his constituents. They've been extremely fortunate to have him represent them and work on their behalf for many, many years.

Mr. Speaker, I share the member from Sarnia–Lambton's concern. We were all troubled by the news of the ransomware attack on the Colonial pipeline on May 7.

It definitely speaks to the importance of keeping line 5 open and its key role in our energy and economic security.

In fact, it serves as a real-life example of what happens when a major pipeline is taken out of commission. A shutdown of line 5 would have serious consequences and impact each and every one of us. A House of Commons multi-party committee in Ottawa confirmed that it would cause energy shortages, transportation bottlenecks and job losses, none of which we can afford.

I want to assure this House and the great people of Ontario that we will support every effort to ensure that line 5 continues to operate safely, as it has for over 60 years.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to thank the minister for his assurance that our government will continue its advocacy to keep line 5 open. There is so much at stake for my constituents, and frankly for all Ontarians and Canadians as a whole. The massive shortages and price hikes caused by the Colonial pipeline hack have not been seen since 2014. In fact—not on my question; just a comment—this morning, I saw that 19 governors in the United States are advocating for reopening and taking another look at the Keystone pipeline.

We must continue to do whatever it takes to ensure Canadians and Ontarians do not face a similar fate if line 5 is to be shut down. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please update this House on the latest developments in the effort to keep line 5 operating safely?

Hon. Bill Walker: I agree with the member for Sarnia–Lambton: The Colonial pipeline attack highlights the consequences of suddenly losing one third of your fuel supply. Just imagine the chaos that would ensue if you decommissioned 50% of your supply of fuel needs permanently.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario needs line 5. Canada needs line 5. Michigan and the United States need line 5. From the outset, our government has worked with the other provinces to urge the federal government to use all means at its disposal to keep line 5 open. We were pleased to see the government of Canada file an amicus brief in court last Wednesday, underscoring the importance of line 5 to the energy and economic security of our province and our country.

I can assure the member from Sarnia–Lambton that our government will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the energy workers, the families and the communities in his riding, across the province and on both sides of the border, frankly, that have had their livelihoods put in jeopardy as a result of the decision of the Michigan governor. Our government remains steadfast in our support for keeping this critical infrastructure available.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: In September 2020, I tabled a private member's bill calling on this government to create an independent seniors' advocate in Ontario. Kitchener Centre residents supported it and so did this government,

because people understood that it's the government's responsibility to protect us, especially during an unanticipated crisis like our current COVID-19 pandemic. That includes creating ways to raise concerns about how older adults are being treated before, during and after the pandemic.

1110

Beverly Summerfield, a Kitchener resident who is joining us virtually today in the gallery with the OHC, could have asked her question to the seniors' advocate, but the government refuses to call it in committee and make it law. So, Beverly writes:

"Why, after learning from the military of the abhorrent conditions in which our seniors suffered, did you proceed to do nothing other than pass legislation to protect yourself and those in a position of authority from legal culpability/ramifications?"

"Where was the iron ring you promised?"

On behalf of Beverly and in the memory of those we have lost, where was the iron ring, and who is going to take responsibility for this chaos?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, we take responsibility for ensuring that we have the best long-term-care system in North America. We understand the challenges that were faced during the first wave of this pandemic and even into the second wave. It's one of the reasons why the very first people to get vaccinated were residents of long-term care.

Setting that aside, we knew in advance that we had to make some serious changes in our long-term-care system. We knew that there was a problem with staffing. In fact, one of the very first meetings I had after getting the privilege of being elected as an MPP was with a PSW in my riding, Rupal, who continues to text me on occasion and lets me know what's happening. One of the things she said is that we have to be organized. There's a bill before this Legislature that would allow them to be organized. She also said to me that we need more PSWs. That's why I'm so proud of the fact that we are hiring 27,000 additional PSWs so we can get to the level of care that is needed in our long-term-care homes; that's four hours of care.

There is nothing that I can say or do that will diminish the loss that Beverly, Peter and others are facing when it comes to the loss of their loved ones—nothing. But what I can make sure that I do is work with this government, make sure we work with all legislators, to give people the best long-term care in North America.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Back to the Premier: Beverly is not the only person with questions. Bruce Thompson, who is also joining us virtually today, is the acting chair, family council, for Almonte Country Haven, a 96-bed, for-profit long-term-care home in Almonte, Ontario.

Bruce writes, "During the first wave we lost over 30% of our residents due to understaffing, PSWs working in more than one home, little or no PPE, no testing capabilities, no infectious disease specialists and no direction

from the government." Bruce has one ask, "We want the Ford government to implement all recommendations of the COVID-19 commission on long-term care."

Through you, Mr. Speaker, and back to the Premier: On behalf of the residents, the staff, the caregivers and the hundreds of family members of this home, will the government immediately implement all recommendations of the COVID-19 commission on long-term care?

Hon. Paul Calandra: We are well on our way to doing just that. But Bruce raised a very good point in his email to the member. He highlighted the fact that testing was woefully inadequate in the province of Ontario. This is what we faced during the initial phases of the pandemic: We inherited a system that could do 5,000 tests a day. We knew we had to increase that, so we brought that up to 75,000 tests a day.

We knew that ICU capacity was a major part of the problem with hallway health care. That is why we increased the capacity in our ICUs from 1,800 to a little over 2,300. We increased critical care beds across the province of Ontario because we knew that this was inadequate. This is what had been given to us by the previous Liberal government. We also knew there was a capacity issue, so that's why we're building thousands more spaces. That's why we're hiring 27,000 additional PSWs and 2,000 additional nurses.

Bruce is quite correct: There were a lot of things that we inherited that have to be fixed, and we will fix those.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I, too, want to welcome those from the Ontario Health Coalition who are packing the galleries today, including Michelle Jones from Scarborough. Michelle's grandmother is in long-term care, and both Michelle and her grandmother acquired COVID-19 in November, they believe, from a resident who had visited the hospital for dialysis during an outbreak at the hospital. "So much for the iron ring," says Michelle.

My question is to the Minister of Health. This government rolled out a vaccination plan that is not easy to use or accessible to all. The vaccine-keen are finding their way, but we cannot over-rely on vax-hunters to pick up the government's slack. There are people in Ontario who face systemic barriers to health every day. Where is the plan for the Ontarians who have systemic barriers to vaccinations? Speaker, not everyone has a computer. They certainly cannot use a library computer during lockdown. Some people are vaccine-hesitant or lack confidence in vaccines, and they certainly lack confidence in this government.

What is the minister's plan to reach the people in Ontario who are eligible to get the vaccine but face systemic barriers to getting it? How will you track individuals and provide socio-economic data—

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question. We do have a comprehensive, three-phase plan for our vaccine rollout. We're now in

phase 2 of the plan, and I can advise that to date over 7.2 million vaccines have been delivered. We have over 5.3 million bookings for vaccines in the future. Clearly, many people are finding their way through the system and aren't finding it that difficult to negotiate.

But for those people who don't have a computer, they can also make calls to our online call centre and book their vaccines that way. We also have numerous pharmacies that are offering vaccines, both Moderna and the Pfizer vaccines. People can make their own appointments through their own vaccine clinics at their pharmacies.

There are many ways for people to access these vaccines. We are making sure that anyone in Ontario who wants a vaccine will be able to get one.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Back to the minister: As your government just said, it just takes one to ignite an outbreak. The Ontario science table said to prioritize hot spots for four weeks to save more lives; you said no. Hot spots have some of the most vulnerable people in our communities that have a high proportion of essential workers, and they have not seen three waves. They've actually just seen a tsunami of one wave, continuously, since the virus started last year.

If the minister and this government are so confident in their plan, why not accept my request to collect socio-demographic data, including race, ethnicity, disabilities and languages spoken, so that we can better track who and where the vaccine is getting to?

Tomorrow, I'll provide amendments to Bill 283 at committee that will require the collection of race-based data and other important information collected when someone gets a vaccine, while protecting of course their privacy, which you require. This will allow the government to see that this life-saving vaccine is truly equitably distributed.

Will the minister fix her bill today and support these amendments so we can better track who is receiving the vaccine?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As the member will certainly know, we are tracking the socio-demographic information by asking people if they wish to disclose it or not. We are making the receipt of the vaccine subject to the person's individual choice. I believe that the disclosure of this information should also be according to their own wishes and not be mandatory. Most people are providing it. Some people don't wish to.

However, I can also speak to the issue about the hot spot areas. We did designate 50% of all of our vaccines going into hot spot areas for a two-week period, with the result that we now have a 7.9% higher increase in people receiving the vaccines in hot spot areas than in the non-hot spot areas. Clearly, that's working.

But I can also advise that the Ontario science table recommendations presented in April assumed a rate of 100,000 vaccines administered per day on a 50% hot spot and 50% per population basis for 30 days. However, in the month of May, the province will receive approximately

double the number of vaccines than were originally estimated by the science advisory table, and we are confident that we will be able to roll out those vaccines in those hot spot areas to make sure that everyone who needs to be covered will be covered.

NURSING EDUCATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: This question today is to the Minister of Colleges and Universities. We know that the previous Liberal government did not make the necessary investments in our health care system. This included not making the right investments in the education of a future generation of nursing students here in Ontario. We all heard stories of the many Ontarians who wanted to become nurses but were unable to find a program close to home or were not able to get into a program, even though they were qualified, because of the lack of increased enrolment opportunities.

I'm proud that our government has taken the right steps to ensure that prospective nursing students have more choices and improved access to excellent post-secondary training. Can the Minister of Colleges and Universities tell us what actions this government is taking to provide greater choice and access to prospective nursing students in Ontario?

1120

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

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to thank the member for that question. Yesterday, when I rose in the House, I spoke a bit about how previous governments failed to think outside the box and equip us with the health human resource capacity to meet not only today's needs, but tomorrow's needs. So I thank the member for that question. I'm pleased to rise to talk about stand-alone nursing.

What is stand-alone nursing? Previously, colleges had to partner with universities to offer nursing degrees. I'm pleased to say that our government launched stand-alone nursing for our colleges without the need to partner with a university. Prospective students now have greater access to excellent post-secondary training in high-demand jobs closer to home.

Speaker, I'm pleased to say that to date, two colleges are preparing to offer the first stand-alone bachelor of science nursing programs in fall of 2021. This will ensure that we are truly meeting the needs not only of Ontarians today, but that we're training a well-trained workforce to meet the needs of Ontarians tomorrow. I'm proud to be part of a government thinking outside the box and doing just that.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's great news that this government is making the necessary investment today in the education of Ontario's future nurses. I know that nursing students in my community value being able to study close

to home and look forward to continuing to care for our community and loved ones. This is the first increase in the number of nursing seats in nearly 20 years.

While it is welcome news that students will be able to access high-quality education closer to home, can the minister please explain what investments our government is also making to increase the number of nursing students in Ontario?

Mr. David Piccini: The member is absolutely right. I'd like to thank him for his leadership and for championing this issue.

Mr. Speaker, we do need to take consistent action to train a well-trained next generation of health care professionals. That's why I am proud to say that last week, under the leadership of the Minister of Colleges and Universities, the Minister of Long-Term Care and Premier Ford, the government announced a \$35-million investment to expand the number of nursing seats in the province of Ontario. What that means: That means we're going to see over 2,000 additional nurses brought into the system—1,130 new practical nurses and 870 registered nurses.

This was the first expansion of nursing seats in the province of Ontario in over 20 years—20 years, Speaker. We know that this was needed so much, but it's not just that, it's about the free tuition for over 16,000 PSWs now in the pipeline to meet our Herculean effort to hire 27,000 more health care professionals. Be it—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to welcome the members of the Ontario Health Coalition who are here in the virtual gallery today and thank them for their advocacy.

My question is for the Premier. Dorritt Paul was a mother of seven, a grandmother of 12 and a great-grandmother of 11. On Mother's Day last year, Dorritt fell into a coma at Weston Terrace, the private long-term-care home operated by Sienna Senior Living where she was a resident. Her family only learned that Dorritt had tested positive for COVID-19 two days later. On May 16, 2020, Dorritt passed away alone, without any of her loved ones to comfort her.

Dorritt's granddaughter Tara Barrows said that Sienna tried to hide the fact that the home had been experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak and had a critical shortage of staff to look after residents. Tara explained that her grandmother experienced many neglectful conditions that are, tragically, so common in many for-profit long-term-care facilities.

Tara wants to know why this government did not send the Canadian Armed Forces into Weston Terrace, where 31 residents died, when they were sent into other homes experiencing similar outbreaks.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Obviously, the Canadian Armed Forces were sent into a number of homes. I also mentioned

a bit earlier how the concept of Ontario health teams was championed and brought in by the Minister of Health in order to help transform the system. We saw in a number of homes, including two in my riding, where the local health facility, Markham Stouffville Hospital, was able to come in and help, whether it was Participation House or a long-term-care facility that needed assistance.

There is no doubt that we were on the defence in the first part of this pandemic. I'm under no illusion that I'm going to provide any comfort, in a one-minute answer, to Tara. I wish I could; I wish what she heard in a minute would give her some solace, but I know it doesn't. I know it doesn't take away the anger and the frustration and the sadness that they feel at the loss of a loved one.

But what I can do, what this government can do and what we can all do is make sure that we fix the problems that we inherited and that we give people the best long-term care in all of North America. And we will.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Grace Hope's mother is a resident of a long-term-care home. She's fully vaccinated and is mobile with the aid of a walker, yet for the past year she has been confined to her room, with none of her loved ones able to visit. Like many other seniors during the pandemic, Grace says that her mother's mental health has been declining and that even the warmer weather has done nothing to improve her spirits. Grace said her mother "does not deserve to spend her last days, months or years in prison."

Grace is watching today. Can the minister tell Grace and other families who are patiently waiting to see their loved ones in long-term care when this government will make the More Than a Visitor Act into law to give essential caregivers in congregate care settings access to their loved ones, so that residents like Grace's mother don't have to continue to suffer in isolation?

Hon. Paul Calandra: We certainly understand that. That's why the initial phase, phase 1, of the vaccination was to ensure that all residents of long-term-care homes receive their vaccinations, and we're well on our way to ensuring that we do that. In addition, there are over seven million Ontarians who have been vaccinated. This is a very good effort, Mr. Speaker.

But we did see a question raised earlier with respect to Roberta Place. We saw what a variant introduced into a home can do to the population of a home, even if they have been vaccinated. It is why we have been calling on the federal government—begging, in fact, the federal government—to help us to close down our airports so that these international variants do not make their way into Ontario and into our long-term-care homes.

I know how difficult it is, Mr. Speaker. Believe me, I do understand how difficult it is. The members opposite are not the only ones who have friends, relatives and family in long-term-care homes. We all do. But our primary responsibility is to keep people safe, and that's what we'll continue to do.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care, who happens to also represent a riding in Ottawa.

I would like to thank Betty Yakimenko for coming this morning, Mr. Speaker. Betty is from Ottawa and her mother lives at the Madonna Care Community long-term-care home in Orléans. She is also the chair of the home's family council. Madonna was one of the hardest-hit homes by COVID-19. Forty-seven residents and two PSWs died.

This morning, on the front page of the Ottawa Citizen, we learned that the home operator allowed a manager who tested positive for COVID-19 to come into work last April. The manager had tested positive for COVID-19 and the operator allowed them to come to work.

An inspection report from October revealed other violations, including managers not being screened before entering the home, staff not always wearing PPE, and one volunteer being encouraged to reuse their PPE.

Families have lost loved ones and they deserve justice, Mr. Speaker. Why is the Premier resisting implementing his own commission's recommendations, and will he commit to publicly reporting on the government's progress on implementing them?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, we called the commission of inquiry so that we could understand what some of the challenges were in the first wave with respect to our long-term-care homes. What we found, both through the commission of inquiry and through an Auditor General's report, is a significant lack of funding by the previous government which left us unprepared to deal with the pandemic when it hit so forcefully.

Having said that, that is why we moved very quickly, even before the pandemic, to ensure that our long-term-care system received the attention it required. It was unacceptable to have multi-year or decades-long waiting lists to get into homes. That is why we committed to building 30,000 new homes. That is why we committed to four hours of care. That is why we're hiring 27,000 additional PSWs. That is why, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Colleges and Universities just mentioned, we're hiring 2,000 new nurses.

It doesn't take away from the pain and suffering that people are feeling, but what it does is it makes sure that the next generation does not feel the exact same pain that this one went through.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to welcome Helen Lee from Oakville, who is here seeking justice for her grandmother, Foon Hay Lum, who passed away at Mon Sheong Home for the Aged. She's here with other families, families who have lost a loved one, seeking justice—justice that was denied when the Premier refused to enact the provisions of Bill 160 that would have held homes more accountable and then passed legislation to

make them less accountable; justice that was denied when more residents died in the second wave than in the first; justice that was denied when an investigation into deaths from dehydration, which the Premier promised, didn't happen; and justice that was denied when the Premier refused to commit to implementing the recommendations of his own long-term care commission.

1130

Speaker, families deserve justice, so through you: Will the Premier commit to recommendation 85 and publicly report on the progress into the recommendations of his own long-term care commission report?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, we are acting on the recommendations. But look, we have made it very clear what we want to accomplish in long-term care. Even before we were elected, we said we had to end hallway health care.

Why do we have hallway health care? Because the previous Liberal government left us with the lowest ICU capacity in North America. That is a legacy of this member and his leader. Why do we have to build 30,000 new long-term-care spaces in the province of Ontario? Because when he was in government, in the previous 15 years that the Liberals were in government, they didn't build any. Six hundred long-term-care spaces is the legacy of the previous Liberal government, compared to 30,000 being built by this government. Five thousand tests a day they left us with; we have increased that to 75,000. We have increased critical care by 3,000 beds. We're hiring 27,000 additional PSWs. We're bringing on 2,000 additional nurses.

We are getting the job done, a job that should have started 15 years ago and four previous Liberal administrations in between. We will get the job done for the people of the province of Ontario, unlike that member and his leader.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Families from every corner of the province have horror stories about long-term care under this Conservative government. Heather McMichael, from London, wants the Premier to hear hers. She says:

"Although my mom did not die from COVID I am convinced that the isolation contributed to her death in ... 2020.

"She was used to two of her daughters visiting two to three times per week and helping her with things staff didn't have time to help her with such as cleaning her humidifier and ... helping with her mail and banking.

"Then she was confined to her room with no visitors allowed for months."

Speaker, my question, through you, to the Premier: No family should have to go through the heartbreak of watching their loved one suffer in isolation and loneliness, and not be able to do anything about it. What are you doing to ensure that this never happens again?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let me just say to the honourable member and her constituent, look, I understand. I can tell you—not that it matters—for a year, going to my father-in-law’s house every Saturday and then leaving him, a 90-year-old man; giving him his groceries and leaving, it’s not easy to do. It’s not just the members opposite. It’s not just people—we feel this. We understand this. We get how hard it is.

That’s why we’re trying so hard to get vaccines into people’s arms. When it comes to long-term care, that is why we’re fighting so hard to get 30,000 spaces, 27,000 new PSWs, 2,000 new nurses.

We have to solve this problem. This is something that should have been addressed in the decades before the pandemic. It wasn’t, and nothing I say now is going to solve that or make people feel better; I get it. But 15 years from now, when people look back, I want them to say that this government, this Legislature did something about it; and we are and we will.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, we learned from the first wave the horrible isolation. We have a bill called Bill 203, More Than a Visitor Act, that’s just languishing in committee. That’s something this government could do.

Heather and her family didn’t deserve to go through this. She says this about her mom:

“She was a very social person and enjoyed meals in the dining room with other residents, going outside to enjoy the nice weather and see the gardens.

“I understand that she was safer in her room than eating in the dining room but I think going outside would have been safe for her.

“Because she was confined to a wheelchair she couldn’t get outside by herself and staff were short-staffed and overwhelmed with COVID procedures and didn’t have time to take her outdoors.”

Again, Speaker, my question to the Premier: What is this government doing to ensure that homes not only have enough staff, but that they have the supports they need to ensure that no family member ever again has to worry about whether or not their loved ones are isolated and are not being allowed to enjoy the outdoors?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I get it; I understand how frustrating it is that a year after, there is still a global health and economic pandemic that we have to tackle.

I know the theme this week seems to be that the opposition would like to declare victory and move on, but it is not time yet for us to do that. We have to ensure that the people of this province, including those seniors in long-term care, are kept safe.

I implore the members opposite to help us: Help us convince the federal government, first and foremost, to close down our international airports, so that these variants of concern don’t make their way back into the province of Ontario. It’s not too late. If they help us, we can stop that.

We’ve got to get more vaccines into people’s arms. The people of this province have done an incredible job so far. Over seven million people have received their vaccine.

There is more work to do. We will get the job done for seniors and for those in long-term care. I am confident of it, and we will not stop until we do.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 18, 2021, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HAITIAN FLAG DAY ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE JOUR DU DRAPEAU HAÏTIEN

Mr. Blais moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 295, An Act to proclaim Haitian Flag Day / Projet de loi 295, Loi proclamant le Jour du drapeau haïtien.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’ll invite the member for Orléans to briefly explain his bill, if he wishes to do so.

M. Stephen Blais: Le 18 mai constitue une date importante pour la communauté haïtienne. Lors du congrès de l’Arcahaie le 18 mai 1803, les chefs militaires représentant les différentes sphères divisées de la société haïtienne se sont unis contre l’armée coloniale française. La bande blanche a été retirée du drapeau français, créant ainsi le premier drapeau haïtien, un symbole de l’alliance formée lors de la lutte haïtienne pour la liberté.

PETITIONS

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I have a petition from Clear Vision Eye Care optometry practice and Grand River Eye Care entitled “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only covers an average of 55% of the cost of an OHIP-insured visit, the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists must absorb the other 45% for the over four million services delivered annually under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and send it to the Clerk.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Jim McDonell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas new mutations of COVID-19—known as variants of concern (VOC)—originating in other parts of the world are the main drivers of the devastating third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, 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; and

“Whereas the United Kingdom has placed restrictions on 43 countries versus our federal government’s list of just two countries; and

“Whereas since February, over 50,000 travellers have tested positive at Canadian airports;

“Whereas during the first two weeks of April, more than 150,000 travellers crossed our land borders; and

“Whereas the Premier has repeatedly requested from the federal government increased measures, travel restrictions and the closure of international travel loopholes;

“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 agree with this petition and will pass it to the usher.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled “Workers’ Comp is a Right.” It reads:

“Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year; and

“Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation; and

“Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers; and

“Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages and protection from discrimination;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

“(1) Eliminate the practice of ‘deeming’ or ‘determining,’ which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

“(2) Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

“(3) Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on ‘pre-existing conditions’ that never affected the worker’s ability to function prior to the work injury.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the Clerks.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition entitled “Christopher’s Law Amendment Act, 2020.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s top priority always has been and will continue to be the safety of its citizens; and

“Whereas our neighbourhoods, schools and charities that work with vulnerable people deserve the resources to be safe; and

“Whereas we need to strengthen the tools available in order to keep our children safe; and

“Whereas our government has zero tolerance for sexual abuse of Ontario’s students and children, and we will continue to take any and all measures possible to protect Ontario’s most vulnerable;

“Whereas, if passed, Christopher’s Law Amendment Act, 2020, would require the ministry to make the information recorded on the Sex Offender Registry available to the public in accordance with the regulations;

“Therefore we, the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario vote on and pass the Christopher’s Law Amendment Act, 2020, immediately.”

I endorse this entirely. I will affix my name to it and pass it down to the table.

GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have an important petition entitled “Ontario Needs an Anti-Racism Secretariat.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for more than 30 years, government reports have uniformly concluded that a concrete and detailed strategy is needed to combat racism in Ontario;

“Whereas anti-racism reports consistently recommend the collection of race-based data to ensure accountability in racial equity programming;

“Whereas the three-year strategic plan on anti-racism has been shelved and there is currently no minister responsible for anti-racism;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create and fully resource an anti-racism secretariat to pursue the anti-racism work that is urgently needed across Ontario.”

I wholeheartedly support this. I will affix my signature and send it to the Clerks.

1510

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition here from Holly Harold, who is a student in Madame Françoise’s grade 5 class from the southeast elementary virtual campus in Ottawa. “Kindness petition

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there have been several religious institutions in Ottawa targeted by racist and anti-Semitic graffiti; and

“Whereas many of our friends are feeling frightened and alone because of these hateful words; and

“Whereas we want to show the world that the hate seen in Ottawa does not reflect the people of our city; and

“Whereas we believe that everyone is welcome in our community; it is the diversity of our city that makes it so wonderful;

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

“That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario stand up and speak out against all forms of hate and discrimination and stand together in love and kindness.”

I agree with this petition, Speaker. I’m signing it and sending it over to you.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s roads and highways are among the safest in North America; and

“Whereas section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act prohibits acts of dangerous stunt driving and street racing actions on our public roads; and

“Whereas, since 2015, stunt driving and street racing offences have been trending upward, putting other road users at risk; and

“Whereas from summer 2020 to the present, Ontario has seen a sharp spike in the number of section 172 offences committed on our roadways;

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

“To call on the government of Ontario to increase the penalties associated with offences committed under section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act by passing Bill 282, Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, 2021.”

I endorse this petition. I will sign my name to it and send it to the table.

GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition entitled “Ontario Needs an Anti-Racism Secretariat.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for more than 30 years, government reports have uniformly concluded that a concrete and detailed strategy is needed to combat racism in Ontario;

“Whereas anti-racism reports consistently recommend the collection of race-based data to ensure accountability in racial equity programming;

“Whereas the three-year strategic plan on anti-racism has been shelved and there is currently no minister responsible for anti-racism;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create and fully resource an anti-racism secretariat to pursue the anti-racism work that is urgently needed across Ontario.”

I fully endorse the petition. I will affix my name to it and provide it to the table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. John Fraser: “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas optometrists now subsidize the delivery of OHIP-covered eye care by \$173 million a year; and

“Whereas COVID-19 forced optometrists to close their doors, resulting in a 75%-plus drop in revenue; and

“Whereas optometrists will see patient volumes reduced between 40% and 60%, resulting in more than two

million comprehensive eye exams being wiped out over the next 12 months; and

“Whereas communities across Ontario are in danger of losing access to optometric care;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately establish a timetable and a process for renewed negotiations concerning optometry fees.”

I agree with this petition, Speaker. I’m signing it and sending it over your way.

GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I have a petition entitled “Ontario Needs an Anti-Racism Secretariat.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for more than 30 years, government reports have uniformly concluded that a concrete and detailed strategy is needed to combat racism in Ontario;

“Whereas anti-racism reports consistently recommend the collection of race-based data to ensure accountability in racial equity programming;

“Whereas the three-year strategic plan on anti-racism has been shelved and there is currently no minister responsible for anti-racism;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create and fully resource an anti-racism secretariat to pursue the anti-racism work that is urgently needed across Ontario.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and send it to the Clerk.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Norman Miller: I have a petition regarding stunt driving.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s roads and highways are among the safest in North America; and

“Whereas section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act prohibits acts of dangerous stunt driving and street racing actions on our public roads; and

“Whereas, since 2015, stunt driving and street racing offences have been trending upward, putting other road users at risk; and

“Whereas from summer 2020 to the present, Ontario has seen a sharp spike in the number of section 172 offences committed on our roadways;

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

“To call on the government of Ontario to increase the penalties associated with offences committed under section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act by passing Bill 282, Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, 2021.”

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Are there any further petitions this afternoon?

Point of order to the member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I just wanted to announce that there will be no night sittings this evening.

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 May 18, 2021, on the motion for third 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 Oshawa.

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much. That applause was effusive and unnecessary but appreciated.

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to stand in this Legislature as the official opposition critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways as we are debating, for third reading, Bill 282, the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, or MOMS Act.

Speaker, what I will start out by saying is that this bill has moved at lightning speed through this process. The reason I’m highlighting that is because I was very disappointed, as the critic with things to say on this bill, which should surprise no one, that I did not have the opportunity to stand in this House and debate it. Yes, we’re on alternating cohorts, but it moved through so quickly and was already in committee just a couple of days after it had been tabled. Why that’s relevant—because, oftentimes, things we all agree on can move quickly. I’m not concerned about that specifically. But this particular bill has brought to light that many of the community stakeholders interested in e-bikes in schedule 1 of the bill were not appropriately consulted at the later stages of the drafting, I’m going to guess, and the government can correct me. They have talked about their extensive stakeholder consultations, but it became very clear that some of the folks like the e-bike community are very worried about some of the nitty-gritty specifics in this bill that will potentially make their e-bikes unlawful or their future purchases unlawful. It creates a bit of a mess, frankly, and we’ll talk about that at length.

I’m going to give a bit of an introduction. This bill is three schedules. Schedule 1 includes amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. Schedule 2 is really just minor housekeeping to the Metrolinx Act; that’s all I’m going to say on that one, because it is just minor. Schedule 3 is Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act amendments. I think much of the debate in this Legislature from the government benches will be around towing and storage

and the need to regulate, the need to make changes. We're not arguing with that, and I will be speaking to that later.

This is a bill that the broader community understands as addressing stunt driving, as addressing the towing and storage sector. I don't think it was intended to be a controversial bill when it comes to e-bikes. However, we've seen a very enthusiastic and invested community of e-bike users, retailers and enthusiasts raise a number of important issues.

1520

I have a fair bit of time today to delve into the meat and potatoes of this bill, and I'm going to be glad to take that opportunity because, as I said, I didn't have it before.

Schedule 1 broadens the laws against racing and stunt-driving and sets lower speed thresholds within municipalities to capture non-highway locations like parking lots. We've heard about why that's important. I think anyone watching today across Ontario who has been on the roadways during this pandemic and this time of, I would say, lesser traffic has seen that people are taking this opportunity to drive quite dangerously. Whether you call it stunt driving or something else—I've heard it referred to at committee as "extreme driving"—people know that they're seeing more and more people make that choice to drive unsafely. We heard at committee some excellent presentations from folks who spoke about the psychology of those who would race on our roadways and endanger folks and families. We've had some suggestions made at committee for the regulatory process and how the government can ensure that this accomplishes what it sets out to do.

An important part of the Highway Traffic Act section that is being amended that we've done a lot of work on—"we" being the official opposition and my colleagues—enables automated camera enforcement to prevent drivers from illegally passing open streetcar doors. I know a few of my colleagues have been on record on that issue.

Another section that has been amended by this bill is about dooring, so it's a section under the Highway Traffic Act relative to dooring. Speaker, if you're not familiar with dooring—it makes sense when you hear it—it is when a driver opens a door into the path of a cyclist.

It was very emotional and very powerful during committee to hear from Jessica Spieker. I will share more of her story. Actually, she was not doored, but she was just cycling along, minding her own business, and ended up very lucky to be alive.

Things can happen so quickly on our roadways, which is why, when we were talking about dooring, which—we're in agreement that dooring needs to be tracked.

My colleague from Spadina-Fort York shared with committee and shared with this Legislature and will probably take the opportunity to share during third reading to illustrate the importance of getting this right. He was doored as a cyclist and has done a lot of advocacy work on the topic.

One of the things that we are trying to bring forward, as I will discuss later, is—if a cyclist is cycling along and a

door opens and the cyclist hits it, there's contact, and that is dooring. No one disputes that. But what happens when the door opens and the cyclist is able to have that split second to swerve? If they swerve and there's another—I won't say "accident" because "accident" makes it seem random, but there's another collision or crash, what we want is for that incident, which was started by the door, to also be tracked, because we have not been tracking this. The insurance folks want this tracked. The cyclists want this tracked. We're seeing so much more in the way of rideshare—this isn't just a driver opening their door anymore; now it's the passengers on both sides, either side, opening into traffic, opening into cyclists.

I have not been on a bike in a lot of years, although I was an avid cyclist when I was teaching English for three years in Japan. I lived on that bicycle, and at the time, I had halfway decent reflexes, which were really needed there. But I'm a driver on our streets, and I know that the Ubers and the Lyfts and the rideshare cars make me very nervous, because they spontaneously do things that are not easily anticipated. Now I can imagine being a vulnerable road user, a cyclist, without a steel cage around me.

A big part of this schedule 1 redefines power-assisted bicycles to create three subclasses of e-bikes that can be independently regulated. So if you think about bicycle-style—picture a bicycle, that's your starting point; moped-style; and motorcycle-style.

I'm going to get into this at length, but suffice it to say, we heard from the minister that the goal of this bill, the spirit of this legislation was to make the world a better place, was supposed to make it clear that e-bikes on our roads would be able to continue on our roads—I'm not going to quote the minister right now; she can do that herself and has. The e-bike community, I think, expected that to happen with this legislation. But when you get into the weeds of the specifics, what we found and what we heard over and over at committee and what all of us heard via our enthusiastic emails is that instead, we've created—"we" being the government—a mess with some of the specifics: that they have excluded e-bikes that were part of a government pilot for seniors, just things that seem inadvertent.

They've been, as a community of e-bike users, very generous to this government—that's not a criticism—by saying, "I don't think they meant to do this." However, if I've had time, as the official opposition critic, to learn so much about e-bikes that I never knew I—more information than I knew I could hold. If I've had the opportunity to learn all of this about e-bikes and work with our opposition research to craft thoughtful, appropriate amendments to solve the problem, then the government had the time to review them, had the time to understand them—because, supposedly, they already know what's going on about e-bikes—and they had the opportunity to pass them and make sure that this legislation was what it needed to be. That didn't happen. So while the community thinks it was a mistake, inadvertent, and not intentionally creating a mess of things, I'm inclined to disagree at this

point, because it was so carefully laid out for them in a non-partisan way, I will say. We had all of these amendments—our colleague from Guelph also. It was a time of non-partisan discussion. The government, each time with each amendment, said, “We recommend voting against”—and then the explanation seemed to mirror the same understanding as what went into the legislation, which I would argue was not understanding at all.

Speaker, as the minister told us that this is the second road safety bill in three years and that this is not the end of it, well, what I worry about is that parts of schedule 1 are just going to have to come back in another piece of legislation. What a waste of everyone’s time. Get it right the first time. So I have concerns about that.

I said I wasn’t going to quote the minister, but I take it back; I totally am. We’ve had a couple of days of committee, but it has all happened so quickly that we don’t have the transcripts from the clause-by-clause consideration, of course, because everything is lightning speed through here. However, there are the transcripts from when both ministers, the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation, appeared before committee. This is what the Minister of Transportation had to say—because I explained to her about the e-bikes and that we were all being inundated, and that I was certain all the government members were as well: “I understand, as you pointed out, that inboxes have been bombarded with pictures of different configurations of e-bikes and that stakeholders and people who own them and want to be able to ride e-bikes have been reaching out to seek further clarification. As I said, we developed these in consultation with stakeholders, so we can continue to refine the definition and refine the implementation of cargo e-bikes and their use on our roads and in our municipalities in consultation.”

I’m going to emphasize this next part: “We will absolutely take the feedback that we receive through this committee process as well as the feedback that” the associate minister “and I are getting as well as ... our parliamentary assistant, is getting on this proposal to make sure that it is refined and clear.”

Well, I don’t know whether the folks at committee didn’t get that memo, but they did not take anything under advisement at committee—nothing. In fact, they had the prepared—at clause-by-clause, as we went through the amendments, they were ready. They weren’t interested in what we had to say, suffice it to say. They may have listened to the presenters, but at some point, somebody decided that they were not going to take any of those amendments at this time. The minister went on to say later, “I appreciate the feedback that we have been getting and look forward to the opportunity to further refine it if we can.” Disappointingly, we had the opportunity.

1530

For the folks at home, and a reminder, maybe, to some folks in this room—when a bill is introduced to the Legislature, that’s first reading. It’s tabled, it’s introduced, and it is before the House for some consideration. As an

opposition member, if I table a bill for first reading, the government might pick it up and put it into their legislation. That’s fine. Second reading is when somebody calls it for debate—we’ve committed that this is what we’re going to get on the record; we’re going to have this debate and see if we can’t move the bill forward. We did that with this bill, Bill 282. We had the second reading debate. Then it went to committee.

Here’s what’s supposed to happen at committee. At committee, you hear from experts and folks, then you propose amendments, or you don’t. Then we come back and we go through the bill literally clause by clause, section by section, and say, “Here’s a suggestion; here’s an amendment; here’s a tightening of language”—whatever—or, “Take this part out.” Then, the government, in its infinite wisdom, is supposed to adopt the amendments that fit the bill to make sure it is the best piece of legislation it can be.

Here’s the part that I’m going to put an asterisk beside if I can. When that bill goes through clause-by-clause and we make the changes, then the text of the bill stands. The text, when it is referred back to this House—this chamber in which we are all sitting right now—for third reading, which is what we’re doing today, there’s no more amending the statute. You can’t change the text, the statute, the bill itself. The government can do whatever they want in regulations, but they can’t, in regulation, go back and change the text of the statute.

So it passed through clause-by-clause and came out the other side completely unamended. All the amendments that we put forward, that the independents put forward—we were just talking to hear ourselves. They had decided they were having none of it. Not a single one of those amendments passed. It comes out the other side exactly verbatim to what went into committee. Once this passes, I don’t know what they’re going to do. I don’t know what they’re going to tell the e-bike folks.

Anyway, that’s what has happened, and now here we are at third reading.

I am going to go through the committee—it’s going to be a barnburner—clause-by-clause and highlight what was missed by this government, the missed opportunities.

Before I do that, I’m going to throw a wrinkle into this, if I can find it in all my paperwork here. Speaker, you can call me lots of things, but you’ll not be able to call me unprepared today.

May 14 was the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 282. Hold that date in your mind: May 14. On May 12, the government posted a power-assisted bicycle, or e-bike, redefinition proposal to the regulatory registry for a 30-day consultation. The proposal for this 30-day consultation, a public consultation, is connected to Bill 282. It’s on power-assisted bicycle, or e-bike, redefinition. So this proposal that they’ve now put out there on the Environmental Registry of Ontario has a 30-day consultation period. They introduced that on the 12th, and we were at clause-by-clause two days later, which—spoiler alert—is significantly before the June 10 end of the 30-day consultation period.

What I want to know—and I don't know that you can answer this: How can the government claim it is consulting in good faith when the deadline for submitting comments is June 10, and when the text of the bill was finalized on May 14? The new environmental registry, or ERO, posting says, "Due to the proposal being updated, the ministry has decided to post the updated proposal for a period of 30 days to gather feedback."

We're talking about e-bike stuff, and yet there we were in committee, so I raised this at committee. We had to take a recess, we got some input, but the input that we need is actually from the Auditor General, so we didn't get the answer that day. But I want to know how the government can meet its statutory requirement of considering this input prior to a decision, when the decision will have been made nearly a month before the end of the feedback period. That's a fair question. I wanted to know if it was even in order for us to have clause-by-clause consideration of the bill before the 30-day comment period is over. I wonder if we will find out that the government has once again been violating the Environmental Bill of Rights. It's not something I can answer today. I guess we'll have to let this all play out.

If the government felt that there was a need to get community feedback on the e-bike redefinition proposal—a power-assisted bicycle—why wouldn't they have thought of that before the bill made it to clause-by-clause, or before the bill was tabled?

I got an email at some point on Sunday—I think it was Sunday evening—inviting me, as critic, to a briefing. Okay, well, we didn't get that email till Monday, but then the bill was tabled on Monday. We weren't able to make it to the briefing because—surprise briefing. And then it was Tuesday morning at 9 a.m. that the government started debating a bill that had been tabled the day before, which hadn't even been printed till the day they started debating it. How is that for a fair process? Fine, we can read it online first thing in the morning.

I wasn't here, as critic, so I appreciate that the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane had to get up and give an hour on transportation issues. But none of us were able to have the bill in our hands. And then it was done and referred to organization for committee by Thursday—that's how quick.

So now you want to do a 30-day consultation after—what's the expression the Premier likes—the ship has left the dock?

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The ship has left the dock is—okay, order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I did not say anything inappropriate, if that—okay. Speaker, I'm going to regain some semblance of control in myself here and continue on.

My point is—30 days of consultation is probably warranted. The timing is not appropriate. The timing should have come before this bill came to this Legislature. I don't know if anyone in this House can dispute that, with

the amount of blowback, so to speak, that we're all seeing in our inboxes.

Let's get into committee stuff.

This morning, the Minister of Transportation made comments on this bill. One of the things that she said—and again, I can't quote exactly, but my take-away was that there were many amendments. I think she actually said that they were thoughtful amendments and that they sort of fell into three categories as per the ministry.

One was a category of amendments that we proposed that they didn't support, that they didn't think had merit. That's their right to think so. I think they're wrong, but that's fine. That's fair.

The second category was amendments that they could deal with in regulation. They felt we were proposing amendments that could be solved or sorted out in regulation. I hope so, frankly.

The third category: She said that some require more study and consultations. I'm going to repeat what I said earlier. If I, who am not an e-bike expert, and research had time to meet with folks from across the e-bike world, have full understanding and come up with extremely precise, careful, exact and appropriate amendments, then they had time to consider them. They also had time to do those same consultations, because while we're talking with the folks, they weren't—not until right up to the day before committee. Come on.

1540

This bill is supposed to be and is about road safety, and we support many of the initiatives in it. We support the goal of appropriately classifying e-bikes. We want clarity, just like the government and just like the e-bike users and retailers. Unfortunately, that's not where we are, so this is what we're going to talk about.

We had a number of presenters at committee. From the Insurance Bureau of Canada, we heard about towing. They did have an important suggestion: "We have a number of ideas that we're going to share with government ... if there's anything that's going to be done sooner rather than later, it would be the Repair and Storage Liens Act."

They talked to us about "a possessory lien" and the fact that "there's no cap once they've kidnapped your car, and there's a negligible enforcement. It's incentivizing the kidnapping of the car, and then the legal system gums things up, and there's a lack of enforcement as well."

We heard some specific things about towing. So while people are in favour, ourselves included, of regulating the towing and storage world—because we all can turn on the nightly news or see things in our local papers that are terrifying, frankly. We see that it has been, essentially, the Wild West for a long time.

By the way, the last government tinkered around the edges of this. They had a bill that didn't accomplish what this bill is setting out to do. Interestingly, Steven Del Duca was the Minister of Transportation for a really long time, so why it wasn't fixed, I don't know.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: That's a great question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It's a great question. I'm not the only one asking it.

However, here we are with this one, and this bill, I will say—what we heard at committee about the towing and storage safety and enforcement section, people are supportive. But I will remind everyone in this House and the folks at home that this is enabling legislation. What that means is that it enables something; it doesn't fix it, necessarily. It enables that process. We will keep eyes on it to hope that these regulations won't be years away, but they could be.

So when we're talking about the safety concerns, when we think about the stuff going on with towing and storage, we know that the fix could still be years away. We encourage the government to stay the course and continue to work on this and to be forthcoming with community partners to make sure that indeed it doesn't just reflect the spirit of what was intended, but that it changes the safety of our communities.

I had stories to share about towing, but I'm not going to. I think we all know that there is a need, and I'm glad to see that in this bill.

We heard a lot of folks who were concerned about stunt driving. Like I said, the layperson who is out on the roads can see that people are driving faster. We see unsafe behaviour. We're seeing things on our roads that need to be addressed. Anyone I have met with in my capacity as critic has been, of course, supportive of this legislation—that section of it—and they've also been very helpful in making some suggestions to the government in terms of actually implementing penalties.

We're talking about stunt driving, we're talking about excessive speeds, but there has been no change to the penalties or to the fines for speeding in something like 30 years, as we heard. So there are things that the government can look at, as were suggested at committee.

This is my amendment packet, and I won't read all of it—but there was a lot. I'm going to just go through what we did recommend, as the official opposition, at committee.

Again, we wanted to establish three classes of bicycle-style e-bike. There were issues raised at committee about the government accidentally excluding bikes that they were including in the Cycling Without Age program. So the bikes that they're highlighting they're wanting to have seniors use on the one hand, they're excluding with the other. That's a perfect example of the left hand and right hand not knowing what the other is doing. When that was raised at committee, again it was defeated.

Little things like the word “conventional”—what is a conventional e-bike, Speaker? If I ask you to draw me a picture of a conventional fork-and-frame e-bike, I don't know if you would know where to start, and I don't know if your drawing would look the same as my drawing. It was a small thing, but it was about being consistent with language—to get rid of the word “conventional.” What other words could you use? “Traditional,” “likeable,” “nice-looking”? They were talking about being consistent with other jurisdictions and not using arbitrary language, and the industry was suggesting that this was arbitrary language. But again, the government said, “We disagree and we recommend to vote against,” so they did.

Wheels: This is so strange. Speaker, again, if I asked you to draw a picture of a wheel, I don't know whether—I don't know why I'm picking on you. I'm going to focus on this specific issue. Many folks are concerned that their e-bikes that they currently are loving, their wheels may actually fall outside of what's allowed—diameter or width or what have you. We're not even sure if the government defines “wheel” as being the rim or the rim plus tire, and that makes a difference.

Again, we were seeking to have things clarified because the letters that we've been getting from e-bike folks really illustrated the fact—we heard from the London Bicycle Café's Ben Cowie and Eric Kamphof. They were saying, “While some of the changes bring much-needed clarity, we have concerns that Bill 282 unintentionally bans products that are already used safely every day in our province by families, municipalities, corporations, and even organizations funded by the provincial government.” They gave us a table. I am a former educator, and I love tables. It was so clear. What they have outlined is what they view as, as they said, “unintended consequences of the regulatory framework.” This table was awesome. It basically outlined what is currently written in the bill, what they think the government was setting out to achieve, the “unintended consequences,” as they generously put it, and they suggested exactly what needs to be fixed. Our research team worked with them and we fine-tuned that to make sure it fit with the legislation. It was a lot of stuff about technical specifications that would exclude bikes.

As I mentioned, “conventional”—that word provides a wide set of interpretations. “Wheel”—I've already mentioned that. But now that it's passed, we're not sure if police and bylaw are going to be having to go around with micrometers. I don't think they're going to do that. That shouldn't be what the government is trusting—“It's a mess, but just leave it alone. I'm sure the police have better things to do than measure wheels.” Well, maybe, but what parent who puts their kid on an e-bike, or what grandmother who is using it for shopping and groceries, or which user of an e-bike wants to know, in the back of their mind, that technically what they've got is not legal? That doesn't fit.

The London Bicycle Café folks also said it excludes many family cycles manufactured by global brands that have stringent requirements in the world. They were talking about the Cycling Without Age program for seniors that was financed by this government; the cargo trikes that, basically, have been purchased by the city of Toronto; a fleet of trikes employed by FedEx—are all of those not okay now?

Mr. Joel Harden: It's a good question.

1550

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, it is a question, and a lot of people have been writing to our office to seek that clarity.

Lynn from Toronto Centre said, “I understand that amendments are being made to the HTA, which I generally support, but I'm concerned that my not-yet-arrived Brompton Electric does not meet the definition in

the legislation that was introduced. Brompton bikes have smaller wheels than full-sized bikes, and I believe they're narrower than the 35-millimetre reference in the legislation....

"I'm not sure what the legal effect will be if the Brompton Electric has wheels narrower.... I hope that the legislation can be revised to ensure bikes like the electric Brompton fit within the legislation. In my case, it's a matter of mobility, activity and health."

Alan Cheadle recently moved to Brampton. He said, "We love our bike and so does our three-year-old! Without changing some of the wording in this bill, our bike could become illegal, please help!"

Chris McCreery from London is worried. He wants to make sure that he's "not driving my illegal cargo bike around to move my family and have to go back to driving. (Please NO!)" He said, "We now use our cargo e-bike as our main mode of transportation, from groceries to taking our daughter to activities and recently we even took our pets to the vet."

We got a lot of these. It's really neat to learn how people are making sustainable choices and navigating their communities differently and safely. But now they're worried.

Marlene Jones, from London, said, "I want to keep rolling carefree on my e-bicycle." She wrote a beautiful letter, actually, but in the interest of time, I'm going to keep moving through this. But I think you take my point, Speaker.

Phil Nowotny said, "While some of the changes bring much-needed clarity, I have concerns that Bill 282 unintentionally bans products that are already used safely every day in our province by families, municipalities, corporations, and even organizations funded by the provincial government." He is "severely concerned and impacted to have such bikes outlawed." He uses his bike to take his toddler to daycare.

Are they legal? Are they illegal? And what kind of position does this put the retailers in? If they now know that, technically, it's not technically allowed—whether it's going to be an offence that the police and bylaw folks are chasing them down for or not—and they sell these products, is there a liability question there for the retailers? And will someone buy those bikes? Will they not? Will the global distributors actually look at Ontario and say, "Yes, I feel like I want to continue to do business with you"?

We heard really cool presentations about tourism and recovery and these cargo e-bikes being used by businesses locally.

I applaud the e-bike folks, because they sent so many photos that were illustrative of what they were explaining—to see these really cool cargo bikes and then to know that, maybe because of the wheel width or what have you, they're technically not going to be allowed. Is the government just hoping that the police and the bylaw folks won't care? I wouldn't say that's good governance, frankly.

Other things about gross vehicle weight versus cycle weight—I'm in the weeds here. There was a lot of

discussion about the weight of bikes, and I got a little tangled in it, frankly, but the concept is, the larger bikes that might actually have more people, to help seniors with disabilities or folks who need a companion on them to help them cycle, some of the pedal-assist or some of the e-bikes that have different pedals with the hands—there are all sorts of different things to factor in: the cargo capacity and whatnot. Some of those bikes are fairly heavy. That doesn't mean they go fast. Other jurisdictions have no maximum weight.

So the government didn't like our amendments about weight—but we had one that kept their same weight. I'm going to tell this story, because even though it's really in the weeds, it makes the point of what we were dealing with, which was like the Twilight Zone. We kept the same language, to keep the 55-kilogram cycle-weight standard that they have set out, but we added the words "or the prescribed maximum." Why this matters: We said, "Keep what you've got, but add in those four little words that allow you to go back—when you realize that you've mucked it up entirely—and be really grateful that you passed this amendment, because you can up the maximum when you finally realize what that means." We were arguing, "Take this power that we're giving the majority government. Take these words. Use them wisely, but be glad to have them, because we're happy to do your job for you in this regard." And the government said, "No, thank you. We don't want more power." It didn't make sense to me, because after the 30-day consultation that we've got going on on the side now that may or may not be in violation of the Environmental Bill of Rights, they're going to say, "Oh, no, we can't go back and amend statutes. We sure wish we had passed that NDP amendment 6." But they didn't.

Walk assist is another thing. If we're walking alongside an e-bike, it helps to have something called "walk assist." It will propel itself at my speed so that I'm not dragging this e-bike. We wanted to make sure that would actually be included in this legislation, because you're not pedalling it when you're walking with it. Again, there's no clarity.

I'm focusing a lot on e-bikes; I'll keep moving through.

And this is the thing: I don't think the government saw this coming, because whoever wrote it thinks they understood it, but it became very clear from stakeholders that there wasn't understanding.

Speaker, something else we tried to include was the Teach the Reach Act. My colleague from Davenport had introduced Bill 89, the Teach the Reach Act, about the Dutch reach. That is a safer way of opening the door. It's a safer way of opening the driver's side door so that you don't fling your door open into traffic, harming someone who is on a cycle. However, that was not something that was a priority in this legislation. If it had been, it could have been in here. The government talked at committee about education and the need for education. That is literally what the bill is about—including that in driver education—but no.

We tried to include the Protecting Vulnerable Road Users Act, which is Bill 62, as introduced by my colleague

from University–Rosedale. We had a number of presenters from the Ontario Brain Injury Association and others, who came and said that the need for a vulnerable road users act was immense.

The Ontario Brain Injury Association said, “We are also supportive of Bill 62, which is the vulnerable road users bill. We encourage you to consider utilizing the vulnerable road users bill to further strengthen Bill 282 to protect all vulnerable road users, because we see the impact: We see the lifelong impact of those who are injured.”

A meaningful vulnerable road users act doesn't just set out who is vulnerable as they are using our roads—whether it's construction workers, cyclists, pedestrians—but it also incorporates the need for victim impact statements in the event of something awful happening, that there is a requirement for people who have endangered a vulnerable road user to have meaningful consequences. But again, this government said no.

We heard from Jessica Spieker and Heather Sim, who are part of Friends and Families for Safe Streets, which is, as Jessica Spieker said, “a group of people whose loved ones were suddenly, senselessly and violently killed by drivers in a collision on Ontario's deadly streets, or people like me who survived a crash with severe injuries.” They were advocating for the incorporation of Bill 62, and they told their very personal, very important stories about injuries and loss.

Jessica Spieker told us about her collision in 2015, when she was riding her bike to work in a straight line when an oncoming driver made a left turn and slammed her large SUV into her. Here's what she said:

“When she struck me, she broke my spine, she inflicted a brain injury and she did such extensive damage to the side of my body that she hit that I developed a large blood clot in my leg. Later, a piece of that blood clot broke off, chewed through my heart and landed across both lobes of my lungs. In effect, her actions nearly killed me twice.”

She went on to explain that nothing happened to that driver—she continued driving—that we don't have the protections we would need, that there wasn't the opportunity for a victim impact statement on something like that that would be meaningful and the opportunity to retrain and correct that kind of driving behaviour.

1600

Heather Sim also asked for the contents of Bill 62 to be incorporated. She said, “I'm Heather. I'm the daughter of Gary Sim. On June 30, 2017, my dad was riding his bike home from running errands. His bike was the preferred mode of transportation for him in the city. He was riding straight past a plaza when a driver in a van drove up behind him, passed him and turned right into him. He spent two days on life support before he died.”

We were grateful for their stories, but they were hard to hear, understandably, and we heard many others from other presenters who shared on behalf of their organizations that are supporting those who are grieving or are recovering.

Heather also said, “For my dad's case, the driver was charged with turn not in safety. He was found guilty and

given the maximum fine of \$500 and two demerit points. There was no licence suspension. At sentencing, the judge called a recess to determine if she could increase the fine as she felt this was not sufficient, but unfortunately her hands were tied by the Highway Traffic Act. My dad's life was worth so much more than \$500.”

Speaker, I'm going to use that to tell you a bit about another amendment that we brought forward. We brought forward the amendment to introduce Bill 62, and it was defeated, but we also brought in an amendment to introduce Bill 122, and that's my bill. That's a bill that my colleague from Niagara Falls tabled back in 2015 at the behest of many motorcyclists across the province—the Bikers Rights Organization. Gerry Rhodes has been an excellent voice for them and I was glad to table the bill as critic for transportation and highways. It's called the Fairness for Road Users Act. Heather's story about her father—and the judge calling a recess actually, as I recall, to try and find out if she could do more, could levy more than a \$500 fine, and she could not.

Currently, a person convicted of contravening the Highway Traffic Act for minor driving offences, such as an unsafe left turn or failing to stop at a stop sign, receives a small fine in the range of approximately \$100 to \$1,000 regardless of the extent of physical damage to the victim—regardless. What happens is, you add insult to injury. If a family is grieving their loved one and they're sitting in that courtroom—the most that can happen is whatever the fine is for failure to stop at a stop sign or a “lesser infraction of the Highway Traffic Act.” You tell someone who's lost a loved one that it was a lesser infraction.

The government's answer to that, when we were trying to introduce my bill which increases penalties to be in line with careless driving—so it increases the fine from either \$2,000 to \$50,000, imprisonment, licence or permit suspended—that's not saying that those things will happen. What it's saying is, it gives the judge the opportunity—that if someone dies or if someone suffers serious bodily harm, it gives them options that the judge can consider. Is this a first-time offence? Is this person a menace on the roads? They can make that determination. That's what it does. It is not setting a set amount if someone dies; it is allowing a judge to use their discretion which, we heard over and over, is missing.

When the government answers back—they kept talking about the penalty for careless driving. I realize it's a massive penalty and all of that, but Speaker—I don't remember if it was 83% in this regard, but hardly any people who are charged with careless driving are sentenced with that. They plead down, is what happens. So if careless driving is the charge, it doesn't stick because they plead down and it ends up being an improper left turn or what have you, and then we end up back with a \$500 fine. So it is gut-wrenching for families.

Bill 122—we really were hoping that the government would understand and would incorporate this.

Let's see. Gerry Rhodes has been a phenomenal voice for this, and he has said, “Far too many road users die or become seriously injured as a result of ‘lesser’ infractions

of the Highway Traffic Act, and the penalty available is only \$500 as per section 214 general penalty clause.”

He says that the “Premier of Ontario is on record as having stated he would like to lock up killer drivers and throw away the key.” That was a newscast in June 2020, about a situation of “a young mother and her three very young daughters killed by an irresponsible driver.” It’s not the same situation, Speaker, but as he said, “He indicated he wanted action from the federal government on such a situation. That accident involved a Criminal Code violation; however, the vast majority of accidents involve HTA violations.” He said, “He and his caucus have the ability to help make the HTA provide justice in tragedies with the legislation proposed in Bill 122.” He said that Bill 282 “should be amended to provide for stiffer, more just penalties, to deter all infractions of the HTA that could result in fatalities or serious disabling injuries.” But Speaker, they said no.

Gosh, there are so many—there are a lot of pages. We did a lot of work. We did a lot of meaningful work on behalf of folks who took the time to reach out, and it’s disheartening when it’s not even—it’s not just that it’s not passed; it wasn’t respected, I’ll say. Maybe they’ll argue that, but anyway.

We talked about dooring, that we wanted the police to be obliged to record all dooring incidents. In this case, the term is “dooring accident”—but even if there is no contact. So if a driver opens the door and somebody has to swerve around and it creates a crash or what have you, we want the police to also record this incident as dooring. Speaker, we’re not coming up with something random there. This is actually to keep language—it would align with section 165 of the Highway Traffic Act. So it’s the government’s legislation that has changed the definition and isn’t consistent with section 165.

If the government wants to read my notes, I’m happy to share. There’s a lot. And Speaker, I see that I’m basically out of time. I’ve covered much of what we talked about in committee. My colleague from Mushkegowuk—James Bay had brought forward a thoughtful motion about trucks on the roads. The government supported it that time. We want to see that move forward.

Transportation enforcement officers: That is a conversation that we need to have. They are tasked with doing unbelievable work on the roads with our transport trucks, and they’re not being respected by this government. They’re not being compensated fairly. But in this act, they’re given more responsibility. That’s not right or fair. You need to work with them. They’ve got, as they put it, a bureaucratic roadblock that needs to be straightened out by the ministries.

Other issues that we heard about: the speed pilot. I could talk for days about the speed pilot. On the one hand, the government is saying, “No stunt driving,” and on the other hand, they’re wanting to increase the speed limit. So there’s still a lot of work to be done to keep our roadways safe. I’m sure that my colleagues are going to talk about the need to incorporate winter road maintenance strategies and improvements in legislation. We also heard that the

term “accident” is not an appropriate word; it’s a “collision.”

This government has a lot of work to do, and I’m very pleased to be on record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I thank the member from Oshawa for completing her hour-long lead as the critic for transportation. Now your colleagues on both sides of the House will have an opportunity to ask you questions about your presentation. The first question goes to the member from Whitby.

1610

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thanks to the member for Oshawa for her presentation. The Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, 2021, proposes the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act, which requires tow truck operators, drivers and vehicle storage operators to have a provincial certificate to operate. It also proposes vehicle and equipment requirements for tow trucks and providing protections for persons requesting or receiving towing and storage services. Does the member from Oshawa agree with the steps outlined to combat the fraud and criminal activity seen and experienced by many in the towing industry?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: A number of the pieces in this, as I said, enabling legislation in schedule 3 are important. We’ve heard from the insurance industry, we’ve heard from safety advocates, and we recognize that they are what is needed at this time. What actually ends up coming out of regulations, as I said, that can still be years away—but we’ll keep an eye on that because the devil is in the details.

I do believe that we all want our roads to be safer, and that’s an important thing. As we heard from the CAA, who are reputable towing folks, they had specifics that they would like the government to consider when it comes to licensing and different jurisdictions and municipalities and whatnot, and not creating an accidental patchwork that actually creates a new problem where we’re seeking to solve them. So yes, I support regulating, but let’s be super thoughtful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member from Oshawa for her presentation—very detailed. Something that might be a surprise to her is that last summer I got my GM licence. One of the reasons why I got that: It was a lifelong dream, a childhood dream, having seen my dad on a bike for a very long time, and I tell you, there was nothing like getting on that bike and feeling my dad with me there. It was the closest I’ve ever been—I lost my dad when I was quite young—but it also provided me with a new opportunity of having a different vision of our roads.

The training that you go through to getting your GM licence is second to none. It really lights you up. It makes you aware of your surroundings and what’s out there, and the term “dooring” became very evident to me.

I’ve always enjoyed my conversations that I’ve had with Mr. Gerry Rhodes, who is the provincial government liaison officer for the Bikers Rights Organization, and they

made a very good presentation to the committee on dooring. Can you please explain to us why it is important to expand the regulations under “dooring”?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The work of the Bikers Rights Organization obviously deals with safety on the roadways. I have worked with them for a few years now, not on the issue of dooring, but on the issue of my Bill 122 that would say if something were to happen and someone was injured or killed, that there are stiffer penalties. But certainly, anybody riding a bike or a motorcycle is very concerned about issues like dooring and they want that to be tracked. That was certainly something we heard.

Also, Mark Andrews came before committee, and I didn't have a chance to highlight his stuff, but what a resonant voice at committee. He's a retired police officer who served 32 years with the OPP and finished his career, the last 15 years, as a traffic inspector for northeastern Ontario. He very clearly outlined the need for different strategies to keep cyclists, bicyclists, motorcycles, cars, everybody safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question for the member is—she stated she used to work in Japan and she was an avid cyclist, and now, of course, she drives to work. That is a good example of how governments need to be nimble. They need to consider the laws that protect people who decide to drive a bicycle and those who decide to drive a bike and those who decide to take public transit. You could say that all the tools that the government can possibly have are good tools.

So my question is, when I spoke to my local police force—I have two, but I'll reference south Simcoe police. I constantly get their news releases about stunt driving and enforcement. So right now, yes, there are things they can do, but they need more from the government. Don't you think it's beholden to the government to give our police enforcement as many tools as they can to use to enforce these rules?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I very much appreciate the question. I would like to continue to share some of the words from Mark Andrews who, as I said, served 32 years with the OPP but 15 years as a traffic inspector. The things that he saw, I cannot imagine. He said, “The reality is the folks who do this”—sorry, he's referring to stunt driving—“the people who have that behaviour, who are going to take risks, be it stunt driving, be it impaired driving—I've dealt with people who have had 10 and 12 charges and arrests for impaired driving. That's when they've been caught, not including all the times they never were caught.

“Does the MTO have all of the information” they need? “It's overloaded. There are close to 100,000 people driving in this province right now that the MTO know about who are suspended. There's not enough of us out there to stop them. We have to think of a different way. There are so many exemptions and there is fear about people who—charging the owner of a vehicle.” He goes on.

He had very thoughtful suggestions that were really specific to policing and safety on the roadways. I would encourage the government to take a look.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague the member from Oshawa for her work on this bill and for her comments today. In particular, I appreciated her recognition of Ben Cowie and the London Bicycle Café for the detail that they provided to the committee on the unintended consequences of the bill and fixes that could be made to address those unintended consequences. London, of course, is one of the communities that has declared a climate emergency. We are also committed to Vision Zero principles. So we have a great interest in allowing e-bikes, and the London Bicycle Café has pointed to the increased sales that they are experiencing. What does it mean for a business like the London Bicycle Café when the bikes that they are selling to an eager customer base are suddenly illegal because of legislation that has been passed?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I don't have an answer to that, because I'm wondering the same thing. They're wondering the same thing. Certainly, we heard from the London Bicycle Café folks; we heard from Bike Law Canada. There are a lot of specific questions being raised about what it will mean for those who use and enjoy e-bikes and whether or not they'll be in violation of the law and what that means for them. But yes, on the retailer side, they're now in this weird limbo: Do they or don't they? If they sell something that they believe to be unlawful according to this legislation, do they do it anyway? Are they in trouble? Are they liable? What if something happens?

This House is creating problems, with the government at the helm. This is unfortunate, because how they interpret it—are we just crossing our fingers that the police and bylaw who are enforcing it will not interpret it the same way? This kind of limbo—I think the government owes the industry clarity. They've certainly worked hard enough demanding it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the member from Oshawa for her presentation. At present, we have bicycle style, moped style and motorcycle style. All these e-bikes are captured within a single e-bike class.

The federal definition of e-bike was repealed on February 19, 2021. The MOMS Act uses this opportunity to redefine “e-bike” in our province by distinguishing the requirements for moped style, bicycle style and motorcycle style e-bikes. Municipalities will choose which classes of e-bikes to permit on their infrastructure, which will enhance safety and mobility.

Does the member opposite agree that municipalities are in the best position to decide which e-bikes to have on their roads?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Speaker, the member opposite, who serves as the parliamentary assistant, was

the only voice on any of these issues at committee. He was the only voice at committee. None of the government members spoke, save the member from Durham, who—we actually had quite a good conversation about Bill 122.

I'm frustrated that this government didn't accept any of the amendments. What the e-bike folks are looking for is harmonization with existing markets. There are opportunities for entrepreneurship, innovation, tourism: pieces of our recovery. What does the member opposite think about that? Why wasn't that factored in?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm happy to rise today and speak in support of Bill 282, Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, or MOMS Act, an acronym that we're already familiar with. The Ontario government is taking strong action to combat aggressive and unsafe driving in order to protect our young and our vulnerable drivers.

I also want to take a few moments just to again thank Minister Mulroney and PA Thanigasalam for all their hard work in bringing these much-needed changes forward.

I also want to take time to thank all the hard-working staff at MTO and all of my colleagues who have taken time to speak in support of this important act, the MOMS Act—what a fitting name for protecting the safety of Ontarians and strengthening our roads. But not to be outdone, we could also call it the “DADS Act,” the “defending and driving safely act.” You have to understand my sense of humour when I relate to that, as well. There are so many different fitting names—to protect the vulnerable citizens of the road from drivers who engage in stunt driving, street racing, all the way to aggressive drivers, and implementing towing regulations which can, in fact, make any situation stressful and unnecessarily dangerous.

1620

Those who decide to be unsafe and threaten the safety and lives of others should not be driving on our roads. This government will be reinforcing these rules the best way we know how with increased suspensions and other more severe penalties.

It's hard to comprehend just what the government's decision would be without first looking at some statistics. Today, I want to start off by sharing some of those statistics so we all have a better understanding of our roads and drivers throughout Ontario.

I want to start off by sharing a statistic from the Traffic Injury Research Foundation's Road Safety Monitor 2019: Drinking and Driving Attitudes and Practices in Canada. In 2019, 15% of drivers admitted to driving after consuming any amount of alcohol, and drivers between the ages of 25 to 34 are most likely the ones who have been drinking.

According to the government of Canada's Department of Justice website, in 2017, over 69,000 impaired driving incidents were reported; almost 3,500 drug-impaired incidents were also reported. Of course, that reminds me of MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Now they have ads out there pertaining to just driving impaired, which could be also drug-induced.

I know that these particular acts I just mentioned aren't related to driving under the influence, but there is a reason why I decided to share those statistics with you. What I'd like to do is to demonstrate that you never really know who you're driving beside. People who are impaired are more likely to make poor judgment calls, exceed the speed limit—not to mention their slower reaction times.

Again, I understand these acts aren't related to driving under the influence, but I just want everyone to understand that there are many situations that a driver should be conscious of. If you or someone you know is driving over the speed limit, it becomes a lot harder to make quick driving decisions that could save your life, especially if people around you are also not following the laws and rules of the road. The better prepared you are at being a safe driver, the easier it is to avoid those unthinkable situations.

When I was young—and that may be a few moons ago; I'm still young at heart—I enrolled in a driver training program. My dad got me enrolled in that, and I was learning how to drive. There was a phrase that my teachers and my family would always say to me: “defensive driving.” Defensive driving is protecting yourself from other drivers. It's kind of like that Heinz ketchup commercial, “Anticipation.” That's long ago but, Speaker, you and I would remember that. In driving defensively, you have to understand that everyone else around you may not be as attentive and they may be about to make a mistake that could lead to a crash. That's a very pessimistic way of looking at driving, but I've got to tell you, that saved me from countless situations throughout my years on the road—anticipation.

Look ahead, see something further—let's say, for example, when you're driving north on a road and, to your right, you see a vehicle travelling west. If it appears that you and that vehicle are going to arrive at that situation at about the same time, anticipate that that car might run a stop sign. Be prepared. But even so, if you're in control of your own vehicle, obeying the rules of the road, sometimes, no matter how defensive your driving is, it may not save you from a crash when others are driving too quickly.

A large part of the MOMS Act helps Ontarians protect themselves from street racing, stunt driving and other aggressive and unsafe driving behaviours. When high speeds or aggressive behaviours are involved, it makes it extremely difficult for everyone involved to make calculated decisions to ensure the safety of all parties.

I haven't even begun to mention just how much weather affects the safety of people's driving. Increased speeds and bad weather, from snow and ice to plain rainwater, can be a reason for someone losing control and crashing their vehicle.

There's a song out there: “It was the third of September / That day I'll always remember,” that was the day—now the song says, “my daddy died,” but I say: That was the day I almost died. Do you remember that accident on the 401, near Manning Road, the fog-related incident? I was in that crash. I estimate I was probably in about the first

15% of that crash. When the fog lifted, after I managed to pull a lady out of the grass median and got her to safety, we used my car as a shield because it was like a war zone. You could hear bang, bang, cars ahead of me travelling eastbound—I was travelling westbound—and cars behind me. It was horrible. It was a war zone, for sure. When it was all said and done, I have to tell you, Speaker, I went over and I talked to the police officer and he said, “Make sure you get the names of everybody whose car you hit and who hit your car.” I asked him, “May I leave now?” He asked, “Did you get the names?” I said, “Sir, my car wasn’t hit.” He looked at me. There was carnage all around me, and there was my Chrysler LHS, parked on an angle, part on the shoulder, part in the outside lane, not a scratch on it. I was protected that day.

Weather—you just never know.

Speaker, there is no room on Ontario’s roads for unsafe driving.

According to the Highway Traffic Act of Ontario, stunt driving tickets are handed out to cars caught speeding 50 kilometres per hour over the speed limit—50.

Just last week, CBC News released a news article stating that during the COVID-19 pandemic—so within the last year—speeding and stunt driving have significantly increased, putting other drivers at risk.

I’m not sure if you remember, but on May 19 of last year, an 18-year-old teenager was caught doing 308 kilometres per hour on the QEW—308 kilometres per hour. For perspective, if the speed limit was 100 kilometres per hour, or even 110, as it is on the QEW, that’s almost 200 kilometres per hour faster than what they should have been driving. Formula One race cars have a top speed of about 360 kilometres an hour.

Could you imagine, just for a moment: Here’s you and I—maybe you’re in your van or I’m in my Murano—and we’re driving down the QEW, and all of a sudden, some vehicle just passes us. Would that scare the daylights out of you? It would scare the daylights out of me. And, Speaker, although I’ve never experienced someone driving that fast going by me, I will tell you—I have had that experience, and I’m sure many of us in this Legislature have had that experience. And yes, your heart jumps up into your throat. You think, “Where did that person come from?”—especially if you were thinking about changing lanes and all of a sudden they come right up behind you, just screaming by you. I’ll tell you, that is something else.

Within the first 10 months of 2020, 224 people lost their lives in 209 fatal accidents.

As I mentioned before, driving at increased speeds makes it a lot more challenging to make safe, defensive driving decisions that could save you or other drivers’ lives.

I’ve talked a lot about protecting drivers, but I’ve failed to mention the cost that all these situations have on other surrounding citizens, from cyclists to construction workers to plain pedestrians. All these vulnerable citizens can be significantly impacted by higher driving speeds. The thrill of racing or going fast—is it worth it to that biker

who just was killed? Is it worth it to that pedestrian crossing the street who has a life partner and three kids, or to their whole family? Or how about that construction worker trying to make a living by doing their job? The answer is no.

That is why the Ontario government is strengthening the rules around these offences, making the penalties considerably higher—to show Ontarians we’re not messing around with road safety.

1630

We’ve talked a lot about stats and why road safety is a high priority, but what is in this act and how will it affect day-to-day drivers who are caught aggressively driving? What other components will this act do?

Speaker, you will remember a fellow by the name of Bill Dana, known as José Jiménez. José Jiménez did a National Safety Council back in the day, when they were first introducing seat belts. He was sitting on a stool, and he was talking about the importance of putting on a seat belt and so on, back when seat belts were first introduced. Then he went to stand up, and he realized that there was a seat belt around him, holding him to that higher chair—and I had to laugh. These things stick in my mind. It’s all about safety, though.

First of all, we’re looking to amend some of the more severe road penalties through schedule 1, the Highway Traffic Act. We’re wanting to make a mandatory licence suspension for convicted racing and stunt driving charges, changing the duration of the administrative impoundment process for the vehicle from seven to 14 days, and changing the licence suspension time frame from seven to 30 days.

Furthermore, we’re wanting to add a clause providing suspension penalties to anyone caught racing in a community safe zone.

These changes are there to escalate suspensions for repeat offenders, and setting lower speed thresholds for stunt driving charges on municipal roads is our goal.

Another huge problem that has stemmed from our advancement in technology comes from—yes, you guessed it. I know you know what it is. It’s distracted driving. From talking and texting on your cellphone to eating while driving, that means distracted driving—and driving up statistics never seen before in human history relating to motor vehicle accidents. Proper preventive measures start with education. Next month, our government is planning on launching a social media campaign to educate the public more on the dangers of distracted driving and the lives that it could cost.

I want to talk about the Metrolinx Act, 2006. That’s schedule 2, by the way, in the act. The second change to this legislation is pointed out there. This is where our government is just looking to amend the definition of GO Transit in a way that the term includes the Greater Toronto Transit Authority.

Honestly, Speaker, I live in rural Ontario, and our definition of GO Transit is when the local bus goes sauntering by and stops at a bus stop, you get on the bus, and you go. That’s our definition of GO Transit.

Lastly, I also want to mention what our government is wanting to do to improve the laws surrounding towing and storage safety for drivers across Ontario, with changes to schedule 3, by introducing the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act, 2021. These changes include a change to certificate holders, who are now going to be subjected to the requirements and standards with respect of towing and vehicle storage as outlined in the act.

This act also provides for the designation of highways or parts of highways as restricted towing zones that are only authorized to certificate holders that can provide the appropriate towing services. Yes, even administrative penalties may be imposed in the event of non-compliance. These changes will set the standard of roadside behaviour and ensure all towing-related company operators are certified under the act.

Again, we're wanting to keep Ontario roads the safest in North America by targeting the offenders who make them dangerous, all in all, while continuing to increase the standards for consumers and businesses, while protecting vulnerable citizens.

Speaker, I just want to take a moment to talk about how stunt driving and distracted drivers have affected me. I mentioned earlier how sometimes they'll right come up out of nowhere and just zoom by you, and that I have a serious concern. As you know, being down in your great riding of Windsor–Tecumseh and my greater riding of Chatham–Kent–Leamington, we travel the 401 a lot—maybe sometimes by train, but sometimes we drive. Again, that stretch of 401—very flat, especially down in our area, but it's also very dangerous.

Most notably, the 401 is perhaps one of the most dangerous highways in North America, so much so that they made a Discovery Channel show about the 401 and the incidents related to it, so you know that there have definitely been some major incidents.

For about five years now, I've been a strong advocate for “Build the Barrier,” as you're very aware. When you travel that section—we're starting to do a lot of work on the 401 from Tilbury into Chatham, which is not a large stretch of road right now, but you have to start somewhere. When you look from Tilbury going west, you have that concrete divider, and, usually just from London or Lambeth going east, you have that concrete divider as well. But in between, you have green grass, and it makes it very dangerous and there have been crossover accidents and head-on collisions as a result of that.

Also, my staffer once told me of street racing incidents that he saw in the aftermath one morning. He said he was on his way to school and he passed a large section with the intersection blocked off. There were car pieces scattered everywhere, even in adjacent parking lots. There were articles of clothing around the scene as well, including a single running shoe on the grass. Upon further investigation, he found out that the crash was from a street racing incident that occurred significantly earlier that morning. The car was going so fast that it didn't navigate the turn as it should have. The driver lost control and the car jumped the curb. The investigators quoted that the car was going so fast, it literally disintegrated upon the crash.

Nobody wants to see things like that. We don't want that to happen.

Again, street racing, stunt driving—there's a reason why we're putting laws and trying to enforce these rules in this particular bill. It's a wonderful bill; it truly is. It's for the safety of everyone driving on the road and for the safety of everyone surrounding them.

I talked earlier about advocating for “Build the Barrier.” Of course, even down in the Essex area and Highway 3, that has been a death trap for a lot of people. There's a lot of reasons why. Can you blame it just on the highway? Probably not. It could be inattentive driving. It could be people getting impatient because they're behind slower vehicles. They pull out to pass but, unfortunately, they don't see another car coming their way, and that's when trouble can happen. Installing concrete barriers will stop it, preventing crossovers.

Just a quick story: My daughter was trying out for Canadian Idol—this is going back several years now. She was a relatively new driver. She was on the 401 near the Yonge exit. She was in the outside lane and a van came across and cut her off. She was travelling at the same speed as everybody else, and she panicked. She oversteered and she hit that concrete barrier. If it wasn't there, she would have gone headlong into traffic going the other way. She bounced off that concrete, came back in—a lot of traffic, and was hit three times. And when the car came to a stop, it was on its roof and over on the other side. She walked out of that crash with just a scratch on her ear. She was—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: That's it? Okay. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It's like Canadian Idol: Once you're done, you're done.

We have time for questions and comments.

1640

Mr. Joel Harden: It's nice to hear from my friend from Chatham–Kent. I was wondering if you could finish your thought about how important it is for us to protect road safety in the kinds of traumatic incidents like you were recounting with your daughter. Finish your thought there, my friend.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for the question and giving me an opportunity to just finish my thoughts. Again, friends, what I want to suggest to everyone here is to think about your family, think about your friends, think about co-workers as well. These are all people who drive, and it's very, very important to remember. I'm sure everyone here is a responsible driver, but as I said earlier, it's important for us to drive defensively, not in paranoia and white-knuckling that steering wheel when you're going down the 401. You have to, again, as they say—as I've told people who have said to me, “Rick, I just hate driving in Toronto.” I said, “Well, you know what? You have to kind of drive like a Torontonians drives.” But wipe out the stunt driving and so on. That way, you can at least drive more safely.

So again, what we want to do as a government is hold the ones responsible and who are selfish enough to put

others in danger accountable for their actions, because if not, the life that they may take could be yours. However, with defensive driving, the life you save may be—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

The member for Barrie–Innisfil has a question.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm going to actually follow suit with the member opposite. I know the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington had a lot more to say in his remarks, so I wanted to see if he could elaborate so that we are not waiting with bated breath for the end of his speech.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I would like to thank the member from Barrie–Innisfil for the question and, again, for the opportunity for me to expand a little bit further. I think one of the things that make speeches more interesting in our Legislature is when we tie in those personal examples, especially the ones that we've experienced or know of. That takes a bill that's being debated and makes it come alive.

I think that each and every one of us should be grateful for changes that are being placed in the bill because, look, all we want to do is make driving safer, through the Highway Traffic Act, for everyone concerned. And of course, we want to protect even those vulnerable citizens of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Toronto Centre has a question.

Ms. Suze Morrison: To the member across: As some of my colleagues may know, I'm a bit of a motorsports enthusiast. I've been competing in regional autocross events for almost a decade now, and I even have a few trophies to show for my time in the sport. But despite my need for speed, one of the things that I've learned about the motorsports community is the dedication to safety that they have and to providing a safe outlet for high speeds that takes that speed off our public roads; it's a really important role that they play.

However, I have heard from folks in the motorsports community over the last year that they have been overly restricted in being able to put on COVID-safe events and open their outdoor recreation facilities because they fall under the same restrictions that golf courses currently do.

My question to the member opposite: If he's really interested in getting speed off our roads and into safe venues like our local motor sportsplexes, why did he vote against the motion to reopen outdoor amenities safely, as recommended and supported by the science table?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, it's interesting that she would raise that question, but thank you for the question. I appreciate it. You know, you always learn more about individuals in here when they talk about some of their personal interests. I think that that's really exciting to know that.

I remember seeing a video one time when we talk about dangers of—well, you see, in a closed track, maybe it's Formula 1, this one vehicle literally exploded. It just disintegrated, and yet the driver walked out of there because of the safety precautions.

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You probably know the one, yes.

So again, we want to keep Ontario safe and we need to cut down on speed. So to answer your question a little more directly, we don't want to speed things up. We want to ensure that Ontario is safe and then we will open things up, but thank you for the question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate the member's passion for road safety. I know that he mentioned that he wants and the government wants to demonstrate that they aren't messing around with road safety. I think that's almost a direct quote. I'm wondering, if that's the case, is he not disappointed that road safety isn't mentioned once in the 2021 budget?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, there's a lot of things that were mentioned in that particular budget which I think are important, and this is also important. So I thank the member from Ottawa-Orléans—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Orléans.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: —Orléans for the question. Safety should be first and foremost. We call it "safety first."

When you take a look at the budget, there were a lot of safety measures that were put into our most recent budget. Did we spell everything out? The budget would have been voluminous had we been able to do that. But again, when we look at it from the bigger picture, there's a lot of great components inside that budget which will make Ontario safe, not just today but for the future as well, while, again, we can advance economic activity and keep our Ontarians safe, especially with this pandemic that nobody ever planned for—but we had to deal with it. We were the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much.

The member for Niagara West has a question.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member for his presentation today. I know that obviously this particular legislation deals with roads and road safety. But of course, surrounding people getting to and from work, an important thing in this particular part of the world and, we know, an area that our government has made great investments in, is transit.

I'm wondering if the member could speak a little about some of the transit investments that have been made and how this also helps road safety. We get a few more cars off the road and of course are able to have a little bit more space for those who are on the road. Could you speak a little about that and also about the importance of ensuring safety on the roads also for those who are perhaps driving to a GO train station, for example, and taking a train in from there?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I thank the member from Niagara West for his question. When you're talking to a rural boy and we talk about big city transit and things of that nature, sometimes it's tough for us to make the connection, but I know that our government is making great strides because one of the things that had been noted in past is the

Gardiner, the Don Valley, elements of the 427 and some of the 400 series are nothing more than just a giant parking lot, and so we need to keep traffic moving. How do we do that? There are many different opportunities to do that as well.

I think the investments that we're making in terms of our rail service, whether it be GO Transit or whether it be subways—and this is futuristic. As the government, we have to be futuristic in our thinking. Again, we are making those investments because we do want to make Ontario a better place to live.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As the member opposite said, we are debating the MOMS Act, or the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act; he made a comment about the “dads act” as well. But what I would like to ask him, especially with everything we've been hearing from the e-bike community, is how do we call something the MOMS Act when it literally takes away active transportation that moms rely on to transport their kids and groceries and possibly makes it that they are no longer using legal e-bikes? How do we call something the MOMS Act when it's taking away that active transportation from moms?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the member from Chatham–Kent–Leamington for perhaps his final answer.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker, and you're probably quite right. It will probably be my final response to questions. I want to thank the member from Oshawa for her question.

I anticipated an e-bike question from you because most of your presentation was on e-bikes, and rightfully so. I get that. One of the things that the ministry is doing is that it's distinguishing the style of e-bikes, and you talked about that, and there are different requirements for each e-bike. Of course, we are leaving it up to municipalities to be able to choose just which class of e-bikes to permit on their infrastructure, where and which will enhance safety and mobility.

Again, there are the cargo e-bikes, but your concern was not so much about that as it was about just the regular type of e-bikes as well. Again, the proposed changes to the e-bike definition are meant to ensure that e-bikes themselves that are permitted today will continue to be permitted as an e-bike or even under the cargo e-bike pilot which we are running.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's an honour to speak to the MOMS Act, Bill 282. Road safety is a huge issue. It's a huge issue in my riding. Whenever I think about road safety, I think about the families that I have connected with and supported who have had a loved one die, and then all the families that have lost people in the time that I have been an MPP.

I think of Ryan Ali, who was five. He was just killed by a red Jeep about two weeks ago, by a driver who was

turning right into him. His father was taking him across the walkway. He was riding his bike, and he was dragged and killed.

I think about Dalia Chako, a grandmother who was killed in my riding a few years ago: 58 years old, loved bike riding. She was killed instantly by a flatbed truck right near University of Toronto.

I think about John Offutt, a man who lived about 200 metres from me, who spent his younger career as a real estate developer and then moved to becoming a teacher, a grade 3 and gym teacher at Thorncliffe Park, because his passion was in giving back. When he was killed by a truck in Etobicoke–Lakeshore a few months ago, I received a lot of emails from students who were just really touched by him. Some of his students are older teenagers now, and they still remember him as that teacher that really made a difference.

I think of Alex Amaro, who was 23 when she died on Dufferin Street. She was cycling home in the evening. It was winter, and she was doing a right-hand turn. Tragically, she was hit by a car and instantly died—23.

There are so many people, children, grandparents, adults, who are dying on our roads—injured, killed—and they don't need to be. The Ontario coroner has said time and time again that these deaths are preventable. They are not accidents that just happened; they are preventable, and there are many ways to prevent them.

So this act: We have Bill 282, the MOMS Act. Overall, I would call this a piecemeal bill. It has some changes that will make significant improvements to road safety, but there is so much that's not here. When we're talking about opening up the Highway Traffic Act, we have this opportunity to bring in amendments that will really make a difference and reduce the number of road deaths and injuries on our roads, get it down to zero so that we're not having loved ones die.

I'm not going to talk much about the e-bikes bit, because the MPP for Oshawa has really done an excellent job covering that. I'm going to speak about the road safety elements of this bill.

I'm going to talk briefly about the things that I like. One is the move to address stunt driving. Now, I don't know why they call it “stunt driving,” because essentially it glorifies something which is, by and large, speeding. It is good news that there have been some measures to bring in tougher penalties for people who speed, including tougher roadside penalties; so when someone is pulled over, the penalties they get—their car is impounded, their driver's licence is suspended, whatever it is. We know, hearing from MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, that roadside penalties are very effective in deterring drivers from speeding, so seeing an increase in those roadside penalties is a good move, supported by stakeholders.

The second piece that I'm also in support of is the decision to include dooring as something that has to be reported to police. So right now, if you're a cyclist and you're cycling along and someone opens their car door, a driver opens their car door—I grew up in Australia and it's this side; I don't door, but yes—and you get hit by a door,

you might end up in the emergency room, but the police aren't required to come to the scene and report on it, which means it's difficult for you to go to court, it's difficult for you to get insurance and it's difficult for you to file any kind of complaint or claim. So the decision to include dooring and requiring police to track dooring is a good move.

Now, we actually introduced an amendment in committee to expand the definition of dooring so that it's more comprehensive, so it doesn't just include that cyclist who hits the door; it also includes collisions that are caused by dooring. The reason why is that now this bill is creating this really weird distinction where, if you're a cyclist and you see a driver ahead of you open the door, you've got two choices. One, you can say, "Okay, I'm going to hit it because then I'm included under this act," or you can swerve and avoid being hit in the first place. But if you swerve, going by this bill, and a car hits you, which is one of the most common ways that cyclists are injured right now—they swerve to avoid the door—too bad, so sad; your injury is not going to be tracked by the police.

So that's an error there in the writing of this bill. We introduced an amendment to say, "Hey, hey, hey, let's expand the definition of dooring so it includes all collisions caused by dooring, so that we get the people who are smart and avoid the door but then might actually hurt themselves." We want that to be included as well, and the government rejected that. I really urge you to do something in regulation to make that definition of dooring actually fit the issue.

Another thing that I think is good is the decision to allow streetcars to install automated speed cameras on the side doors. This is something we've been pushing for for a while in University–Rosedale with Jaye Robinson, the chair of the TTC, and Mike Layton, the city councillor at University–Rosedale. The reason is that there are a lot of people, when they get off the streetcar, who are nearly hit by a driver who doesn't know the road rules. You'll see the driver of the streetcar honk their horn and you'll see the rider say, "Oh, my gosh, I didn't get hit." That happens all the time if you're a rider. The problem is that it is next to impossible to find—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government members, come to order, please.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It is next to impossible to find and fine those drivers who break the rules and buzz by a streetcar.

So the decision to allow municipalities to install those automated speed cameras, which is what they've been asking for, is a good move. My request is this: There are some municipalities out there that are asking for greater authority to install automated speed cameras in areas beyond what they can do. I urge this government—and these are rural, smaller municipalities—to listen to some of the requests coming from municipalities to expand where automated speed cameras can be included, so it's not just in school zones or community safety zones—which are good, but it's fairly restrictive—and to really

listen to municipalities and give them greater authority to put them where they know there's a lot of speeding happening, a lot of dangerous driving happening. I'm sure you're hearing that from your municipalities, and it's something that I hope you think about in regulation as well.

Now, what I want to talk a little about in my final half is some of the additional recommendations that I encourage this government to move forward with, if not in this bill, then maybe in regulation or in future bills. These issues come from stakeholders. I've read through committee, I've listened to the MPP from Oshawa and some of the excellent questions she had for the stakeholders, and I also hosted a round table with some of the key players in the road safety sector to hear what they're saying.

I want to thank the Ontario Brain Injury Association; Cycle Toronto; MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving; Jess Spieker and Heather Sim from Friends and Families for Safe Streets; the Ontario Good Roads Association, Scott and Thomas; Bike Law, Patrick Brown, Melissa; Bike Share; and the Ontario Traffic Council. There is a movement of people across political ideology who really, really want our roads to be safer, and they are asking you, they are begging you, to do more with the Highway Traffic Act and to do more than what is currently in this bill. I want to address some of the things that they raised.

One is that there is a push to expand the consequences that drivers face when they kill or injure another person on the road. Now, we are not talking about drivers who are following the road rules at the time. We are talking about people who are breaking the Highway Traffic Act when they injure or kill someone else. Maybe it's a road worker. Maybe it's a garbage truck driver. Maybe it's another driver. It's often a pedestrian. Tragically, sometimes it's a child. It's often a senior. It's people who have accessibility issues, who don't see well. They are the ones who are more likely to be injured and killed on our roads.

1700

These are the people who run red lights, open their door without looking, text, speed, drive while high or drunk. These are the people when they're breaking the rules.

We introduced amendments, my colleague the MPP from Oshawa introduced amendments to bring in what's called the vulnerable road users law. What that would do is, it would require a driver who breaks the law and kills or injures someone to have their licence suspended until they take a driver re-education course, and the value of that is that we don't want repeat offenders. We want them to understand that these are the rules of the road. We want to give the judge discretion to increase fines or, in egregious cases, jail time.

And this is really important—I cannot emphasize how important this is: We want a driver to go to court and hear a victim impact statement from the victim—usually the families, sometimes the person who survived—to hear and understand the consequences of their actions. The reason why this is so important is because, right now, if you injure or kill someone, essentially you get away with it, and I'll give you some examples.

There's Gary Sim, who was brought up in committee. His daughter came, Heather Sim, and she talked about how her dad was biking, doing a usual errand because he liked to bike everywhere, and he was hit by a driver. The driver received a \$500 fine. That's it: a life for a \$500 fine, no licence suspension, nothing, and they never had to hear about how that's affected Heather's life.

Then there was also Jess Spieker, who also spoke in committee. She's very active in Friends and Families for Safe Streets. She was nearly killed by a driver a few years ago. Her spine was broken. She continues to have brain injuries. She's a personal trainer, very athletic. She's still recovering, and she's in chronic pain. The driver got a \$300 fine. She's still recovering.

The benefit of having a victim impact statement is that it gives people who have gone through so much a chance for justice, and it also can change people's minds. It can change drivers' minds, and it can change their behaviour. The reason why I say this is because we had Patrick Brown. He's the founder of Bike Law Canada and very active in the vulnerable road users law movement. He has first-hand experience as a lawyer seeing what happens when drivers hear victim impact statements. In committee, numerous times he has said to me, "It moves people. It changes their mind. They understand the consequences of their actions," because they hear.

So we introduced an amendment to require that victim impact statements are something that a driver who breaks the law or injures and kills someone needs to hear, and the government rejected that. I have a lot of concern for that because it's what the community is asking for, and we know it will make a difference.

There are a few additional amendments that we introduced. Some of them are small and some of them are bigger. One was "Teach the Reach." This is something my colleague and friend the MPP for Davenport has introduced and advocates for, and it's so simple. It's a simple education measure. It doesn't cost any money, and what it does is, it requires all new drivers to be taught the Dutch reach, which means that—I've got to get it right now—you open your door with your right hand when you are getting out of your car, and when you do that, you automatically turn around and you see what is coming towards you. That means that if there is a cyclist or a pedestrian or even another car, you are in a situation where you can see it and it means you can act accordingly. Maybe you won't open the door and hurt someone or injure yourself. It's a very simple method. We introduced that measure, and the government rejected it.

I urge you to look at these bills and see if there are opportunities for you to move forward on these measures in regulation or additional bills because they make sense, and the community is asking for them.

I've also been pushing for a long time for Vision Zero. The idea of Vision Zero is a very holistic approach to moving forward on road safety. It's basically asking the Ontario government and the Ministry of Transportation to come up with a holistic plan for how they're going to reduce road deaths and injuries to zero. Why I think that is

useful to think about and why the government should think about that is that it means that we will move away from this fairly piecemeal bill, which takes little elements of what could be done or what should be done to improve road safety. Instead, a Vision Zero approach says: Let's take a step back and see what we can really do in a transformative way to make our roads the safest in the world.

The beauty of Vision Zero is that it's worked elsewhere, so we don't have to reinvent the wheel. BC has done it. Alberta has done it. Other countries have done it. There are tried-and-tested, evidence-based measures that we can move forward on that we know are going to get people from A to B in one piece. The beauty of Vision Zero is that it includes a few things. It includes education, like Teach the Reach, so that we all know the road rules. It includes enforcement, like the vulnerable road users law, so that if people are behaving in a way that they shouldn't be on our roads—because driving is a privilege; the government has said this—then there is proper enforcement.

There are also changes to engineering. This is something I think we as a province really need to work on. When I'm talking about engineering, I'm talking about how the roads are designed, how we move. It can range from what our speed limits are. It could revisit the idea of how we design our intersections and make it more consistent. Anyone who has driven in Toronto knows that there is a hodgepodge of rules around intersections, where in some intersections, you've got dotted lines, and in other intersections, you're allowed to turn on red. There's a real hodgepodge of it. So even just streamlining what our rules are on the road could make a huge difference.

But my point is, why I bring this up is that there is a real need to take that holistic step back and think: "Okay, how can we bring in the experts here and come up with a really good plan that works?"

In my final few minutes, I do just want to address the issue of e-bikes. The beauty of e-bikes is that it's the way of the future. It's a way for people to get around and carry a lot of stuff in an easy way, in a safe way and in a low-carbon way. As a parent with two kids, when I'm going to the supermarket, I'm probably carrying—if I take my two kids in it—about 180 pounds worth of stuff.

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, my kids are heavy, they're 50 pounds each, and then you get your groceries. So my point is that there is a real value in legalizing and regulating cargo bikes and e-bikes so that people don't just have to get a car. They've got more options available to them if they live in a big city and they want to get around.

The problem, however, is that the e-bike rules—very quickly, when they came out in Bill 282, we got inundated with calls and emails from e-bike operators and e-bike distributors who said, "This must be a mistake. Why are they creating these rules that are going to make a whole segment of e-bikes illegal?" They're very concerned because this is a growing sector. What we heard time and time again is that there is real value in creating regulations that are harmonized with other markets, like the EU, like the United States, so that we can really increase and grow

this sector and we're not having e-bike manufacturers create tailored e-bikes to different markets.

The idea that we're just going to allow municipalities to decide what e-bikes are allowed and what e-bikes aren't allowed is, I'm not going to lie, a little bit strange. There are over 100 municipalities in Ontario, and we're not going to have each individual municipality say, "We're going to allow that one, that one, but not that one." It doesn't make sense because people travel long distances and there needs to be consistency. So my request is that you really take a good, hard look and go back and do that consultation with that sector and make sure you get it right.

That's all the time I have for my comments on Bill 282. Honestly, there are a lot of things I like about this bill. I just want to conclude with that, because it's exciting to see road safety back on the table again. But my request to you is that you just go a little bit further. Do it in regulation, do it in a future bill, but let's make our roads safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I thank the member from University–Rosedale for her 20-minute presentation. And now your colleagues on both sides of the House will have the opportunity to ask questions about that presentation. The first question goes to the member from Whitby.

1710

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the member from University–Rosedale for your presentation. The member represents a downtown riding here in the city of Toronto. The legislation, as she knows, as was evident from her presentation, proposes an automated camera enforcement framework to allow photo evidence of vehicles that illegally pass streetcars on the left. And you've seen it, Speaker, downtown here, where the doors open to pick up or drop off passengers. Does the member from University–Rosedale support this measure to protect transit riders in downtown Toronto?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Whitby for asking that question. Yes, I do. This issue came to light in our riding because we had a woman get off at the corner of Bathurst and Ulster, right near my house, and she was hit by a truck. She was hospitalized. She's now okay, but it became very clear among the resident associations and the parents in our community that this is a big issue and that action needed to happen.

The good news is that the TTC is on board. The TTC chair is on board. Mayor Tory is on board. Mike Layton, the councillor, is on board. It was very clear that it needed to happen and that it was the provincial government's responsibility to act on it, and they did. I thank you for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I wanted to ask the member—she referenced road safety quite a bit through her debate comments. She also talked about speeding and stunt driving. I want to share with the House that on Sunday afternoon, as my husband and I were travelling here to Toronto, on the opposite side of the 401, I saw a few motorcycles, six of them. They were out driving. And literally there was one that was on one wheel, on the hind

wheel, the back wheel, for quite a distance. And if that wasn't shocking enough, then he stood up as the bike was—and my heart was sinking, first of all, for him, and then also, if he caused an accident, for other people and how that would affect them.

The member talked about stricter, stronger consequences for stunt driving. I just wanted to ask her if she could repeat or enlighten us as to what that looks like for her and how they could strengthen the bill.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that question. It actually brings up one of the flaws in this bill. The definition of stunt driving: They've reduced what constitutes stunt driving to anything that's 40 kilometres or over on roads that have a speed of 80 kilometres or less—good. The challenge is that that doesn't include a lot of these 400-series highways, where people go well over 100 and they're allowed to go well over 100.

The second issue is around enforcement. When we did the round table with road safety advocates, we actually had an enforcement officer from the provincial police come whose speciality was road enforcement. He talked about how there just wasn't enough people out there or there just wasn't enough enforcement to make sure that the road rules were actually upheld. I think that's a challenge that this government really needs to work on too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The member is familiar with the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act. It's interesting. When you talk about tow truck operators, they tend to know where the accidents are going to happen. They're like vultures at the side of the road just waiting for that accident to happen. They rush out there, and they may or may not be in somebody else's territory as well.

I can tell you of an example just outside of Chatham, where there was a pileup. Some friends of mine, actually, had to—you know, when you're in an accident, you're kind of upset, and this tow truck driver literally took them, because he was from the Toronto area. He came down and serviced. Of course, they had to get their car towed back and it cost them almost \$1,000. It was just ridiculous.

So my question is: Would you agree with the steps outlined to combat the fraud and criminal activity seen and experienced by many in the towing industry?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much to the member from Chatham-Kent. My focus has been primarily on the road safety elements of this bill. But what I do know with the regulation of the tow truck industry is that it is enabling legislation. So what we really want to see is, what is this exactly? What does this really mean? We want to see what the regulations are going to be, and we also are requesting that the government really does stakeholder outreach to make sure those regulations work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Oshawa has a question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I do. Thank you, Speaker. I want to appreciate the work that the member from University–Rosedale has been doing since joining this Legislature as the official opposition critic for transit—no

longer, but I would applaud her for some of her work that we see reflected in this bill, frankly.

But I will also say that her Bill 62 and my Bill 122 were kind of a one-two punch, and we heard that at committee: that the vulnerable road user act, as brought forward by the member, and the Fairness for Road Users Act, my own, were really needed. We had the chance to debate it at committee, but I will ask the member, who has spent a lot of time working with the coalitions and folks in the community: What kind of difference would it make if we had those two pieces? What would that look like for people who have suffered on our roadways?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that excellent question, MPP for Oshawa. There are two things that come to mind. Time and time again, people who have had someone, a loved one, die or be injured on the road, overwhelmingly want some kind of justice. I'm not hearing people say, "I want this person to go to prison for 20 years. Lock the door." That's not what we're hearing people say. They're saying, "I want these drivers to understand how their actions on the road have impacted me." They also want to make sure that if there are very horrible circumstances, the judge has more opportunity to bring in tougher penalties. That's what they want. Both the MPP from Oshawa's bill, Bill 122, and Bill 62 come from the stakeholder community. This is what they're asking for, and we are going to continue to push for these changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the member for her presentation. One of the changes proposed in the MOMS Act is to improve worker conditions for our highway workers by allowing the use of automated traffic control devices. I know I drive pretty much every week up Highway 400 back to the riding, and there's a fair amount of construction going on. I'm always shocked how people don't see that it goes from 100 kilometres an hour to 80 kilometres an hour. I'm really quite shocked at how people just seem to ignore the reduction in speed limit and just how impatient people are.

I wonder if the member supports this change that's proposed for the use of these automated traffic control devices at construction sites.

Ms. Jessica Bell: That is something that we support. Also, in the outreach that I have done on road safety issues, especially when we brought back the vulnerable road users law, we had organizations that represent road workers, garbage truck workers and emergency road workers approach us and say, "There are actually a whole lot of things that we want to make sure our workers are safe on the road when they're doing road maintenance, repairing a scene from an accident and whatnot." Some of the things that they are advocating for include the vulnerable road users law, so that there are tougher penalties for someone who speeds by and hits a road worker who is simply doing their job keeping roads safe. So that's my answer to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for a quick question and a quick answer.

Mr. Joel Harden: I really appreciated what my friend from University–Rosedale was saying. I know a debate in our community—and I'm interested to hear what your thoughts are on this—is the presence and what we do with ghost bikes. People are talking about how we remember where accidents have happened, and I know that in this legislation, there's no guidance to municipalities on what we do with these community memorials to try to remember hot spots in our city. I'm wondering if you have any thoughts for the government on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): To the member to respond in 30 seconds.

Ms. Jessica Bell: That's an excellent question. There are many ghost bikes in University–Rosedale that acknowledge and remember people that have died. They aren't regulated. Municipalities and the province are not involved. It's a community-led initiative to remember and recognize. I think it should be kept like that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. For further debate, we turn to the member from Orléans.

1720

Mr. Stephen Blais: Before I begin, I'd just like to say I'm going to support this bill, as flawed and as limited in scope as it might be.

Mr. Speaker, what we need in Ontario is a road safety plan for the 21st century. We need a road safety plan that is data driven, has measurable outcomes, and encompasses the principles of a systems approach that prioritizes human life. It would be a plan that understands that safety is a shared responsibility between the road providers—i.e., the government—road regulators and, of course, road users. Ontario needs a plan for reducing traffic fatalities and road-based fatalities to zero. Unfortunately, that's not what we have in this bill. When I was elected a little over a year ago, I was shocked that Ontario doesn't have that plan. Whether you call it a Vision Zero plan or road safety plan, it's a plan that's based on those principles of shared responsibility. That's not what we have. There was an opportunity to include that in this bill, I know, because I said almost those exact same words in February, when we debated a motion from the government about stunt driving. They asked for information and ideas about how we might improve road safety. It was the motion from the member for Mississauga–Streetsville—I see her inquisitive face. The government had those ideas. They had them in the discussion of that debate. They've had them in the bills that have been mentioned by my colleagues over here to my right—literally to my right, not ideologically to my right. But they've chosen not to take that advice.

Increasing fines for stunt driving is great.

Reducing the limit from 50 kilometres an hour to 40 kilometres an hour is great.

When I was a city councillor, the number one issue we got in the office was speeding in neighbourhoods. This bill isn't going to stop speeding past schools. It's not going to stop speeding past parks. It's not going to do any of that. The way you address speeding past schools and parks is

by modifying the roads to make it impossible to go 50 kilometres an hour past parks and schools.

The budget that they passed this year, as I mentioned earlier, has zero dollars to help municipalities modify roads to reduce speeding past schools and parks. Moreover, when they took office, they made it more difficult for municipalities to implement automated speed enforcement in school zones and park zones. There are parts of Ottawa Centre today where the city, despite its desire to implement automated speed enforcement, can't because of regulations imposed by this government on signage—on signage. They failed to make those changes.

So there has been a huge missed opportunity in this bill. Road safety is important. It needs to be addressed. The government of Ontario could take a leadership role in addressing it, and they've chosen not to.

Increasing fines is great. Reducing the limit to 40 kilometres an hour is great. But it won't stop speeding past schools. It won't stop speeding past parks. Without automated speed enforcement, it will do very little to stop speeding on highways. It's a huge missed opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for questions.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I listened to the member's speech, and he addressed a lot of things.

Overall, we need to remember that this bill is about safety for all different types of transit, whether you take public transit, whether you drive a car, whether you drive an e-bike. This bill will protect you, whether you're a construction worker helping to build our highways—keeping you safe. Really, we've covered it all, because the objective here is to give as many tools as possible to all the individuals, whether it's municipalities or law enforcement, or moms or dads, or parents or kids, so that they are safe on the road and they're safe on transit. I know in Ottawa, for example, as they're expanding their transit, that's going to be key.

For someone who is very keen on public transit in the Ottawa area, don't you think we should have more safety practices as transportation evolves?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Yes, of course. Having more tools to enforce the rules of the road is important. Giving municipalities that ability to enforce the rules of the road is important. But if the desire is to help moms, which is what I understood the bill to be designed to do, the best way to stop the concerns of the moms I hear from is to stop speeding in neighbourhoods. The way you do that is investing in physical changes to the roadway to make it more difficult to go 50 kilometres an hour past a school, to make it more difficult to go 50 kilometres an hour past a park. There is not a dollar in their budget to do that, and there's nothing in this bill that will help municipalities do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to ask a question of the member.

When we have been spending all of this time talking about the towing industry and stunt driving and different

ways to make things safe, the last government had a lot of opportunities—and I recognize the member wasn't here, but the last government, the Liberal government, had a lot of opportunities to make changes. The current leader, Steven Del Duca, was the Minister of Transportation for a lot of the time that I was here, and we didn't see the towing industry being fixed. We know that the government had a lot of connections to the towing industry.

Why do you think it wasn't changed at that time? They just tinkered around the edges, and we have to again come back to this House and make the substantive changes that are required to keep our roadways safe.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate the question.

I can't speak for the previous government or for other people. What I can speak to is my record on road safety.

As chair of the transportation committee in the city of Ottawa, we brought in the road safety action plan that will invest \$31 million over four years to improve road safety in the city of Ottawa. We led the way on putting automated enforcement on school buses—the first of any municipality in Ontario to put cameras on school buses to stop those people who illegally pass stopped school buses. We led the way in calling for automated speed enforcement in school zones, in park zones and across a broader range of areas so that we can combat speeding where it happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the member opposite. I listened intently, and he kept bringing up what he feels is the funding around this particular initiative.

Of course, he's running, I'm assuming, under the Del Duca leadership—they're going to be running in the next election.

I'm just wondering how much that party opposite is planning on committing to road safety in their plan, come the election.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Government members have said they want to send a message that road safety is ultimately important, and they have not put any sign of road safety in their budget.

So my question back to the member: How much is a child's life worth—that you're not willing to invest in road safety measures past schools and parks? There's not a single dollar for road safety in schools and park zones.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Joel Harden: It was good to hear my neighbour from Orléans hold forth on road safety, something I know he cares about. I know there are a lot of cyclists in Orléans, as well.

I was wondering if the member has any thoughts, given what we've heard in this House today, around the debate around the e-bikes. I'm hearing from a lot of business owners and people about restrictions of their rights as consumers for these devices that can make our city a lot greener. What do you think?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate that question.

I have to admit that I don't know enough about e-bikes; I don't know as much as I should. But what's clear is that there are a lot of stakeholders who have concerns about it.

As the member for University–Rosedale said, it doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to have jurisdictional regulations across North America that make it more difficult to produce common e-bike designs—regulations that would bring the price down and make them more accessible. So it's definitely something that needs to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: As you know, our budget invested tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of dollars, into municipalities to ensure that they had the funding available for roads and bridges, as well as billions of dollars for transit, including in your city and in our cities here in the GTHA.

I'm just wondering exactly how much you would commit in your 2022 budget platform for your commitment to road safety.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Liberal platform for the next election is getting a lot of attention from the media, and I'm glad that it's getting a lot of attention from the government. There will be lots of announcements about our platform and about what we plan to put forward to Ontarians. I expect that the member will have lots to say when that happens.

Needless to say, we think road safety is an important issue.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government members, come to order, please. Thank you.

The next question.

1730

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's very interesting hearing the members opposite talk about funding for transit when their plan has zero funding tied to it. It's just promises. You haven't put any dollars into your transit plan.

Anyway, back to the MPP for Orléans: The question I have is around automated speed enforcement and what you noticed, as a councillor, was holding the municipality back in bringing forward more expansive automated speed enforcement rules.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for that. Certainly, there were two things that were holding back the introduction of automated speed enforcement: the limitations on where that speed enforcement could be deployed, but also the cost. Automated speed enforcement is very expensive, and unfortunately, municipalities in Ontario don't have a partner in the provincial government to help fund that enforcement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Mr. Will Bouma: I'm intrigued, and I appreciate the member from Orléans's comments.

I also come from a municipal background. Whenever the former provincial government would overstep their boundaries into municipal areas, telling them, "This is

what you're going to do, and this is what you will spend," it caused a lot of consternation with municipalities.

I believe strongly in what our government is doing in giving municipalities the tools to do enforcement the way they see fit; for example, putting in community safety zones so that they can put in speed-control cameras.

Do you believe that municipalities should have the authority to make some of those decisions themselves? Or because you're not part of that government and haven't been, would you come in with a heavy hand and force municipalities to do things in a Toronto fashion that don't fit in a rural community?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I had the pleasure of representing a suburban and rural community, so I know a great deal about the differences.

I agree that municipalities should have flexibility, which is why some of us have argued for changing the restrictions on where you do automated speed enforcement. Those are restrictions imposed on municipalities by the provincial government. You had an opportunity in this bill to change those. You have an opportunity in regulation to change those. I'd encourage you to speak to your minister to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member with perhaps the final question is the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: The member's background—he explained that he worked on quite a bit of the initiatives that were there in Ottawa. He talked a lot about the government not putting in any money and the government just reducing the speeds. He talked about barriers that were not being put in.

I'd like him to expand on what those barriers and what that infrastructure would particularly look like so I can be educated and find out what that would look like.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate that. It depends, of course, on what type of road you're talking about. There's a difference between a rural road where the speed limit is 80 kilometres an hour and an urban road in the Glebe in downtown Ottawa where you can barely go 30 or 40.

You can do traffic bumpers. You can pop out medians. You can put in segregated bicycle facilities. You can do centre line flex sticks. There is a range of roadway modifications that can be done in municipalities. They're very expensive, but they work. Municipalities across Ontario need the government of Ontario to help fund them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We really don't have enough time for another question and response.

Further debate?

Mr. Norman Miller: I will be sharing my time with the member from Perth–Wellington.

I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 282, the making Ontarians more safe bill.

Before I start, I want to extend my condolences to the parents, friends, family and neighbours of the two young children who were killed in a horrific crash on Sunday.

This bill proposes a number of changes which will make Ontario's roads and highways safer for drivers,

pedestrians, cyclists, construction workers, tow truck drivers and others.

There are a number of really good initiatives in this bill, but I want to focus on one aspect of the bill and how the efforts of a resident of Parry Sound–Muskoka are going to make life safer for tow truck drivers and easier for anyone who has to rely on the services of a tow truck.

Doug Nelson from Bracebridge has been advocating for provincial licensing and regulation of the towing industry for as long as I can remember. Long before we were hearing all-too-frequent media reports about tow truck turf wars resulting in shootings and trucks being burned, Doug was telling anyone who would listen that there were problems. He was telling us that good tow truck drivers were leaving the industry out of fear for their own safety.

Doug is currently the executive director of the Ontario Recovery Group, which was established in 1981 by a group of professionals in the heavy-duty towing and recovery industry. The mission of the group was to develop and promote professional standards for the industry. Doug has 34 years of experience in both light and heavy-duty towing, and was a founder and former executive director of the Provincial Towing Association of Ontario.

I don't remember when I first met with Doug, but with a little help from Hansard, I know that as far back as 2005, I referenced his concerns about the towing industry. In 2005, during the debate regarding Bill 14, the Access to Justice Act, I talked about a proposal that Doug was promoting. This is what I said about this 16 years ago:

"I bring up tow truck operators just from the perspective of the need for more regulation for safety and for incident management in the province, especially on the major highways. I note that the Ontario Recovery Group has started a new head office for Ontario in the town of Bracebridge, in Muskoka, and that Doug Nelson, formerly of Northland Truck Centre, is the new president of that group. They've put a comprehensive incident management package together with many suggestions for the training of tow truck drivers, for regulations on the major highways, for all the qualifications they should have, like proper insurance, communications, training—all the various things that go into this to make our highways safer, to deal with incident management and to make the industry more professional. I really do believe that the government should be listening to groups like the Ontario Recovery Group and bringing in some regulations to improve the tow truck industry in the province of Ontario."

So that was 2005.

In 2008, the former member for Willowdale, David Zimmer, brought forward a private member's bill to address these issues: Bill 87, the Towing Industry Act. Doug Nelson was heavily involved in informing that bill. Like many private members' bills, Bill 87 died awaiting a committee hearing. MPP Zimmer reintroduced it as Bill 147 in 2010, and that bill was debated again in 2011. Despite that bill twice passing second reading—unanimously, if my memory serves—the previous Liberal government did not move that bill forward, nor did they adopt the idea and include it in a government bill.

The government of the day did study the issue. In March 2014, Ontario released the Towing and Storage Advisory Group—Report and Recommendations to the Ministry of Consumer Services, prepared by KPMG. That report recognized a number of issues in the towing sector, but I want to highlight what they had to say about "unprofessional practices." This included things like invoice padding, fraud and kickbacks. The advisory group reviewed the root causes of these issues and "concluded that these issues were occurring because there are few barriers in place to discourage unprofessional practices, or in other words, current circumstances allow tow operators to exploit the system for financial gain. There are also few consequences, or deterrents in place, as no entity is responsible for creating and enforcing common standards or a code of conduct to inform professional practices."

The advisory group, which included Doug Nelson as well as representatives from towing companies, insurance companies, the police, municipalities, the CAA and the Ontario Safety League, recommended the creation of an oversight body, a licensing system and penalties for unprofessional practices.

Again, that report was released in 2014.

Following that report, the government of the time introduced Bill 15, which took some baby steps towards consumer protection for customers of towing and vehicle storage. For example, it required tow truck operators to publish rates, provide an itemized receipt, accept payment by credit card, and give the consumer access to their vehicle to remove personal property. This bill also ensured that consumers would have the right to say where their vehicle would be towed to. These were steps forward, and as such, I voted for Bill 15. But as I said, they were baby steps; they didn't go far enough.

These steps addressed some unfair, predatory practices in the towing industry, but over time, the concerns about the towing industry have grown. The concerns have gone from issues of consumer protection and fraud to full-fledged organized crime. Don't get me wrong; I'm certainly not saying that all tow truck drivers are involved in organized crime. Tow truck drivers come to our rescue when things go wrong. The vast majority are very good people doing a tough job, often in uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous conditions, and thank goodness they are there to do that job when we need them. However, the lack of oversight of the towing industry has allowed organized crime to find a convenient cover.

1740

In the past few years, police services across the GTA have cracked down on organized crime in the towing sector. A year ago this month, Project Platinum culminated in 21 search warrants, which resulted in arrests, as well as the seizure of 11 tow trucks, more than 40 illegal firearms, more than \$500,000 in cash and large quantities of drugs. In this investigation, the police searched properties in Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Toronto, Hamilton and Oakville.

As you can see from the list of locations, this is becoming a widespread problem. These arrests and

seizures make it clear that the turf wars aren't about the business of towing disabled vehicles. The tow companies involved in these turf wars aren't just protecting an area where they can perpetuate fraud; these drivers are taking part in much larger crimes.

The police have been cracking down on the towing industry because of increasing violence. In the past few years, a number of tow truck drivers in the GTA have been murdered, with others having been shot or threatened. It is disturbingly common to hear of tow trucks being burned. In a quick Internet search, I found articles about two cases of tow trucks being set on fire in Toronto and York last December, a case in Ajax in January, one in Whitchurch-Stouffville in January, and two cases off Victoria Park in the east end of Toronto in February.

With stories like that in the news, why would any law-abiding individual choose to go into towing? This violence is chasing good tow truck drivers out of business, something we cannot afford. And when I spoke to Doug Nelson yesterday, he said that the city of London, Ontario, has just passed a bylaw legalizing chasing, and that the operator that's there, which is an excellent operator, is not likely going to bid on the contract, and that their drivers are being threatened by the criminal element.

I am pleased our government is acting to regulate the towing industry, but all of this could have been avoided. All the resources that were used in fighting these fires and the police resources that were used investigating the murders, fires and other violence could have been saved. All that, if only the last government had gone further in regulating the towing industry and acted upon their own members' private members' bills.

I look forward to seeing this bill pass and to finally seeing a Director of Towing and Vehicle Storage Standards appointed. I expect it will take some time to clean up the towing industry, but I know that with this legislation in place, we will be able to get started getting rid of the bad apples.

I want to thank the Minister of Transportation for acting to clean up the towing industry, and I thank Doug Nelson for never giving up and for continuing to advocate for provincial licensing and regulation of the towing industry. Every Ontarian who finds themselves needing the services of a tow truck driver—I think that is all of us at one time or another—will owe Doug a big thank you. Congratulations, Doug. It is great to see all your efforts finally pay off.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka did say he would be sharing his time with his friend from Perth–Wellington, who now has the floor to continue the debate.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am grateful to share my time with the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka today, and I was certainly very interested in his thoughtful speech about the tow truck industry. I'm going to focus on a different thing here.

But first of all, I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation and her PA for bringing this legislation forward. It's a great piece of legislation, and it's a needed piece of legislation. It takes 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 Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, also known as the MOMS Act, is a series of measures that will help protect people and families. The act, if passed, would help keep Ontario's roads amongst the safest in North America by targeting those engaged in unsafe, high-risk driving.

The proposed legislation will continue Ontario's efforts to increase standards for consumers and businesses while protecting pedestrians and other vulnerable road users such as highway workers. The government is fighting distracted driving to ensure that the public is aware of its preventable dangers and consequences. Those who threaten the safety of others have no place on our roads. We'll continue to target those drivers with increased suspensions and other penalties.

The MOMS Act also includes provisions, as the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka went through, to enact the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act. This act, if passed, will strengthen provincial oversight of the towing and storage sectors 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.

Speaker, the Minister of Transportation said in her comments the other day that she is a parent of driving-age teens. Well, I am a grandparent of a girl who is going to be turning 16 this year. Her parents are going through the same thing that I did when my boys decided to get a driver's licence: "Gosh, I hope they're safe out there." She'll be taking driver training, something that I never did; maybe I should have. My driver training happened on a farm, and you could go out in the field and roar around and usually not hurt anybody or whatever you're driving. But that's my driver training. Certainly, when I started driving, there were things that I did that I wouldn't do now, because I just didn't know. That's the important part about driver training: Even though it does cost some money to do these things, that's an important thing. I think it probably is not a good idea for a parent to teach a child to drive, because of some of the arguments that could ensue.

I would like to take you back, Speaker, a few years—because I think you and I are about the same vintage; pretty close, anyway—back to the 1960s, when there seemed to be a quarter-mile in every township that young folks would go to on a Saturday night or Sunday afternoon and race cars. This is something that was highly illegal, and we all knew that, but I guess, being young folks, we just wanted a rush. We wanted to see who could beat who. I never had one of these cars, but I can remember the 427 and 426 Hemis, the little deuce coupes and all those types of cars—

Interjection: Sounds like the Beach Boys.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It sounds like a song there, yes.

Anyway, we used to go out and stand along the side of the road. The road would be lined with cars, and at the one place I remember—it was down near Leamington—there was a hill on each end of it, so we had spotters up there.

We did crazy things, so they could tell if the OPP were coming out, and then everybody would stand beside the road as if we weren't doing anything, which was a really dumb thing to do, because they knew what we were doing.

I guess what I'm getting at, Speaker, is that this has been going on a long time. This is nothing new. The cars have changed. We wear seat belts now, when we never had seat belts then. The fastest trip I ever made in my life was from North Ridge to Leamington in the back of a 396 Chevelle, and I and the two girls in the car with us, with this other guy, were screaming our heads off to please slow down. The old number 3 highway just looks like a snake. We were that frightened. We were sliding around in the car when he'd go around a curve, because they had leather seats in this thing, hanging on to door handles or whatever. We finally got him stopped near Leamington and said, "Please take us home." We were that scared. Of course, he thought he was being a superhero, I guess.

But then when I was in high school, I can remember them showing us a picture of what could happen in an accident much like that. They actually showed an actual accident. They showed the victims and the mess they were in. It kind of brings it home.

So when I see on these highways now—the cars have changed. You're buckled in. The cars have airbags in them. You're protected, and I think it just gives a lot of people a false sense of security that nothing can happen to them. Cars are designed to, in an accident, fold up around the driver—that's how they're engineered; they have pressure points and stuff like that—but it doesn't do you any good at 200 kilometres an hour if you hit something. You're probably not going to come out on the good end of that one—or you hit another vehicle and take somebody else's life.

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When the minister, I'm sure, looked at this—what could we do to try to slow people down, to try to get a sense of responsibility about what they are doing not only to themselves but possibly to somebody else on the highway? And we've seen that happen certainly with different car crashes.

Sunday night, when I come down here to the Legislature, guess what happens? I invariably see somebody racing—two guys or two girls, whoever it is, just going like crazy on the 401, in and out of traffic. I wonder if it has something to do—the roads until recently have been actually quite bare because of COVID. People are staying at home. Whether that has something to do with it—I don't know. But it's very frightening to see these cars going at the speeds they go at.

The Associate Minister of Transportation also said, "The MOMS Act targets the worst actors on our roads by creating escalating suspensions for repeat offenders and setting a lower speed threshold for stunt driving charges on municipal roads." Well, that's something that interests me because I come from the country. Most of Perth-Wellington is rural. If there's no sign on a road, it's an 80-kilometre zone. That's the way it works.

Hon. Bill Walker: Highway 6 and the Ferndale Flats.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, Highway 6 and the Ferndale Flats, which is in my good friend's riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Also, as you come up into towns, you start to get into the 70- and 60-kilometre zones. So I think that's a very good point or regulation in this bill. I think that's one of the best ones in this bill, especially in rural Ontario.

The Solicitor General said, "Stunt driving and street racing are serious threats that have posed a greater risk to our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic." I just gave the example where the roads seem to be bare, or barer than they were in normal times, which just opens up the space. You get on a six-lane highway out here or a four-lane highway out on the 401, and some of these people just see the road ahead and away they go to see how fast they can get there. They're not doing it to get from point A to point B in a shorter period of time. What they're doing is just racing. That's all it is. And I think—or I know that we have to do something about it, and this bill will go a long way to helping with these situations, with stunt driving.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Members, come to order, please. There are a lot of conversations going on, and I'm having difficulty hearing the member from Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The other thing that I mentioned, which I don't know whether most people know in the House—a lot of members probably do. A number of years ago, we put speed limiters on trucks. They can only go so fast. Some of the trucks I used to drive—I had one that would do 95 wide open. That was crazy. The owner of the company finally changed the transmission so that wouldn't happen anymore. Is that the next step if this doesn't work—which I think it will—is that the next step, that we speed-limit cars? I don't know, but this has got to stop.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I thank the member from Perth-Wellington and the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. Now we have a few minutes for questions and responses. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has the first question.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I always enjoy the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka and the member from Perth-Wellington. They're two class acts in this chamber, and when they talk about their experience—I have to agree with the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. At the gym facility that I frequent, there is a tow truck driver who actually frequents there as well. He described what you have just shared with this House to pretty well the T. He's left the Toronto area because of the atmosphere and because of the fraud and because he feels like he's being put into an environment where he just doesn't feel safe being at work any more. So he's now working in my area. He was actually asking, "When are you guys going to do something about certification for the tow truck industry?" So thank you; that was good.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pose your question, please.

Mr. Michael Mantha: When I do have my time to speak about this individual, those are going to be part of my comments that I'll be bringing forward.

The member from Perth–Wellington: habits change. I remember—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you so much. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Mantha: And I'm done. But I do want to finish this later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Perhaps one of the members would like to respond to what they've heard from the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the member from Manitoulin for highlighting that. I spoke a lot about Doug Nelson. As I say, it was 2005 when I met with him and he was telling me all these horror stories. I remember him giving examples: "Would you want your daughter out on the side of a highway in a vulnerable position with the Wild West that's been going on for many years in parts of Ontario?" So I'm glad that, finally, we're starting to do something about it. I think it's really important.

I'm a little concerned when I was talking to him yesterday that, as I say, in the city of London, they have just made chasing legal there. I don't know why, but they passed a bylaw making chasing legal there. He says they have got a great operator who has had the contract whose drivers are being threatened by these people coming into the area. So it's the Wild West right now, and we really need to do something. I'm glad we finally are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Lorne Coe: One of the features of this legislation is the extended consultation that took place with a variety of sectors: for example, road safety advocates, law enforcement and, yes, mayors—mayors across the province.

Can the member from Perth–Wellington speak a little bit about the type of support that there is for this bill that's been received to date?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Perth–Wellington to respond.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I did have some difficulty understanding the question, but it has to do with fines and that type of thing?

Mr. Norman Miller: Consultation.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Oh, yes. There were a number of stakeholders that were contacted. Certainly, the police forces were consulted, the towing industry, a number of agencies, insurance companies, these types of things. Consultations were held with these companies and helped the minister draft this bill. So these consultations went on for a long time and helped mould this bill into the great bill it is today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question, back to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'll just take off where I left off the last time. As I was saying, habits change over the course of the years, and I remember being that young guy—remember when you were talking about people not wearing seat belts and so on? I was that kid in the back of the station wagon, lying across the window, looking at the truck drivers in the back, going like this and telling him to toot, while mom and dad were both smoking cigarettes in the front seat and there was a blue haze in the car.

But those habits change. Our knowledge has grown. The training, the awareness has significantly changed over the course of the years as well. Being an older gentleman, my habits have significantly changed with some recent training, driver training, that I've taken recently. It has just created more awareness.

My question to the member is, additional training, exposing drivers to a variety of challenges that are out there on our roads, getting more informed, getting more education out there will be very beneficial to them. Would you not agree that we should look at expanding our training, as well, in all weather, in all regions of the province?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Perth–Wellington to respond.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you for the question. Training is always good. Things change. The vehicles, as I said, from years ago are certainly a lot different than what we have now. The tires we used years ago—we didn't have radial tires back then. I spoke about that car that we went to Leamington with. However fast we were going, you could just feel that thing floating and slipping around because of the bias-ply tires we had on there.

But training is something that's very important, and I do believe that more is better. Certainly, in my truck-driving career, which spanned about 38 years, I think, that I drove a truck off and on, you learned as you went along. Certainly, as you got older, you didn't take the chances that you might take when you were younger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Unfortunately, the time for further questions and debate on this topic has expired.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The clock being at 6, it is time we moved into private members' public business.

Interjection: Not today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Not today? Don't we have to call it anyway? We have to call it, I believe.

Orders of the day?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Ballot item number 88, Mr. Sandhu.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no one to introduce the item, therefore this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
France Gélinas, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Taras Natyshak
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Will Bouma, John Fraser
Logan Kanapathi, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche
Natalia Kusendova
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell