

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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Mercredi  
19 mai 2021

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
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House Publications and Language Services  
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building  
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Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires  
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement  
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430  
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 19 May 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 19 mai 2021

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA LUTTE  
CONTRE LA TRAITE DES PERSONNES

Ms. Jones moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 251, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in respect of human trafficking matters / Projet de loi 251, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les questions de traite des personnes.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the minister care to lead off the debate?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I would. Thank you, Speaker. I will be sharing my time with Minister Downey, Minister Dunlop and Minister MacLeod.

I am proud to be part of a government that is resolved to take action on human trafficking and, therefore, it is my honour to help move forward the proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021.

This debate has been a painful reminder that human trafficking continues to be a serious problem and that, as legislators, we have a duty to use every tool at our disposal to combat it. This House has an opportunity to forge a new path in our fight against human trafficking and confront head-on those who benefit in trading in human lives and causing human misery.

I would also like to take a moment to thank members of this House for their support during second reading of this bill and for demonstrating your commitment to ensuring all communities in our province can look forward to a safer future. Thank you.

Human trafficking is a vicious and violent crime that can leave its victims severely traumatized. Here are a few alarming facts. The average age of recruitment into sex trafficking is 13 years old. Almost 65% of human trafficking victims identified by police are under the age of 25. Nationally, the number of human trafficking incidents reported in 2019 marked a 44% increase from the previous year. In 2019, Ontario accounted for the majority of police-reported human trafficking cases in Canada. And calls to the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline suggest

that only a small fraction of incidents are ever reported to the police.

Human trafficking disproportionately impacts children and youth, Indigenous women and girls, racialized groups, those with mental health and addiction challenges, and youth who are otherwise marginalized; for example, those that are experiencing homelessness, victims of abuse, and children and youth in our child welfare system who are increasingly targeted.

COVID-19 has placed an enormous strain on all of us and put our normal lives on hold. Sadly, crime is not taking a break and human traffickers are still preying on the vulnerable. We know that traffickers have adjusted how they prey on victims during this global pandemic. Isolation, economic instability and lost wages are placing our most vulnerable people at an even greater risk, where children are most isolated from supports and even more connected to social media.

COVID-19 has also laid bare the social and economic divides that traffickers have long exploited to target and lure victims. The victims themselves are more exposed to contracting the COVID-19 virus, among other serious health risks, less able to protect themselves, and often unable to seek medical help and other critical community supports.

Finally, COVID-19 has forced governments around the world to reorganize priorities, causing some to worry that victims of human trafficking, already difficult to identify in normal times, may fall through the cracks. I have a clear message for those who share such concerns: not on our watch.

With our government's anti-human trafficking strategy, we're making investments of up to \$307 million to combat human trafficking and better support survivors. With the proposed legislative package we hope to pass today, we are building on the strategy and reinforcing it with the legislation to drive it forward. Our proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, is a major step forward. It builds on the actions that have already been deployed and are under way to fight the increasingly sophisticated criminal networks that perpetrate human trafficking across Ontario.

To keep pace with the increasing volume and complexity of human trafficking cases, Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy provides a coordinated approach to law enforcement, with increased capacity to investigate and deter human trafficking. I would like to take a couple of minutes to remind the House of some of the measures my ministry has under way, in cooperation with law

enforcement, to identify, target and hold human traffickers accountable.

We are establishing a new intelligence-led joint forces investigations team from police agencies across Ontario, including the Ontario Provincial Police, municipal police services and First Nations police services. The capacity of the OPP Child Sexual Exploitation Unit will continue to be expanded by adding 23 members, both uniform and civilian, to their current complement. This unit enhancement supports a deployed team model for uniformed members, increasing their ability to engage with community, as well as an analytical support team tasked to identify and disrupt those intent on the sexual exploitation of children, while rescuing victims from this heinous crime.

The OPP's cyber operations section supports all criminal investigations with digital forensics and cyber investigative needs, including the fight against human trafficking. The Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario's anti-human trafficking team is ramping up efforts of police services specific to the identification and interception of human trafficking networks provincially and nationally.

As I mentioned earlier, traffickers are weaponizing social media to commit their horrible crimes. The expansive reach of social media means traffickers can scan for young, potential victims without leaving their home, and, once recruited, tracking devices on mobile phones allow traffickers to monitor someone's every move. We must continue to improve our use of existing and emerging technologies to disrupt and prosecute human trafficking rings. The cyber operations section allows the OPP to host all of its cyber crime investigation and digital forensic resources under one roof. It has more than 50 staff using advanced technologies to support criminal investigations into crimes such as human trafficking.

We are enhancing the use of major case management for missing persons and human trafficking by investing in software development to meet the specific needs of human trafficking investigators and analysts. We are also putting more money from the proceeds of crime into stopping violent criminal activities and putting the criminals behind bars. Under the Proceeds of Crime Front Line Policing Grant announced in August, \$6 million over three years is being reinvested into front-line community safety initiatives, including anti-human trafficking activities.

#### 0910

That is just a snapshot of what the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the OPP and our policing partners are doing to help prevent and combat human trafficking across Ontario. We will continue to improve connections between law enforcement and the agencies and sectors that have a significant role to play in preventing human trafficking, supporting victims and survivors, and ensuring that the people of Ontario can live free from the threat, fear or experience of exploitation and violence.

The proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, demonstrates this government's leadership in responding to this heinous and pervasive crime. This legislation, if passed, will be the first of its kind in Canada.

It will better protect victims, support survivors and increase tools to crack down on offenders.

Wherever trafficking may occur, whether it be large urban centres, small towns, or remote communities, we know traffickers are using provincial corridors to move and exploit their victims. The bill includes two proposed new acts: first, the Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021; and the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, which would replace the Hotel Registration of Guests Act. It also contains proposed amendments to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, and the Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking Act, 2017.

Together, the proposed changes would support the government's response to human trafficking by supporting a sustained, long-term provincial response to combatting human trafficking and being the first Canadian jurisdiction to mandate an anti-human trafficking strategy in legislation; emphasizing that all Ontarians have a role in combatting human trafficking; strengthening the ability of children's aid societies and law enforcement to protect exploited children; and supporting more survivors and the people who assist them in obtaining restraining orders against traffickers, with specific consideration for Indigenous survivors and communities.

The proposed changes also provide law enforcement with more tools to locate victims and penalize traffickers. This will be achieved by increasing penalties for persons, including traffickers, who interfere with a child in the care of a children's aid society; clarifying how and when police services can access information from hotel guest registries and establishing the authority to make a regulation to include other types of accommodation providers, such as short-term rentals—this will help deter trafficking and help identify and locate victims—and providing for the ability to create regulations requiring companies that advertise sexual services to have a dedicated contact to support investigations into suspected human trafficking.

In drafting the proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, we engaged law enforcement, persons with lived experience, Indigenous organizations and communities, front-line service providers, sex workers' rights advocates and the tourism sector, amongst others. This morning I will focus on two specific areas: the advertising of sexual services and using hotel guest registers as an important investigative tool. With each area, I will address the "what is it," why we're proposing the measures we are, and what we want these measures to achieve.

Advertising sexual services: As I have mentioned, the Internet has dramatically changed how human traffickers lure, recruit and exploit victims, including through the online advertising of sexual services. Online resources such as classified advertising sites, adult websites and even the dark web have become primary tools for traffickers to solicit customers for their victims. This online world has provided cover to help traffickers evade law enforcement and keep victims isolated and controlled. That is why our government is proposing that a new light shine on the world of advertising of sexual services to support investigations of suspected human trafficking.

Under the proposed legislation, if passed, we will have the ability to create regulations requiring companies that advertise sexual services to make their contact information, such as an email address or telephone number, available. If prescribed, these companies would be required to make the contact available to police and other entities, as well as respond to requests directed at this contact within a prescribed period of time. Once these proposed regulations are prescribed, failure to comply with this requirement could result in penalties of up to \$50,000 for an individual and \$100,000 for a corporation.

Using hotel and other accommodation industry guest registrations: Hotel and motel operators may unwillingly and unknowingly provide infrastructure for human traffickers. The market explosion of short-term rentals has added to the inventory and created new options for traffickers. As such, hotel guest registries serve as a valuable tool in human trafficking investigations.

The proposed new legislation would include regulation-making authority to enhance the information collected in guest registries and establish a length of time that registries must be maintained to support investigations, which can span many years. Under the proposed legislation, our government will work with law enforcement partners and Ontario's tourism and hospitality sector to determine what information and record-keeping practices could best support our anti-human trafficking efforts through the regulation development process.

Policing stakeholders have also told us that the use of short-term rental units by traffickers is on the rise. That is why the proposed legislation includes regulation-making authority to prescribe other accommodation providers, such as short-term rentals, to ensure that they are required to follow the same requirements as hotels and motels to help deter trafficking in the places where we know it's occurring more and more. Providing this regulation-making authority would allow us to expand the scope of this new act to capture newer entrants to the accommodation sector, as well as provide greater flexibility for the act to maintain relevance and be reflective of the rapidly changing accommodation sector in the future.

At the same time, employees such as those in the accommodation and hospitality industry can also play a pivotal role in helping to identify trafficking, and, to do so, they must be equipped with the tools and necessary skills to spot the signs of, and appropriately respond to, human trafficking. I am pleased to say that under the proposed Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021, Ontario would become a national leader on training individuals and organizations on how to identify human trafficking and respond appropriately.

Human trafficking is a serious challenge for law enforcement. We must give police the tools to identify traffickers quickly and support investigations, including through access to hotel guest registry information where there are reasonable grounds to believe such information will assist in locating or identifying a victim of human trafficking or someone at imminent risk of being trafficked.

The proposed Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, which will replace the Hotel Registration of Guests Act, specifies how and when police services can access hotel guest register information without a court order in certain emergency situations, such as when there is a threat of bodily harm to a person or reason to believe evidence may be destroyed. These changes would support more consistent and timely access to guest information in situations requiring immediate police action to protect public safety. Not only is this clarity important for our law enforcement partners, it will also support the accommodation sector by making sure processes are clearly outlined to support their operations and training.

It is essential for everyone to learn what human trafficking is, understand the risk factors, identify the warning signs and know how to get help. The proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, is built on state-of-knowledge insight into the habits of traffickers and the needs of survivors and the family, friends, support workers and communities who help them.

The proposed legislation mandates Ontario to maintain an anti-human trafficking strategy that is regularly reviewed to help the province stay ahead of traffickers, combat this crime and support survivors. If prescribed, the collection of non-personal data will enable the government to conduct research and analysis to plan for the delivery of programs and services under the anti-human trafficking strategy, and to evaluate whether existing supports are working, where they can be improved, and what new supports can be added.

Traffickers don't stand still, Speaker, and neither can we. The stakes are too high.

**0920**

The proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, gives Ontario an advantage in the fight against human trafficking and sexual exploitation. It gives law enforcement new investigative tools, disrupts the infrastructure that enables trafficking, enlists Ontarians in the fight against trafficking and delivers new tools to help support and give hope to survivors. I ask members of the House to pass this important legislation.

Now, Speaker, it is my honour to share my time with my co-lead, Minister Dunlop.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I now recognize the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. The floor is all yours.

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** I'm happy to join my colleagues the Solicitor General, the Attorney General and the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries to speak to Bill 251, the proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act. I want to take a moment to thank the Solicitor General for all her work with this legislation, as well as being my co-lead on the strategy. You have been standing at the forefront of this issue for a long time, along with our Minister of Infrastructure, Laurie Scott. It is an honour and a privilege to work with you and all of our colleagues on such an important topic.

After an informed and spirited debate on the merits of Bill 251, we have arrived at this final stage of the

legislative process. All members of this House now have an opportunity to send a message beyond this chamber to every community in Ontario that human trafficking and child sexual exploitation has no place in our province, none at all. We want an Ontario where our young people can live their lives and fulfill their dreams without experiencing the nightmare of human trafficking. We're not there yet. However, I believe Bill 251, if passed and enacted, would take us in the right direction.

Human trafficking and child sexual exploitation is a complex file involving not only a range of ministries across the Ontario government but many community agencies, a wide array of sectors and all levels of government outside of this building. Our government has also benefited greatly from the experience and expertise of survivors, front-line service providers, advocates and champions for victims and survivors that have informed various parts of the proposed bill. We would not be where we are today without their strength and determination, their belief and their passion in creating a better future for survivors and young people at risk of being trafficked.

Human trafficking is a horrific crime that poses a real and serious danger. It steals the safety, the health and livelihood of those who are being exploited and abused, often resulting in long-term trauma. This trauma is complex and runs deep, impacting the physical, emotional and mental health of victims and survivors. Human trafficking violates human rights. It is an affront to the humanity of every individual and family caught in its nightmare existence. It upends families, it weakens communities and it shatters lives. It should never be tolerated or coexisted with, and the outcomes are injurious and profoundly harmful.

Unfortunately, as stated many times, Ontario is a hub for human trafficking, accounting for the majority of all police-reported incidents of human trafficking across Canada in 2019. However, due to the fact that cases of human trafficking are known to be vastly underreported, these numbers only capture the tip of the iceberg and are likely much higher.

While anyone can be a victim, human trafficking is a crime that disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations and individuals, as traffickers assess and manipulate vulnerability to their own benefit to target, lure and groom their victims. And when we think about those vulnerable people who are particularly at risk of being targeted by traffickers, it bears repeating: We are talking about children and youth, Indigenous women and girls and other racialized groups, children and youth in care, people who identify as 2SLGBTQ+, newcomers, migrant workers, persons with disabilities, persons experiencing mental illness or addictions challenges, and people who may otherwise be marginalized, such as persons experiencing poverty, homelessness or bullying.

This is utterly unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. We owe it to our most vulnerable to stop this, to protect them and keep them safe. That's why our government is committed to combatting human trafficking wherever it is found, to show our determination and will at every

opportunity, so survivors know they're supported by this government and perpetrators realize we are taking action to hold them accountable. That's why we have continued to step up our fight against human trafficking and child sexual exploitation, even amidst the pandemic.

Bill 251 is a key part of our response to this grave societal challenge. Its proposed changes, if passed, would better protect victims of human trafficking, support survivors and increase tools to hold offenders accountable. Bill 251 builds upon a strong foundation of Ontarians and community service partners working together to fight human trafficking and support survivors. That collaboration helped inform and support our five-year, \$307-million strategy to combat human trafficking and child sexual exploitation, announced last year.

I'm incredibly proud of this strategy, as it is the largest strategy across any level of government, at any time in Canada. This investment is supporting a range of initiatives across government focused on the four pillars of our strategy: raising awareness on the issue, protecting victims and intervening early, supporting survivors, and holding offenders accountable. Key efforts are already well under way.

Over the last 14 months, as the world faced a global pandemic, human trafficking didn't stop or take any breaks. And neither did we. Working across ministries and with survivors, multiple sectors and community organizations across the province, we achieved milestones and laid a foundation.

In collaboration with the Minister of Education, the elementary health and physical education curriculum has been updated to include mandatory learning about online safety and consent to help keep kids safe and respond to the growing threat of human trafficking. We also released *The Trap*, which is an interactive digital education tool to help children and youth learn about how traffickers lure, groom and manipulate young people into trafficking, so they are equipped to recognize when it may be happening to them.

Working with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, as well as Indigenous survivors and First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and organizations, we released an Indigenous-focused education campaign, *Speak Out: Stop Sex Trafficking*. This was designed by and for Indigenous people to support Indigenous youth, communities and caregivers, connecting people and providing information about sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

Through the work of the Minister of Transportation, we are partnering with the trucking industry, including the Women's Trucking Federation of Canada, and ONroute locations to train staff and raise awareness on Ontario's 400-series highways.

With the Attorney General, we have invested in enhancing specialized services for victims through victim services agencies, and we have reinvested cash and proceeds seized from criminals to help fight human trafficking.

And through the Solicitor General, we are implementing important initiatives to help hold offenders

accountable, which we just heard about from my colleague the Solicitor General.

We are investing \$96 million over the next five years in community-based services across the province to provide more supports for victims and survivors, particularly children and youth. This includes funding especially to Indigenous-led initiatives and organizations, to provide specialized and culturally relevant supports designed by and for Indigenous individuals for those at risk of and who are being trafficked. These programs do incredible work to support survivors and victims, especially our children and youth, who are often the target of traffickers. This investment provides direct supports at the community level to protect our young people.

To support Human Trafficking Awareness Day earlier this year, we also undertook a province-wide marketing campaign targeted to teens, as well as parents of children and youth, to raise awareness and ensure that everyone knows where to get help. We are expanding the Youth-in-Transition Worker Program to provide human trafficking supports to youth in care and leaving the care of children's aid societies, including workers to support specific populations such as Indigenous children and youth.

And, Speaker, that was just one year in our strategy. There is still so much more to do.

**0930**

As has been noted already, human trafficking didn't stop or take any breaks during the pandemic, and neither did we. We need to be constantly adding new tools and mechanisms to our tool box. That's why I would characterize Bill 251 as another important tool to help us protect children and youth and support survivors.

As my cabinet colleague has already noted, the proposed Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, if passed, would require the province to maintain an anti-human trafficking strategy and support a sustained long-term response to combat human trafficking. We are very proud of this proposal. This requirement would be the first of its kind in Canada and position Ontario as a leader in anti-human trafficking efforts across this country. It would mean that any government, regardless of political stripe, would be required to continue working towards eliminating human trafficking in this province and supporting victims and survivors. It would also embed promising practices, such as the need to engage with victims and survivors of human trafficking in developing a provincial strategy. This is a practice I am eager to continue, after having had the opportunity to participate in numerous round tables with survivors, Indigenous communities and organizations, those on the front line, police officers and more to learn first-hand about human trafficking in Ontario.

These issues require us to work together in a non-partisan manner. Support is not limited to one ministry, one person, one political party or one government. It requires all of us working together. Given the complexity and pervasiveness of human trafficking, it requires not only a cross-government approach, but work across jurisdictions and with various sectors and community

partners. That's why I raise the issue with all my provincial, territorial and federal colleagues whenever I have the opportunity. I know my cabinet colleagues the Attorney General and the Solicitor General have done the same.

This proposed legislation would also increase public education and raise awareness of human trafficking through an enabling authority. This includes posting information about human trafficking, training staff on the signs of trafficking and how to respond if you think it is occurring. These provisions would support the strategy's efforts to raise awareness of human trafficking in targeted sectors, contributing to better identification, attitudes and behaviours towards human trafficking, including enhancing the ability to identify and appropriately respond to suspected instances and connect survivors to supportive services. Many people don't know the signs of trafficking or don't know where to go if they suspect it's happening. Education is vital to prevention efforts to stop this crime and in supporting victims through early intervention.

We recognize that a range of organizations have applied anti-human trafficking efforts within their sectors and that appropriate responses may potentially differ. The proposed legislation seeks to build upon this work and encourage more organizations to prioritize anti-human trafficking efforts across Ontario. If passed, it would send a strong message that all persons have a responsibility to help combat human trafficking, while affording flexibility to compel, for example, sectors or businesses to prioritize anti-human trafficking efforts if required.

Bill 251, through the proposed amendments to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, would also provide significant tools to better protect children and youth from this crime. Taken together, the proposed amendments to this act are important new measures that would strengthen the authority of children's aid societies and law enforcement to intervene in child sex trafficking cases, discourage traffickers from interfering with children in the care of a children's aid society and promote consistent responses across the province. This part of the legislation is so important because, as has been stated many times, the average age of recruitment is just 13 years old. By the time a youth is 16 or 17, they could have been so manipulated that they do not even know they are being trafficked. The temporary removal from a very unsafe situation may disrupt the trafficking enough that the child or youth can access supports. And even if they don't search out the supports immediately, they are being told someone is there for them when they are ready. The sooner we can remove these children and youth—and again I'll repeat, these are often children and youth—the better it is for them, for their families and for their communities.

Great collaboration brings great momentum, and that is where I think we are on this file at this moment. The proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act is the result of engagement with survivors, a wide range of front-line service providers and community partners, and Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations who gave us their best advice and council. We owe it to the victims

and survivors to do everything we can to address and end human trafficking, strengthen our ability to support them and to better protect children and youth. On behalf of the government, I want to thank those who have taken this journey with us, who have provided invaluable feedback to inform this bill and those who continue to drive anti-human trafficking efforts across the province. We should all be proud of our efforts and the actions we have taken to date.

Now we have the opportunity to send a strong message. If passed by this House, it will demonstrate Ontario's long-term commitment and determination to end human trafficking, strengthen our ability to support survivors and victims, and better protect children and youth from this horrible crime. I urge all members to support its passage.

When I was first appointed as the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, I was part of the round tables that were being held across the province. One of the locations I went to was Thunder Bay, to the Ontario Native Women's Association where we held an Indigenous-specific round table. I just want to read a quote from Coralee McGuire-Cyrette, who is the executive director of ONWA, who is very supportive of the plan this government has put forward. I thank her and her organization for the work that they are doing to support Indigenous women as they leave human trafficking.

"The Ontario Native Women's Association ... clearly understands the necessity and the timely importance of the introduction of the Combating Human Trafficking Act as well as amendments to the Children, Youth and Family Services Act.... Indigenous women in Ontario have been telling us what they need for years to address human trafficking and this multi-pronged approach stands to provide meaningful change."

I would like to thank all victims and survivors who participated in these round tables—which I know many members in this House held in their ridings and participated in with myself—who really helped to lead the strategy and the approach this government has taken to support victims and survivors in Ontario.

I'd now like to pass it over to the Attorney General.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I now recognize the Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I'm really pleased and want to thank my colleagues the Solicitor General and the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, who have already broadly explained the Combating Human Trafficking Act and how it will enable the province to effectively fight against human trafficking and confront those who commit this exploitative crime. I look forward to hearing from Ontario's Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries as well. I know that she has a unique perspective with her stakeholders on this insidious crime and how it exists in our province.

I'm proud to stand here once again to support this legislation and highlight some of the measures that my ministry has brought forward to help lead and strengthen protection and support the human trafficking victims and survivors.

Human trafficking is a vicious crime. It occurs in our communities and it occurs in our neighbourhoods. I'm proud to be part of a government that has been loud—very loud—and impactful in its commitment to confronting the perpetrators of these crimes and bringing them to justice. We have been equally forceful in our commitment to protecting and supporting survivors. We couldn't do it without our partners or without the collaboration of our communities.

Our government continues to support the work of police and prosecutors to target the criminal networks that prey on and take advantage of and profit from young and vulnerable people. As you have heard from the Solicitor General and the associate minister, young people of an average age of 13—again, I just have to stop and let that resonate. That's a child in grade 8, just to be clear. Our government continues to support the work of police and prosecutors to target these networks. We need to take the profits out of their endeavours.

I'm proud of the collaboration we're driving across government to make sure we get this right. This is the one issue, and I said it at second reading, that crosses all ministry boundaries easily. We want to collaborate, barriers come down, we want to find the best way possible, and I think we've come up with an absolutely excellent plan in this legislation. It's a problem that no one in our province should ignore.

**0940**

Growing up, I saw first-hand how hard my mother worked as a founding member of the York Region Abuse Program, an incredible organization that supports the recovery of adult and child survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Later, as a lawyer, I was proud to be a member of an advisory group that helped inform the Saving the Girl Next Door Act, a thoughtful piece of legislation put forward by my colleague the MPP for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Laurie Scott, a real leader in this area, Mr. Speaker.

And now, today, I'm proud of the work we've done to build on Ontario's comprehensive strategy to combat human trafficking through the Combating Human Trafficking Act. This legislation reflects the invaluable feedback provided by those who have been victimized by these criminal networks and the community-based service providers who have been there for decades, doing everything they can to support them. In my role as AG, I want to continue strengthening protections for human trafficking victims and survivors, including children and those who care for them, and I am proud to say that today we are doing just that.

Restraining orders are critical protection for survivors. Restraining orders can get survivors and their families some peace of mind, knowing traffickers are required by law to stay away from them and can be criminally charged for not abiding by that law. This act would allow these orders to apply for a longer period by specifically giving judges the discretion to lengthen restraining orders beyond the current three-year limit. This is a significant reform that I'm proud we've been able to bring forward to protect survivors when they need the help the most.

The act would also extend the protections of restraining orders to others, including front-line workers, survivors and the survivors' family members, and we are supporting survivors and those who advocate for them by specifying who can apply for a restraining order on behalf of a child. This change is especially sensitive to customary care arrangements within Indigenous families and communities. The increased restraining order protections in this act build on several investments we've made over the past year and a half to strengthen support for victims, including survivors of human trafficking.

We know that staying home is not the safest option for many people. Domestic violence and violence against women and children has reportedly increased during COVID-19. That's why we took action to increase supports and services in communities large and small, to ensure victims can get help when and where they need it. Over the past year the Ministry of the Attorney General has committed an additional \$18 million in supports to victims of crime and front-line workers. Speaker, this includes more than \$10 million specifically for survivors of human trafficking and local projects to help victims fight crime.

In August 2020, I was pleased to join the Premier and my colleagues who are speaking today to mark an investment of \$7.65 million—so \$7.5 million and a little more, Mr. Speaker; that's a lot of money—in specialized services to support human trafficking victims. This funding helps reduce financial barriers and cover essential requirements to provide important lifelines to survivors in very difficult moments. This can include cellphones, which are critical to a survivor's safety; transportation; meals; a place of safety; and dental care. These are all things that most of us take for granted. The investment is also helping front-line workers offer early intervention and referrals to local programs and expand funding to cover court-related expenses.

Speaker, I also want to take a moment to highlight our support for victims in smaller rural and northern areas of our province. In March, we committed more than \$2 million to establish sexual assault services in Leeds, Grenville and Dufferin counties. The funding also expands Victim Services of Nipissing District-North Bay. In the past, Ontario also began implementing more services tailored to the needs of survivors of human trafficking, including Indigenous-specific victim services, which have been designed, developed and delivered by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people. These programs respond to language barriers and the realities of remote communities.

As announced in the 2020 budget, the province is providing up to four hours of free legal advice to survivors of sexual assault, which can include survivors of human trafficking. This program started as a pilot in Toronto, Ottawa and Thunder Bay, and has been so successful that it is now offered province-wide. For the past three years, my ministry provided free legal representation to help sex trafficking victims and those who care about them apply for restraining orders against traffickers. Thanks to this program, 100% of applications for restraining orders have

been granted, which complements the strengths and protections in the Combating Human Trafficking Act. Two of the applications were on behalf of victims as young as 13 years old, underscoring the need for this legislation.

I also want to mention another program that has helped fight human trafficking and give money to survivors and those who support them. Ontario's Civil Remedies Grant Program, as mentioned by the associate minister, invests cash and assets forfeited from criminals into community programs that help victims and prevent crime. This past fiscal year, we invested \$2.5 million from proceeds of crime in 33 local projects across the province focused on preventing human trafficking and supporting crisis counselling, research and public education. We have made changes to property forfeiture that allow for the forfeiture of cash and assets of lower value in uncontested cases.

These changes are long overdue and allow Ontario to catch up with other provinces in terms of deterring crimes like human trafficking. Twenty years ago, Ontario was a national leader in deterring crime through property forfeiture programs. Since then, other programs have updated their laws to keep up with crimes that fuel gang activity and human trafficking, yet Ontario fell behind, even though two thirds of human trafficking crimes are reported here.

Our new administrative forfeiture program was implemented on April 1 of this year. Now, in uncontested cases, certain personal property connected to unlawful activity can be automatically forfeited without a court order. This will free up valuable time and resources for the police and our courts and will ensure victims can access compensation with fewer delays.

Our support doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. We're also holding human traffickers responsible and accountable for their crimes. Our dedicated provincial human trafficking prosecution team is a province-wide, comprehensive, coordinated and specialized team of prosecutors. They take on human trafficking cases, advise front-line crown prosecutors and train prosecutors, police and victim/witness assistance staff. They also work closely with police officers and service providers to improve human trafficking investigations and prosecutions. As of April 1 of this year, my ministry has expanded the specialized team to 14 prosecutors, covering every region of the province.

We're also taking action to ensure the criminal justice system is more connected and responsive to human trafficking and other crimes. Recently, Ontario modernized the criminal justice system through a new digital evidence management program that allows police services to securely capture, store and share evidence electronically with crown attorneys and other police services. Across the province, we continue to implement a digital system called eIntake that allows police to file criminal charges electronically. These tools are improving how information moves through Ontario's criminal justice system and will help ensure human traffickers are brought to justice quickly.

Finally, I want to highlight recent changes my ministry made to modernize the justice system—changes that also

help combat human trafficking; changes that needed to happen a very long time ago; changes to fix a neglected justice system, its gaps and barriers amplified by COVID. Survivors of human trafficking in particular should not be revictimized by the failings of our justice system.

Just a few weeks ago, our government passed the Accelerating Access to Justice Act. As part of that legislation to break down barriers to justice, we will be filling judicial vacancies faster. This will support survivors by ensuring human trafficking cases are heard by a judge quickly and with fewer delays. We are also addressing systemic barriers to access to justice and providing faster access to victim services by changing courthouses into technology-enabled community justice hubs.

Speaker, I want to finish by reiterating that I am honoured to work with my colleagues here and so many justice and community partners to bring forward the Combating Human Trafficking Act. I want to thank Minister Jones and Associate Minister Dunlop for their leadership on this file to bring all of the Legislature together for a very important matter. This is another vital step forward in Ontario's urgent and comprehensive actions to fight this heinous crime.

I look forward to working with the Premier and my colleague ministers to harness the talent, experience and expertise across the justice sector to ensure our anti-human trafficking strategy makes an impactful difference in every community in the province, and I look forward to working with the staff in my ministry, including our hard-working special prosecution team and other justice sector partners, to protect and support human trafficking victims and survivors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci. Meegwetch.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Now I turn it over to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** I would like to start off by thanking and congratulating my colleagues the Attorney General, the Solicitor General and the Associate Minister of Women's Issues for this groundbreaking legislation. I'm pleased to have a small part in this as the tourism minister in terms of our Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act.

I was previously the minister responsible for women's issues in another iteration three years ago. My first speech as a minister was to the Canadian Club, and it was on Ontario's dirty little secret. I wanted to build off of the extraordinary work of the Minister of Infrastructure, the Honourable Laurie Scott, who brought forward to this Legislature, years before anybody was talking about human trafficking, the girl next door act. That girl next door act propelled a discussion in this Legislature and across this great province about the scourge that is human trafficking—or, as I will directly call it, sex trafficking—of girls as young as 11 in every single community across the province of Ontario.

**0950**

Laurie was able to build a network not just across Ontario, but to have a national conversation started. I

know she had a great deal of work being done with federal members of Parliament as well to really talk about the fact that this type of illicit, illegal activity is happening in every community. It's happening on our 401 corridor, but it is really a borderless crime. A child in Ottawa could just as easily be trafficked in Gatineau as a child in Kenora could be as easily trafficked in Manitoba.

I think it's really important that we have this conversation. I know, Speaker, you yourself, in your own riding, have been a tremendous leader on this issue and have spoken literally to hundreds of people to talk about the situation in southwestern Ontario, and I congratulate you for that.

In my new portfolio, as I mentioned, we had a small part to play to work with the Solicitor General, the associate minister and the Attorney General to talk about how we can best combat human trafficking that is happening in hotels in every community across Ontario.

Growing up in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, my best friend was Joylene MacNeil. She ended up in Durham and she still is with the Durham Regional Police Service. She became a police officer, and she's still there. She's working in the human trafficking area. She told me three years ago when I was the minister, and she joined me at the speech, that in every single hotel in the province of Ontario, there is sex trafficking. She told me stories of helping victims who were not able to walk because they had been raped so badly. She talked to me about girls that were stuck in hotel rooms literally with no food for weeks. She told me about children who had been addicted to drugs because they had to numb the pain and their trafficker was supplying them.

None of these stories are pleasant. But we do have an outstanding directorate here that is victim-led in the province of Ontario. I think there are many victim-led tables across the province as well that have really brought a voice to those who have survived. When they bring their lived experience to us as legislators, we can't help but act swiftly and act strongly.

This is what this legislation does. This legislation is a whole-of-government approach. It is one that is multi-ministerial. There are four ministers speaking today, but I can tell you the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is involved, the Minister of Transportation is involved and, of course, the Minister of Infrastructure is involved, and so many others. Because this really is something that happens in every community.

I remember being told by my friend Cynthia Bland, who is the founder and CEO of Voice Found—it's victim-led, to support those human-trafficked. She told me of a story of a young girl in my constituency, in Barrhaven, where you don't think it's going to happen because we happen to be, according to the census, one of the wealthiest, best-educated communities in all of Canada. So, you think, "Okay, this is not happening here." But Laurie Scott knew it was happening there, because she said it was the girl next door.

I found out that a hockey family—I'm involved in hockey, Speaker; you know that—had a daughter, who

was 13 years old, and a son playing hockey, doing great work. She decided she would start to get on Instagram. She was angry with her parents because they were off at hockey or whatever. A predator who was much older than her started to message her on Instagram and then started to supply her with purses and other things at the Bayshore Shopping Centre. Then this little girl ends up being not only trafficked, but brutally gang-raped.

That happened in my community. I can imagine what's happening elsewhere, in Indigenous communities, in areas where there are parents who are unable to be with their children all of the time. If that's happening in our nation's capital, it's happening in every single community in this province, and it's happening in hotels. That's why I was pleased to work with our sectors, in the tourism business and hospitality, and making sure that every single hotel owner in the province of Ontario—they have a role to play.

We can't look the other way. We have to have a pact in this Legislature, all of us together, regardless of political party, that we do not look the other way because this is uncomfortable. We have to talk about it. We have to bring Ontario's dirty little secret from behind the shadows into the forefront, because that could be any of our daughters. The girl next door could be our friend's daughter. It could be our neighbour. It could be our daughter's friend. It could be our son's friend. It could be their classmate. It could be the people we work with.

In fact, when I was giving a speech in Ottawa on this very issue several years ago, I actually was working with a woman from Ottawa who told me that her daughter—she was dedicated in this line of work, and her daughter had been trafficked in Gatineau, across the river in the national capital region, where the tall, beautiful, historic Parliament buildings sit, where the major legislation that keeps our country going is made. It's happening there. It's happening where I live. It's happening here in Toronto. It's happening in hotels as we speak. So, every moment we have the opportunity to raise this issue and lend our voices—it's absolutely critical that as leaders in our communities, as mothers and fathers, as grandparents in this assembly, we recognize it could be happening to a child.

That's what this is about. This is not about sex workers who have chosen that life; it is about children who have been preyed upon. They have been conditioned, they have been groomed, and they had their lives ruined. That's what this legislation is about. That's why the Solicitor General brought this forward. That's why the Attorney General has made such an effort. That's why the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues is speaking with victims. If we can't stand up for vulnerable women in this Legislature, who in this country will? That's our job. It's our job to stand here. It's our job to talk about that.

When I was women's minister, I also heard stories about young Indigenous children in the north being groomed over \$10 iTunes cards. Think about that. Think about an 11- or 12- or 13-year-old girl absolutely violated, her life ruined, because of a \$10 iTunes card that she thought was more attractive in the moment than going

home. The stories I remember from those times—I tell you, Speaker, they still haunt me.

I had the opportunity to lead a national conversation with Maryam Monsef, the minister of women's issues federally, in the Yukon—I believe it was in October 2018—and really trying to explain to some of those from other parts of the country that it is happening in their communities. I remember, because I'm a native Nova Scotian, the Nova Scotia minister at the time learning a little bit more about it and being really shocked it was happening there.

I then had the opportunity in March 2019 to go to the United Nations as a Canadian delegate to speak on human trafficking at a session organized by the Vatican and then again at the general assembly. I took my opportunity on women's issues to talk about this particular issue because, again, it is borderless. It's as easy for a child in Windsor to be trafficked in Detroit as it is, as I said earlier, from Ottawa to Gatineau, or Kenora to Winnipeg. That's the reality. These kids are being trafficked up and down the 401. We needed to have that conversation. We need to have this conversation here, we have to have it nationally and we have to have it internationally. I was really proud to be able to do that. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and it's certainly one that I'll never forget.

As I close out, Speaker, there are amazing victim-led organizations across this province. I mentioned Cynthia Bland. This ministry has the opportunity to support this legislation through the accommodations sector—and I'll close on that—but we also have a \$103-million fund called the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which every member is aware of. It's open to all of our communities. For the past couple of years, we have been able to fund Voice Found through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which is absolutely critical. I've visited there many times. I've met many of the victim-led facilitators.

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I was able to speak with Cynthia a couple of times throughout this pandemic. I was able to donate some PPE, actually, to them as well personally. I can't say enough about these courageous people; that really is what they are and who they are. They're courageous, because they stand up every single day and listen to stories that most of us would never want to hear.

Speaker, we don't want to see this happen in our communities. So, I implore all legislators in here to not look the other way, to really look at the problem, root it out, make an example of these individuals. We're really committed to making hotels, motels, short-term rentals and other temporary accommodations across the province accountable, and we'll continue to do that.

But the accountability isn't just with a company. The accountability isn't just with law enforcement. The accountability can't just be with those victim-led organizations. The accountability starts with every one of us. If we all talk to 10 people today—which we all will; we will all talk to 10 people because we're politicians—I think we should all reference this debate that we've had so that they understand it's happening and so it's not just a few of us

who are having this conversation this morning, but it's a lot of us having the conversation on a longer-term basis.

I'm going to conclude with this. I've said this many times in this Legislature and I firmly believe this, Speaker—and you are a true example of it and so are many of the men here. I know I've done a lot of work with the Minister of Natural Resources on women's issues in his riding. The chief government whip is standing up all of the time on this issue and had a round table organized recently. Strong women have to support vulnerable women, but Speaker, I will conclude with this: It's now more important than ever before that strong men support vulnerable women. I urge all of the men in this chamber to support this legislation as we move forward as a government in a whole-of-government approach.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** It's now time for questions and response.

**Ms. Suze Morrison:** Thank you to the ministers collectively for their presentations.

To the member across: When you said we need a pact in this House so that we do not ever look the other way, I would challenge back to you that your government can't just pick and choose when you're willing to not look away from gender-based violence. Where was this passion to not look away from ending violence against women when your government cut 30% of the funding for rape crisis centres in this province, or when you slashed legal aid, or when you cancelled the provincial round table on ending violence against women? Where were you looking then? Because it wasn't in the face of women who were experiencing gender-based violence in the province of Ontario.

So, my question to you, Minister, is: Will you live your commitment to ending gender-based violence, restore funding to rape crisis centres, support women's organizations, support legal aid and bring back the round table on ending violence against women?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I'll look to the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues for a response.

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for your question and for being a member of the committee when we were there doing our deputation last week. I'm very proud of this government's anti-human trafficking strategy of \$307 million over five years, and I was very pleased a couple of months ago to announce the recipients of the \$96 million in the community supports fund, as well as the Indigenous-led initiatives fund—some fabulous organizations, 27, in fact, across Ontario. I had the opportunity to meet with many of those organizations as part of our round tables, who were there supporting victims and survivors of human trafficking.

With this five-year strategy, as well as looking at Bill 251, with the intent that there will always be an anti-human trafficking strategy in place in Ontario, we are leaders in Canada. I'm very proud of this government, and we are here to support victims and survivors.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** It's a privilege to be here this morning and take part in the debate. We also had more than one of those roundhouses—not “roundhouse,” but round tables; I guess it was a roundhouse some days—in Sarnia–Lambton. The Minister of Infrastructure now came down there. I had the minister of tourism and sport there at about the same time—recently, anyway—and it was about saving the girl next door, that bill.

Something I want to ask—I'd like to comment on all of us; maybe I will during the day. But something I think we haven't talked a lot about—I think I'll put this question to the Attorney General: I want to know what we're doing in this province, and if there's more that we could do, about the johns who take part in this, the perpetrators. What are we doing to name and shame them? And if we're not doing anything, I think we should be.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** This topic brings out such passion in people, and I 100% agree: We need to be vigilant about not only the people who are preying on the young and the vulnerable and trafficking them, but those who are using them as a service. It is deplorable and despicable, and I would like to take a roundhouse to them, to use your phrase.

I think we need to stay vigilant. We need to talk about both sides of this equation, and we need to put all of our resources into protecting vulnerable people from both sides of that equation. It's something we have to stay vigilant on.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Those who work in addressing the trafficking of Indigenous women and girls point to the root causes of exploitation of Indigenous women, including pervasive racist and sexist stereotypes and the normalization of colonial violence. I'm just wondering how this bill addresses that.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I will turn to one of the ministers—and it happens to be the Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** Look, we all have something to say about it, because you speak a truth, that there are some structural challenges that are there that we need to recognize. We can't just be putting in rules and procedures without recognizing the fundamental problems that are part of this dynamic.

I can tell you that the one thing that we're doing in my ministry is we're working on using technology to get away from some of the re-victimization. I'll give the example of where someone has to fly in on a six-seater airplane with their accused to go to a trial. That would just be horrific to experience that, and that is what's happening, where all of the witnesses and everybody are travelling on the same plane. So, we're trying to use technology to bring things forward, to take down some of those systemic challenges that have been brought up. They go deeper than that, as you've mentioned.

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** It's indeed a pleasure to join in the debate and to see the action that our government is taking on this. It struck me in listening this morning and through the testimony that we heard at committee how quickly the environment changes and how victims of this are groomed.

I was wondering if I could ask the Solicitor General to explain the importance of a legislative requirement for reviewing the strategy on a regular basis, as well as what work might go into that. For example, we are in year 2 of the current five-year, \$307-million strategy. What kinds of conversations are she and other members of the government having to help shape any changes thus far?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Thank you to the member. It's a really important consideration. We know that when Minister Scott and others sat on a select committee that really started to delve into human trafficking, the average age was 14, so that is one of the important reasons that we have to constantly be vigilant as a government, as parliamentarians, to make sure that the legislation that we have in place and the regulations that we have in place are still appropriate.

The consultation is ongoing. Minister Dunlop spoke about round tables that she has held, that Premier Ford has held, and myself, involved in listening to survivor-led organizations, listening to people with lived experience, listening to family members who have been impacted and trying to better understand how we can help them immediately. That's why it's so critically important to have that ongoing update.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Justice for Children and Youth would like to see more resources applied to voluntary services for exploited youths to access in order to leave avoidable exploitative situations. So, Justice for Children and Youth are critical of these resources going to, primarily, police response and of the legislation that is potentially punitive against the victims. JCY highlights how sexually exploited youths are often recruited from child custody and CAS types of environments.

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My question is, if you're placing them back into those kinds of environments, how is that going to help youths trying to escape or get services for child exploitation and child sex trafficking?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I'll recognize the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for that question. In fact, we recognize that children and youth who have been in the child welfare system are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked. That's why we have made amendments to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act to ensure that 16- and 17-year-olds can be temporarily removed if there are suspected incidents of trafficking.

I look to the Minister of Tourism, who gave the example of \$10 gift cards. When we're looking at children and youth who are being recruited—the average age being

13; some are much younger than that—they don't even know it's trafficking at that time. The \$10 gift card, the new purse, the thinking it's your boyfriend doing this: They don't recognize it's human trafficking. If we're able to even temporarily remove them so they recognize that there are supports there in their community—and how to access them. We know that sometimes they return to trafficking, but if they know that supports are there in their community and they're able to access them, then they're more likely to leave trafficking and feel supported.

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

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** During committee we heard concerns from some about the role of police in human trafficking supports. In our government, we understand that law enforcement plays an important role in keeping people safe and holding offenders accountable. Could the Solicitor General explain what role police have in this process, in particular the level of training they receive in this area?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Thank you for raising that important issue. Every new cadet who goes through the Ontario Police College gets a section completely dealing with human trafficking: understanding the signs, understanding the opportunities of where help can happen within their communities. But there's also another piece and that is, frankly, why there are four ministers standing here today to talk on this legislation: the prevention piece. All of those have to be coordinated to ensure that we get this right.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much. The time for debate this morning has ended.

*Third reading debate deemed adjourned.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### CHILD CARE

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** This government's choice not to invest in and prioritize child care is forcing my constituents into a tough spot. A mom in my riding contacted my office because she was struggling. Between helping her kids with their school during the day and going to work at night, she was being stretched thin. The lack of child care spots in London has left her literally sleepless. She's not alone. I have heard from multiple essential and front-line workers in my community who can't find spots, particularly in the east of London. Families, especially moms, are left to decide if they should quit their jobs or pay exorbitant fees for child care.

For months now I've been raising the alarm on the child care crisis in London. Pre-pandemic waiting lists were ballooning. Those wait-lists have only continued to grow. After forced closures and a reduction in staff, child care centres simply don't have the space or staff to accommodate the demand for child care spots in London. In addition to keeping the centres safe by social distancing and keeping their numbers lower, they also have to help kids complete their school requirements. All the while the

government refuses to prioritize child care workers for vaccines.

The folks at the London Child Care Network told me, “I can personally speak to how frustrated I am for the child care profession. Why is it up to child care centres to provide the backup plan? I feel that child care has been so resilient throughout the pandemic and the pressure for our limited resources keeps piling on to the licensed operators and ECEs and child care in Ontario.”

Once again, child care in London is at a breaking point. This government needs to immediately address the ballooning wait-lists. Without it, economic recovery for women and for all will not be possible.

### VISION ZERO

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** As part of its commitment to Durham Vision Zero and road safety, the regional municipality of Durham is currently recruiting high school students from across Durham region to become Vision Zero Youth Network ambassadors.

The Vision Zero Youth Network is a free program that enables selected ambassadors to work with the Teens Learn to Drive team, police services and other partners to close the knowledge gap for young drivers, cyclists and pedestrians, making Durham roads, including those in Whitby, safer. This program also provides many benefits for student participants, such as a \$500 scholarship, hands-on experience and access to mentoring, while earning 40 hours of community service.

Students today can apply to become an ambassador by visiting [teenslearntodrive.com](http://teenslearntodrive.com). I encourage all those watching this morning to do exactly that.

### MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** To the people of Kitchener Centre who are sending me their reasons to invest in mental health care now, I want to say thank you, because everything is not okay. On May 10, I spoke with Helen Fishburn, the CEO of CMHA Waterloo Wellington. They host *Here 24/7*, which is a crisis line for folks experiencing mental health issues. As of May 10, 3,639 people had been stabilized but were now languishing on wait-lists, waiting for help.

I asked Helen who was on that list. She said in the first wave it was seniors who were isolated and lonely. The second wave were youth and post-secondary students who saw their visions of adulthood disappearing before their eyes. And now in the third wave, it's parents who have become “professional jugglers” but who are at a breaking point. Helen said, “In my 20 years, I have never seen it like this.”

What are they asking for? A comprehensive mental health and addictions framework for Ontario. We have to do better because while people are on these wait-lists, the risks of waiting are great. They can fall back into crisis. They can experience different types of coping mechanisms

and the impact of turning to drugs and alcohol to address the anxiety. The layers get deeper for people who are racialized, for people who are homeless and for those who are waiting for culturally responsive care that just doesn't exist.

So today, everything is not okay.

### COVID-19 TESTING

**Mr. Norman Miller:** In an effort to help stop the spread of COVID-19, all four Muskoka chambers of commerce are making rapid antigen testing kits available to small and medium-sized businesses. I want to thank the managers of the Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Hunstville/Lake of Bays and Muskoka Lakes chambers for taking the lead on this initiative. Working with the Orillia chamber, the Muskoka chambers ensured they were among the first to sign up to offer this program to local businesses.

Businesses with 150 employees or less can arrange to get tests for their employees by visiting [www.rapidtest-muskoka.com](http://www.rapidtest-muskoka.com). The program is designed to help detect asymptomatic cases of COVID-19 in workplaces, helping to keep workers, their families and the customers safe.

Businesses can receive a two-week supply with enough kits to test their employees twice a week. If someone tests positive, that individual will be required to leave work, arrange for a PCR test at a COVID-19 assessment site and self-isolate at least until the results of the PCR test are received.

This program is the result of a partnership with the Ontario government, the federal government and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. I want to thank the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Vic Fedeli, for his part in developing this program, and again, I want to recognize the work that the four Muskoka chambers of commerce have put in to make this program available in our area.

### TREATIES RECOGNITION

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch, Speaker.

*Remarks in Oji-Cree.*

This morning I rise to speak about a very important matter that is before the courts, which is treaties. There's a case that involves a clause in the Robinson-Huron Treaty, signed in 1850, that allows for increase of the annuity payable to treaty holders should revenues from resource development generated in their treaty territory allow the crown to increase the annuity.

The annuity was increased once, in 1875, to \$4 per person and has not been raised since. This issue has been raised by these treaty chiefs many times since 1875, with no resolution from Ontario or Canada.

**1020**

Chief Dean Sayers of Batchewana said of this matter, “As a people, this colonial court process is not our preferred resolution to a disagreement about treaty implementation ... in the absence of a negotiation table, we have had to utilize the court system to enforce crown ... obligations.... Based on the evidence presented, the federal

and provincial government and Ontario residents can now understand that the treaty is a sacred agreement that has to be interpreted in a way that serves both parties.

Speaker, treaty relationships should not have to be fought in court. The Robinson Huron Treaty Anishinabek want to move forward with treaty renewal, and Ontario needs to quit being an obstacle in this process. Ontario, honour the treaties.

#### EDUCATION

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Later today, we will be debating my first private member's bill to build a more inclusive and equitable province through the education system.

While we're on this topic, I wanted to take a moment this morning to speak to the importance of quality education in this province. Schools take up a lot of our children's growing space, and it is crucial to ensure our children feel safe, seen and heard. Schools need to be spaces where they can explore their opinions and develop compassion.

While my PMB focuses on the importance of using this space to promote diversity and inclusion, we don't have to stop there. With ever-evolving content and educators able to teach it, schools can provide an incredible foundation for change and progress.

Support and training for education workers is just as important as having quality teaching content. All of our children and communities are at an advantage when our teachers, schools and school boards are supported. But it's no secret that our education workers are feeling abandoned and that they've been voicing their concerns for a long time now.

With the effects of the pandemic on our entire education system, with the ongoing shortage of French teachers and with the systemic barriers that remain for racialized students, it is clear that our education system needs repairing. Every child in this province deserves a high-quality education free of discrimination.

I look forward to discussing this further during today's Bill 287 debate.

#### ONTARIO ARTISTS

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I have to report to this Legislature that music is in the air in Barrie and Innisfil. You may know that CBC Music's Searchlight contest, the hunt for Canada's next undiscovered talent, is on right now, and we have Barrie's own Kat Chabot with her song that she wrote called *Coffee by the Sea*, which residents can vote for.

As well, Innisfil residents can also support Dawn Mucci, who is very well known for Canada's Top Mayor Award. She wrote a theme song for those awards called *Elevate*, with the group *Vibration*.

So, if you're browsing the Internet, you can support those two local artists we've got. It really shows you what happens when the community comes together with music.

But Speaker, there's more. As you know, Barrie's Live Music Show is an online group that's been playing music throughout the pandemic. They've raised over \$100,000

for local charity groups, and most recently, they were part of The 705 fundraiser. The 705 is a recovery hub in Barrie that helps those who are experiencing addiction and alcoholism. It is generously operated by volunteers. I want to name some of those volunteers today: Christine Gordon, Tod Palmer, Jordan Mathias, Samara Whiteman, Mark Rogowski and Brett Mason. And of course, Barrie Councillor Natalie Harris has also been donating her time to help with this particular clinic.

Speaker, I am so proud to represent this community. Please vote and donate to The 705 efforts.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** Right now, a grandmother is calling for help but nobody is coming. She is in a for-profit long-term-care facility, and the few staff working there are spread so thin, residents there just have to wait—wait in soiled undergarments; wait when they are hungry; wait when they are thirsty, sometimes lying there with bedsores that look like shrapnel wounds.

We can fix this. New Democrats have joined advocates in sounding the alarm for years. We have told countless stories here in this chamber of those whose lives were lost and those who are hanging on and still calling for help.

Where is the sense of urgency to fix the system? Our loved ones need help now. The NDP have called for inquiries. We've tabled bills to increase the hours of direct care, bills to take profits out of long-term care, bills to let loved ones see their mothers and grandmothers who are alone there right now—the list goes on and on. But there's just no urgency.

This government, just like the one before, will agree in this House and then let the status quo prevail—a status quo where our loved ones are dying of dehydration; a status quo where the military releases alarming and horrifying reports of inhumane conditions. These are our parents, our grandparents. They raised us, gave us everything. And in their time of need, they are made to live alone and without dignity. During this pandemic, 4,000 of them have died alone in long-term care. Enough is enough.

Liberals and Conservatives have received huge sums of money taken from for-profit long-term-care operators for years to keep this broken system going. It's time to pull the plug on for-profit long-term care. It's time to have the resolve to do the right thing.

Our loved ones are not commodities. They are counting on us right now to fix long-term care in Ontario. We know what needs to be done. Let's do it now.

#### VOLUNTEERS

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I rise today to congratulate the efforts of individuals, businesses and organizations to celebrate heroes young and old in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Angele Bourdeau-Piette and Julia Lucio have partnered to start a GoFundMe campaign to highlight the efforts of local youth to take part in National Superhero Day, held on April 28. Children and their families were required to

wear orange, and Angele and Julia were hoping to give every child a commemorative bracelet. They believe our kids deserve a hero badge, and so do I.

Meanwhile, the local Dairy Queen owner, Nolan Quinn, encourages residents to take part in the “We Stand Behind our Healthcare Frontlines” mural. It has been developed in the solarium seating area of the Dairy Queen, now vacant due to the pandemic. Nolan has enlisted local artist Robbie Lariviere to complete the mural, recognizing the health care heroes of the Cornwall Community Hospital. Community members are encouraged to offer ideas for their visual tributes for the chance of winning a prize.

I wish all involved in promoting the giving residents of Cornwall and surrounding communities as we keep our heads high in support of each other during these challenging times.

## SPORTS AND RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Good morning. More and more families are choosing to plant their roots in southwest Kitchener. In fact, this part of my riding is the fastest-growing community in Waterloo region, which is also one of the fastest-growing communities in all of Canada. As you can imagine, the demand on local recreational amenities has swelled considerably.

A few years back, I met with Kitchener Mayor Berry Urbanovic and Councillor Kelly Galloway-Sealock to discuss plans for a new community park that would include one of the city’s largest playgrounds, turf fields and an aquatic centre that would serve local residents of all ages. As a father of young children—I think a couple of them are actually watching right now, so a “hello” to Maverick and Ryder—I know just how important having a place for them to play close to home is for their well-being, and I was more than happy to add my support to the project. In September, I was proud to help cut the ribbon for the official grand opening of phase 1 of the RBJ Schlegel Park.

But that was only the beginning. Yesterday, I was honoured to join the Minister of Infrastructure and her federal counterpart to announce that \$24 million in funding for the RBJ Schlegel Park aquatic centre was approved, which was nominated for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program by our government. This new aquatic centre will include a new 25-metre pool and multi-use community rooms, where families can stay active together.

It has taken an entire community of hard-working people to get this project done. I’m so happy to see it coming to fruition in Kitchener–Conestoga.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** This morning my first question, once again, goes to the Premier. For months, Ontarians

everywhere, businesses, health experts, everyday working folks, have been pushing for the government to answer basic questions about their COVID-19 response.

Earlier this morning, we called for a full public judicial inquiry into the government’s response to COVID-19. Will the government commit today to calling a full public judicial inquiry into its response to the COVID pandemic?

**1030**

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** We were very quick to ensure that there was a commission of inquiry into long-term care, but obviously we are still in the midst of the pandemic. As I said yesterday, I appreciate that the opposition wants to declare victory and say that it’s over and move to reopening, but our main priority right now is going to continue to be the health and safety of the people of the province of Ontario.

With close to 7.5 million vaccines in people’s arms—great progress, very, very good progress. I’m excited that the numbers seem to be going in the right direction, but it’s not time to declare victory. We’re going to double down and make sure that all of the people of the province of Ontario are safe, so that when we get this behind us, the economy can come roaring back. There will be plenty of time for the members of this Legislature to investigate the progress of the pandemic.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, it is absolutely the right time for this government to commit to doing the right thing, as other governments have already done. This is something that needs to happen here in Ontario, just like it needs to happen in many, many other parts of this world.

This Ford government promised accountability, they promised answers, but their track record shows exactly the opposite of that. They stonewalled their own long-term care commission and refused them the extension that they had asked for because they didn’t want them to be able to do the job necessary. They promised an investigation into long-term-care deaths that were caused by neglect, caused by dehydration, that the Canadian Armed Forces discovered. They’ve ignored expert advice and claimed that they didn’t.

Will the Premier commit today to holding a full public judicial inquiry into what happened with this government’s response to COVID-19?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** As I just said, the Auditor General has taken a look. There was a commission of inquiry as well. There will be plenty of time for, first and foremost, the members of this Legislative Assembly to look at, through its committees, the pandemic before, during and after.

Having said that, I will reiterate that I’m just not on the same page with the Leader of the Opposition when it comes to declaring victory over this pandemic. There is still a lot of work that remains to be done. Huge progress has been made, yes, absolutely huge progress: 7.5 million

vaccines into people's arms and thousands of appointments being booked. That is great news, but the job is not yet done, and for the members of the opposition to suggest mission accomplished—I just simply disagree.

We're going to double down on our efforts to make sure that all Ontarians are safe and that when we put this behind us once and for all, we can put all that we need to into making sure that we unleash this economy like it was before the pandemic.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I fear we're now looking at yet another failure of this Ford government to do the right thing in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have watched as this government has made the wrong decisions. There are lessons to be learned here, and they need to be learned. This government needs to make a commitment to being very transparent and open in public about how this pandemic was managed.

There was a preventable third wave. They walked us right into it because they ignored expert advice and 1,892 more people passed away in the third wave. The long-term-care tragedy is unspeakable: 4,000 people lost their lives. The impacts are going to be felt for decades on families, on businesses, on jobs and on people's mental health.

We need to learn what this government got wrong, including why the Liberals and the Conservatives failed to learn the lessons from the SARS pandemic. We need to ensure that this never, ever happens again in Ontario. So, will this government commit to an independent judicial inquiry? That's the very least that Ontarians deserve.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Of course, we have had an Auditor General's report; we've had a commission of inquiry into long-term care—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** That's right. The Leader of the Opposition and her party were against that commission of inquiry.

There are going to be lessons to be learned, Speaker; of course, there are. It is our responsibility to make sure that we learn from the mistakes of the previous four Liberal administrations that preceded this government. But we were moving very quickly, in fact, because we knew some of the problems that the previous Liberal government left us with, whether it was inadequate testing or whether it was the lowest ICU capacity per capita in North America. We were moving quickly on that.

There are other lessons to be learned too, Mr. Speaker, like why variants of concern had been allowed to come into this country through international borders, why the federal government hasn't worked with us after we've been pleading for months to close down our borders. Are there lessons to be learned? Absolutely.

The first place we can learn those lessons is through the members of this Legislature working through our commitments to do so, Mr. Speaker. That's the first step.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, my next question is for the Premier, but this minister is absolutely wrong in his assessment here.

This question is now to the Premier. It's regarding the Minister of Health's statement yesterday that a reopening plan is coming soon. We know that this government has a dismal track record of ignoring experts all the way along. In fact, that's exactly what led to the third wave being as bad as it was. Their reopening track record has caused us to be in the third wave and has caused this pandemic to be longer than necessary here in Ontario. It has cost lives. It has cost jobs. It has cost us businesses.

The question is, when will we actually see the plan?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you very much for the question. We have been careful every step along the way, protecting the health and well-being of the people of Ontario.

Emerging from this third wave, even though we're starting to see the numbers go down, we're not in the clear yet. We still have very high numbers in ICU. Today they're down to 735, but that still is very high.

We know that we have to take very careful steps, because the last thing that we want in the province of Ontario is a fourth wave. So, any steps that we may take in the future will be based on sound medical advice from Dr. Williams and from other health experts who are advising us, because we know that we cannot move too quickly. The variants of concern are still out there. Things can rise up very quickly, so we need to take very, very careful steps to emerge from this third wave when the time is right.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Gee, Speaker, that would be a really good change here in Ontario; that would be a really good change. This Premier and this minister have claimed in the past that they have consulted with doctors, that they've listened to the experts. We've heard all of this before, but it doesn't ring true, Speaker.

In November 2020, the government claimed that their colour-coded system was designed by expert advisers. That's what they claimed, that the system was designed by the experts. But the reality shows something completely different. Those very advisers rejected the government plan, as we found out after. They had actually rejected the government plan.

In February, the government ignored the science table advice while claiming that they were following it. In fact, the Premier said, "We've always listened to the chief medical officer and the health team." And the experts say that decision not to listen is exactly what brought us to the devastating third wave that we are still dealing with.

So why would anybody believe the Premier and the Minister of Health now?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Notwithstanding the comments made by the leader of the official opposition, our

government has in the past and always will continue to rely on the advice of Dr. Williams and the other medical experts who are providing with us advice and recommendations. They are reviewing the science data and trends, along with collaborating with local medical officers of health.

They are looking at the indicators such as the epidemiology of the virus, the number of cases, the positivity percentage, the health system capacity, ICU occupancy and general hospitalizations, public health system capacity and, of course, the rate of vaccinations, which I'm very proud to say are now at over 7.4 million vaccines that have been distributed. Fifty-seven per cent of the population of Ontario over age 18 has now received at least a first dose.

1040

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, everyone knows that this Premier, this government, walked us right into the third wave, because at every step, while he was insisting that the expert advice was being followed, those same experts were actually begging the government to change course. As a result, we now have 732 patients in the ICU today. In fact, today we've hit a horrifying milestone, where now over 2,000 more Ontarians lost their lives to COVID-19 in the third wave. Those are parents, those are children—those are children who have been left orphaned—mothers, fathers, wives, husbands. We need to get this right. We absolutely can't trust the Ford government, unfortunately, to do that.

The question is: Will this government commit today to a reopening plan that is actually backed by science and that we can see for ourselves where it has come from, so that people can actually trust the reopening plan? Because we certainly can't trust this government and this Premier to get it right.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Yes.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** My question is to the Premier. Timmins declared a state of emergency on Monday in response to the recent rapid surge of COVID-19 cases, the bulk of them within Timmins itself. The Porcupine Health Unit has called upon this government to recognize Timmins as a provincial hot spot to ensure that vaccines and supplies are readily available for the community. They also need support to enhance capacity for testing and to set up a community isolation centre.

We are now seeing young, healthy individuals requiring hospitalization. This is really, really concerning for northern Ontario.

Will the government provide the support Timmins needs to respond to this surge of cases?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you to the member for the question. Yes, of course we will provide support in any situation where there is a hot spot emerging where

additional resources are needed. We are watching this situation very carefully, and we will provide the supports that are needed to enable the situation to be brought back under control.

But with respect to vaccinations, I can advise that we are receiving over two million vaccination doses this week, that we are going to be able to supply all of the public health unit regions, all 34 around Ontario, with significant volumes of vaccines so that people can be protected—young people and seniors as well and everyone in between.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Back to the Premier: We have to know that the geography of the north and limited resources make our health care system vulnerable, especially in emergencies. Remote and sparsely populated communities are far from health care. People in regions across the north have driven over hundreds of kilometres to get to their vaccines, because it's not getting to all the northern communities equally. Our public health units are doing their best with limited resources.

Now Timmins is in the third-highest number of active COVID cases per capita in Ontario. They need resources. Will you commit to getting those resources to Timmins, what they need so their health care is not overwhelmed, yes or no?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you to the member for the question. Yes, of course we will assist Timmins if they require additional resources in addition to vaccines, if they need more support to deal with any outbreak. We want to make sure that we can supply everyone who wants a vaccine with one.

I would just also refer to Operation Remote Immunity, which was a big success in vaccinating our First Nations people on 31 fly-in communities, as well as in Moosonee. We want to get back to do the second doses as well, as well as to deal with young people ages 12 to 17, who can now be vaccinated with a Pfizer vaccine. We are committed to that, and we are going to be ramping up Operation Remote Immunity to go back again to finish the job.

#### BORDER SECURITY

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Speaker, I continue to talk to frustrated Willowdalers every day, who have made incredible sacrifices over the past year, but they're also very worried. They're worried because of these variants of concern entering Ontario, and we know for a fact that these variants did not originate inside of Ontario's borders. We also know for a fact that the majority of cases of COVID-19 today remain those variants of concern. So my constituents have a right to be worried.

If we look to the example around the world of other jurisdictions and see what they've done, our nation cousins have implemented stricter border policies to stop the entry of COVID-19, and they've had great success. I did read recently, however, that the Prime Minister of the United

Kingdom has come under fire for not restricting travel from international hot spots sooner.

Speaker, my question is to the Solicitor General: Can she share lessons from the UK experience that would be relevant to stopping the spread here in Ontario?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Thank you to the member from Willowdale for continuing to raise this important issue, because it's not going away, and we actually need to deal with it with our federal cousins.

The spread of variants of concern is not just something Ontario is monitoring and raising the alarms about. As the member mentioned, in the United Kingdom, as an example, you cannot enter if you have been in or through any country on their red list 10 days prior. The British Prime Minister has indeed been under fire for not adding some countries to this list sooner. This delay, some have claimed, has caused unnecessary spread of the new variants of concern just as the UK was reopening.

In Canada, we don't even have red lists. We have a couple of blocked countries but, as we know, it takes only two mouse clicks to reroute your flight with a layover in another country to flaunt the rule. In fact, travel sites do it for you.

It's time for our country's Prime Minister to step up with stricter measures at our borders as well.

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

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you to the Solicitor General, because that's exactly what I'm hearing from my constituents—that frustration after putting in a year of sacrifice and affecting their lives in every way imaginable. You would think that our partners in Ottawa would have put in some safeguards to protect our borders by this point, this far into the pandemic, this far into the third wave, but they have not.

Speaker, it's not just international travel. A Maclean's article from last week said, "The virus isn't just flying into Canada. It's also on a criss-crossing tear inside our borders." I think that most Ontarians would agree with that, that more should have been done by our Prime Minister.

Back to the minister: Can the Solicitor General tell us more about the countries on the restricted list for the UK?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Absolutely. The UK actually has 40 countries on their red list. Canada has no countries that stop you from travelling to Canada. We only limit direct flights. The federal government does restrict direct flights from India and Pakistan, but there are no rules against rerouting through other countries. The UK, Australia and New Zealand restrict travel based on where you've been, not what flight you take.

As other countries talk of tightening up travel restrictions, Canada is actually mulling over lifting restrictions along our longest border. Ontario is taking all necessary steps to stop the variants. It's time for our federal government to do the same.

## COLLEGE STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, PEQAB reviewed the twice-delayed application by Charles McVety's Canada Christian College. Conservatives have bent over backwards to help Charles McVety. This fall, in an omnibus bill, they buried legislation allowing him to turn his college into a university that offers arts and science credits.

PEQAB made a decision last night, and while we wait for the minister's response, here's what we know: We know Charles McVety never shied away from using his college platform to attack LGBTQ2S communities, and he never shied away from using his college platform to attack Muslim Ontarians.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Premier: When will this government tell Ontarians that people who spew hate should never run universities?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South and parliamentary assistant.

**Mr. David Piccini:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. Speaker, as we've said from day one, this government understands and respects the independent PEQAB process.

It's because of that independent process and because of the educational experts embedded in that process that Algoma University is expanding its educational opportunities in the north for learners in the north. It's because of that independent process that OCAD University in downtown Toronto is expanding opportunities for students in the arts, embracing new challenges, embracing new learning techniques. It's because of that independent process that we've seen Seneca pivot to offer programming for in-demand labour market needs. And it's because of that independent process, regardless of who applies, that we've ensured a high quality of education in this province.

We will always, as we said from day one, respect the independent educational advice from the PEQAB committee.

1050

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

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Back to the Premier: The McVety's quest to own a university never should have got this far. It never should have come to this. The Premier and this whole government encouraged Charles McVety at every step. They emboldened him enough to think he can build a bigger platform for his hateful rhetoric. As long as Charles McVety supported the Premier, the Premier had his back. In the meantime, the Minister of Colleges and Universities refuses to invest in Laurentian, he won't speak out against McVety's hate and he's leaving post-secondary institutions to fend for themselves during a pandemic.

So, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier: Why won't the government reverse the legislation and stop

wasting precious time and resources on people like his bigoted friend Charles McVety?

**Mr. David Piccini:** It's this government that historically lowered tuition for learners in this province. It's this government that has expanded mental health supports, that stood with our universities and our publicly assisted colleges through the difficulty of this pandemic, providing additional funds to support learners.

Again, it's because of independent processes, independent of political influence—independent processes that have a rigorous review on student freedoms in the PEQAB process, a rigorous review on organizational structure, a rigorous review on student supports, led not by politicians but educational experts. I find it ironic that, all of a sudden, now the member is interested in the PEQAB process. It's that member who wanted politicians to make those decisions.

On this side of the House, as difficult as it is, we will always stand by the independent educational advice of the PEQAB process. We will respect it, and I would encourage the members opposite to do the same.

#### ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** My question is to the Minister of Education. As I have worked to draft my private member's bill that will be debated later on today, I have been hearing from many leaders in my riding and from across the province who have been working tirelessly to fight racism. As elected representatives, it is our responsibility to work towards a truly inclusive province. To this day, there are children in our classrooms who cannot reach their full potential because of systemic barriers obstructing their success.

Your ministry, the Ministry of Education, has an Education Equity Secretariat initiatives branch, but I haven't seen any initiatives lately, even given the important rise in racism incidents over the last year and more. Can the minister provide some information regarding any recent initiatives to address equity issues in our schools?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Obviously, we both have a shared interest in breaking down the systemic barriers that really impede the success of young people in the province. It's why this government made a pretty significant, bold step in de-streaming the new grade 9 math curriculum, which will be unveiled shortly, for the benefit of all children in this province, lifting up the performance of students in Ontario. It's why we've initiated, just last week, an over-\$300,000 investment to counter the anti-Asian racism that is very much on the rise in this province and around the world.

It's also why we took action to end discretionary suspensions of young children, disproportionately impacting racialized, Black and Indigenous children. It's why we've mandated all trustees and senior board staff to undergo human rights training, to build that capacity and that culture within our schools of inclusivity and respect, something that I think the member opposite and I share.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Again to the Minister of Education: The fight against racism obviously needs to be led on multiple fronts, but one of those has to be education. As we work towards a brighter future for our children, we must recognize that giving them tools now to understand equity issues and participate in the development of an inclusive and equitable Ontario is something that we wish for our children.

So, as I am a firm believer that schools are the starting point to a better society, I ask: Does the minister support action to modernize our curriculum and make schools places where our children can learn, and contribute to building a more inclusive and equitable province?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** We certainly agree that this is a priority. It's why we tackled actions to really reduce those barriers, well before the pandemic and during the pandemic. We have urged school boards—and accelerated the collection of race-based data and the public release of it to create accountability. We think we have to understand the problem by measuring it first. It's also why we've ensured that there's anti-racism and anti-discrimination training in all curriculum, mandatory from kindergarten all the way up to grade 12.

One of the, I think, most compelling case studies of supporting racialized children is making sure that they can see themselves reflected in their educators, which is why we abolished regulation 274 to ensure that equity, diversity and, yes, merit lead the way in the hiring of educators in Ontario.

#### PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I'm still going to talk about Willowdale. It has to do with transit this time and an election promise our government made to get Ontarians moving, specifically in the greater Toronto area, where transit has not kept pace with growth. Nowhere is that pain felt more than in Willowdale, which hit its provincial growth targets for 2041; it did that a few years ago, Speaker.

It's finally time to get these subways built, and I'm so happy that Willowdalers got excellent news last week with an announcement that the federal government has committed to funding 40% of the Premier's historic \$28.5-billion transit expansion plan. This is really exciting for Willowdalers, but they need more detail. Can the Associate Minister of Transportation tell us how these transit projects will achieve the promise of addressing the growth in Willowdale?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Speaker, I think you can tell that I can't stop smiling when the member speaks about the subject. A tremendous amount of work has been undertaken to advance the single largest build of public transportation in Ontario's history. I want to thank the Premier for his vision and Minister Mulroney for working so hard to negotiate a great deal for Ontario. It wasn't always easy but she successfully persisted.

The funding commitment confirms the continued construction of our Ontario Line, our Yonge North extension, our three-stop Scarborough subway and our predominantly tunnelled Eglinton Crosstown West extension.

These transit lines will reduce gridlock—which is desperately needed in the GTA and especially right here in Toronto so that people can get to where they need to go and so that goods can move across the province very, very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, this not only means we will be improving the quality of life for people here in the GTA, but we will be injecting the GTA with billions of dollars into our local economy here.

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

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Really, it is excellent news for Willowdalers. Willowdalers are very familiar with gridlock and the challenges associated with that, the challenges associated with overcrowding on the subways. My constituents have been waiting for this news for a long time, and we're almost there.

I've had relatives visit from overseas look at our subway map and—this is decades ago—laugh at it. For a city our size, we do not have enough subway service. That's a fact. So, I'm looking forward to the day where we have a spider web network of subways, and this is an important step towards that.

My question is going to be back to the associate minister. Now that this landmark expansion plan has funding attached to it from the federal government of \$10.7 billion, can the minister tell us how we're going to plan and develop it differently so that these projects will benefit generations to come?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Of course I can. Our plans are centred around building fast, reliable transit, but we also have a focus on building complete communities. Throughout this pandemic, we have spent the last 14 months confined to our immediate neighbourhoods. Having gone through this experience together, we have learned a lot. We have learned about the importance of walkable communities so that you can access everything you need within a 15- to 20-minute walk, whether it's a grocery store or a pharmacy—also, so that you can have easier access to employment centres across the city, so that you can travel to take care of loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, this moment in time has presented us with a great opportunity and we will not waste it. We are going to build transit and we are going to build complete communities.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This question is for the Premier. The city of Toronto's annual employment survey was released this week and the findings shine a light on the absolute devastation our largest city has suffered due to the painful and repeated lockdowns, made longer by this government's failures. The survey recorded a 7.6% decline in total jobs, making it the largest single-year decline since the survey was initiated in 1983. By the end of 2020, a staggering 3,480 businesses had been closed.

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Speaker, the people of Toronto want to know: Why did the Premier repeatedly ignore the pleas for help from small

businesses who were being forced into eviction, gouged by insurance companies and left without the means to replace lost revenue?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the member from Willowdale and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Certainly we recognize that small businesses in this province have been impacted greatly by COVID-19. These are our job creators. This is where these jobs come from. That's why this government, from the get-go, from when COVID-19 began, has introduced a series of measures from the beginning, most recently a grant program that the member opposite voted against. The member has done no favours to these small businesses by voting against every support measure, whether that was hydro reductions or tax reductions, not just to get through the pandemic but to position these businesses for success in the future.

The question to the member is: What has the member voted in favour of to support these job creators? Name one measure the member has voted in favour of supporting small businesses.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, let me tell you: The words of the member opposite are cold comfort to the small business owners who have lost everything this year and to the nearly 120,000 workers who do not have a job to return to. Those businesses are not coming back.

In Davenport, we've lost cherished local businesses, like Wallflower on Dundas West, Starving Artist on St. Clair and Queen West's iconic LGBTQ bar, The Beaver. There's a tide of for lease signs like no one has ever seen before all across this city, and those that have survived up to now are begging you to stop forcing them to jump through hoops to get a small business grant that barely covers their needs.

Speaker, Toronto's economic recovery is absolutely essential to Ontario's economic recovery. Will the Premier finally wake up to that fact and fix this mess?

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Speaker, what I hear is that the member has not voted in favour of any of the support measures this government has introduced—

**Interjection:** Not one.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Not one. But I will also remind the Legislature and the businesses in Toronto that the opposition did not put forward a single amendment through the budgetary process, the official channel through which to suggest further measures to support these small businesses—not one.

So now as we move through—and thanks to the efforts of our health minister, nearly half the population in Ontario has been vaccinated with their first dose. That means hope is indeed on the horizon and we see those brighter days. This government has positioned these businesses for success tomorrow as well, because it's not just about COVID-19—though now the members voted against that as well, Speaker.

But here's the thing for these small businesses: We're going to get through this, and despite the efforts of the opposition, we're going to position you for success. We're busy fighting this virus. We're busy fighting for small businesses. The opposition is simply too busy fighting this government.

### PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** My question is for the Premier. May is Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month. Ontarians living with cystic fibrosis have waited too long for life-changing drugs that could transform their lives. They're available in other countries around the world, but not here. Trikafta is a transformational drug that can treat up to 90% of Canadians with CF. The federal government is poised to end the review and provide recommendations by the end of June.

In England, the National Health Service finalized negotiations with the manufacturer and agreed to fund the drug before regulatory approval. Ontario can do the same, Mr. Speaker. Will the government negotiate with Vertex immediately so that, once approved, this drug can be prescribed to desperate CF patients as soon as possible?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you very much to the member for the question. This is an important issue, I know, to many Ontarians. Trikafta has shown great promise as an effective treatment for cystic fibrosis patients, and this is an important step for CF patients to be able to access new drug therapies such as Trikafta in Canada.

Our public drug programs look forward to continuing their discussions with Vertex as Trikafta moves through the steps in the drug review process, which includes, of course, approval by Health Canada for sale in Canada; a review of the clinical and cost information through a health technology assessment; and, finally, reaching successful pricing negotiations with the pCPA, the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance.

It is working its way through the system. We are doing whatever we can to follow up and to work with Vertex so that these products can be available to cystic fibrosis patients in Ontario.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** My supplemental is for the Minister of Health. Twelve-year-old Camille Rochon from Orléans is one of the many cystic fibrosis patients in Ontario whose life depends on timely access to Trikafta. Now it appears, based on that answer, that Trikafta will be delayed by the same health care red tape that has delayed so many other groundbreaking treatments here in Ontario, that are available in other parts of the world. Every day that passes without access to these medications means more sickness, more hospital visits, and even more death.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier, his minister and his government have the power to get Ontarians with CF affordable access to Trikafta. He could help and the minister could help the vast majority of CF patients have a brighter future.

I know that the minister wants to say yes. So just say yes. Will you ensure that Trikafta is available at an affordable price here in Ontario the moment it receives federal regulatory approval?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you again for the question. Of course we want all of these new drugs to be able to be approved and available for people, and I know that many people in the cystic fibrosis community are looking forward to having this approved. But you will also know that there has to be a process to make sure that we take an evidence-based approach to the approval of these new medications, by funding decisions that consider the clinical effectiveness of the drug, the safety, patient input, affordability and effects on other health services.

Of course, I am as anxious as anyone else is to have these drugs approved because we want to be able to help people with cystic fibrosis lead more normal lives—I know that life is very difficult for them—and I am speaking with my ADM in this area on a regular basis to understand where the system is. Anything that we can do in the Ministry of Health to move things forward, we certainly will do.

### NURSING EDUCATION

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I know our government has been making long-overdue investments into our health care system. These are investments that the previous Liberal government simply failed to make, and these—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will come to order. The member for Ottawa South will come to order.

Please restart the clock. Member for Willowdale.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you, Speaker. These investments into our health care system also include, of course, the education of our future generation of nursing students in Ontario. We've all heard the many stories of Ontarians who wanted to become nurses but were unable to find a program close to home or weren't able to get into a program, even though they were qualified, because of a lack of increased enrolment opportunities. I'm proud that our government has taken the right steps to ensure that this changes, that prospective nursing students have more choices and improved access to excellent post-secondary training.

Through you, Speaker, can the Minister of Colleges and Universities tell us more details about what the government is doing to support the training of more nurses?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Member from Northumberland–Peterborough South and parliamentary assistant.

**Mr. David Piccini:** It's always very exciting to rise in the House to talk about outside-the-box thinking and about leadership that this government is taking to invest in increased nursing spots for our next generation of nurses across our great province. That member is right. This government made a historic \$35-million investment to expand nursing spots in this province.

Speaker, it was the first expansion in nursing seats in over 20 years—20 years, the first expansion in nursing seats. But what does that mean? For fall 2021, that means in our 2021-22 cohort, over 2,000 additional students, of which 1,130 will be practical nurses and over 870 RNs. We reached that number in close consultation with the sector, reaching out proactively, seeking feedback from our partners in the post-secondary sector, asking them how many additional seats they can do. It supports historic investments from this Minister of Health to end hallway health care and deliver better patient-centred care.

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

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I really appreciated that answer, because in Willowdale, our nurses and students appreciate being close to home, being able to study and work close to home, so we look forward to continuing to care for our communities in the right way, which my constituents want to see. This takes those investments.

But I know that we've also committed to establishing a nation-leading four hours of care per resident in long-term-care homes. This is going to take a lot of PSWs as well. We've made significant investments there, by supporting and training up to 16,000 in our private career colleges, publicly assisted colleges and school boards tuition-free.

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I will say I was shocked to see the NDP critic for colleges and universities voice her opposition to the initiative to train 8,000 PSWs at our private career colleges. I was also shocked to see that member vote against the \$4.9 billion to establish the four hours of daily care per resident.

Speaker, through you back to the minister: What is the parliamentary assistant's reaction to the NDP's opposition to training more PSWs?

**Mr. David Piccini:** Speaker, when we sit down with partners in the sector, a commitment we make is to serve everybody in the sector, to work with all partners and leave no stone unturned. So it was deeply, deeply disappointing to see the comments from that member opposite, who would turn her back on our partners who train over 75% of PSWs in this province—8,000 PSWs this government wants to bring into the system, who are so desperately needed to care for our loved ones.

What that member might be interested in learning is that of those 75% PSW graduates, 65% are women and 50% are from racialized and marginalized communities.

On this side of the House, we're going to work with every partner in the post-secondary sector, not driven by ideology, but driven by the need to work and leave no stone unturned to ensure that we deliver better patient-centred care in the province of Ontario.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, we all know this has been a very difficult year for our kids. They are pleading, "Let us play." Unfortunately, the PC government just voted down our motion to safely

reopen outdoor recreational facilities, to boost mental health.

The Premier received a letter from Athletics Ontario urging the government to follow the advice of his own health experts and immediately reopen outdoor sports activities. They wrote, "We cannot overstate the mental health crisis facing our children and youth...."

An Ontario Soccer survey found that without youth soccer, 40% of respondents reported feeling anxiety, stress and worry.

So how is this government responding? The Premier teased that summer camps would be open, but then he disappeared—no plan. On Monday the Minister of Health said, "Today is not the day to reopen outdoor sports." On Tuesday she said, "Today is not the day."

Today is Wednesday. Kids and parents are feeling enough anxiety. They don't need to be held in suspense. When can we expect this government to start listening to them?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** In fact, we do encourage people to be outdoors. We do encourage them to go out and enjoy this wonderful weather that we're experiencing. This is something important for everyone to do, not just children. It improves everyone's mental health to go outside and go for a walk, go for a run, go for a bike ride, do whatever you want to do. The parks are open. We encourage people to use them.

Please go out and enjoy this great weather. That's going to improve everyone's mood, mental health and physical health, by getting out to get some physical activity.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Back to our Premier: Tragically, the devastating impact of social isolation on children's mental health is a full-blown crisis. This government's repeated failure to follow expert health advice has created problems for our kids that will not go away with the end of the pandemic.

In a CBC survey, 92% of Hamilton teachers said that the challenges of this year will have psychological impacts on their students. The team at McMaster Children's Hospital are raising the alarm. They report that the number of youth being admitted after a suicide attempt has tripled this year.

We have seen the devastating consequences of a government that never seems to have a plan. Our kids are not okay. They don't need more empty words. We need a whole-of-government response.

How many kids in crisis is too many before this government will act?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Just before the pandemic struck us last year, we released Roadmap to Wellness, our comprehensive mental health and addictions plan for the province of Ontario, which would provide a continuum of care across the system for people of all ages. We have invested \$175 million extra in that plan, as part of our plan to build over \$3.8 billion over 10 years more into our mental health and addictions plan.

We've also put \$176 million into the mental health and addictions system this year, and an additional \$147 million to immediately expand access to the provincial mental health and addictions system for individuals and families in order to address the issues that many Ontarians are facing during the course of this pandemic. We will continue to do more because we recognize that this pandemic has had significant effects on many people, and we are prepared to deal with that. We know these issues are going to continue long after the pandemic, and we are building up the resources in order to be able to help people through this.

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Roman Baber:** To the Minister of Health: Last Tuesday I suggested to the minister that it's astounding that almost all beds saved by cancelling surgeries are sitting empty. Surgeries of real patients are cancelled to save beds for computer-modelled COVID patients. The minister responded that the hospitals are in fact full, so I went back that afternoon to look at capacity on the day before, May 10.

In Toronto, the hot spot, ICU occupancy was 81%, with the goal of being under 90%. Acute bed occupancy was at 84%, with the goal of being under 90%. And 2,033 of our province's ICU beds were occupied. That's 84% ICU occupancy. In Burlington, 252 beds were occupied out of 335 beds. That's 75%. In Ottawa, ICU capacity on May 10 was 66%. I can go on and on.

My question to the Minister of Health: She said that the beds are not taken up by the computer models and are not taken up to preserve capacity. She said that the beds were full. Speaker, why did she say our beds were full when the beds were not full and, in some cases, below the stated occupancy goal?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Once again, I can advise the member opposite that the beds are full. We're still requiring patient transfers from one hospital to another in order to balance that load. We still have 735 people in our intensive care units. We are still dealing with the effects of this pandemic.

However, I would also wish to advise that directive number 2, which restricted non-emergency surgeries, has been amended to allow hospitals, as long as they fall within the guidelines set out by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, to start doing day surgeries, to start working on that surgical backlog. This is good news for the people of Ontario, and I know there are many hospitals that are going to be anxious to start with these surgical procedures and surgeries as well.

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

**Mr. Roman Baber:** Thank you for that. In fact, last Tuesday I asked the minister why we cancelled surgeries of ambulatory patients. It made completely no sense. They don't need a bed. So, thank you for restarting those.

Speaker, if the beds are full, then maybe the minister can tell us what the occupancy numbers are. She is the Minister of Health; she can tell us. What is the occupancy

in Toronto today? What is it historically? What's the CCSO for Ontario today? What is it historically? If I'm wrong or misleading this House, I stand to be corrected.

But there is, in fact, a segment of beds that is full: It's youth mental health beds. Yesterday the CBC reported that CHEO is overwhelmed by the increase in the number of young people needing mental health care, and CHEO is looking to send teenage patients to adult hospitals. CHEO says that they've never had to do anything like this before and that 50% of all patients visiting the ER now are seeking mental care. So, it appears some beds are full. They're full with kids and teenagers suffering from the mental health pandemic created by this government.

Will the minister acknowledge the catastrophe caused by her lockdown policies on the mental health of kids and teenagers?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Well, certainly, we know that there has been an effect on the mental health of everyone in Ontario as a result of this pandemic. But we've needed to take the steps that we've had to take with respect to the lockdown to save people's lives. That's why we're doing it: to save people's lives.

We recognize the mental health effects. We are dealing with that. We're putting another \$175 million into the system this year. We've already put an additional \$147 million in to deal with these issues. They will continue post-pandemic. We are prepared to put whatever resources we need into that to deal with these things.

But there's no question that this lockdown was necessary in order to stop the spread and save people's lives.

### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** My question is to the Premier. On Monday health units learned, with one day's notice, that COVID-19 vaccine eligibility was opening up to everyone 18 years of age and over. Not surprisingly, yesterday in London demand far outstripped supply, with thousands of Londoners jamming the phone lines and the website to vie for limited appointments.

Middlesex-London's medical officer of health, Dr. Chris Mackie, said in no uncertain terms that our health unit has nowhere near enough vaccines for all the people in the new group. Did this government do any consultation at all with local health units so they would be prepared for the sudden change in eligibility?

*Interjections.*

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

The Minister of Health.

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**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Yes, in fact, we are in regular contact with the medical officers of health across this province. We have conversations with them, Minister Jones and I, two or three times per week, so they were very well aware of this change well in advance of when it was coming. They are also well aware of the numbers of vaccines coming into their area.

We can only make appointments for the vaccines that we have, and this is going to be subject to supply on an

ongoing basis. We know that we have a large number of supplies that are coming in during the month of May and into June. We don't have the figures post-that, but we can only book for where we have vaccines. I think the fact that we had over 277,000 people call in just yesterday, when the criteria expanded to age 18, indicates that people are anxious to receive their vaccines, and we're very grateful to the people of Ontario for taking these up.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** The Middlesex-London Health Unit is ready to add appointments as soon as vaccines are available. Limited supply in mass clinics and in pharmacies has meant that London's vaccination rate is trailing the province's.

Despite Dr. Mackie's efforts to secure a reasonable supply of doses to vaccinate Londoners aged 18-plus, he tweeted on Monday night:

"A last-ditch effort this afternoon has failed to procure additional vaccine supplies for tomorrow's opening to adults 18-39. This means we have 24K appointments for ~135K people."

"I'm sorry in advance for the frustrating situation of limited vaccine supply."

Speaker, London was overlooked in the initial pharmacy vaccination program and currently has no pharmacies administering vaccines. Why is this government continuing to deny Londoners our proportionate share of doses?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** First of all, Dr. Mackie is doing a wonderful job in London with the rollout of the vaccines. He's an important member of the team of 34 local public health unit leaders who are rolling them out. But London is receiving its proportionate share of vaccines.

We've reverted back to 100% distribution among the 34 public health units based on population, based on risk, and we will be supplying those vaccines to Dr. Mackie and to his team as soon as we receive them. They have a significant allocation because of the 2.2 million doses that we're receiving this week, and we will continue to make sure that London receives the vaccines it needs to make sure that the population can be vaccinated.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios:** To the Premier: The federal government's Public Health Agency of Canada has stated that their desire is to see Canadians go back to outdoor activities, but only after 75% of those eligible for vaccines have received at least one dose, something Ontarians were permitted to do last summer before vaccines were offered. The federal government's public health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, has said that indoor sports, family gatherings and attending college and university should resume only after 75% of those eligible are fully vaccinated. In Ontario, less than 3% have been fully vaccinated, and Justin Trudeau has said the US border will only open after 75% are fully vaccinated.

Is this Ontario government basing its social restriction rules on the federal government's recommendations of

75% of the population being vaccinated before Ontario's draconian restrictions are lifted, or does it have its own figure that it's working towards that I can reveal to the people of Ontario?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Of course, we listen to the recommendations of Health Canada, to the recommendations of NACI. We also listen to the recommendations of the medical advisors advising our Chief Medical Officer of Health on when this would be a safe time to exit the lockdown strategy.

There will be more information available very soon with respect to this, but we need to factor in a number of issues, not just the number of vaccines administered—the level of hospitalizations, ICU capacity, the R levels. There are a number of factors that need to be considered, and they come from a variety of sources.

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

**Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios:** In the United Kingdom, society has reopened with 30% of the population being fully vaccinated. South of the Canadian border, where 37% of the population has been fully vaccinated, things have reopened. Yet in Ontario, we don't have a road map or a goal from this government as to when people can expect things to get back to normal.

Is it 30% full vaccination, 37% full vaccination, or is it what the federal Liberal Trudeau government wants, 75%? What figure is the Ontario government working off of? And if it is the 75% figure, what is the scientific reason for the figure being more than double that of other jurisdictions like the United Kingdom?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** We are developing an Ontario guideline that will allow us to safely exit the lockdown when the time is right, because the last thing we want is a fourth wave. We have to avoid that at all costs. It would be devastating for the people of Ontario and for the businesses of Ontario.

We know that we need to proceed very, very cautiously. That is what we will do, but it will be based on the medical evidence, the clinical data and the recommendations of Dr. Williams and the other medical experts who are advising us.

#### CANADIAN NATIONAL EXHIBITION

##### ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

**Mr. Chris Glover:** My question is to the Premier. The city of Toronto announced last week that the CNE would be cancelled for the second year in a row. This is only the third time in its 142-year history that the CNE has been cancelled. The other time was during World War II. With a second year of revenue lost, the city has said that provincial government support is needed or the CNE may close forever.

We all know how important the CNE is. For me, my parents took me, I took my kids, and my grandparents took my parents. This is a story that's repeated again and again

across this province. It has a 142-year history. It's an iconic event in the province of Ontario.

My question to the government is: Will the government commit to providing the financial support to make sure the CNE restarts in 2022, or will the government add to its legacy the permanent loss of the CNE?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I know that the minister, Minister MacLeod, has been working very closely with all of the representatives in that sector, Mr. Speaker.

It's not just the CNE, of course. It has been a significantly difficult time for many of the people in our tourism and hospitality sector. This is a sector that is, as the member has highlighted, so important—not only to the city of Toronto, but when it comes to jobs and economic activity, this is an incredibly important sector: hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars' worth of activity. That is why the Minister of Finance brought in a program to support some of the industries within that sector, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, there is more work to be done on that. There were a lot of lessons learned, in particular in Toronto, coming out of SARS on how long it took that sector to recover. The minister, Minister MacLeod, understands this and she is already working closely with that sector, because without the revival of the hospitality sector and the arts and culture sector in the province of Ontario, this economy will not roar back. It is too important to us and we will make sure that there are supports there for them.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'm glad to hear the government member recognizes the importance of the event and tourism industry to Ontario's economy and to our culture. They've also said a lot of words about the importance of small businesses, but they let 25,000 small businesses go bankrupt in 2020 before they finally introduced the Ontario Small Business Support Grant.

The plight of the CNE is just one example of the major events in my riding of Spadina–Fort York whose futures are in jeopardy. The Honda Indy, Luminato, North by Northeast, the Toronto Jazz Festival and so many other events attract millions of visitors to Toronto's waterfront each year, but are at risk today.

Will the government support the event industry in Ontario, or will it allow iconic events like the CNE to die like so many other small businesses and local events during this pandemic?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, obviously this is too important a sector for us not to all pay very close attention to. It's not just the city of Toronto, Mr. Speaker. A plug for my own hometown: the strawberry festival in Stouffville has been something that has brought so much economic activity to the downtown of Stouffville. It has been cancelled for the last year and this year coming forward. I know that in Barrie the Elvis Fest is something that I loved and enjoyed.

Across the province, there are small festivals which might not make the headlines like the CNE but are so

important to the hospitality industry and to the economies of small towns, villages and communities across this province. It's not just the CNE; it is hundreds of thousands of jobs, billions of dollars' worth of economic activity, and we are not going to lose that. We are a government that wants this economy to come booming back, and the arts and culture and attractions are an important part of that.

#### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**Mr. John Fraser:** Just before the end of question period, I would like to ask the Minister of Health about AstraZeneca doses. There's a lot of controversy right now about those doses sitting in freezers and that they're not going to be used and that some of them will expire.

What I think Ontarians need to know, especially those who received AstraZeneca and those who are concerned about wasting those vaccines—which we all agree would be the wrong thing to do. Can the minister let us know: Is there a plan? Will there be some information coming to us to let us know what is going to happen with those AstraZeneca doses that are in freezers right now?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you very much for the question. This is an important issue, I know, to many people who have received a first dose of AstraZeneca. I'm one of those as well. However, we are waiting to hear from Dr. Williams on the effectiveness and any concerns that are still outstanding with respect to AstraZeneca.

We do have some—we don't intend to waste any of those doses. But what will happen for people with AstraZeneca is either they will receive the second dose of AstraZeneca—and there are indications coming from the UK that the VITTs, the problems with that, on the second dose are much less than with the first dose. In the event we don't proceed with those AstraZeneca doses, also from the UK there is evidence that it can be combined with an mRNA dose, either Pfizer or Moderna.

We expect that we will have that information from Dr. Williams and the medical team well in advance of any expiry date for those doses. Nothing will be wasted.

#### CORRECTION OF RECORD

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Thanks very much, Speaker. I would like an opportunity to correct my record. I misspoke earlier regarding the loss of life in the third wave. As of today, we've lost 1,911 lives to the third wave and we're tragically close to the grim milestone of 2,000 lives lost in the third wave.

#### CORRECTION OF RECORD

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes, Speaker, just to correct my record: Actually, Elvis Fest is in Collingwood, not in Barrie. There are lots of great things that happen in Barrie, but Elvis Fest is actually in Collingwood.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1132 to 1500.*

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### RETIREMENT HOME JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2021

### LOI DE 2021 SUR LA JUSTICE ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ DANS LES MAISONS DE RETRAITE

Ms. Shaw moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 296, An Act to amend the Retirement Homes Act, 2010 to dissolve the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority / Projet de loi 296, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur les maisons de retraite afin de dissoudre l'Office de réglementation des maisons de retraite.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas care to briefly explain her bill?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Retirement Home Justice and Accountability Act amends the Retirement Homes Act, 2010, to dissolve the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority and provide that certain of its functions will now be performed by the ministry.

### CENTERING YOUTH IN PANDEMIC RECOVERY ACT, 2021

### LOI DE 2021 POUR METTRE LES JEUNES AU CENTRE DE LA RELANCE APRÈS LA PANDÉMIE

Ms. Stiles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 297, An Act respecting children, youth and young adults and the COVID-19 pandemic recovery / Projet de loi 297, Loi concernant les enfants, les jeunes et les jeunes adultes, et la relance après la pandémie de COVID-19.

**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):** Will the member for Davenport briefly explain her bill?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to my co-sponsor, the MPP for University–Rosedale.

The Centering Youth in Pandemic Recovery Act builds upon the motion I first tabled for debate here in March and calls on the government to recognize the disproportionate impact this pandemic has had on children and youth—from education to employment to mental health.

This bill will establish a post-pandemic child and youth action plan created in consultation with youth themselves, and will create a COVID-19 recovery youth secretariat to ensure that the needs of children, youth and young adults are front and centre in every step of the government's recovery plan. A new standing committee will ensure accountability and that our collective words result in real action.

Speaker, a strong recovery for Ontario depends on the social and economic well-being of this next generation. With serious coordinated interventions, we can build a brighter future for all of us.

### ABUSE PREVENTION WEEK ACT, 2021

### LOI DE 2021 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA PRÉVENTION DES MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS

Mr. Mantha moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 298, An Act to proclaim Abuse Prevention Week and to establish an Abuse Prevention Framework Advisory Committee / Projet de loi 298, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la prévention des mauvais traitements et constituant un comité consultatif du cadre de prévention des mauvais traitements.

**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 Algoma–Manitoulin to briefly explain his bill.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Charmaine Loverin, this is for you.

The bill enacts Abuse Prevention Week Act, 2021.

The act proclaims the week beginning on the first Sunday of October in each year as Abuse Prevention Week. The act establishes an abuse prevention framework advisory committee to provide recommendations to the Minister of Education, and requires the Minister of Education to issue curriculum guidelines respecting abuse prevention in accordance with the committee's recommendation. The curriculum is required to be taught during Abuse Prevention Week.

Thank you, Charmaine.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** I rise to recognize May as Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. This is a month for

all Ontarians to better understand the historical and existing root causes of sexual assault, support survivors, and work together to prevent sexual assault, including human trafficking and child sexual exploitation.

As I have told this House before, the silence and secrecy that often still shrouds sexual assault is an issue for us all. This silence is detrimental to the health of survivors, who often feel they can't talk about their experiences or reach out for help, and this secrecy is detrimental to society as a whole. It limits our understanding of a major social problem in our midst, delays the search for solutions, and prevents survivors from receiving support.

Reducing sexual violence is an issue for each and every Ontarian—and I am proud of how our government is working with many groups to make this a reality.

In Canada, one in three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime; the same is true for one in six men. Women are three times more likely to be stalked and four times more likely to be a victim of intimate partner violence. People between the ages of 15 and 24 experience the highest rates of sexual assault.

And some Ontarians are at greater risk of experiencing sexual violence. These populations include Indigenous women, racialized women, newcomer women, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and women with disabilities.

This is particularly timely to raise, as Monday was the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. Violence that is committed towards these individuals is significant.

Everyone deserves to live free of assaults and harassment.

For too long and in too many jurisdictions, our society has blamed the victim in sexual assault cases. More and more, our society is beginning to understand that these assaults take place from a position of power and entitlement. They are part of a long and complicated history that has seen women's sexuality as fair game for aggression, harassment, confinement, sexual exploitation, violence and even murder. Simply put, sexual assault is about a criminal perpetrator seeking power over another person. Survivors have every right to pursue, if they choose to do so, the prosecution of these individuals and ensure they are never in a position to reoffend, and our society has every obligation to do all it can to prevent these assaults and support survivors in every way possible.

One area I'm particularly proud to see movement in supporting those who come forward is at post-secondary institutions. The Minister of Colleges and Universities, Ross Romano, put forward proposed regulations earlier this year that focus on protecting complainants from irrelevant questioning or repercussions when reporting incidents of sexual violence. All three of my daughters are in university right now. If any one of them were to be assaulted, they should not be scared to report the incident, and they shouldn't be blamed for someone else's disgusting actions. These regulations would help the habit of blaming the victim and encourage more individuals to come forward about their assaults. As a parent, that brings me a lot of relief.

The challenges of life during the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the risk of all forms of violence against women—sexual assault, sex trafficking and domestic violence.

That's why our government moved quickly to boost support for women facing a heightened risk of violence due to the pandemic. Among several other measures, we announced our \$40-million COVID-19 Residential Relief Fund to help address increased residential costs experienced by service providers. This includes emergency shelters that support women and their dependents who are experiencing gender-based violence and residential sites for survivors of human trafficking.

#### 1510

Our 2021 budget includes an additional \$2.1-million investment over three years to expand victim and sexual assault services in underserved communities, expand free legal support services for survivors of sexual violence across the province, and improve collaboration across the sector to provide seamless supports to victims and survivors. This is on top of the \$3.6 million from our 2020 budget for rural and remote communities.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on Ontario's most vulnerable, including women and children fleeing violence. This is why we're working to increase access to safe and affordable housing and to provide supports to people experiencing homelessness during COVID-19.

To help support victims of domestic violence and survivors of human trafficking find and maintain affordable housing, our recent budget also includes an investment of \$18.5 million over three years in the Transitional Housing Support Program.

Overall, this year, our government is investing more than \$172 million in supports for survivors and for violence prevention initiatives. We fund vital initiatives like emergency shelters, counselling services, 24-hour crisis lines, safety planning, and transitional housing supports in both urban and rural areas—because violence against women knows no boundaries.

Speaker, one of the more deplorable developments in recent years has been the dramatic rise in human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Our government has zero tolerance for these despicable crimes. I want to thank the many individuals and organizations in Ontario who have helped us get to where we are today in terms of raising awareness about this issue and providing supports for victims and survivors. This includes organizations like Covenant House, Project iRise, the Ontario Native Women's Association, YWCA Niagara, #ProjectMapleLeaf and many, many more. After years of operating in the shadows, a bright light is being shone on these horrific crimes and the victims and survivors who need our help. This growing awareness is a positive development and one that we must take full advantage of. In the spirit of Sexual Assault Prevention Month, now is not the time to let up; rather, it is a time to double down on our efforts to protect our young people and prevent this crime.

This is the path we are following in Ontario.

Last year, our government released a five-year, \$307-million anti-human trafficking strategy. This strategy is a comprehensive action plan to combat human trafficking and child exploitation focused in four key areas: raising awareness of the issue; protecting victims and intervening early; supporting survivors; and holding offenders accountable. Our strategy is the largest total investment in dedicated anti-human trafficking supports and services in Canada and is a major step forward in our fight against human trafficking.

Despite the pandemic, we have made swift progress in delivering on our strategy over the last year. We have increased services to support victims and survivors of human trafficking across Ontario, investing a total of \$96 million in these programs over five years. We have launched tools and resources to help raise awareness among children, youth and Indigenous communities. We have reinvested cash and proceeds seized from criminals to help fight human trafficking, and provided grants for anti-human trafficking projects delivered by community police services.

Most recently, we introduced, through the Solicitor General, the Combating Human Trafficking Act, new proposed legislation that, if passed, hopefully, here today, will better protect children and youth, support victims and survivors, and increase tools to hold offenders accountable. This proposed legislation offers a multi-faceted approach to combatting human trafficking, including a requirement that all future governments maintain an anti-human trafficking strategy and support a sustained, long-term response to combat human trafficking and child sexual exploitation. If passed, this would be the first legislation of its kind in Canada. This would mean that any government, regardless of political stripe, would be required to continue working towards eliminating human trafficking and child sexual exploitation in this province and supporting victims and survivors. Our government is determined to fight this crime everywhere—in the Legislature, on the front lines, in our schools and courtrooms, and in the support we extend to survivors to help them rebuild their lives.

My message today, during Sexual Assault Prevention Month, is that we're making progress when it comes to raising awareness of sexual assault, supporting the victims and survivors, and prosecuting offenders, but there's always more to do. Let's use this month of May to build the conversation about sexual assault and protect Ontarians and their communities from this horrible crime.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** I am truly honoured and feel quite blessed, actually, to be speaking about Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

Just before I came into the chamber, I was looking at my door in my office. I have a sticker there that says "I Believe Survivors" and another that says "Break the Silence on Men's Violence." Both of those stickers were given to me by the Male Allies in Waterloo region.

It is so important for us to take seriously what is happening on university and college campuses right now, not just because it's Sexual Assault Prevention Month, but

because there was a commitment made at the tail end of the Liberals' time in power to post-secondary students to actually address sexual violence on campus. There were many questions about whether they were truly committed, because the investments weren't included alongside the legislation that required post-secondary administration to do the work, to start collecting the data and address the issues.

Under the Conservative government, however, we seem to be in even murkier waters. While we're standing here and acknowledging Sexual Assault Prevention Month, at the University of Toronto we are finding out that the minister is holding up the process to provide the data results on sexual assaults on campuses that were required by the legislation. And because we're holding up those results, that means that the prevention work—which is literally the point of us speaking about this in the House—is not able to happen. There are 20,000 students on that campus who provided their input for this important survey, and there are 20,000 students whose data we need to look at to find out what that experience of sexual violence looks like on campus, and there are 20,000 students who are waiting on this government to act.

The associate minister said there has been progress, that we're raising awareness, that we have to have more than conversations, and I say yes; I totally agree. Release the data. Let us create prevention opportunities on post-secondary campuses.

I say yes, we've done a lot of raising of awareness. Those stickers are not just stickers that came to me; there were Male Allies on university campuses in Waterloo region who were doing the work to ensure that men knew the consequences of perpetuating rape culture—things that nobody would talk about—that teachers and educators knew exactly what they could do to intervene. It's why bystander training became so important and integral on university and college campuses, not just in Waterloo region but across the province. But a lot of that is being done despite the government.

What I would like to see in May, in order for us to all stand together and address the root causes of sexual assault on university campuses and in our communities, is action, legislation that embeds intervention protocols, that gives resources to the experts in the community to address what's needed by survivors that actually centres survivors, because that's what they're asking for.

They're not asking for us to stand up in the chamber and say, "We're going to keep talking about sexual violence on campuses" or "We're going to keep talking about sexual violence in the community." They're asking for culturally responsive mental health supports. They're asking for rape crisis centres to be funded adequately to be able to do their job. They're asking for Male Allies programs to not have to rely on piecemeal funding to do the important work. They're asking for real action. They're asking for real change.

We have an opportunity to do that. That's part of why we are elected—not just to pay attention to the month and stand up and make statements about the month, but to

actually build legislation on that month, to think through what that intervention can look like, to actually invest public dollars in doing the work to address the root causes of sexual violence and sexual assaults in community. I think we can do it because everybody in the chamber is allied in not wanting more sexual violence in community. We've all heard the minister speak of that. So what I ask in this month of May is that we act collectively, collaboratively and in a way that is survivor-centred.

1520

## PETITIONS

### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I have a petition here I'm presenting on behalf of Rhonda Moscoe. It reads as follows:

"Stop Ford's Education Cuts.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Doug Ford's new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

"Whereas the changes will mean thousands fewer teachers and education workers and less help for every student;

"Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take at least four of their classes online, with as many as 35 students in each course;

"Whereas Ford's changes will rip over \$1 billion out of Ontario's education system by the end of the government's term; and

"Whereas kids in Ontario deserve more opportunities, not fewer;

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

"Demand that the government halt the cuts to classrooms and invest to strengthen public education in Ontario."

I strongly support this petition. I'm going to affix my signature and table it with the Clerks.

### TUITION

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** I have a petition entitled "Support Our Students: Stop Cuts to OSAP.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario has the highest tuition rates in Canada, lowest per-student funding from the province and highest student debt, and the government's changes will only make the situation worse;

"Whereas removing the interest-free six-month grace period means students will end up paying more, and are pressured to pay their loans even before finding a job or starting a career;

"Whereas the Conservatives' decision to cancel grants and force students to take loans instead is another barrier to college and university;

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

"Direct the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to reverse the recently announced OSAP cuts, protect the existing tuition grants and reinstate the six-month interest-free grace period after graduation."

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

### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I have an important petition here called "Stop Ford's Education Cuts."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Doug Ford's new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

"Whereas the changes will mean thousands fewer teachers and education workers and less help for every student;

"Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take at least four of their classes online, with as many as 35 students in each course;

"Whereas Ford's changes will rip over \$1 billion out of Ontario's education system by the end of the government's term; and

"Whereas kids in Ontario deserve more opportunities, not fewer;

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

"Demand that the government halt the cuts to classrooms and invest to strengthen public education in Ontario."

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

### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the greenbelt protects farmland, communities, forests, wetlands and watersheds. It also preserves cultural heritage and supports recreation and tourism in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been, and continues to consult publicly on how best to protect and grow the greenbelt; and

"Whereas this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to grow the greenbelt and protect Ontario's environmental, groundwater, and agricultural resources for future generations; and

"Whereas the government has committed to adding, expanding and further protecting urban river valleys, and increasing the greenbelt's footprint in urban areas; and

"Whereas in 2017, the previous Liberal government carved up the greenbelt 17 times, removing 370 acres of land for their development buddies; and

"Whereas by announcing its intention to expand the greenbelt protection of critical water systems in Ontario, the province has indicated an important path forward for extending and enhancing the unique benefits of the greenbelt;

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

“To fulfill the latest budget commitment to complete the largest expansion of the greenbelt since its creation in 2006.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to the page.

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** I have a petition here for the assembly.

“Don’t Increase Class Sizes or Cancel Full-Day Kindergarten.

“Whereas the vast majority of parents, students, and educators support smaller class sizes and the current model of full-day kindergarten and want the best education possible for the students of Ontario; and

“Whereas larger class sizes negatively impacts the quality of education, reduces access to teaching resources, and significantly diminishes teacher-student interactions; and

“Whereas the impact of larger class sizes will be particularly detrimental to students who need additional support; and

“Whereas Ontario has an internationally recognized public education system that requires careful attention and the investment to ensure all of our students can succeed;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to reducing class sizes, maintain the current model of full-day kindergarten, and make the necessary investments in public education to build the schools our students deserve.”

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I’m pleased to present this petition on behalf of Luke Wilson.

“Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly: Invest in the Schools Our Students Deserve. Stop the Cuts!

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government has announced over \$1 billion in funding cuts to our schools, which will result in:

“—much larger class sizes in grades 4 to 12;

“—significantly less support for our most vulnerable students, including those with disabilities, special needs, and English-language learners;

“—forcing secondary students to take four online courses;

“—further deterioration of schools already in need of repair; and

“Whereas Ontario already ranked last in per pupil funding when compared to the per pupil funding of 18 northeastern and Great Lakes states and provinces prior to these cuts;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately halt and reverse all funding cuts to our public education system; eliminate mandatory e-learning;

“(2) amend the education funding formula to: increase program and resource support for special education; lower class sizes in kindergarten and grades 4 to 12; and increase school boards’ capacity to deliver front-line services by paraprofessionals;

“(3) support the development of an Ontario-wide ‘state of good repair standard’ for all publicly funded schools so that these public assets are safe, healthy, well-maintained buildings that provide environments conducive to learning and working;

“(4) establish an evidence-based review of the education funding formula every five years to determine its effectiveness in supporting high-quality public education.”

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

#### FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I will affix my signature.

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I’m pleased to present another petition related to education. It was provided by Sally Sparrow.

**1530**

It reads as follows:

“Don’t Increase Class Sizes or Cancel Full-Day Kindergarten.

“Whereas the vast majority of parents, students, and educators support smaller class sizes and the current model of full-day kindergarten and want the best education possible for the students of Ontario; and

“Whereas larger class sizes negatively impacts the quality of education, reduces access to teaching resources, and significantly diminishes teacher-student interactions; and

“Whereas the impact of larger class sizes will be particularly detrimental to students who need additional support; and

“Whereas Ontario has an internationally recognized public education system that requires careful attention and the investment to ensure all of our students can succeed;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to reducing class sizes, maintain the current model of full-day kindergarten, and make the necessary investments in public education to build the schools our students deserve.”

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

#### FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I will affix my signature and pass it to the Clerk.

#### FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

**Mr. Mike Harris:** This is a very important petition, and I’d love to read this into the Legislature.

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

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

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

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

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

Once again, I wholeheartedly support this petition, and I affix my signature.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING ACT, 2021

#### LOI DE 2021 SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE LA TRAITE DES PERSONNES

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

Bill 251, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in respect of human trafficking matters / Projet de loi 251, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les questions de traite des personnes.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I rise today, as the MPP for London West, to lead off the third reading debate, on behalf of the official opposition, on Bill 251, the Combating Human Trafficking Act. It is truly an honour. For some time in the NDP caucus, I served as women’s issues critic, and this, I believe, is at least my fourth opportunity to participate in a debate about human trafficking.

I want to acknowledge the work that was done by my colleague across the way, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, to bring this issue forward.

Certainly, we saw some progress under the Liberal government, and now we have legislation that is being brought forward by the Ford Conservatives.

I want to also acknowledge my colleagues on this side of the House who have participated in the legislative process on this bill. My colleague the member for Toronto–St. Paul’s, as women’s issues critic now for our caucus, led off second reading debate on this bill. Many of my colleagues have already spoken to this bill at second reading, and others of my colleagues participated in the committee process on this bill last week.

I want to reference the remarks that were provided by my colleague the member for Toronto–St. Paul’s in her second reading debate on this bill, because she provided important context that we must keep in mind when we’re addressing the issue of human trafficking and looking at it from an intersectional gender equity lens. She talked about the need for an anti-racist and anti-oppressive feminist framework in looking at this issue, and she spoke passionately about her own experience as a survivor of sexual violence and as a Black queer woman—a member of two communities that are disproportionately targeted by police violence and also by traffickers.

Today, because the official opposition is maintaining cohorts as a COVID-19 safety measure, none of my colleagues who have already been involved in the legislative process on this bill are here to participate in the debate, so it is my honour to carry this bill forward.

I’m going to be offering some comments on the amended bill, as it reflected the input that was received by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

I do want to express my sincere gratitude to all of those who took the time to appear before the committee or to provide written input, and to respond to questions that

were asked by members of the committee. For those of you who are watching today, if any of you participated in that committee process, your participation certainly helped strengthen our democracy, even if you don't see what you were hoping to see reflected in the bill before us today.

Speaker, human trafficking is a despicable and odious crime. It robs those who experience trafficking of their freedom and their rights. It denies them autonomy and agency. It targets the vulnerable and marginalized and leaves them traumatized and stigmatized, often reluctant or even unable to seek help.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of human trafficking, especially for young people who are spending hours and hours online and who are at greater risk of being lured by online traffickers. Of course, the pandemic has also to some extent changed the nature of the exploitation that is experienced by trafficked women and girls, with a shift to more online forms of exploitation.

Speaker, who are these trafficked women and girls in Ontario? There was a study released by the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking the same day or just the day before the government tabled its legislation. That study was called Human Trafficking Corridors in Canada, and it shed some light on some evidence about the experience of those who are trafficked. This was a qualitative research study that involved interviews with 20 law enforcement officials and 49 service providers. The study found that most of the victims and survivors of trafficking whom they worked with were under the age of 35, with ages ranging from as young as 12 to as old as 50—although I don't consider that old anymore. The vast majority were women and girls, most often aged 18 to 24. Only half of the interviewees indicated that they had had interaction with a victim or a survivor of human trafficking who was under the age of 18.

#### 1540

These law enforcement officials and service providers were asked to identify some of the common characteristics that they noted among the people whom they worked with. Certainly, there were some common indicators:

- many of these women and girls had prior or current involvement with the child welfare system;

- many were living in, or had prior experience living in, poverty;

- many were experiencing homelessness and/or precarious housing;

- many had a history of substance abuse or addictions issues; and

- many had a history of trauma, abuse and/or domestic or sexual violence.

This reflects findings in the research that have been fairly consistent over the last period of time that an awareness has been raised of the scourge of human trafficking in Canada.

A report on sex trafficking in Winnipeg also identified common factors that were quite similar for those who were experiencing sex exploitation: poverty; homelessness; precarious housing; the legacy of residential schools and

the continuation of colonialism and racism; the lack of stability and being placed in multiple care homes; childhood physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse; sexism; gender discrimination and discrimination against two-spirit/transgendered people; generational sexual exploitation; and effects of low self-esteem.

There was another study out of York region, closer to home, by the Women's Support Network of York Region that talked about the importance of understanding social location and its impact on women's economic independence, victimization by crime, and safety. They said that having this understanding is integral to the phenomenon of human trafficking. Again, they cited specific factors that make women more vulnerable to trafficking. They can be social, including gender inequality, colonial exploitation, poverty, lack of access to education, and restrictive immigration policies. They can be economic—the supply and demand for labour in many sectors. They can be political—situations resulting in displaced persons or refugees.

That report goes on to state that “different women and girls are targeted for and experience human trafficking differently. A woman's race, socio-economic status or age affects her level of risk for being targeted for trafficking and sexual exploitation, her safety concerns, her community support system, as well as resources available to her should she consider exiting a situation of trafficking.”

Speaker, in all of this, I want to reinforce the importance of recognizing that women are more vulnerable to trafficking because women are more likely to be poor. Poverty is one of the clearest risk factors for trafficking, and that's particularly the case for immigrant and Indigenous women.

There was a study by Public Safety Canada that found Indigenous women account for almost half of all victims of trafficking, although they represent only 4% of Canada's total population.

So trafficking is experienced very differently depending on who the survivors or victims of trafficking are.

What all of these studies tell us is that to effectively combat human trafficking, you need to deal with root causes. You need to look at how to prevent making women and girls vulnerable to being trafficked. You need to ensure that the child welfare system doesn't itself become a pipeline to trafficking. You need to increase social assistance rates so that being on Ontario Works or ODSP doesn't become a life sentence to poverty. You need to remove barriers to employment and training programs, increase access to educational opportunities, invest in affordable and supportive housing, and commit to truly addressing anti-Black, anti-Indigenous and anti-Asian racism. These are the strategies that are going to be most effective in eventually bringing an end to human trafficking in Ontario.

That is not, unfortunately, what we see in the legislation before us today, in Bill 251.

Bill 251 is focused on helping those who are experiencing trafficking to leave their traffickers.

So I want to once again return to the study that the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking did, which identified some of the barriers women encounter when they are trying to exit from the trafficked situation. Service providers said that by far the biggest barrier was stigma, followed by lack of trust in the system. Again, they identified addictions, lack of appropriate housing/shelter, and lack of trauma-informed services. Among law enforcement respondents who were involved in that study, they identified the financial barriers and insufficient income support as the biggest barrier for those wanting to exit their trafficker, followed by stigma and addictions.

Again, it's just another way of looking at the same evidence that I talked about earlier and highlighting those root causes that need to be addressed around access to housing, income stability and access to mental health services—all of these things that need to be in place if we are going to be able to end trafficking in Ontario.

One of the things I do appreciate the most about participating in third reading debates is the opportunity to put on the record the testimony that was heard by committee members who were considering the bill. So this afternoon I will be referring extensively to some of the verbatim comments that were made during the committee hearings on this legislation.

Interestingly enough, when I was preparing for my speech today, I took a look at my third reading remarks from the debate on the Liberal bill, which is actually referenced in schedule 4 of this bill, because there is an amendment to that Liberal bill that was passed in 2017. What struck me when I reviewed those remarks was the similarity in the themes that were brought forward by the presenters—that's the presenters who spoke to the Liberal bill back in 2017 and the presenters who spoke to Bill 251 last week.

At that time, I noted that the sex workers who spoke to the committee about that Liberal bill cautioned that conflating sex work with sex trafficking ignores the factors that lead women to enter the sex trade as a way to feed their children or keep a roof over their heads. These are women who confront on a daily basis the reality of poverty, homelessness, mental health and addictions, violence and trauma, and a myriad of other issues.

At that time, in 2017, when speaking to the Liberal bill, I also highlighted the calls that many presenters made for measures to address the social determinants of health, measures to lift women out of poverty and out of the vulnerable situations that lead to exploitation, such as a \$15 minimum wage, such as an increase to social assistance rates, access to affordable housing, access to enhanced services for violence against women, and programs to deal with mental health and addictions.

**1550**

The concerns that were raised by many of the organizations and individuals who spoke to the committee on Bill 251 were very similar in content. However, in this particular committee, there was a much greater focus on the dangers of conflating sex trafficking and sex work. This was highlighted last week in a media conference that

was held by a coalition of groups, including Butterfly Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network, HIV Legal Network, and the No Pride in Policing Coalition. These groups argue that Bill 251's expansion of police powers will only further endanger already marginalized sex workers and lead to further targeting of poor and racialized groups.

I want to quote Indigenous lawyer and former sex worker Naomi Sayers, who was actually originally from London when she was a sex worker. Now she's a professor and lawyer. She says that by conflating human trafficking with sex work, Bill 251 is "going to over-police individuals who are not supposed to be the subject of concern." We've heard that from the Solicitor General. We've heard the government say that the focus of the bill is not on sex workers; it is on victims and survivors of sex trafficking. But these are the concerns that were brought forward to the committee.

Professor Sayers told the CBC, "This bill is framed as supporting victims and providing support to victims. But actually, what it ends up doing is diverting resources away from victims and human trafficking and diverts them towards the police."

This was a concern that was raised repeatedly at the committee, and I urge the government to consider that input and ensure that the human trafficking resources that have been allocated, the \$307 million, are used appropriately to support victims and help victims recover from the trauma of being trafficked.

The committee received a number of presentations, as I mentioned, all pointing out their concerns that expanded police powers are not only harmful to the sex workers who will potentially be targeted by these new powers, but can also lead to racial profiling of Black, Indigenous and racialized communities. Many said that that is actually counterproductive to ending trafficking.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association cautioned against the likely impact of an increased reliance on a police-led law enforcement approach to addressing the harms of human trafficking. They underscored the profoundly negative consequences such an approach would have on both victims of human trafficking and sex workers.

The Durham Community Legal Clinic stated that while they recognize and support the need for law enforcement to have a greater array of tools to address human trafficking, they were concerned that the unbalanced emphasis on law enforcement will negatively impact marginalized communities. They said, "The solution to human trafficking is not achieved through state surveillance and policing, but can be improved by addressing the root causes of human trafficking, which include poverty and trauma." They went on to say, "Law enforcement should not be at the centre of the solution" to human trafficking because it does not address the systemic roots of the problem.

I want to read some more comments into the record that were provided by deputants to the committee.

Health Providers Against Poverty stated: "Instead of addressing the root causes of exploitation and human

trafficking in Ontario, Bill 251 will amplify and entrench barriers that prevent sex workers from getting health care, from accessing social supports, and from working more safely....

“Moreover, broadening law enforcement powers to investigate sex workers in more settings will further fuel mistrust towards health workers, social service providers, and others who provide points of access to supports and services that facilitate health and well-being. Increasing the powers of law enforcement will make Black communities, Indigenous communities, undocumented people, sex workers, and other groups, including people living in poverty, less safe, not more.”

Finally, I want to reference a submission that was made by HIV Legal Network, jointly with Butterfly, in which they state: “We have grave concerns about the act’s reliance on a law enforcement model that has been proven to be not only ineffective, but counterproductive to efforts to tackle human trafficking. In particular, we are concerned that the proposed act will continue to reinforce the conflation of trafficking with sex work; adopts a problematic law enforcement model that further entrenches the wide-ranging powers of police ... and confers broad, excessive investigative powers to inspectors.”

Not surprisingly, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association echoed many of these same concerns about over-broad law enforcement-focused anti-trafficking initiatives that counterproductively increase the risk of isolation and marginalization for both sex workers and survivors of sex trafficking.

So those are some of the overall comments that were made about the bill during the depositions to the committee.

Now I want to turn, in some detail, to the bill itself.

Schedule 1 of the bill creates the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act. This schedule will require hotels to keep a register of guests, record their names, residences and other prescribed information that will be set out in regulation. The legislation gives the government the ability to require other businesses in addition to hotels to maintain these registers, and we have heard that the government intends to add short-term rentals like Airbnb through regulation. On that point, however, I would note that Bill 251 was introduced on February 22, which is almost three months ago. At that time, the Solicitor General said that Airbnbs had been omitted from the legislation because there had not been enough time to consult with the short-term rental sector, despite the fact that Airbnbs have long been recognized as being equal to hotels and motels in terms of use by human traffickers.

The frequency of using Airbnbs had been noted by that report from the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking that talked about the 401 corridor. They had identified short-term stays as, in some cases, being preferable to traffickers to move their victims along because there is nobody at the front desk to have to sign in to.

The fact that Airbnb is a registered lobbyist with the government of Ontario does raise some legitimate

questions about why short-term rentals were not included in the legislation in the first place, and why there hasn’t been that consultation with Airbnb over the last three months so that the legislation could have been amended before it is passed. Surely, if this government believes that an accommodation register is necessary to combat human trafficking—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me; I’m sorry. We have a point of order.

I recognize the member from Barrie–Innisfil.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Sorry to the member—it reminded me. I just wanted to do a point of order to tell the House there will be no night sitting.

1600

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

Continue.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I was just saying that if the government really believes and is committed to an accommodation register as a way to combat human trafficking, then certainly, both hotels and short-term rentals should have been specified in the bill.

The bill gives police the ability to apply for a judicial order to obtain the register. It also gives them the power to make an urgent demand for access to the guest register without a court order, directly to the owner of the accommodation, if there are reasonable grounds to believe that information in the register will help identify or assist victims of trafficking or those who are at imminent risk of being trafficked. So there is a fine of up to \$5,000 for hotel owners who fail to keep a register and for hotel owners and guests who falsify information in the register.

I was pleased to see the amendment that was included in the legislation, which was in response to a submission from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, that requires a written report whenever an urgent demand is made, and for the chiefs of police to report annually on the total number of urgent demands made in the year and the number of human trafficking investigations. This was identified by many of the organizations and individuals who came to speak to the committee as an alarming over-reach of police power. At least now, with the amendment to the schedule, there will be a little bit of transparency as to how this new police power is being used.

I want to share what was said by Health Providers Against Poverty when they commented on this schedule of the bill in their submission to the committee. They said, “This breach of privacy will force sex workers into less safe working conditions, where they are afforded fewer protections and less capacity to control their surroundings. As a result, these workers will have less agency to take steps to protect their health and safety.” This was a concern that was raised by many of the deputants to the committee, that by requiring a guest register to be established and by allowing police to access that register, either through a court order or through an urgent demand, legitimate sex workers who are in these places of accommodation would have their customer list handed

over to police without any control over the use of that information.

Schedule 2 of the bill, the Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, requires the government to maintain an anti-human trafficking strategy that aims to end human trafficking in Ontario and to support persons who have experienced human trafficking, to be reviewed every five years. I want to call the government's attention again to the submission from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who noted that, while this five-year review of the strategy itself is helpful, what would have been more helpful was a legislated requirement for the review of the legislation and the regulations every five years. Unfortunately, that was a recommendation of the Information and Privacy Commissioner that that this government chose not to incorporate.

Schedule 2 also sets out the principles that are supposed to underpin the government's strategy. These are human rights-based, survivor-centred, intersectionality, cultural responsiveness, prevention, trauma-informed and informed by evidence. As a former researcher before I was elected, I can say I fully support these principles. I fully endorse these principles. These are excellent principles, and they do represent a significant step forward for this Conservative caucus in terms of their earlier approaches to human trafficking.

I talked at the beginning of my remarks about acknowledging the work that had been done by the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. The first bill that she introduced was called the Saving the Girl Next Door Act. While it is true that human trafficking can happen to anyone, including the girl next door, including girls that we would view as being well brought up from good middle-class families, the reality is that the victims of sex trafficking are much more likely to be marginalized, much more likely to be isolated, much more likely to be poor, much more likely to have experienced violence or trauma in their past. And that is validated by the research, by some of those studies that I had referenced earlier. The problem is that when responses to sex trafficking are framed only in terms of rescuing the girl next door, it further neglects the root causes that make women and girls more vulnerable to trafficking in the first place.

So I acknowledge that this government has come a long way since Saving the Girl Next Door Act in its identification of those important principles that will underpin the human trafficking strategy. Unfortunately, however, principles on their own are meaningless unless they are internalized by this government. We have, quite frankly, not seen any kind of demonstration that this government has any interest in putting those principles into action. There is very little trust, I would say, that the government will undertake the important work around this anti-human trafficking strategy and do that work with those principles embedded in the way that it needs to be done.

I say this, Speaker, because of what we have all lived through in this province since this government was elected in 2018; what we have seen from this government in the actions it has taken, the decisions it has made, the funding

it has cut. Let's just remember that only a couple of months after the government was elected in 2018, one of their first major announcements was to eliminate the Roundtable on Violence against Women. Shortly after that, they cancelled the 33% funding increase that had been planned for rape crisis centres. That would have been \$8 million a year over two years for rape crisis centres in Ontario. They cancelled the Basic Income Pilot. They cut in half the planned rate increase for social assistance recipients, people on ODSP and Ontario Works. They eliminated the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. The Solicitor General talks about this as being a bill that is focused on rescuing children from sex trafficking. I would think that the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth would have been very important in supporting the government in doing its work and focusing on youth.

**1610**

But there's more, Speaker. This government also slashed funding for legal aid services that had been accessed, in many cases, by vulnerable and low-income women who were dealing with the Family Court system. Much as the government would like to talk about those important principles that are set out in schedule 2, I think it will take a lot more for Ontarians to actually believe that they will move forward in a way that respects the principles that have been set out.

Schedule 2 also enables the government to put in place new regulations requiring specified persons to disseminate information about human trafficking, as well as specified employers to provide training on human trafficking and specified employees to report instances of suspected human trafficking. Speaker, you can just imagine what this is going to look like: You have a hotel—presumably, there will be an Airbnb, which may or many not be staffed, but certainly you have hotels and motels, which we know are places where trafficked women and girls are transported along the 401. There will be an employee, probably a minimum wage employee—it could be a student, Speaker; it could be somebody working two minimum wage jobs to support their family. But you will have somebody at the front desk who now may be regulated under schedule 2 to report instances of suspected human trafficking, after they have apparently been trained in recognizing the signs of human trafficking.

I question, and the sex workers who spoke to the committee question, how those employees will be able to distinguish between legitimate sex work—because there is sex work that also takes place in hotels and motels along the 401. So employees will now have to distinguish between legitimate sex work and sex trafficking, and this is also where the concerns about racial profiling come in. Some of the signs that are supposed to be red flags that there could be a victim of trafficking include a young person who is not well dressed but has an iPad, because maybe their trafficker gave it to them, or they have some kind of expensive technology. If these are the flags that hotel employees are now supposed to be using to report instances of suspected human trafficking, I think there is a legitimate concern that there are going to be families and

people across this province who will be subject to racial profiling because of the way they look and because of who they are.

One of the most contentious parts of schedule 2, however, is the appointment of inspectors to enforce the regulations. There are fines, Speaker, of up to \$50,000 for individuals and \$100,000 for corporations that do not comply with the inspector. The legislation is short on details as to who this inspector is or how they will operate, but it clearly assigns these inspectors a huge amount of new power to enforce these new regulations that are going to be established under the act.

On this issue, the submission from the HIV Legal Network and Butterfly stated, “Troublingly, an individual is not permitted to ‘refuse to answer questions on any matter that is or may be relevant to the inspection,’ potentially requiring sex workers, who face an array of negative consequences for engaging in criminalized labour, including stigma, discrimination, the possibility of eviction, travel bans, criminal charges and loss of immigration status, to disclose details of their work with little knowledge as to whether an inspector’s questions are relevant to a human trafficking inspection.”

Again, Speaker, this part of schedule 2 of the bill raises all kinds of concerns about police overreach that this government will have to monitor very, very carefully.

Before I leave schedule 2, I did want to also acknowledge the efforts of my colleague the member for Spadina–Fort York for his advocacy to amend the anti-human trafficking strategy to forgive fraudulent student debt. This is a common scenario where a trafficker will steal the credit card of the person who is being trafficked or steal the identification and will take out an OSAP loan in the victim’s name. There is an organization based in Toronto that works with survivors of trafficking called Project Recover that helps survivors regain their financial footing, and they have stated that an average non-government fraudulent debt that a trafficking survivor faces is \$28,000. That’s non-government, so that can be double that when OSAP is included. So forgiving OSAP debt would be an important way to help survivors heal from being revictimized when they are forced to repay debts that were incurred by their trafficker.

I will point out that this survivor debt forgiveness was also a recommendation that was made to the committee by Victim Services of Durham Region, so it’s disappointing that that was not included in this bill.

Schedule 3 of the bill amends the Child, Youth and Family Services Act to allow a child protection worker or a peace officer to remove youth, aged 16 or 17, from environments where they are deemed to be at risk or engaged in human trafficking, basically to detain them for up to 12 hours for the purpose of offering services and supports.

On this schedule there was a very thorough and well-argued submission from Justice for Children and Youth, which is a specialized legal aid clinic that focuses on children’s rights. They state that, “A vulnerable young person is unlikely to differentiate between detention that

is intended to assist them and detention that is punitive. Holding them against their will does not support the development of a trusting relationship with service providers—a prerequisite to accepting assistive services—and may well be a traumatizing experience on its own. In this context, we suggest that a young person is unlikely to be receptive to supports and services that are offered in this punitive and coercive manner. Young people must be ready and willing to engage in services for those services to be effective.”

There were similar concerns about this schedule of the bill that were raised by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, who noted that, “Legislation that provides authorities with the ability to use coercive tactics, forcible relocation, and involuntary detention serves to foment an antagonistic relationship between youth and law enforcement—a key contributing factor to youths’ vulnerability to violence and exploitation.”

The other concern that was highlighted, however, is that these youth who are being removed and detained—where they are likely to end up is in the child welfare system. As I stated at the beginning of my remarks, the child welfare system has been a breeding ground for traffickers looking to recruit victims of trafficking.

So there were very legitimate concerns raised about schedule 3 of the bill and whether it will be effective at all in helping support youth and connecting them to appropriate services.

#### 1620

Finally, the fourth schedule of the bill allows a person caring for a child victim to apply for a restraining order and also allows orders to last for a period longer than three years. This was a schedule of the bill that did not receive any commentary at the committee. I think that it makes sense. We want to remove barriers to people who have experienced trafficking, and they should not have to go through a cumbersome legal process to obtain a restraining order if it needs to last longer than three years. I think it was a good move by the government to include that schedule in the bill.

In the time that I have left, I want to talk a little bit about my community in London. That report that I talked about on human trafficking corridors identified London as one of those hot spots on the way as trafficked people are transported along the 401. There has been heightened awareness, certainly, of the reality of trafficking in our community for some time.

But what I really want to focus on is the work that is being done in London by the agencies that are supporting women and girls, including women and girls who have experienced trafficking. As my colleague the member for Kitchener pointed out in her remarks on Sexual Assault Prevention Month, these agencies are absolutely vital in supporting the safety and well-being of women and girls in our community, and they are struggling in this pandemic. The United Nations has called the skyrocketing incidents of violence against women and girls during COVID-19 a “shadow pandemic.” And agencies in London, agencies around the province, gender-based violence agencies are all reporting the same thing: increased

demand on services, exhausted staff, and depleted financial resources to help meet the demand.

The London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse just released some data at the end of February about the demand pressures on the violence-against-women services in my community. In the first six months of the pandemic, from April to September, Anova, which is an agency that is a merger of the sexual assault centre and the domestic violence shelter, had 1,064 domestic violence and sexual violence crisis calls. This represents a 227% increase over the same period in the previous year.

Anova also reports that the length of stay is significantly longer for women and children who access shelter because London, as many communities across this province, is in the throes of a housing crisis. There is a lack of safe, affordable housing for women and children to move into after they have been in shelter.

Anova also points out that the acuity of violence is also increased. Women arrive at shelter at a significantly higher level of risk during this pandemic than they did previously. That could be because they are at home with their abuser, and wait longer before they feel that they're ready to access services from Anova.

Also in London, the regional centre for sexual violence and domestic violence reported a 53% increase in crisis calls from men, women and children.

Atlohsa, which is an agency that provides services for our urban Indigenous population, reported another 227% increase in Indigenous crisis calls.

The London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, which brought these agencies together to share the reality of what is happening for vulnerable women and girls in London during this pandemic, is calling for an increase in core funding to maintain programs that have been born out of the pandemic. What we have heard from this government to this point is that that funding was one-time, and there has been no indication that those funds will be maintained.

I have some more statistics here. The London Abused Women's Centre, which is an agency that focuses more on supports for women and girls who have been trafficked, in addition to women and girls who've experienced violence, noted a 40% increase in demand for service from what they call the Urgent Services Support Program, which provides immediate access to services for urgent needs. There has also been a 16% increase in terms of the number of women and girls who were helped over the last fiscal year.

Finally, I want to talk about the implications if we don't ensure the stability of our gender-based violence agencies like Anova, like the London Abused Women's Centre, like Atlohsa, like the regional centre for sexual violence and domestic violence. Anova has had to turn away more than 2,550 individuals during COVID-19 because of a full shelter and, as I said, because women are staying longer than a month because of a lack of housing in London. If we don't ensure the safety of those women and girls who are looking to access shelter supports and are turned away, we are forcing those very vulnerable members of our

communities to go back to a situation that puts them in danger, and I don't think that this government would want to see that happen. I would hope—this is Sexual Assault Prevention Month—that we will see a strong commitment from this government to ensure the long-term stability and sustainability of those agencies.

Speaker, I want to share some of what we learned when this Legislature was engaged in the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. That was a committee I participated in with the now Solicitor General and the now Minister of Infrastructure. We heard from about 170 organizations and individuals who presented to that committee. Many of those were gender-based violence agencies, and they talked about the reality of the fact that, prior to any government announcement of dedicated funding for human trafficking, women and girls who were experiencing sex trafficking were coming into those agencies. They were using the services of those agencies.

### 1630

I think that there is some trepidation about what the government's plan is with the \$307 million that has been allocated to human trafficking and what that means for the rest of the gender-based-violence sector. We can't only focus on one thing at the risk of jeopardizing this other vital system of services and supports that are in place for women and children.

So I would encourage this government to make sure that funding for crisis centres, for domestic violence shelters, is not only maintained and stabilized but also enhanced. Coming out of this pandemic, we know that one of the priorities in ensuring a she-covery is access to supports for women who have experienced violence at home. This is going to be an important piece of the government's economic recovery strategy as we move forward from COVID-19.

I want to end on a positive note about some of the work that has to be done in order to really bring an end to human trafficking in Ontario. I talked about addressing those root causes, which is absolutely fundamental—no question. But the other important piece is around education. I know that this legislation was brought in on Human Trafficking Awareness Day, that there has been work done to integrate human trafficking curriculum into the education system. No question, that is vitally important, for young people to understand what trafficking looks like and to reduce the risks that they will end up being sexually exploited.

But there is another approach that has been utilized by agencies like Anova. This is an approach that empowers women and girls with a sense of their own agency, their own autonomy and their ability to provide consent. Anova is doing incredible work with our school system on ending gender-based violence by raising awareness about the importance of consent.

Prior to COVID-19, I worked with a group of grade 8 girls in my riding, the London West Girls' Government. One of the issues they identified that they wanted to see changed in Ontario politics was around consent education. They wanted to see the concept of consent incorporated in all curriculum about healthy relationships, as a way to

move forward and ensure the safety of women and girls in this province.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** It's time for questions.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Thank you very much to the honourable member for your comments today.

I have a little bit of a concern, in that I spent many, many years in the drug enforcement and narcotics field, and there appears to be a vilification of the police engaged with this. Are you suggesting that the police should turn a blind eye when they see that there are problems going on? If they turn a blind eye, they're not deemed to be helping that community. Anything that I've ever experienced is to reach out to the community—so the police should be an ally.

I've heard, "Defund the police. Eliminate the police. They're a problem." That perception appeared to be shared by some of the opposition members. That's really discouraging and disappointing, quite frankly, because I think we do need the police as part of the solution—not all of the solution, but certainly as part of the solution when it comes to enforcement of 13-year-olds being trafficked.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** That is not at all what I said in my comments. I shared the concerns of sex workers about the new police powers that are included in this bill and their awareness that they have not had a positive experience in interactions with police.

The Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment that I mentioned at the conclusion of my remarks heard from sex workers who spoke very movingly about the fact that when they experience sexual assault and go to the police, they're not believed.

These are actual experiences of sex workers that raise concerns about how these new police powers will be used.

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

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you to my colleague and friend from London West for such important remarks. One of the pieces that stood out for me was near the beginning, when you pointed to the principles, one which is being survivor-centred.

To follow up on the last question, I'm wondering if you could speak little bit more about why understanding what the experiences have been of some survivors—for instance, Black, Indigenous, racialized survivors, Asian survivors, who have been part of the targeting in some cases in legislation—is so important to building solid legislation that does actually build trust between survivors and police forces.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I appreciate the question from my colleague the member for Kitchener Centre.

She is absolutely right that survivor-centred approaches, particularly around gender-based violence, are absolutely essential, because unless you understand the survivors' experience, unless the survivor is part of the process of developing the response, the response won't be effective. You need to walk in somebody else's shoes. You need to walk where they have walked, you need to hear

what they have heard if you are going to develop effective responses to human trafficking and gender-based violence.

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

**Mr. Norman Miller:** Thank you to the member from London West for her presentation.

I believe I heard correctly that she felt that Airbnbs weren't covered by this legislation. I do note that the proposed Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act would include regulation-making authority to enhance the information collected in guest registers, establish length of time that registers must be maintained, and prescribe other accommodation providers, so short-term rental companies, which are currently not in the scope of the current act, would be prescribed in that.

I'm just wondering if the member agrees that this would be a positive step in allowing regulation-making authority to capture short-term rental organizations.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** One of the concerns that was raised by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, in fact, was the amount of detail in this bill that was left to regulation and not set out in legislation. That was actually a recommendation that she brought forward around the guest registry, which now talks about name, address and prescribed information. She had said that that information should be spelled out in legislation. It should not be left to regulation. We believe that the issue with Airbnbs—understanding how short-term rentals are so prevalent for victims of trafficking, we believe that that should also have been spelled out in the legislation and not simply left to prescribed regulation.

1640

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I want to thank the member for her comments on this really important bill. For the past year, I've been working with Project Recover, and they have been talking about how they're working right now with 52 survivors of human trafficking who are not able to return to school because they've got outstanding OSAP debts. In some cases, the trafficker stole their identity, applied for OSAP and got an OSAP loan. In other cases, they were kidnapped while attending college or university, and that debt is impeding them from going back to school.

You mentioned in your speech—I brought a motion forward. Project Recover has met with several members on the government side, asking them to include in this bill a means for the government to forgive those OSAP debts so that these young women will be able to return to school. Yet when it was brought to committee, that amendment was voted down. Can you comment on the government's refusal to support these young women so that they can return to school?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** That's an interesting question. I don't understand why the government would not have wanted to support these victims of trafficking, who are now being revictimized by being forced to repay OSAP loans that were fraudulently obtained. It's inexplicable to

me for an anti-human trafficking strategy that is supposed to be survivor-centred, that is supposed to be trauma-informed. One would think that debt forgiveness would be an appropriate strategy, but this government chose not to go in that direction. I think it is a real disservice to the victims of trafficking that we're trying to support.

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

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova:** I was listening intently to the member opposite and her remarks. She alluded to the idea of conflation of sex work and human trafficking. I believe that understanding the difference between human trafficking and consensual sex work is critical. Unlike consensual sex work, human trafficking involves the use of threat or manipulation, coercion, psychological and/or physical violence to control and exploit victims. No one can consent to being trafficked, and children and youth under the age of 18 cannot consent to engage in sex work.

Speaker, I was very troubled by the depositions that I heard during committee hearings. There are some members of society today in Ontario that were unable to state on the record that they believed that the involvement of girls as young as 13 is not appropriate. So I would like to hear from the member opposite, if she can please state on the record: Does the member opposite agree that there is no legal sex worker at age 16, 17, or 13, for that matter?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I thought it was important during my remarks to put on the record some of the concerns that were brought to the committee by the people who presented. There is a real concern about the conflation of legal sex work and sex trafficking.

We know the difference between legal sex work and sex trafficking. The employee at the hotel who is now required to report to the police if they suspect sex trafficking may not understand that difference. That is what has legal sex workers concerned about this bill.

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

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** It's great to join this debate today. I have to say, during the committee, it was a really tough committee hearing, listening to people share their stories and talk about people's thoughts on human trafficking. I just have to comment—I know the member opposite in her remarks quoted a couple of people who spoke during the committee hearings. She took a segment of what they said but didn't really take the majority of the premise of their conversation. Such as, there were some groups that she commented on who actually believe that police have no place in society at all. What kind of society would we have without our front-line officers?

There were many, many who really weren't sure if human trafficking actually does exist. Certainly, they felt that it didn't exist to the numbers that we factually stated. As I always believe, and I know everybody here in this House believes, one girl trafficked or one little boy trafficked is one too many. It was quite tough to hear those comments. So when we pick a segment from what people said, I think it's fair that we share the entire story.

Mr. Speaker, human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing crimes worldwide. It disproportionately impacts

children and youth, Indigenous women and girls, racialized groups, 2SLGBTQQIA+ persons, those with mental health and addiction challenges and marginalized youth, such as runaways and victims of abuse. This heinous crime preys on the young, the vulnerable and can leave its victims feeling broken and often forgotten. The majority of the victims are young girls, and as we've said over and over, this legislation is about the young children between the ages of 13 and 17 years of age.

Recruiters look for a variety of ways to connect with potential victims. In some cases, the victim may not even realize that they are being trafficked because of the relationship they have with their trafficker. It can be happening outside your school, it could be happening at the local mall and it's happening online. It is often someone that they know.

Speaker, this is not a problem that happens in other places. Most police-reported incidents of human trafficking in Canada happen right here in Ontario. We've said this over and over: Two thirds of Canada's reported cases of human trafficking happen right here in Ontario. However, most of these incidents go unreported. We know that human trafficking crimes are hidden in nature, and for very many reasons, it's particularly difficult for victims and survivors to come forward. Due to the fact that instances of human trafficking are regularly under-reported, these numbers only capture the tip of the iceberg and are likely, unfortunately, much, much higher.

Mr. Speaker, we want to change that and we want to help create an environment where more victims are confident in breaking the silence, and that is why this debate is so important. We want to make sure that everyone in Ontario knows they are safe.

As we said, it could happen anywhere. It could happen in any of our ridings. You don't have to live in a big city. You can live in a small town. You can live in a condo building. You can be in an Airbnb.

We've met many people and we've heard many stories about human trafficking, and there are many, many not-for-profit organizations that have helped shed a light on the trafficking and the problems. The information we've received from them through our consultation has been invaluable, and I thank them for their work.

I'd like to share and recognize two women's support centres in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I want to thank them for their advocacy against human trafficking and domestic violence; for being a supportive person for those who need a friendly face; a caring and listening ear; a place to go when someone needs shelter, food or clothing; and most of all, a friendly voice to let you know that you are not alone.

**1650**

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give a shout-out to our Jean Tweed Centre. It was established in 1983 and named after Jean Shannon, a pioneer in advancing the cause of women-specific programming. The centre offers a wide range of services, including residential day programming, outpatient programming, including family and trauma counselling, individualized counselling and continuing care. The Jean Tweed Centre's work has been instrumental in

helping out young women, our survivors of human trafficking.

I would also like to applaud Women's Habitat. It's been in operation since 1978. Over the course of those 43 years, they have become leaders in making sure that women and their children fleeing violence have a safe place to go. The work they do in our community, providing support, counselling and advocacy for women, is truly amazing, as are the women who work there. Women who use the shelter come from all walks of life. It is meant to be a safe place for women, with or without children, fleeing from violence or threat of violence, and they receive up to a thousand crisis calls a year.

These are just two of the many, many organizations that help female victims of violence and human trafficking in Etobicoke, and I'm proud that my riding has such robust community supports for our women.

Through consultation with these and other organizations, we have discussed and we have learned more about how truly horrible human trafficking is, how difficult it is for law enforcement to detect it and how tough it is for women to speak out. This is why it is important that Ontario be equipped to fight this crime and support victims and survivors with every tool at our disposal.

Last year, Ontario launched a new anti-human trafficking strategy with an investment of up to \$307 million over five years. This strategy takes a proactive approach to combatting human trafficking while ensuring the necessary supports are in place to help survivors deal with the trauma.

Speaker, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, who spoke earlier, today are two of the front-line ministries for this government's response to human trafficking, and we need to remind everybody, when we heard people at committee, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services are there, because we're talking about children.

Due to the complexity of this crime and the trauma involved, it's critical that the justice sector and the social services sector collaborate. Combatting human trafficking requires collaboration, not just across government but also with many groups, including police, our community agencies, families, school and the youth themselves.

Mr. Speaker, our government's proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021 opens up new avenues in Ontario's fight against human trafficking. Under the proposed new act, we introduced the Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021, and the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, which would replace the Hotel Registration of Guests Act. We also proposed amendments to the following acts: the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, and the Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking Act, 2017. Together, this proposed legislation and amendments to existing legislation would support the government's response to human trafficking by:

—providing a long-term provincial response to human trafficking and emphasizing that all Ontarians have a role in combatting human trafficking;

—strengthening the ability of the children's aid society and law enforcement to protect children;

—assisting more survivors and the people who support them in obtaining restraining orders against traffickers with specific consideration for Indigenous survivors and their communities; and

—providing law enforcement with more tools to locate victims and penalize traffickers.

As part of the Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, we are proposing an Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021, the first of its kind in Canada. If passed, this legislation would support raising awareness of human trafficking and provide a sustained, long-term and comprehensive response. This would be achieved by mandating Ontario to maintain an anti-human trafficking strategy that is reviewed regularly to help the province stay ahead of traffickers. It would also emphasize the role that Ontarians have to play by enabling regulation-making powers to train certain individuals and organizations on how to identify and appropriately respond to suspected instances of human trafficking.

If passed, the proposed act would include establishing the power through regulation to require companies that advertise sexual services to have a contact for law enforcement and other entities. This contact would be used to request information in support of human trafficking investigations. Let's think about it: We're talking about children 13, 14, 15, 16 years of age.

Next, the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, would specify how and when police services can access hotel guest registry information without a court order in certain emergency situations where an order can't be obtained. Once again, we're talking about children 13, 14, 15, 16 years of age. Hotel and motel operations may unwillingly and unknowingly provide infrastructure for human traffickers. Hotel rooms are often used by traffickers as a base for recruitment.

The market of short-term rentals has been added to the inventory and created new options for traffickers. These facilities offer accommodation to move victims while providing privacy and anonymity to traffickers who relocate their operations, often to evade detection of law enforcement.

Speaker, hotel and motel operators are taking a firm stand against human trafficking and I applaud them. I want to recognize the work our Ontario hotel and motel associations and operators are undertaking to address this heinous crime. As we've said, we cannot do this alone.

By repealing the outdated Hotel Registration of Guests Act and replacing it with the new proposed Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, the government is supporting the anti-human trafficking strategy. It will help deter traffickers in hotels, motels and resorts by supporting police investigations into suspected human trafficking. For example, hotel guest registers have served as a valuable tool in human trafficking investigations. The proposed new legislation would include regulation-making authority to enhance the information collected in guest registers and establish a length of time that registers must be maintained.

Speaker, based on consultations with Ontario's tourism and hospitality sector, the government is also modernizing the definition of a hotel to better reflect the modern industry. In addition to hotels, short-term rentals are used as venues for human trafficking because they have also provided the traffickers with privacy and anonymity. Policing stakeholders have told us that the use of short-term rental units by traffickers is on the rise. The proposed new legislation would provide regulation-making authority to apply requirements in the act to other types of accommodation providers such as short-term rental companies. We had mentioned this in committee quite a bit. This is going to be taken care of under regulation.

Speaker, hotels, motels and resorts have always had to maintain registers and this information can be made available to the police. But we are making this process clearer and specifying the conditions for both police and the accommodations sector. The proposed new act will respect the balance between safeguarding privacy while supporting law enforcement in deterring human trafficking. More victims may be identified and located and more traffickers may be deterred by specifying how and when police services can access information from a guest registry.

Organizations can also help stop human trafficking by training employees to spot the signs, especially in sectors commonly used by traffickers, including hospitality and transportation. Under the Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, Ontario could develop regulations to become a national leader on training individuals and organizations on how to identify human trafficking and how to respond appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, our government has voiced its commitment to tackling human trafficking. We worked with a wide spectrum of stakeholders to establish the comprehensive \$307-million ...

We worked with a wide spectrum of stakeholders to establish the comprehensive \$307-million anti-human trafficking strategy. This is why Ontario is taking the lead in the fight against human trafficking.

**1700**

Bill 251 is a key part of our response to this grave societal challenge. Its proposed changes, if passed, would better protect victims of human trafficking, support survivors, and increase tools to hold offenders accountable.

Bill 251 builds on a strong foundation of Ontarians and community service partners working together to fight human trafficking and support our survivors. Human trafficking feeds off the vulnerable, destroys the lives of the innocent and fuels other criminal activities, such as gun smuggling and gang violence. No part of this province is immune to human trafficking.

Earlier in our mandate, we committed to tackling this crime. These proposed legislative changes, if passed, would reinforce our anti-human trafficking strategy's objectives of raising awareness of the issues, protecting victims and intervening early. We will be supporting survivors and holding offenders accountable. It would also support law enforcement to dismantle criminal networks

and help deter human trafficking. Once again, this is happening all around us, in all our ridings, large or small.

There are children, young women and families in every part of Ontario who depend on this government and our partners to do everything we can.

These issues require us to work together in a non-partisan manner. Support is not limited to one ministry, not one person, not one political party, not one government; it requires us all. It requires a collaborative approach. Given the complexity and the pervasiveness of human trafficking, it requires not only a cross-government approach but work across jurisdictions and with multiple sectors. None of us is alone in this fight.

And I want to draw your attention to Ontario's confidential human trafficking helpline: 1-833-999-9211. This helpline is a 24-hour, seven-day service, and you can call to get information to find help and services in your community.

Mr. Speaker, we are determined to fight this crime on all fronts, including adding secondary school lesson plans to prevent child sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, including key topics such as online safety and healthy relationships.

Once again, we need people to be educated, and we need to act. We cannot do this alone. It is essential for everyone to know what human trafficking is, understanding that human trafficking does exist. We will not turn a blind eye.

Mr. Speaker, our government is determined to end human trafficking, strengthen our ability to support victims and survivors, and better protect children and youth from this horrible crime.

I ask all members in this House to send a strong message to those cowards who prey on young children. Let's pass this legislation unanimously.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** It's now time for questions.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I appreciate, obviously, the principles behind this bill. The government is saying all the right things, talking about preventing human trafficking, supporting sexually exploited survivors of violence, protecting potential victims—all of those are great words.

I want to ask the member opposite why, then, the government chose to slash funding for sexual assault centres; why the government eliminated the support that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board provided; why the government did away with the Victim Quick Response Program? Community-based sexual assault centres are overwhelmed with increased demands. Why won't this government support them?

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Thank you very much for the question.

Of the \$307 million, \$94 million of that is going to go directly to communities to help with these programs.

Most of the information we've received that created this legislation was from the consultations we received from the police and these not-for-profit sectors. During committee and during debate, we've had these not-for-profit sectors speak in support of this legislation, because

the money is going directly to them, no matter what community you live in. It's not just about the big cities like Toronto; it's about small towns, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Cambridge. All communities are going to be part of the programming, because we need those supports. That's why I wanted to mention the two in my riding—because they're so important to this program.

As we said, we can't do this alone. We must have our partners, and they will receive funding. There's \$94 million there going directly to them.

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

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I want to point out one thing: It's not just about money; this is about changing the ideology and the way that people think about a lot of these issues. These are hard conversations to have. We've certainly heard that through committee. We've heard it through the consultation process.

I'd really love to hear from the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore why this is such an important thing for her. Why is she so personally invested in this? Why is she getting behind it? I think when we talk to members in our constituencies—certainly, my constituency is along that 401 corridor. It's an area, obviously, that we have a lot of issues with when it comes to sex trafficking and different things. She also represents a community that has a lot of issues with this particular problem in general.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Thank you very much for that question.

I think being a member of a community is the reason. We all have a role to play. I'm also very fortunate to be a stepmom of two teenage daughters, so it really does bring it home to you, when you talk about young children the ages of 13, 14, 15. It doesn't matter if you're a mom, a dad, an aunt or an uncle—these are children we're talking about. We have a role to play, especially as elected officials. We have that responsibility to protect these children. That is our job. That is our responsibility. I would not feel right being an elected official if I couldn't do what I could to protect these children.

So part of it is just being part of my community. It's meeting the amazing people at my women's shelter and our people at the Jean Tweed Centre and the sharing of the stories that we've heard.

Over the years, I've had conversations with the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. When she brought forward the anti-human trafficking proposal a few years ago, I remember I was working at city hall and we had that conversation. It's an important discussion. We need to continue that discussion. This is just the beginning. We are talking about it now, and it's important.

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

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch. I see things at a very practical level. When we talk about upstream, downstream—sometimes we pull out people who are suffering or engaged in whatever activities and then we throw them back in.

And when we talk about agencies, child welfare agencies—you try to deal with that when we talk about

Indigenous children, when we talk about the lives of Indigenous young mothers and the high rates of apprehension for Indigenous youth and children. How does this address Indigenous youth who are in that system?

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Thank you very much for the question.

This is about all children. We've had a lot of consultations with groups of many, many different backgrounds. There is a part of this strategy that is going to support our Indigenous survivors of human trafficking, and that's a really important part, because they seem to be more vulnerable, and it's just so sad.

Coralee McGuire-Cyrette sat in at the committee hearings with us, and we heard from her first-hand about the work that she has done in her community. She was quite supportive of this legislation.

**1710**

We want to make sure that we work with all communities, how they want to deal with it. What's right for one group is not right for the next group, which is not right for the group after.

So please know that there are supports. There is funding. I know it's not just about money, as we mentioned, but there is funding, there are supports. We will work with everybody to make sure that we get this right.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** It has been a great debate today, both this morning and this afternoon. I've enjoyed it very much, with comments from all sides.

The one question I had for the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore—I've been reading through the bill and some of the comments about the effect of prolonging restraining orders and the impact that could have on human trafficking. Does she feel that we're doing enough there, or could we even do more?

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Thank you to the member from Sarnia–Lambton for the question.

That is actually an addition that has been added to the bill, and that came from our consultations with the police and with our not-for-profit groups, and also our Indigenous groups. So that will be added to the legislation. Considering the heinous nature of this crime, especially with so many victims, stricter measures were needed and requested. They will be provided, and they are part of this legislation.

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

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I have taken the opportunity a number of times through the years to speak about human trafficking, and I very much appreciate the work of the human trafficking coalition that I am loosely a part of in my community. An important part of this is actually in this bill, in schedule 2, where it outlines the principles—the principles that read really well: survivor-centred, human rights-based, intersectionality, cultural responsiveness, prevention, trauma-informed. Those are important pieces.

The member talked about supports. My question is, what will those supports look like, when this government,

since the election, has denied funding for sexual assault centres, disbanded an expert panel aimed to end violence against women, cancelled the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act, limited access to contraceptives and reproductive health, and removed provisions that allowed domestic and sexual violence survivors to leaves from work, calling it a job-killer? What will the support look like from this government for those survivors?

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** As I mentioned—sorry, I think I said \$94 million earlier; it's actually \$96 million that is going to straight to community groups. I just want you to know, that is more than any other government has ever given. As we said, this is not just about money, but it's \$96 million that will go towards community groups, and it's more than has ever been provided across Canada.

Some of that money—and I find it interesting. Something that was brought up: \$2.5 million of that money comes from criminals. So we take the money from criminals that they would have earned and they have to pay it forward to some of these victims. I think that's a positive move—of where we're receiving some of this funding.

There are 33 projects that will be focused directly on prevention and crisis counselling, research and public education, and that comes from the Attorney General's portion.

We're also providing more than \$7.5 million over five years in dedicated supports and services for survivors of human trafficking through four programs—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Can I just say who they are?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** No. Thank you.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** No, no, that's fine. As they say back home, you done good, but unfortunately, I have to try to stick to the timing as well.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Now it's—sorry, we have a teacher present here, so you did very well. How is that? All right.

Further debate?

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** I am very, very honoured and humbled to be speaking to this bill today. I'm going to go through five different points in the time that I have with you.

What I want to do is ask everybody in the chamber to join me in actively doing something a little bit different, and what that is, that I'm going to ask of everybody, is that we actually become survivor-centred. I say that as our starting point, not just because it is important to say out loud, but because if we are going to authentically do this work, the only people who matter are the survivors.

I'm going to step back and talk to you about why I think this is so important. It goes back to my life before I was elected. Prior to being elected, I was the director of diversity and equity at Wilfrid Laurier University. One of the portfolios I was responsible for was the gender-violence-prevention portfolio. Prior to that, I didn't do

work in this area. I didn't understand what it meant to be survivor-centred. It's something that does have to be taught, and one of the big pieces of being taught that is to recognize that my experiences are different than those who have experienced sexual violence in all of its forms, including trafficking. And if I'm listening to those experiences that are different than mine, being survivor-centred means that I start by believing what they're saying to me.

Because I am a Black woman—I was a Black woman then, and I'm a Black woman now—and I was the director of diversity and equity, a lot of survivors on campus who were Black, who were racialized, who were Indigenous, felt comfortable coming to me. They felt comfortable coming to me to speak about their experiences of sexual violence because they knew that I would hear them when they said this, when they said that they weren't believed when they went to the police; that when they explained what had happened and how their historic experiences, for instance, of sexual assault, some trafficked—when they came to campus and tried to access help, they weren't believed. There were assumptions made about their maturity level even when they were children, because that's how racism operates.

So they came and told me these stories, and now I have this very interesting moment in my life where I'm standing and speaking to a bill that could help them, but it can only do that if we actually centre survivors.

If I turn to the principles in schedule 2, one of which says, "Survivor-centred ... It is foundational to the strategy's success that people with lived experiences of human trafficking are empowered and that their expertise be recognized"—I need to ask that everybody on all sides of this chamber take seriously the realities that some folks who have experienced sexual violence are not believed when they raise it and that some people are scared to report to the police.

So the reason that we've had folks come to committee and raise concerns about providing increased powers to police isn't for any other reason than them being survivor-centred and saying that Black, brown and Indigenous survivors need alternate options. They need other places to be able to report because, right now, when the trust is broken between a system that is supposed to save them and protect them, they need time to rebuild that trust.

That leads me to something else, which is called being trauma-informed. We talked about that in the chamber. What does that mean and look like for us, when we're actively being trauma-informed? It means that we're listening and believing the people who have these experiences, and that we believe that if you have a different background and you've experienced different things, then there's a possibility that the same services that were supposed to keep you safe did not actually keep you safe. There were still issues and trust that needs to be rebuilt there.

So whose job and responsibility is it to rebuild that trust? In this situation, it's ours. We can actually help to rebuild that trust, and we can do that by ensuring that

everything that survivors have said to us gets embedded into the legislation in a way that's meaningful for them.

One of the things that survivors said to me numerous times in my role at Laurier was that they needed more investment in upstream supports. That's something that actually touches on another one of the principles that's in the legislation: human rights-based. There's a bit of a discrepancy between the way the government has defined a human rights-based principle and how communities that have come to committee have described it and understood it.

1720

In the legislation, it says, "Promoting and protecting human rights are foundational to an effective strategy," which is great and totally true. But if I turn to the submission from Butterfly and the HIV Legal Network, they've actually put in as one of their recommendations, "We urge the government to take a human rights-based approach that centres labour rights, migrant rights, and sex workers' rights and addresses structural barriers, including poverty, precarious immigration status, and lack of access to affordable housing, health and social services that contribute to the risks of human trafficking."

The big difference between the way that the government has included this language in the bill and what community members have said about a human rights-based approach is that community is saying, address the root causes. They're actually saying to us that it's imperative that, for any of this work to have a positive impact on those who are most vulnerable, we need to actively address poverty, we need to actively address housing issues and we need to actively address systemic racism. It's hugely important if we want to get the work done.

So what happens if we don't do that work? Well, again, wanting to believe that I'm in a chamber of love—when I used to teach, I used to always say—because I always talked about racism; it's a thing that I do—that we're in a room of love. It's not about fighting and arguing back and forth; it's actually about learning from each other so that we can do better. So wanting to believe that this is a chamber of love, here is an example of what happens when we don't address the root causes. This is from a CBC article. It was published on May 11 of this year: "Another campaign, led by Hamilton police, aimed at protecting potentially vulnerable women in fact saw women arrested for immigration infractions and bylaw crackdowns."

The reason I'm raising that is because I want people in the chamber to understand why folks are worried about putting more power in police without providing training for the police to not, in fact, enact systemically problematic, discriminatory and/or racist actions. They can use this legislation as an open door to go in and lay other kinds of charges. As long as they have reasonable cause to think that what they're doing is to protect somebody, they can choose to then charge them with immigration infractions, if it turns out that there are some immigration status issues with these young women.

But don't all women deserve to be protected from sex trafficking? Don't all women deserve to be protected so

that they can work, have housing, access education, access health care, raise their families? And so the question from community is, how will we go about ensuring that with an increase of power, the power doesn't get abused in any way? And it's not coming out of nowhere; it's coming out of lived experience. That lived experience, if we don't take it seriously, it means that we're not actually being survivor-centred.

So it's difficult to hear—and I know that not everybody in the chamber is going to want to hear that as a real experience. But I can tell you that there's not just one person who has come and said that to me; I've had a number of people who have said to me that, because they are Black, because they are brown, because they are Indigenous, they've not been believed, and that if there was anywhere that they would in fact turn to disclose any kind of sexual violence, any kind of violence, it would not be to the police.

In fact, that was so true that on campus, at Laurier, we started to implement bystander training, because there was so much talk about sexual violence and the different kinds of ways that sexual violence and gender-based violence happens. There were a lot of people who were not equipped to hold that level of trauma and harm from their peers, so we had to do something to ensure that anybody who had been disclosed to knew what to do with that information and knew how to help them find a pathway forward. That meant, based on what we did working with survivors, providing them with options, so that going to the police was one option, but also going to counselling and trying to navigate your own journey through that horrid experience was another option—before you decided that you would then go to the police or before you would decide that maybe you wouldn't, because maybe for you as a survivor your healing was the journey. But it's up to the survivor to make that decision.

That leads me to something else. It leads me to the rebuilding of trust. Victim Services of Durham Region formally submitted some of their suggestions for the legislation, one of which, their number 4, is, "Police and CAS units with specialization in" human trafficking "should have mandatory training in understanding bias, anti-oppressive practice, anti-racism and trauma-informed care."

I've heard that from a lot of local activists and community members in Waterloo region and in my own riding of Kitchener Centre, who have asked the same thing of the Waterloo Regional Police Service, for instance. The reason everybody is asking for the same thing is because every single person wants to feel safe. There's nobody who wakes up in the morning and decides, "Do you know what I don't want to feel today? Safety." Everybody wants to feel safe.

The challenge is that some systems were not set up in a way that understood the nuance, in my particular experience, so when I go to them and ask for that safety, it's not necessarily reciprocated. How do we address that? We train people. We talk to them about these different experiences. We make the new experience part of the thing

that they now know about so that when somebody does approach them, they're able to say, "Oh, I now know about that. And do you know what you deserve? Safety. Do you know what you deserve? Protection. Do you know what you deserve? Access to resources."

That leads me to one other piece. A lot of people, a lot of survivors who I spoke with and worked with when I was at Laurier, did not have access to culturally responsive supports. There's a difference in the ways in which I need to explain to a counsellor, to a social worker, to a therapist, my experiences of violence if I am not straight or white or a woman. As a Black woman, sometimes going and actually trying to get support to address experiences of violence requires me to navigate hours and hours of therapy, talking to a therapist about racism even existing—much less talking about the trauma that I'm supposed to be working on addressing with them. And so culturally responsive supports is actually part of the human rights-based principles. It's survivor-centred. It's the intersectionality piece in these principles that are listed here.

But in many communities, those services don't exist, and that's where the problem is. That's why people are very, very, very worried that if the legislation does not include more information or detail about how we're going to address the root causes of the kinds of violence experienced by the most vulnerable, then it's just not going to work. It's not going to be able to provide us with everything that we need.

One option is to ensure that those that are supposed to maintain the safety, the inspectors that—it's rather loosely inserted who they are or what that training will look like, but ensuring that the inspectors aren't just trained in trafficking in general, but also have anti-oppression training, anti-racism training; that they also understand the root causes of poverty and the experiences that many people have that make them more vulnerable to something as horrendous as trafficking. If that training was listed in this legislation as something that was required, then maybe people would have more trust that this legislation would be used differently than other pieces of legislation have been used.

1730

I want to say a big thank-you to TK Pritchard. At the time, TK was a public education manager with the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region. He's currently in a new role as the executive director of the Shore Centre. In the past role, he wrote curriculum on human trafficking for grade 7 and 8 students. The work was hugely important, and we've talked about that in the chamber: the importance of making sure that younger people learn about human trafficking, know the signs, know what kinds of things they should trust or not trust, know what the supports are, etc.

I think that one of the other pieces that would be extremely important to ensure that we actually are survivor-centred is to ensure that all of the services that are being provided to help a survivor are also trained in anti-oppression, in anti-racism, in a culturally responsive approach to supporting survivors. It would be wonderful

if everybody who was there to help was trained in such a way that when a survivor said to them, "This was my experience, and this is why I'm scared to talk to the police," that nobody questioned that, but instead, knew where that fear was centred. Even if they didn't have the same experience, even if for them going to the police would be their go-to thing, they would take a step back and say, "This person has gone through so much already. Let me just be there and hold them with care and support. Let me believe them."

Let me work on legislation when I come to Queen's Park ensuring that the Anti-Racism Directorate collects race-based data so that we know it's actually happening. Well, let's take that data, analyze it and make new legislation so that we don't have so much racism running around, willy-nilly, in the world. We could do that. Instead, my sense is that when I sit down in this chamber, people will have heard two things: They will have heard, "she doesn't like police," and they will have heard, "survivors don't really need to have this training being done in those support networks."

That's upsetting, because I actually think that part of our role here in this chamber is to have what I like to call when I'm at home, real talk. Just real talk, where I can tell you, as one of only 14 Black people who has ever been elected in Ontario—I found that out when I was on The Agenda—that my experience in the world, as much as I love Ontario, is not the same as my white colleagues; and that because I'm in this particular position, a lot of people will come to me, tell me what their experiences are and ask me if I can use my position of privilege and power and influence to let more people know that their experiences aren't the same, that they want safety, they want security, they want to be loved and cared for, and they want us to pass legislation that centres them, too. They want to make sure that everything they say at committee is heard. They want to make sure that somewhere in the midst of our back-and-forth, government and opposition duking it out, we don't lose sight of what's most important, and that's survivors: survivors of trafficking; survivors who everybody has said are usually most vulnerable, living in poverty, navigating poverty; racialized young women. They want to know that we've heard that.

I'm going to stay hopeful—y'all can't take that away from me—and I believe that we can do this.

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

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I certainly have a lot of respect and admiration for my colleague from Kitchener Centre. We've had a couple of pretty good real-talk conversations over the last few years. Certainly, there are a lot of things in her debate today that I think were very important. Obviously, talking about survivors is one thing. I have a five-year-old daughter at home—she just turned five last month—and I could never imagine if something like this in the conversations that we're having today happened to her.

Talking about survivors is one thing, but talking about how to stop these kinds of heinous acts from happening in the first place is a very, very different thing, and this bill

looks to achieve some of that. I'd like to hear maybe some comments on how the member from Kitchener Centre feels about trying to stop these things from happening in the first place.

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you to my colleague for the question. A lot of it has to do with the upstream supports. A lot of it has to do with the early education. A lot of it has to do with early intervention. But I think part of what I also want to add to that, and what people are saying to me, is that it also has to do with being able to recognize that for many people, they're living in a pandemic within a pandemic—since we're in COVID—or a crisis within a crisis, like racism was already happening, and then trafficking happened. And so the supports that are available to them have to be able to deal with both, and that's the part of the legislation that people are saying is lacking.

If we had an opportunity to review the legislation, to my colleague and friend from London West's point, we'd had an opportunity to adjust this. But for now, that's one of the biggest issues that I'm hearing as well.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you so much, to the member from Kitchener Centre, for her work and insights into this. I first got introduced to this issue of human trafficking a year ago through Richard Dunwoody at Project Recover, but in your speech, I learned so much. I learned about what survivor-centred training would be and why it's so important. I also learned about anti-oppression training—some more insights into anti-oppression training.

I'm thinking about this in terms of—like everything, as you said, all of this, this legislation, should be written from the perspective of the survivors, from their insights into what happened to them but also their insights into what they need in order to heal and recover. My question is, what should we be doing at this point with the government, with this bill, in order to make sure that the next stage of this, the regulation stage, is actually going to be survivor-centred?

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you, again, to my colleague for that question. I think that one of the things we could do—and this could be me being very wild and crazy, but we could make sure that any piece of legislation that we bring forward in this House uses that equity lens. We could make sure that every single—not just this one, but anything that we're doing uses an equity lens, that we ask ourselves who is at the table and how might their experiences be different, so that when we write legislation, we do so in a way that provides opportunities for everyone to feel safe, for everyone to feel heard, for everyone to feel recognized within the legislation. I don't think that it should necessarily be in regulation that that happens, because people watch what we're doing here, and they want to see that in this moment, in the public's eye, we cared about them and we centred their experiences.

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I appreciated listening to the member from Kitchener Centre and the lived experience that

she brings to this debate. I was struck last week during committee hearings by the testimony of some of the people that she talked about, too, that basically said that human trafficking is much, much less than what's reported, because the NGOs that work with people that come out of human trafficking get government funding and so they actually over-report that to get government funding dollars. So I really appreciated what you brought to the table today about how you've witnessed that yourself. I was wondering if you could speak to that testimony, what was going through your mind when you heard people saying in committee last week that it's far less, human trafficking than what we've been told.

1740

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you for your question. I wasn't actually one of the people that was in committee last week, but I did get an opportunity to review some of this, and I have some understanding from a lot of the community organizations that have raised issues with the legislation that have come to me, more because I'm the anti-racism critic than because of carriage of this particular bill.

What I can tell you is this: When there's an opportunity for us to do better, the public wants us to do better. What I think I'm hearing from the people that have been speaking to me about the bill is that this was an opportunity for us to help more survivors, not just one small portion of the survivors, and that if we had expanded some of that work, there would have been an opportunity to ensure that more people felt safe and that more people felt cared for and heard. To that end, I think that it would be really great if we remained survivor-centred, because that helps us to expand.

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

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I would like to thank my colleague from Kitchener Centre. One of the submissions to committee was from the Durham Community Legal Clinic and Access to Justice Hub. I'm just going to read a few portions here to get your feedback. They said, "To be effective, anti-human trafficking legislation should view trafficked people as victims of crime, not as criminals." They go on to say, "Although" schedule 2 of this bill "is guided by important principles, the emphasis on law enforcement is not an effective way to address human trafficking, as it does not address the root causes of the issue. Therefore, the Durham Community Legal Clinic looks to highlight concerns with such an approach and introduce alternatives that systematically address the issue."

In here they haven't outlined what some of those alternatives could be, but you spoke eloquently about the need for alternatives for some folks, based on their lived experience. Could you maybe talk about what that could look like for the House?

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you to my colleague for the question. For some people—I think I'm actually going to start it a different way; I'm going to answer it a different way. There is an assumption made in the legislation that

the only way to address human trafficking is to go to the police and have somebody thrown in jail. There are a lot of people who have very mixed feelings about whether or not jails and prisons are the best way to put more love and care into the universe. In fact, based on this submission, there are a lot of survivors who raise issues and then are criminalized, so they end up going to jail. That's part of where the concern is.

So the options for some are to be able to sort out and navigate the trauma and the harm that they have experienced from the violence before they have to make a decision like, "I'm going to now go to the police and potentially put myself at risk as well."

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

**Mr. Dave Smith:** I greatly appreciate the perspective that the member opposite brings to this. You made a comment that you're one of 14, I believe it was, people of colour who have been elected. I'm not the first Dave Smith to be elected, so we have a very different perspective on things. So I greatly appreciate the perspective that you bring.

One of the challenges I have, though, with some of the things that you've been saying is that this bill is intended to target those who traffic. It's not intended to target anyone who is a sex worker. If stopping that trafficking from occurring by putting them in prison is not the right thing, what should we be doing, then, with those who commit that horrendous crime?

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Thank you to my colleague for the question. So we can try this: Instead of thinking about my lived experience and what I bring, why don't we think about the expertise and what I bring? I've got my doctorate in education, I oversaw a gender violence prevention portfolio at Laurier, and one of the things that I also was versed in was human rights law and the ways in which we put human rights policies into practise. The big thing is to not be concerned about your intention, but instead about your impact. Community has been telling the government, "This is the impact that we fear," and that's where they want you to do better.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** I rise today to speak to the importance of this bill on combatting human trafficking in all of its forms across Ontario, but also to the concerns surrounding this legislation. Human trafficking is an especially complex issue given that it's often hidden and often trans-national. It happens largely undetected and is under-reported in the justice system. This insidious crime has no place in Ontario's communities, nor anywhere else in the world, for that matter.

We cannot speak about human trafficking without recognizing the extremely gendered nature of this issue: 97% of all reported survivors in Canada between 2009 and 2018 were women and girls. Nearly half of those survivors were between the ages of 18 and 24, and another 28% were under the age of 18. These numbers are staggering and don't even make up the full picture, since they only

represent reported cases. We owe it to the survivors behind these numbers to learn about their stories, assist them and work actively to put an end to these cycles of abuse.

We must also recognize that poverty and systemic oppression play a large role that affects those who are trafficked. In Ottawa, the organization PACT-Ottawa, which stands for Persons Against the Crime of Trafficking in Humans, conducted nine months of research into human trafficking in Ottawa, and their report made this clear. They found that respondents noted that poverty, oppression, homophobia, sexism, unemployment and limited access to resources are among the most common root causes of human trafficking.

Some 24% to 40% of homeless youth in Canada identify as 2SLGBTQ+, and they often have difficulty finding shelters where they can feel safe and respected because they do experience discrimination and violence in these shelters. These members of our communities are often forgotten in conversations around human trafficking, but they are incredibly at risk of abuse.

It's also important to recognize the disproportionate impacts of these crimes on Indigenous women and girls. In my riding of Ottawa–Vanier, we have a large Indigenous population. It is an ongoing priority of mine to improve urban Indigenous services to make our riding more inclusive and accessible to these members of our community.

PACT-Ottawa's report emphasized that Indigenous women in Ottawa are more likely to be survivors of trafficking because they often do not have family support in the city and are disproportionately affected by poverty, racism and marginalization, leaving them increasingly vulnerable.

We cannot forget the impacts of intersecting identities in these conversations. Ending human trafficking requires significant changes to the systems that perpetuate marginalization in our communities. One of the most important factors is housing. Ensuring that every Ontarian has a roof over their head will ensure that all Ontarians have their own safe place to live.

Many find it difficult to understand the true extent of human trafficking as an issue because of its hidden nature. But it is an issue that touches every single one of our communities, and we've heard that repeatedly. Trafficking can happen to anyone, and survivors live among us, go to school, pass through our health care system, take the same buses as us, live in our neighbourhoods. They need us to provide proactive and meaningful protection, prevention and treatment services.

As a parent and school trustee, I was disturbed to learn many years ago that such criminal behaviour was actually present in our schools and in our communities. Such realization opened my eyes to the disturbing realities of many survivors across Ontario and that trafficking was not a far-off problem. When confronted with such circumstances in my role as school trustee, I witnessed its potential effect—disastrous effect, I would say—on individuals, their families and the entire community. Each one of us in this House has a moral and ethical obligation to help

eradicate human trafficking from our communities and ensure that all Ontarians have access to the education, resources and public services required to stay safe and healthy in this province.

I want to talk a little bit about the concerns I have about this bill. So while I was looking forward to discussing this bill at committee and working together to improve it based on what I just mentioned, the timeline for amendments was completely rushed and impractical to the point that I didn't have a chance to present any. With hearings and clause-by-clause happening one day after the other, there was absolutely no time to take the important testimony we heard and propose changes. What is the point of consultation if no one is going to listen to it?

**1750**

What's worse is that the hearing process was very hostile. We've heard "difficult"—I think "hostile" is a better descriptor. The perspective that was brought forward by human rights organizations and sex workers and their advocates on the negative impact this bill would have on their lives was important to hear. They deserved respect and compassion for coming forward and sharing their stories. Instead, Mr. Speaker, I witnessed, with dismay, a series of aggressive questions towards the presenters opposing the bill without consideration for their viewpoint.

It is clear that between this mistreatment of experts and the incredibly rushed committee process, this government does not want to hear about the potential for this bill to do more harm than good. For that reason, I'm going to once again raise those concerns here.

Over 70 legal and human rights organizations have written to the provincial government in opposition to the bill, so let's talk about it. This legislation could have serious implications for sex workers, especially those that are Black, Indigenous and people of colour. It presents the danger of conflating human trafficking with sex work, which can lead to unjustified surveillance, interrogation and sometimes detention and/or deportation of sex workers. The risk of this is even higher for racialized sex workers, who we know are often treated with prejudice by our enforcement and justice system.

Further, there are always risks involved when police are given more powers without any safeguards with specific regard to systemic racism that exists within our system. From that, we clearly and repeatedly heard that the police are not a source of safety for racialized communities, especially Black sex workers, so how will an increase in enforcement affect them?

While I can't say I have the solution to these concerns, they absolutely need to be addressed if we want to combat human trafficking without further harming our communities. To do this, we needed a comprehensive consultation process that included adequate time to propose meaningful changes. It is extremely distressing that this legislation is moving forward without the proper consideration it deserves from the harm it may cause.

Meanwhile, there are even more elements to human trafficking that this government has failed to recognize. With this bill focusing so strongly on enforcement, it

failed to focus sufficiently on measures to improve prevention.

Allow me a moment to address a technological and educational dimension of that has been suggested to truly address human trafficking. Over the years, human trafficking has significantly changed with the use of technology. Trafficking is done by someone the survivor knows and trusts, who grooms them to slowly take control over them. It is within our communities, under our noses, appearing like everyday interactions by people who have known each other for quite some time. Furthermore, modern communication greatly facilitates this by connecting youth to many people without adult or parental supervision. It becomes increasingly easier for traffickers to comb social media to find youth that would be more susceptible to being trafficked. This digital dimension represents an added danger for the exploitation of vulnerable and marginalized youth that needs to be taken into consideration. For every new tool that is introduced to young people, we need to ensure that they understand how to use it in a safe manner, and the most efficient way to address prevention is by teaching students to recognize the warning signs. Explicitly discussing and teaching them about the grooming process that traffickers use will help youth recognize early signs of trafficking and prevent them from becoming victims.

I know that the government previously announced their anti-human trafficking strategy, and I think it is important that we receive ongoing updates on its implementation. Tackling the unique challenges of protecting Ontarians from human trafficking requires responsible enforcement measures and meaningful improvements to social and community services for Ontarians at the margins of our society. All of our ridings are affected by this, and it is crucial that we all collaborate on fighting the cycles of abuse that exist in our communities.

I will be supporting this legislation because I cannot vote against a measure that may help victims of human trafficking. It's too much of an important issue. But I want to make it clear that I am supporting it while still feeling very dismayed by the process this bill has gone through, while feeling strongly about the concerns raised with regard to protecting sex workers, and while hoping that this government will recognize its shortfalls and work to address them urgently.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** We do have some time left for questions.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Thank you to the member opposite. I know we sat together in this committee, and it was hard on all of our hearts. You talked about your daughters, and you mentioned that importance. I think that what we all bring is our emotions. Unfortunately, sometimes it is an emotional debate.

I want to talk a little bit about police powers. You heard some of the deputants speak about police and their opinion of police. My opinion of the police—I thank our front-line officers every day for the jobs they do to make sure our communities do remain safe.

So a question to the member opposite: Does the member agree that our law enforcement partners play an

important role when it comes to stopping trafficking, and does the member support them in their goal?

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Thank you for the question. I was totally expecting it. Of course, police officers are very important in our day-to-day lives, but I think that we cannot ignore what was brought before the committee, because I learned about this myself. I didn't realize how too much enforcement, without safeguards, can have a negative impact on those people, and they were very, very clear. Some of the testimonies were quite eloquent about the concerns raised about the way that anti-trafficking policies are played out on the ground, because what it does is it increases surveillance and unwanted and unsolicited presence of law enforcement in a sex worker's life. Further, it increases antagonism between sex workers and law enforcement.

So I think that the issue is real. I think that both need to coexist. There needs to be a balance and there need to be some safeguards put in place, which are not present in the bill.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you to the member from Ottawa–Vanier for her comments today. I also was a school trustee, and when I was a school trustee, we brought somebody in with lived experience, and she was talking to young women in the schools, and young women came forward to her with experiences of human trafficking that they would never have revealed to anybody else otherwise. I think that speaks to the importance of having the right person speaking.

The criticisms that people heard on this bill is that it's a police-only response, and people are often not going to

come forward to the police. We've also heard—and you mentioned that some of the people in the committee were saying that people will be afraid to talk to the police because of previous experiences. So the police cannot solve human trafficking.

Would you agree that we need to take multiple approaches and not a police-only approach?

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Thank you for the question. It's very important. I think that any problem in our society needs to be addressed at the root of it—like, the root cause. We need to think about what is causing this problem and how we can address it.

For sure, education is a good start. You take kids when they're young, and before they get influenced and dragged into some very negative influence, you teach them, and that's how you instill prevention. I think that, looking at the root, we also need a response to housing, which is a big issue for people feeling safe, and I totally appreciate the comments from the member from Kitchener Centre, who talked extensively about safety. So we need resources to deal with addictions. That is a problem, as well, that makes those people most vulnerable being dragged into human trafficking. We also need resources for mental health services, because those are at the root of the problem that—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you. Unfortunately, there isn't enough time for further questions right now; however, when this debate is brought back to the Legislature, you will have time to respond to other questions. That opportunity will be afforded to you.

*Third reading debate deemed adjourned.*

*Report continues in volume B.*







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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
<b>McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)</b>	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
<b>Nicholls, Rick (PC)</b>	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Rod (PC)	Ajax	
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
<b>Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)</b>	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)</b>	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
<b>Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)</b>	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
<b>Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

**Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna Skelly  
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett  
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto  
Randy Hillier, Jane McKenna  
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa  
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly  
Peter Tabuns  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts  
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho  
Catherine Fife, Mitzie Hunter  
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa  
David Piccini, Jeremy Roberts  
Amarjot Sandhu, Dave Smith  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner  
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey  
Guy Bourgouin, Stephen Crawford  
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover  
Mike Harris, Sheref Sabawy  
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner  
Daisy Wai  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian  
Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson  
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe  
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin  
Norman Miller, Rick Nicholls  
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard  
Marit Stiles  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard  
Will Bouma, Lucille Collard  
Parm Gill, Daryl Kramp  
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison  
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh  
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Kevin Yarde  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam  
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau  
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi  
Michael Mantha, Jim McDonell  
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff  
Kaleed Rasheed, Donna Skelly  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas  
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett  
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais  
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto  
France Gélinas, Christine Hogarth  
Daryl Kramp, Taras Natyshak  
Michael Parsa  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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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