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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 31 May 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 31 mai 2021

Report continued from volume A.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Sorry, it's like a shift change going on in the House right now.

The member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker. I have the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill today, to recognize that human trafficking is, unfortunately, today's modern-day slavery and we do want to put an end to it. This bill helps us take a step forward to it. It complements many other measures that this government has taken to date and, as we've heard, by different ministers who have worked on this file, whether it's our current Minister of Infrastructure, the member for Kawartha, and her really early work on the Saving the Girl Next Door Act; whether it's our Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and what she's doing in her sector. As we know, a lot of these women are being trafficked through hotels, motels and Airbnbs, which are covered by this piece of legislation and further regulations to come. We also have our minister for women, who has been relentless in her campaigns to stomp out any forms of trafficking—I've heard a lot from her and the work she's doing in her file—and of course, we've got our Attorney General and my colleague and next-door neighbour, the MPP for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte, who has also done work in his file as Attorney General to ensure that things like the monies taken from crime or what have you is actually going towards victims and those who need those funds the most for their recovery.

But when I speak about this bill to members in my riding, too, you can see the amount of hope that it provides for them. For example, the Barrie women's and children's shelter—it complements all the work that they're doing. Of course, it also helps a lot of the 400 corridor and all the

women and the campaigns that are involved in that to clamp down on trafficking, because we know that it happens so much on that 400 corridor.

I've recently been able to speak to different people who are encouraging more people to step out, to know the signs of trafficking. This bill goes a long way for that as well and encourages people to recognize what the signs are so that they, as citizens, also have a way to be empowered to take action to combat human trafficking, which is so important, because it's not just our law enforcement that we have to train—and they're doing a great job at it—but our hotel workers as well. We talk about that as well, so they have the training and they know what to look out for. But it's upon every citizen. As we often say, if you see something, do something. But when you do see that, what do you do? You need that education and you need an avenue, so now, through this government, we do have those avenues. So I think that is very vital to recognize, Speaker.

In addition to having those avenues and helping those victims, it's also being able to give them that next leg up in life. There are women that I've spoken to in my area who were involved in trafficking who have moved on to a second career. They were really grateful to be able to be pulled out of trafficking, but now they can move on to a lifestyle that they much more prefer and they don't have to be worried for their life or the danger. Many of those kids who are now going to be safe as well—I remember one mother was telling me that her daughter was receiving text messages and she was being lured, and she thought that person was her daughter's boyfriend the whole time, and it wasn't. He was luring her to the GTA from a rural area and trying to ply her into human trafficking. Thank God that did not happen. I often think about that every day when we talk about legislation like this.

On that note, I will end my remarks. I know I have many colleagues that want to speak to this bill as well.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Unfortunately, I thought that the member would speak further. I was hoping to hear some details about the bill. I was hoping to hear her position on the Airbnbs and why the government didn't think that it was important to enforce Airbnbs in the inspections.

I also know that the Airbnbs, coincidentally, had been lobbying the government at the same time as this bill was being prepared—and the concerns that came out of that throughout the committee process.

So I would like to hear from the member her position on why Airbnbs were not included in this legislation—for the police to be able to track folks through the Airbnb process.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you for the question.

I think you have to look at the amount of work that has been done in this current legislation—the drafting, the consultation. Much of the things that the member opposite has also mentioned will be fleshed out in regulation, as well. So a lot of hard work has been done by multiple ministries, many different people. We've heard from various stakeholders—I can start naming the quotes of so many people who are supportive from my riding alone.

I think we need to do the right thing here and move forward and protect these women and people being trafficked.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Once again, it's so important to be here for this debate tonight.

I just want to ask the member—you mentioned having consultations in your riding. What did you hear from some of the people in your riding about this really important legislation that we certainly want to pass tonight?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: One of my colleagues who's going to be speaking tonight very passionately about this topic, from Mississauga, actually took the time out of her day and out of her busy constituency schedule to come to Barrie–Innisfil to do a round table with me. We heard from people from all walks of life, like I said, whether it was the women and children's centre, whether it was people helping within the transgender community—because they're also impacted by human trafficking. She really took time to come listen to all these people, compile all the consultations. She also worked quite hard on this particular bill—as well as, of course, the Solicitor General and all her work.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm glad to stand and ask a question with regard to the government's Bill 251 on anti-human trafficking.

I'm wondering if you all took time to make a distinction between human trafficking and sex trafficking. I'm wondering why labour or organ trafficking was not included in this bill that you claim is very comprehensive.

Similar to my colleague, I'm also wondering why Airbnbs, which I heard are disproportionately the spot where sex trafficking happens, were not included in this piece of legislation and if it has to do, quite frankly, with the Conservative government's behind-the-door friendship with this sector.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Just to answer her question, Airbnbs were consulted. They were included. They will continue to be consulted through the regulation process. This was covered in committee.

The other thing that was covered in committee was the distinction between the different types of workers. I wasn't on that committee, but certainly I heard that it was an interesting position that the members of the opposition took on that specific topic. I won't say more.

But I will say what we believe on this side of the House is to protect these people who are fleeing that particular trade—they're fleeing human trafficking. So we have a registry for hotels, and we're working with stakeholders, including Airbnb, to stomp this out.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I was part of quite a few of the committee meetings that we had on this bill, and that's one of the things that did come up a few times—and especially, I believe, the members of the opposition did move a couple of amendments to include Airbnbs. But I think one thing they don't fully realize is that they're not necessarily provincially regulated. Municipally, a short-term rental or an Airbnb or a Vrbo or whatever other company that might be using, or whatever platform you might be using to rent these out—they're all different in every municipal jurisdiction, and they're all regulated differently. So to put just a blanket statement in saying these particular ones—they may not be included as a short-term rental in some language of some bills.

I just wanted to point that out to the member. I know that she takes a very keen interest in this. It's something that she and I have talked about at length multiple times, human trafficking, and she's a big proponent of where we are today. Hopefully, she can maybe explain to us a few more things that are great about this bill. I'm looking forward to seeing it pass.

1810

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I thank the member. He definitely paid attention in his civics class, because I think often there's confusion between regulation and legislation and what we can actually put in legislation and what we can't; and how consulting is so important after legislation is passed so that we can draft the regulations. I know it's very technical, but I think it's upon all of us to understand the fundamentals. I know the member here has clearly been paying attention, so thank you.

This bill definitely goes further than just what we see on the surface of the legislation. It complements, again, more of the things we're doing. Much of it is following the money—what we're doing complements some of the actions Conservative governments have done at the federal level, too, in terms of the money laundering that occurs a lot with human trafficking—but also things like ID. You look through the work our Minister of Consumer Services is doing through making things easier for ServiceOntario, but it also affects those people who need ID after they've been trafficked to start their new life as well. So you see all levels of government coming together to help these women come out of trafficking and start their new life.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the member, and also to the questions and comments. There is, obviously, an issue with Airbnbs. It was identified that here is the potential problem. In your consultations and in your discussions, have you come up with any ideas on how to encompass Airbnbs? Because they're obviously part of the issue, and to just leave a hole and say, "We can't cover that and we're going to walk away," is actually not addressing the issue. So have you come up with any ideas on how Airbnbs can be brought in and be a part of the solution, instead of part of the problem?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: In short, yes; we're working with the people that will help us come up with those solutions.

As we've heard in previous questioning, every municipality, every region has different ways they operate. Airbnbs and other sectors that offer accommodations all operate very separately as well. So it's prudent of a government, rather than doing a blanket approach that actually might miss certain components like Airbnb components—instead of missing those in blanket legislation, actually drill down on the details in regulation, which is exactly what we plan to do.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'm happy to ask another question of the member. Thank you again for allowing us to speak today on this important legislation. I want to ask the member, why is it important that this legislation passes now? What does it mean to you as a representative, and why would you think this should pass today?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you. I think the importance of this legislation being passed today is, it's one less young girl who is being trafficked into a life she does not want to enter. It's one less parent that has to spend a sleepless night because they know that their son or daughter is being trafficked. And it's the countless families who have been victims of human trafficking and the amounts of help they've needed to come out of that: mental health supports, physical supports, financial supports. It's one less person that has to endure that, and today we're making a difference.

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

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to the member opposite. I really support stopping human trafficking, especially the issues we're having in Ontario and Sudbury being a hub to the east and the west. I want to know if the government is going to reinstate the funding that they clawed back from legal aid, because that's really going to help a lot of people who are trying to escape human trafficking.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you for that question. What I'll say to the member is, we've taken very prudent actions when it comes to victim services funds. In fact, there is going to be access to financial supports for many of these victims of human trafficking, amongst other victims of crime, thanks to the changes we've made not only in this legislation but previous ones as well—the work the Attorney General is doing through his portfolio that allows for more access for victims to have funding. And those who decided to make money off of crime—those funds will also be taken into a victim services fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): We don't have time for another question and answer so, further debate?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Before I rise today, before I actually say my comments directly about the piece of legislation before us, like many others in the House, I do want to take a moment just to acknowledge the grave injustice that has happened to our sisters and brothers in the Indigenous community, with the tragic and unjust information we learned last week. The remains of 215 children were found in a mass grave in Kamloops, BC, at a residential school: Indigenous children who were taken from their homes, robbed of their culture and their identity,

and ultimately killed. All of Canada bears the grave weight of this injustice, and each and every one of us must carry the weight of this failure on the path towards justice.

Speaker, today we are here to speak about the human trafficking act, a bill that has come forward. It's a bill that I spoke about, where I attended at length in committee, and I have to say that this was a committee that was incredibly eye-opening because of the information that was provided, the different perspectives that were provided. Ultimately, everyone had the same focus and goal: People wanted to ensure that no one is exploited, no one is facing any form of harm or any form of violence in their workplaces, in this area of sex work. They wanted to make sure that people are protected across the board.

But hearing the testimony and the evidence provided in committee opened my eyes to, what are the ways we can ensure that people who are being exploited in those areas of work and who do not choose to act in those areas of work—what support systems do they need to ensure that they can exit safely? And what we're seeing with this piece of legislation and what we heard from a lot of folks in committee was particularly an emphasis that the Conservative government is putting forward on policing. We recognize, of course, that you need to ensure that people have the ability to make sure folks in any field, quite frankly, are having the correct checks and balances and the accurate or necessary oversight. But what's really needed for folks who are in exploitative areas of work is empowerment. And empowerment can often take the form of access to resources, and access to resources can look like a variety of different things.

We know that if people have access to housing, if people have access to mental health supports, health care, if they have access to these kinds of support systems, it ensures that they are less likely to be put in exploitative situations. Look to the fact that, if we really want to ensure that people are able to access these resources, often an increased fear of policing can limit those people's ability to actually get the supports they need to exit a line of work that they find exploitative or they find problematic.

So if we look at how we can address issues that folks are facing in this area, we can really look at a solution which is about providing people the resources and supports they need to live a better life. And an increase of policing can have an adverse effect towards that, because ultimately it can create a climate of fear. We're talking about areas which can involve folks who are undocumented, who may have a fear of being able to access resources or are instead being faced with deportation, and that can result in people being put in further precarious situations. So I think we need to start examining those gaps when we look at this piece of legislation and start examining how that can ultimately result in communities that are potentially already marginalized being over-marginalized.

Also, this issue has come up time and again about Airbnb, and I think it's a really important point to examine and to look at, because we know that folks who are being exploited in this area of work can—we know that Airbnbs are an area in which that often is increased. It's an area in

which people are further subjected to a lack of checks and balances because Airbnbs are often a location in which this kind of exploitation can occur.

It was problematic. We in the NDP put forward a variety of amendments towards this piece of legislation to say, hey, let's ensure that Airbnbs are having the correct checks and balances put in place, and the government refused to take those measures into action.

1820

I heard earlier from the government, having an argument around jurisdiction and who has the correct domain to address this issue around Airbnb. I would argue that if we have the ability, from a provincial jurisdiction, to have any impact on ensuring that people are not being exploited, that's a good thing and that's something we should do. Instead of playing this whole kind of game of hot potato in terms of a jurisdiction, I think we can just say that the province obviously has a domain in which they have an impact on Airbnbs and we should do whatever we can, to whatever extent we can do, to ensure that those checks and balances are put in place so that Airbnbs can be held to account as well.

I think what we really need to understand when we look at this piece of legislation, as well, is that it kind of comes to an approach or a difference in perspective. So the perspective that I would argue and I would put forth is that, to help those who are feeling exploited in this area of work and want to leave—or any area of work, quite frankly—you can take a punitive approach or you can take a supportive approach. If there are people who want to leave an area of work, creating a further negative environment or greater punitive approach towards those individuals will push them further into the margins and will actually probably have a contrary effect to what the government wants.

If the government is putting forward legislation to ensure that people are not being exploited in this area of work, which is appropriate, then they should ensure that that actual end is being meted out. But instead, if we are seeing, as per the testimony of this reporting committee, the potential for people to be further marginalized, further pushed to the margins, then that's contrary to the intention of this legislation, it's contrary to the intention of what should be the spirit of this bill and it's actually going to have an adverse effect to those same marginalized folks.

So I would ask the government to reconsider that particular part of—not that particular part, but the spirit overall in terms of how we can help people in any area of work who are being exploited. You don't help them by creating a further punitive environment. You help them by creating more supports and access to more resources. That's what we heard time and again in committee. We heard folks who were saying directly that if folks choose to exit that field, they need to be given resources, supports, access to mental health, access to housing, access to those kinds of factors to get them out—not a climate of fear which can result in people further going into an area in which they have a lack of access, and potentially, for those who are in exploitive situations, being further exploited.

It's also important to keep in mind that—when I was at committee, I was really struck by the perspective and just the passion that people had around ensuring people were protected and people had that access to protection. It really did come down toward a difference in what that protection looked like and in terms of how that protection can actually be executed out, how it can be put into power and put into place. We did see time and again that difference, that dichotomy of one perspective of an increase in police powers and one perspective in terms of increasing resources. I think that's an important distinction, that we have an opportunity to ensure that that gap doesn't exist. But the government has not chosen to bring in that kind of approach towards this piece of legislation.

I think that, overall, it is also important to keep in mind that when we look at the different stakeholders who are involved and their perspectives—it did really strike me to see that often when we come to this assembly, it's often by its very design an adversarial and confrontational way in which we're set up, even in the fact that we have an opposition and a government. I always look up to a hawk that tells me to look at the government with vigour and really examine the actions of the government, and the government looks up to an owl, to teach them to work with wisdom.

When I looked at this piece of legislation, when I heard people in committee speak about it, everyone was coming from that perspective. It wasn't from an adversarial perspective; instead, there were folks who wanted the same thing, in terms of wanting to make sure that no one was being exploited and no one was being put in precarious situations, but they wanted to make sure it was done in a way that was, from their perspective, actually going to have that impact.

For me, hearing the opinions of those who had a lot of direct, hands-on experience in this field and the continual response, continuously going back to that need towards access, towards resources, I found really compelling. I think that when we talk about anyone in any marginalized area, it's that nurturing, supportive place which can allow people to have the greatest ability to ensure that they are living in a way in which they are free and sovereign and not being impacted by potentially exploitative forces or powers being put against them.

I also think it's important to keep in mind that at committee, not only was it the perspectives that I found really stark and also compelling, but also, when you hear about the fact that, you know, government has an opportunity right now to ensure that they put forward legislation—and I've said this before, as well, that we are lawmakers, and as lawmakers we have an opportunity to make good law or bad law. I think, also, when we talk about any profession—when we talk about bakers, bakers make good bread. Builders should build good houses. Lawmakers should make good law.

The issue was brought forward in committee a variety of times that if you have a piece of legislation which is going to go contrary towards the ultimate intended purpose of the bill, then you have the ultimate impact of the

equivalent of a baker making a bad piece of bread. We should be thoughtful in committee and in the pieces of legislation we put forward, and whether we have intentions which are positive, if the legislation is not written correctly, the impact of it can result in actual negative impacts of the piece of legislation, and that's the concern that was brought forward in committee time and again: that the result could very well be a further marginalization of people who are already marginalized, and people who need supports having that fear of the supports.

That's something I could really resonate with, because the solution towards all issues can't just always be greater policing. The solution needs to be, in addition to making sure there's oversight, supports for vulnerable communities. That's something that when you have an opportunity to do so, it's important to make sure that our responsibilities as lawmakers are being carried out. I was really paying attention towards those comments that were brought forward in committee, and I think that's something that should be taken into account in this House, and in this piece of legislation as well.

It's important to keep in mind, as well, that when we envision a society in which we hope to make sure everyone is able to live out their dreams and their hopes, I think that really comes down to envisioning a society where people have the resources they need to live their lives. I think that irrespective of what area of work you're in, if people don't have decent housing, if people don't have access to appropriate health care, if they don't have access to supports they need, then—we had this conversation about what is the role of government and how we can actually help impact people's lives, and how we can impact their lives for the better. I would argue that government's best role should be in providing that support, and when we actually think of a noble society, a just society, it is one in which every individual has the ability to access the resources they need to live their best lives, without fear of reprisal, without fear of potentially facing harm, without fear of unduly having their liberties taken away from them. That, I really think, is the core of a lot of the criticisms that were put forward with this piece of legislation. I hope that the government understands that that's something that they have an opportunity to address.

And, really, this issue of Airbnb is something that I think is really important, because we heard in committee time and again that that is an area of concern. If the government, provincially, if we have the opportunity in any way, shape or form to address this issue around Airbnb, then we have a duty to do so. I think it would be not becoming of our positions as lawmakers if we did not take every opportunity available to us to ensure that people are getting the protections that they need to ensure that they're not being put in any harm or danger.

1830

With that being said, Speaker, I look forward to the questions and comments put forward.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It's always, as I said, good to be able to rise on some important legislation, such as Bill

251. I was sitting at committee with the honourable member, and we heard the tragic stories, talking about young women, 13-year-old girls, 13-year-old children, who have been affected by human trafficking, and those parents out there who worry for their children's safety and go to bed wondering where their children are. It's very sad for any mother, any father, any grandfather, any aunt or uncle to have to have that on their shoulders. So this piece of legislation is an amazing step forward to help save some of these young women, so I ask the member opposite, will you be supporting this important piece of legislation today?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I think our position as a caucus has been very clear in terms of the position we're going to take with this piece of legislation. We're going to continue to always advocate to ensure that people are given the supports they need, and specifically we are looking for the government to take a really direct look at Airbnbs and ensure that that's something that is being addressed in this piece of legislation as well.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to thank my colleague from Brampton East for his excellent presentation. I know that you talked about support for the most vulnerable members of our community. My question is, how do we help them? This government hasn't been doing much about supporting the most vulnerable members of our community in terms of putting in resources and providing a lot of support when it comes to legal support, when it comes to direct support. I would like to ask you, how could we improve it and put in complete ideas to support those who need our support, the most vulnerable members of our community?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Actually, we heard about this a lot in committee, as well. Specifically, aside from the basic necessities, one issue that was brought up time and again was legal aid and how cuts to legal aid are actually something that directly impact people's ability to make sure that they have access to the resources they need to live a dignified and free life full of liberty. I think that the government could immediately reverse their cuts to legal aid and ensure that legal aid is properly funded. That's something we heard in committee, and I think that would be one step that the government could take of many to ensure that people who are in marginalized or exploitative situations have the support they need, to make sure that they're living their best lives, that they have access to the resources that they need, to ensure that they have the support systems they need to not be put in an exploitative situation.

Legal aid is something which is described—rightly so—as the backbone, the pillar of people and their ability to access resources. Legal aid is something that ensures that people have the ability to get the legal representation that they need when they're put in precarious situations, and I think that's something, at the least, that the government could take into account. That's something we heard in committee, as well, that that was a really impactful and important way that the government could directly address this issue around folks who, in general, are just in

marginalized or exploitative situations, and how they can live their best lives or better lives.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, I just wanted to give my sincere condolences to MPPs Mamakwa and Morrison, as well as all First Nations communities across Ontario and the country. It's a terrible thing that was uncovered, and I'm glad that our government is taking steps to ensure that truth and reconciliation are met.

With respect to the member opposite's speech, Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to what the member had to say, and I just wanted to read a quick quote here. This is a quote from Coralee McGuire-Cyrette, who is the executive director of the Ontario Native Women's Association. Coralee says:

"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 just wanted to ask the member, Mr. Speaker: Given the critical nature of a provincial anti-human-trafficking strategy, does the member opposite agree regarding the importance of establishing a legislative requirement to review the strategy?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: In committee, we actually heard from both First Nations and Indigenous communities who described the perils and the potential exploitative situations that are faced by folks in that community with respect to the legislation put forward. It's important to keep that perspective in mind. It's something that was very eye-opening and something that provided a lot of knowledge to me in respect to the systemic inequities that are faced with respect to the legislation put forward. It was something that was important, and as a House and as lawmakers, we need to ensure that all people in all areas are provided with the supports they need to ensure that they're living their best and most free lives.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's actually a two-part question. Maybe you could talk a little more on the cuts to legal aid and the effects that had; but also, what role do the social services agencies, outside of the police, play in combatting human trafficking?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Thank you so much for that question. I do really want to take a moment just to acknowledge MPP Gates and his amazing advocacy for his community. He's someone who just fights tirelessly for folks across the region in the Niagara area. He's just a champion across the board, so I want to thank him for his continual advocacy.

Applause.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Yes, he definitely deserves a round of applause.

When we talk about legal aid particularly, I've spoken about this issue time and again in this house. I am critic to

the Attorney General, and we heard the impact of cuts to legal aid: how much it devastated people who are in marginalized positions, people who are at the margins of our society, and how legal aid is really like this invisible support system that helps people across the board.

We heard about it in committee time and again. That's something, that specific issue of legal aid, that directly impacts the piece of legislation, because the people who are in exploitative situations, who need access to support, often need access to legal supports. When we don't ensure that we as a government and we as a society are providing that level of support to individuals, it can result in, really, that foundation of our society being rocked. It's something where you don't realize how important it is until it's something that you interact or engage with, and that's why I really want to just reinforce this point, that legal aid support is something that will help people across the board, and it's something that, as a government, we have an obligation to truly make sure is properly funded.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: I just want to build off the earlier comments from the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I thought she asked a pretty clear question, and certainly didn't get a very clear response back. That was whether or not the member from, I believe, Brampton East and his colleagues would be supporting this legislation here today. He said his colleagues have been quite clear about this, but I remember that during second reading debate they weren't particularly clear. They weren't particularly clear during committee and they haven't been particularly clear so far during third reading here. So I'll give him an opportunity again: Will you and your colleagues be supporting this legislation here today?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: It's not our job to open up the ears of the government. We've been very clear in our position with respect to this piece of legislation, and we are looking specifically towards and really hoping that this issue of Airbnbs is something that this government can take a stronger position on. We know that people in committee really described, as well, that folks in Airbnbs can be exploited and it can be an area of exploitation for folks pertaining to the piece of legislation. We hope that the government listens to the evidence, that the Conservative government listens to the evidence put forward and makes the necessary changes to allow for greater protections for people who need it the most.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There's time for one more very quick question. The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, as well, to the member from Brampton East. I'm just curious, because we have not a lot of time: Why wouldn't Airbnbs or short-term rentals be part of this? It's a growing area—we know it is—for human trafficking.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: In my short time, I also want to just acknowledge the member, MPP West. He's just such a strong advocate for the folks in Sudbury. He's someone who fights tirelessly for his community, and I'm honoured to be alongside him. It's an honour to have him.

Applause.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Yes, give him a round of applause. He deserves it. He's a fantastic MPP.

1840

I don't know why the government didn't take this position to include Airbnbs. It's clear-cut, and it's something that should have been included.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I'm honoured to rise today to speak to Bill 251. With the recent news of the tragic discovery of 215 youth who had fallen victim at the hands of the residential school system, we are once again reminded of the disproportionate dangers that our Indigenous communities are faced with. The case of human trafficking is absolutely no different. We must be committed to eliminating the unique problems facing Indigenous communities that put them at greater risk and vulnerability.

C'est un plaisir de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour parler du projet de loi 251, la Loi sur la lutte contre la traite des personnes. Tout le monde dans cette Assemblée peut convenir que l'exploitation des êtres humains et, en particulier, des enfants est un crime terrible et que nous devrions faire tout ce qui est en notre pouvoir pour y mettre un terme.

La traite des personnes à des fins d'exploitation sexuelle est un crime particulièrement atroce et, malheureusement, elle constitue la majorité des cas de la traite des personnes en Ontario. L'aspect le plus troublant de ce crime est son impact disproportionné sur certaines de nos populations les plus vulnérables, notamment les communautés autochtones, les immigrants récents, la communauté 2SLGBTQQIA+, les personnes en situation sociale ou économique difficile et, en particulier, les enfants.

Plus de 70% des victimes de la traite des êtres humains ont moins de 25 ans, et l'âge moyen de recrutement dans la traite sexuelle est aussi jeune que 13 ans. C'est une statistique déchirante qui montre clairement pourquoi il est si important de faire tout ce qui est possible pour riposter. Nous devons protéger nos populations jeunes et vulnérables et nous devons nous assurer que les forces de l'ordre disposent des outils dont elles ont besoin pour traduire les auteurs de ce crime en justice.

Ce gouvernement est déterminé à s'attaquer à ce problème, et je suis fière des mesures que notre gouvernement a déjà prises pour lutter contre la traite des personnes en Ontario. Nous ouvrons clairement la voie au Canada pour faire face à cette menace croissante qui représente un grave danger pour notre société.

L'année dernière, nous avons publié une stratégie de lutte contre la traite des personnes sur cinq ans, et nous investissons 307 millions de dollars de 2020 à 2025 pour la mettre en oeuvre. La stratégie met fortement l'accent sur la prévention à travers des campagnes de sensibilisation qui éduquent le public et les enfants, en particulier, pour qu'ils reconnaissent les signes de la traite et sachent comment la signaler. Ces mesures sont essentielles pour protéger les enfants et les jeunes de l'Ontario.

La stratégie met également l'accent sur le soutien aux victimes et aux survivants, en particulier ceux des groupes

marginalisés. Cela inclut en particulier nos communautés autochtones sur lesquelles la traite des êtres humains a eu un impact disproportionné et dévastateur.

Encore une fois, ces soutiens sont un élément essentiel de la lutte contre la traite des personnes en Ontario, et je suis fière que notre gouvernement aille de l'avant pour les mettre en oeuvre.

In addition to these preventative and support measures, however, our government's strategy also focuses on ensuring that traffickers are held accountable for their crimes. In contrast to what some critics have had to say recently, we remain absolutely clear that law enforcement has an important role to play in protecting Ontarians from crimes like human trafficking. Our brave men and women in law enforcement crucially work to investigate suspected instances of human trafficking and bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice under the fullest extent of the law.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Peel police, and specifically Constable Joy Brown and Inspector Mark Dapat for their incredible work and leadership in the region of Peel with their anti-human trafficking vice unit, their train-the-trainer program and giving training sessions for the Greater Toronto Hotel Association. I'm very proud of the work that is being done in my region of Peel.

Unfortunately, human trafficking has been an issue in Ontario for a long time, and we will have to keep continually addressing it to ensure that Ontario's children are protected from exploitation. That is why it is so important for the government to have a strategy in place to address human trafficking. While our government has already established a strategy, Bill 251 goes even further by requiring that future governments always have a strategy in place. By enacting the Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, Bill 251 ensures that Ontario will always have a strategy in place and support the victims of this crime.

Additionally, the strategy will have to be reviewed every five years, ensuring that it remains up to date. As part of the review process to ensure the strength of laws working to fight human trafficking, the government is required to consult with the public and with relevant community organizations and other levels of government. This will ensure that the strategy remains relevant and appropriate for the current context and that it is integrated with other jurisdictions in Canada, because we know that traffickers do not know municipal boundaries and they most certainly do not know provincial boundaries either.

This new legislation also highlights the importance of listening to the lived experiences of victims of human trafficking, as well as the role that intersectionality plays in victims' experiences as they recover. Casandra Diamond, a survivor of sex trafficking and founder of Bridge-North, had this to say: "Voices of survivors and those with lived experiences are being heard. For years, we have been asking to have peer-led services, and today because of our government's strong and wise leadership, it is a reality." Listening to the experiences of survivors when making policy on this issue is extremely important, and I am so glad that this bill recognizes this.

To fit within the dynamic cultural mosaic that Ontario is built upon, we must also ensure that victim supports are provided in a culturally sensitive way, and I'm happy to say that this piece of legislation highlights this as well. This bill will ensure that Ontario always has a strategy in place to prevent trafficking, protect victims and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Et comme je l'ai mentionné plus tôt, il est également important de veiller à ce que nos agents de police soient également en mesure d'agir rapidement pour protéger les victimes et traduire les criminels en justice. Le projet de loi 251 apportera des modifications pour garantir que la police dispose des données et des informations dont elle a besoin pour mener les enquêtes nécessaires sur les cas présumés de traite de personnes.

La loi oblige les hôtels et autres entreprises prescrites à recueillir les noms et adresses de leurs clients et à tenir un registre de ces renseignements pendant une période de temps prescrite. Ils seront également tenus de fournir ces informations à l'application de la loi après avoir reçu une ordonnance d'un juge de le faire. Ces informations permettront à nos forces de l'ordre d'enquêter efficacement sur les cas présumés de traite de personnes, garantissant que nos courageux premiers intervenants peuvent protéger rapidement les victimes de ces crimes.

Contrairement à ce que certains détracteurs de cette législation disent dans les médias, cela est extrêmement important, compte tenu des graves préjudices et abus que subissent les victimes de la traite des personnes de la part des trafiquants.

I'd like to actually address some of the concerns that I've seen in recent weeks in the media regarding this legislation, with one criticism in particular that has been top of mind. One advocate said that this bill, "Dangerously conflates sex work with human trafficking," making this legislation "really, extremely harmful." You know what is harmful, Speaker? Innocent prepubescent or pubescent 13-year-old little girls being lured and groomed into a form of modern-day sex slaves. This is intentionally done before these children fully understand the idea of consent and before they develop their own sexuality and sexual boundaries. These little girls are often being drugged and developing long-term substance abuse and addiction issues, having to perform sex acts with strangers one or multiple at a time, several times a day in a hotel, motel or Airbnb, with these children completely losing autonomy over their bodies and personhood. Meanwhile, their trafficker holds their documents, steals their money or earnings this child may have, or threatens them with the release of sexually explicit images to their family, friends or community. That is harmful, Speaker.

1850

Human trafficking presents a grave threat to the safety of our children; it is as simple as that. So to insinuate that this legislation, with so much broad support from children's aid societies, from community human trafficking advocates, from our law enforcement and from survivors themselves, can be boiled down into conflating sex work with human trafficking not only jeopardizes the safety of

our children but also diminishes the horrors lived by its survivors.

The statistics are damning, and the trends are worrying. Our children, especially children from minority communities and vulnerable settings, are at profound risk from the threat of traffickers who want nothing more than to steal their innocence and sell their bodies against their will—because you can sell cocaine only once, but you can sell a young girl over and over and over again. There is no consent involved in selling a child for sex. I will repeat that: There is no consent involved in selling a child for sex. And this government will not stand for it. The vast, vast majority of Ontarians agree with us that strong and immediate action is needed.

The purpose of this bill is to deter human trafficking, support investigations, and help identify and locate victims of human trafficking. We are not seeking to criminalize sex work—and, by the way, the Criminal Code is a federal jurisdiction, of course. In no way does this legislation seeking to fight human trafficking present a campaign by this government to monitor sex workers, nor is it a way for the government to police marginalized communities. It is quite the contrary.

Maintenant, monsieur le Président, il est important de reconnaître que même si la police nécessite des outils plus solides, comme je l'ai décrit, ces pouvoirs peuvent aussi être abusés, ce qui entraînera un plus grand préjudice pour les personnes impliquées.

Lors de l'examen de ce projet de loi en comité, nous avons entendu des organisations de défense des droits de la personne qui craignaient que le pouvoir supplémentaire donné aux forces de l'ordre d'agir rapidement nous mènera à des situations où les populations vulnérables et racialisées seraient négativement touchées par ces pouvoirs. Compte tenu des expériences historiques, ce sont des préoccupations légitimes. C'est pourquoi je suis heureuse de soutenir les amendements visant à mettre en oeuvre des exigences de rapport supplémentaires.

Les modifications exigent désormais que tout agent qui formule une demande urgente d'accéder rapidement à l'information prépare un rapport écrit expliquant les raisons pour lesquelles la demande urgente était nécessaire. Chaque chef de police devra également préparer un rapport annuel indiquant le nombre de demandes urgentes qui ont été formulées et les enquêtes sur la traite des êtres humains auxquelles elles se rapportent.

Ces nouvelles exigences en matière de signalement sont un moyen productif de garantir que la police dispose des pouvoirs dont elle a besoin pour suivre rapidement les pistes et éloigner les victimes de situations dangereuses, tout en assurant une surveillance adéquate. Ces rapports permettront un examen efficace des mesures prises par les agents et veilleront à ce que tout abus soit mis en lumière, et qu'ils puissent également être utilisés pour éclairer les discussions sur les futures modifications de ces pouvoirs. De plus, le projet de loi donne au gouvernement le pouvoir d'exiger de certaines entreprises qu'elles fournissent une formation ou diffusent des informations sur la traite des personnes.

Le gouvernement donne aux inspecteurs de plus grands pouvoirs pour accéder aux informations et pour interroger les personnes afin de garantir le respect de ces exigences. Ce faisant, nous veillerons à ce qu'un plus grand nombre de gens puissent reconnaître les signes de la traite des personnes et à ce que tout le monde dans la province travaille ensemble pour se protéger les uns et les autres de l'exploitation, ce qui a été un aspect central dans mes conversations avec les parties prenantes sur cette question.

Une fois de plus, cependant, il est important que l'on n'abuse pas de ces pouvoirs. C'est pourquoi je suis heureuse de soutenir les amendements apportés en comité pour garantir que les informations demandées par règlement sont à la fois pertinentes et nécessaires. Les modifications garantiront que nous protégeons les renseignements personnels des Ontariens et n'exigerons que la divulgation d'informations essentielles.

Dans le processus de présentation de ce projet de loi à la Chambre et de son adoption, j'apprécie la place du comité pour aider à peaufiner et à améliorer les méthodes que nous cherchons à utiliser pour lutter contre la traite des personnes. Je tiens à remercier tous les intervenants de la communauté qui ont pris le temps de prendre la parole aux audiences du comité, ainsi que tous les membres de la Chambre qui y ont participé également.

En fin de compte, nous avons tous le même objectif : vaincre la traite des personnes dans la province de l'Ontario et faire du projet de loi 251 le meilleur travail possible, ce qui est essentiel au processus démocratique.

The most important part of this bill, what I want to spend some time discussing, are schedules 3 and 4, which focus on children and youth, some of the most vulnerable people in our society and, sadly, those who are most often the victims of sex trafficking. The bill allows child protection workers and peace officers to bring a child victim of sex trafficking to another location for up to 12 hours for the purpose of offering services and supports to the child. This means that these children will be removed quickly from their vulnerable situation, protected from further exploitation and supervised by expert care to ensure both their physical and mental health are prioritized.

Children's aid societies play a significant role in protecting children from sex trafficking and supporting the victims of this crime, and this bill further enables them to do this important work and ensure that our children are protected. Endorsements by the likes of Peel Children's Aid Society CEO Rav Bains provided to my office that speak highly of the work done by our government thus far in the fight against human trafficking are particularly special to me. Mr. Bains had this to say: "Peel Children's Aid Society is pleased to see the government of Ontario taking a stand against human trafficking and strengthening protections for vulnerable children and youth. We see the devastating consequences of this heinous crime on young victims, and fully support measures aimed at prevention, and prosecuting those who exploit children. We continue to work closely with our valued community partners to support victims and improve the lives of children, youth and families in Peel region."

As the member for Mississauga Centre, I remain committed to continuing our work with Peel Children's Aid Society and other children's aid societies across our great province to protect children and youth in Ontario. That is the essence of this legislation. Stakeholder quotes like these both inspire me and motivate me, and they show the good that's possible when a government for the people listens to its partners in the community to tackle important issues.

Le projet de loi 251 est un pas en avant important dans la lutte contre la traite des personnes, et je suis heureuse de le soutenir. Il est essentiel de disposer d'une stratégie globale de lutte contre la traite des personnes en Ontario pour veiller à ce que ce problème soit traité de manière holistique pour les années à venir.

Notre gouvernement a déjà pris des mesures pour promouvoir une meilleure éducation et une plus grande sensibilisation à la traite des personnes au sein du grand public et en particulier dans nos écoles, afin que les enfants soient habilités à éviter les situations dangereuses qui pourraient conduire à la traite des personnes.

Bill 251 takes important steps forward to implement our plan to combat human trafficking and ensures that Ontarians will always have such a plan in place. This is what strong leadership looks like. Our government will continue to demonstrate leadership in effectively combatting human trafficking in Ontario.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the ministers involved for their strong advocacy on this issue, which is so near and dear to my heart, along with all my colleagues in this government who themselves have championed this cause so strongly. I know that a future free of the destruction and abuse inflicted by human trafficking is within our reach, because it truly does take a village.

1900

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions to the member for Mississauga Centre?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: We heard about this issue of Airbnb continually in committee. It's been an issue that's been raised in this House time and again. Why did the Conservative government choose to not include Airbnb in this piece of legislation? Airbnbs are known for having areas in which people can be subjected to exploitation in this area of work. Why did the government not take that extra step to ensure that people are being protected?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you so much for this question. As was said before, some of these short-term types of rentals are governed by municipal bylaws. We will continue consulting with our partners. As this is a new form of short-term rentals, we want to make sure that we consult all the parties involved as we continue developing and strengthening our human trafficking strategy which, as you know, this legislation requires us to review every five years. So this gives us an opportunity to strengthen it, to make sure that all the voices are reflected.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to congratulate the member from Mississauga Centre for an excellent presentation. From late summer 2020 to the winter of 2020-21, there

was a robust consultation undertaken on this legislation with a variety of stakeholders. Would the member speak about the breadth and depth of that consultation and how it informed the legislation?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you for that question. Indeed, this anti-human trafficking strategy, and the bill put in front of us today, is the result of three years of very hard work by this government, and I just want to highlight to the chamber today that there are eight ministries working on this bill. There are eight ministries that have done concrete actions and steps to combat human trafficking in Ontario, including the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, the Ministries of the Solicitor General; Attorney General; Indigenous Affairs; Education; Health; Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries; and Transportation. So it is truly a collaborative effort.

The government doesn't always do everything right, but I think in this piece of legislation it's done 100% right.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Sudbury.

M. Jamie West: Merci à la membre de Mississauga-Centre. Merci pour votre discours, votre débat sur le sujet de la traite des êtres humains. C'est une opportunité pour moi de pratiquer mon français. Pour les membres « opposé »—je m'excuse—pourquoi est-ce que ce projet de loi exclut Airbnb? Et aussi, est-ce que vous pensez que la traite des êtres humains va sortir des hôtels et entrer dans les Airbnbs?

And for Hansard, because I know my French isn't that good: I thanked you for debate and the opportunity to practise my French. I'm just curious why Airbnb was excluded from this. Do you believe with it being excluded that human traffickers will exit from hotels and start to move more and more into Airbnbs?

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Merci beaucoup pour la question, et merci pour l'effort de parler en français. Je pense que c'est très important de parler dans nos deux langues officielles.

Je pense que cette question a déjà été répondue par différents membres de notre gouvernement, mais je vais prendre l'opportunité pour parler des intervenants francophones—par exemple, Sexploitation—qui ont beaucoup de services à offrir pour les victimes de la traite des humains, et il y en a d'autres, comme le Centre francophone du Grand Toronto, qui veulent travailler avec le gouvernement pour renforcer notre stratégie de lutte contre la traite des humains.

Je pense que la question des Airbnbs, c'est quelque chose qu'on doit travailler dessus. On doit consulter avec tous les gens sur cette question, et on va avoir plus à dire quand on va réviser la stratégie en 2025.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for your comments today. As the member for Whitby talked about, the robust consultations that were held—you were a major piece of those consultations, so thank you so much. My question is, what did you hear from survivors like Casandra Diamond and front-line officers like Constable Joy Brown as part of the consultations?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you so much, Minister, for that question. I'll take the opportunity to just give an example where the rubber hit the road for me, actually. Last week, I was working a nursing shift. I think it was on a Wednesday. I was actually working in the mental health ward of the emergency room. I had a young girl come in with telltale signs of human trafficking. Because I was educated now and I'm sensitive to the issue, I knew what questions to ask, and I knew how to prompt this young girl. I was able to contact Constable Joy Brown, and I was able to contact Inspector Mark Dapat to get some resources for this young girl.

It sends shivers down my spine, because if I can change one life, everything that we do here is worth doing. For me, it was such a profound moment that I will never forget. My career up till this day has been so worth all the work that we've done and the controversy and all the negativity that we endure. Even to help one person, it's totally worth it for me.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Again, I'm again rising to speak to the anti-human trafficking bill. This government cut \$335 million from mental health supports. The Victim Quick Response Program was only qualifiable to a victim who reported their crime to the police, and I don't have to tell you all that victims of gender-based violence and certain groups have difficult relationships with the police force, to say the least.

I'm just wondering why you would say you want to combat human trafficking but you would make it such a police-heavy response, as opposed to ensuring mental health supports, supportive housing, education, the clearing of all OSAP debt—the kinds of things that could actually help people get out of a life of danger or violence, because, of course, none of us want anyone to participate or be dragged into human trafficking. But at the same time, what was the research done to show that a police-heavy response was the most empowering and enlightening and trauma-informed way you could save victims of human trafficking?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you very much for that question. I would just like to remind the member that this bill is not the only thing that we're doing. Our anti-human trafficking strategy is a robust multi-ministerial strategy which does have funding attached: \$307 million, \$96 million of which is for community-based initiatives and \$46 million for Indigenous-led initiatives.

Of course, we have our Roadmap to Recovery, which is our mental health plan—\$1.9 billion over 10 years, an unprecedented investment. For the first time in the history of Ontario, we have a minister at the table whose sole responsibility is to advocate for mental health and addictions. I think we're tackling this issue from many different ways, many different ministries and industries, and I'm extremely proud of the work that we've done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the member for Mississauga Centre is—I wanted to start by thanking her

for coming to Barrie–Innisfil, for doing a round table with me. At that round table, a shocking statistic came out: We know that Barrie Police Service human trafficking in 2019 actually did an investigation—63 investigations, in fact. They found 59 victims of human trafficking, many of them foreign nationals as well, and they laid 196 charges. They were grateful for the tools they had that day, but they talked about how they need more tools, and not just for them but for things like children's services as well.

Can the member elaborate on some of the additional tools we're giving to both children's services and to our police enforcement?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you so much for that question. I think we've learned through this process that human trafficking is actually a crime that goes largely underreported, so the statistics that the member mentioned are probably underreported. The stark reality is that there are a lot more victims than we know of. That's why it's so important to give all the tools we can to all of our partners, not only policing but also our partners in education. We are currently developing a province-wide protocol for school boards so there is a uniform approach across all school boards for teachers, educators and administrators to recognize the signs and symptoms of human trafficking and give parents the right tools to intervene.

I think it's so important that we are doing work from all kinds of angles, including, for example, in the Ministry of Transportation. We have partnered up with the Women's Trucking Federation of Canada to develop curricula funded by this government to train truck drivers, because as we know, traffickers transport their victims on the 400- and 401-series highways, so we're really tackling this issue and we need many, many partners in combatting this crime. I think that's the right way to approach it.

1910

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane and on behalf of my party—and today on the Combating Human Trafficking Act.

I would be remiss if I didn't, like many of my colleagues, start my remarks about the news that broke of the 215 children buried in a mass grave at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. I think what hurts us the most—we know that these things happen, but our innocence was stolen as their lives were stolen. And what hurts me the most, as someone who grew up in the Christian faith, is that those children weren't treated as humans. The proof is that they were thrown in a mass grave and never identified. That steals our innocence.

We stand in this House and recite the Lord's Prayer, those of us who are Christian. And regardless of your faith, when our own religious institutions—and I am not picking on one. There is lots of blame to go around and lots of blame in the government to go around too. But institutions that claim to represent faith and claim to care about the afterlife—obviously they didn't care much about the kids in that hole.

As a white man, I can honestly say I don't think I've ever experienced discrimination. As a white man, if it was

215 white kids in that hole, there would have been investigations long ago—long ago.

It's kind of fitting, Speaker, that we are talking about human trafficking today because there are things that are very similar.

I have no experience—none—in what the First Nations have gone through in our country. But through the honour of being elected here, I have had the honour of talking to the member for Kiiwetinoong and becoming his friend. Some of the things that he says in passing that he doesn't even think about make me think very deeply—thoughts that I never, ever would have thought before I met him.

So, like many of you, I've got kids, three lovely daughters and a son. They went to high school in my hometown and they were home every night. Because teenagers are teenagers, you want to be able to see them, hopefully help them—and hold them.

But for many First Nations, even now, grade 8 is as far as you go, and then they send you to the city, a city that you have never had any experience in—never. It's like, my kids go from grade 8 and then I send them to Toronto. I barely survived coming to Toronto when I was elected here. It was so foreign to me. I had never been on a subway. I was elected to represent people. I had never done these things.

Yet we, in this province, still expect children to go from their homes to the city to board to go to high school. That isn't the same, obviously, as what happened at residential schools, but there is a similarity, because we know, and the parents of those kids know, that they are at a much, much bigger risk of getting into trouble, like being trafficked. Yet are we doing anything about that? Those kids come from places where there's no water, very little housing—something I've never experienced. I experience it through the member for Kiiwetinoong. Then, we put them into our society, and we wonder why their numbers in social services are higher. That's pretty basic stuff. There are incredibly complicated issues, but a pretty basic one is keeping your kids within the family unit for the length of their public education, like high school. I think that's a pretty simple one. That's something that none of us would stand for, and that's something that is normalized for—and I was going to say “them,” but, no, normalized for people of this province.

You want to talk about fixing things? Our collective innocence has been stolen. We're all shocked by what happened, by what was found in Kamloops, and we should make a big effort to find what truly happened everywhere. The thing about history is, you have to know history because you need to learn from it. As advanced as our society is—and I'm going to focus on this one—the fact that those families are still broken up, they are still sent to a foreign society, which has proven, in many ways, to be more damaging to people than their own society—and we continue to do it.

So does this bill do some things that could help? Yes. Is it fully the solution? No.

I'm focusing on high school and kids and my own experience. Someone who has been spoken about in this Legislature several times, Carly Church, works for Victim

Services of Durham Region, helping kids who are in human trafficking. I knew Karly when she was small. Karly grew up in my hometown. She's the same age as our kids. We held the prom party at our farm every year, and she was there. I don't really recommend anybody to hold a prom party. They get really excited. You would have thought I would have figured it out after number four.

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But at that time, I didn't know what human trafficking was. And Karly turned—she was trapped. Now, she helps others, and I commend her. But think of the advantages she had, compared to some others. Think of the advantages we have, compared to many.

I didn't have the privilege—I wasn't on that committee. The one thing that this bill—a few things: The police now have the power to go into hotels, I understand, but not into Airbnbs. I listened to the comments: “Well, that's because they're municipal.” But we all know, I hope we know, that as you clamp down on the hotels—you know what's going to happen. This is a business, not a very nice one, and it's going to migrate to where you don't clamp down, like Airbnbs. And I've listened: “Oh, yeah, we've got a strategy. We're going to look at it in five years”—good. I'm not complaining. But you can't wait five years to look at the Airbnbs.

I get kind of a kick out of it, actually—not kick. I listen to the members on the other side: “Oh but this is municipal. We just can't go there.” This is the government that halved Toronto council in the middle of a municipal election. In the middle of a municipal election in Canada's biggest city, you halved the council. Yet now, when we are dealing—and I don't question that the government is sincere. We disagree with some of the mechanisms they're using, but I don't question that the government is sincere in trying to address part of the problem. But don't tell me, “Oh, this is just too big a one for us to handle right now. We have to deal with, like, separate councils.”

Okay, if you're really serious about this, find a way to deal with Airbnbs and whatever comes after, because we all know that when you close one door, someone is going to push another one open, and they're not friendly people. Now, I don't begrudge the government for saying, “Okay, we can't,” but I don't buy it. I do not buy that this is too big an issue to deal with because you have to deal with municipals. I don't buy that; I really don't. This is an incredibly important issue, and people are suffering, dying. Right? And we're sitting here: “This is too big an issue.”

I am willing to bet that 100 years ago, 60 years ago, there were people talking about residential schools and there were others saying, “We're not going to go there. That's too big an issue. That's the jurisdiction of the churches,” or that's this or that's that, and those kids ended up in a hole. Now, we are in a position to do something about kids, about people who are being threatened, and this is, I think, a step sideways in one way or another. But we cannot wait five years to talk about the monstrous-sized loophole—not even a loophole; the monstrous-sized escape hatch that you've given to these people. We know it, and by looking the other way, we are as guilty as the

legislators were back then when they looked the other way, when they knew that Indigenous kids were being treated the way they were and that they were dying. People knew then. People know now. We're sitting in the same chairs.

So is this bill a step? It's a step. Is this bill, hopefully, going to save some people? Hopefully. But is this bill going to leave all kinds of kids by the wayside to be abused and, quite frankly, tortured? It is, and we all know it. So let's not wait five years. Let's not turn the other way. Let's acknowledge the shortcomings, do what we can do, move ahead and fix the hatches we've left these people and provide support.

Think about kids who have to go to a big city, who have never been, who live in a beautiful—they live close to nature, and then we force them to go to a city, a foreign environment that they've never had any access to, and we wonder why they end up in trouble. That's happening. This isn't 100 years from now; this happens all the time. And my hope is that we don't have to lower flags 20 years from now from the things we're finding out that we missed today, because I hope that we are more intelligent—or not intelligent; more knowledgeable than we were and our predecessors were.

I'd like to close. I'm incredibly honoured to be able to stand in this House and sometimes say the things that I say. But I hope that we work to make—this bill is done. It has gone through all its readings, but there is so much more to do, and we know that. And those shoes on the front steps should remind us that we have the power to do more than talk about strategies and do more than talk about how it's somebody else's issue. We have that power, and we need to use it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: I have to say, the end of the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane's speech I think really sums up what this bill is actually trying to do, and that is, not leave anybody out.

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When we look at what the opposition wants to call Airbnbs, when in fact they're short-term rentals—and short-term rentals can take on a different look, feel, regulation, all kinds of different things in every municipality across this province, and they're all handled differently. Part of the reason why the Solicitor General and the others who are building this framework and this legislation are doing more consultation on that is so we don't leave anybody out. And I think it's unfair, quite frankly, for that member to stand there and accuse this bill of doing that.

I'm hoping that we're going to see support for this bill. The member from Brampton East wouldn't commit to it. So I'm going to ask the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane: Will you support this bill at third reading and get it passed today so that we can save more people here in the province of Ontario, and so that we aren't leaving anybody behind?

Mr. John Vanthof: I appreciate the question. And actually, I appreciate the member's comments. They're always thoughtful.

I'm never going to apologize for pointing out issues in legislation that leave people vulnerable.

I'm not accusing the government of not trying. I said it's a step. But, again, this is the government that took on the city of Toronto in the middle of an election.

I'm assuming that there's going to be a vote soon, and you will find out.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I want to thank the member, MPP Vanthof. He is truly someone the entire caucus looks to for leadership, for direction. He's someone who has a lot more years in this House than the rest of us, and we're very thankful for the mentorship he has provided.

You bring up this point of Airbnbs time and again, and it's a very important point. I really like how you put it—about how the Conservative government had the political will to halve city council in the middle of an election, but all of a sudden it's too complicated to address the issue of Airbnbs.

If you can expand on this point about Airbnbs and the fact that the government has the ability to ensure that no one is left behind, but they're purposefully choosing to leave it outside of this piece of legislation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government side will come to order.

To reply, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker.

I will leave out the part where the member said I was old, in a friendly way.

Whether you call them Airbnbs or short-term rentals, we know the issue is there—and by closing one, or trying to close one with hotels, you're forcing more into short-term. So we need to identify what the roadblocks are to overcome and we need to overcome them, because driving this issue—it's already illegal activity—more underground is a problem.

There was the political will to move mountains when you wanted to. Is there the political will to move the short-term rental now?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: I listened to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, and I understand and agree with the difficulty that he has representing people in this place, where you feel so far removed from the lived experience.

I have heard the stories from constituents in my riding that I have the honour to represent. As children, they were walking down the street, and a car pulled up and offered them ice cream, and they got in that car, and they never saw their home again.

When we were at committee, we heard that human trafficking is drastically over-reported in the province of Ontario and, in fact, the only human trafficking that actually happens is probably migrant workers who work on farms. I reject that wholeheartedly. I think that you do, too. I was wondering if you could expound further on the comparison between the residential school system, and how much we abhor that, and the crime of human trafficking today.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the member for that question. It is a very thoughtful one. I don't think we can deny that human trafficking is happening. There is more to this issue than simply trafficking, and there is a risk of—I believe the word is—conflating of sex work. It's not all as cut and dried as it seems. Is there an issue? Definitely. But knowing that makes it even more important for us to identify all the places and make legislation as effective in all areas where it could be happening, not just some and concentrating it in others.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane started his debate talking about the 215 tiny bodies that were found outside of the Kamloops residential school. It reminded me that in 2018 I volunteered for the Walking With Our Sisters demonstration. If you can imagine this chamber, this entire chamber, with no furniture, just with moccasin last, the decorated tops of the moccasins to represent the many murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls. One of stats that stood out for me is that Indigenous people are 4% of the population but they make up 16% of female homicides.

I think about those graves and those tiny shoes and those tiny lasts, and we're probably going to find some undocumented graves from people from Indigenous communities who have been human-trafficked. Many of them come from northern ridings and rural ridings. I just want to ask the member, what resources exist right now in northern ridings and rural ridings, and what would you recommend?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the member for Sudbury; again, a very thoughtful question and a hard question. The preamble is very hard to answer. I have no experience. I cannot speak on the experience of Indigenous people. I can speak on the general lack of many services in rural Ontario. The more sparsely populated, the bigger the problem, because services—and I understand this—tend to be concentrated where there are more people.

I'll give you an example. During COVID, someone from the Canadian Mental Health Association, and I stole their quote, said that the district of Timiskaming was a “treatment desert” for addiction, because the treatment beds are not in the district. So during COVID, there was effectively no treatment for people in Timiskaming. That is an example of what is still happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have time for one very brief question.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I wanted to understand a little more about why the member is calling our consultations into various types of accommodations “Airbnbs.” I think that's kind of looking down on the topic given the very sensitive nature of what we're doing here and given the fact that not every city or municipality can provide the same type of accommodations. Why does the member not think it is important that we cater to the needs of everyone when we're dealing with this very important issue?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for the question. I think it's very important. I think the province should also provide the horsepower to those municipalities so that they

can actually look at how the regulations should be implemented. It's not just telling people what to do; it's giving them the resources to actually—same for people. It's not just enforcing; it's giving people the resources to make things better.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You have to stand up if you've got a point of order. Do you have a point of order?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My apologies, Speaker. Thank you very much. It's been brought to my attention that earlier in my remarks, I may have inadvertently referenced the Indigenous community, and what I meant to say was "the" Indigenous community. It's a learning moment for me today. I appreciate my colleague for bringing that forward, and I apologize for that.

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

Ms. Jones has moved third reading of Bill 251, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in respect of human trafficking matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day? I recognize the member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: No further business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1941.

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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**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Will Bouma, John Fraser
Logan Kanapathi, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche
Natalia Kusendova
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell