

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

JP-4

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

JP-4

**Standing Committee on  
Justice Policy**

**Comité permanent  
de la justice**

**Estimates**

Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery

**Budget des dépenses**

Ministère des Services au public et aux entreprises

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

Thursday 17 November 2022

1<sup>re</sup> session  
43<sup>e</sup> législature

Jeudi 17 novembre 2022

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Chair: Lorne Coe  
Clerk: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Président : Lorne Coe  
Greffière : Thushitha Kobikrishna

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House Publications and Language Services  
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building  
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
Telephone 416-325-7400  
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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  
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1710-9442

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

## COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

Thursday 17 November 2022

Jeudi 17 novembre 2022

*The committee met at 0900 in committee room 2.*

### ESTIMATES

#### MINISTRY OF PUBLIC AND BUSINESS SERVICE DELIVERY

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** Good morning, everyone. Welcome back.

Just a reminder to all of the members of the committee: Your microphones are controlled by the broadcasting staff just to my right. You do not need to press any buttons. All those buttons are activated by the control booth, okay? It just makes things straightforward. Should you wish to speak, just to help me in the process of managing the meeting, raise your hand so I can acknowledge you and get you on the record right away.

We're going to resume consideration of vote 1801 of the estimates of the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. Welcome to the Honourable Kaleed Rasheed, the minister, and his staff.

There is now a total of one hour and 15 minutes remaining for the review of the estimates. When the committee adjourned yesterday, the government had 15 minutes remaining, and I had already acknowledged MPP Saunderson.

MPP Saunderson, can you restate your question, please, for the record, and direct it to the minister?

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** Good morning, Mr. Chair, and thank you. I want to thank you also for the heads-up that I was going to have to repeat my question, because it took me a little while to recall what it was. I think I have it, though, now, Minister.

My question really is rising out of the pandemic and some of the procurement issues that we had across the province. I know in my communities there was a huge need for PPE, masks and hand wash and sanitizer, and that many of our local businesses pivoted to fill that much-needed gap during the pandemic. But I'm wondering now, Minister, if you can just comment on changes we've made as a result of lessons learned in the pandemic and if we've made any changes to our procurement policies.

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** To the minister, please.

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Good morning, Chair. Thank you, MPP Saunderson, for your question. Under Premier Ford, this government has replaced the rotting medical supplies, as we all know, left by the previous Liberal government, and built a robust PPE stockpile to protect our front-line and other critical workers in the public

sector and ensure our province is ready for any future emergence or variants. And we have talked about this many, many times: that we need to be ready in case, God forbid, there is such an increase in number of cases or any situation like that.

And through you, Chair, I want Ontarians to know that they can rest assured that even as we head into another winter, our government has their backs when it comes to the health and safety of their loved ones. And we want to make sure that our PPE and stockpile remain a crucial part of this government's plan to stay open and ensure that the ongoing growth of our economy continues and that there are no further, God forbid, lockdowns.

So for us to make sure that we have all the PPE on hand—and I must say that our team is doing a great job making sure that we have that PPE on hand. And my ministry will continue to work closely with the chief medical officer, our partner ministries and other experts to ensure that our vast stockpile is maintained and adjusted to reflect any potential changes brought on by another wave. My ministry is also providing the necessary supports to the Ministries of Education, Colleges and Universities, and Health to support them in the great job that they are doing.

With that, I'll pass it on to the deputy minister to add some of her comments as well, too.

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Thank you, Minister.

It's Renu Kulendran, deputy minister of the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery. Thank you to the members this morning.

I just wanted to add to what the minister has already stated. We've done a lot on the policy and legislative front in terms of enabling a legislative framework that ensures sustainability with respect to procurement.

There are a number of pieces of legislation that were introduced, beginning in 2018: the Fairness in Procurement Act, which allowed for the implementation of proportional and responsive restrictions on suppliers to help really support domestic supply. We've introduced the Supply Chain Management Act to support the government's direction to centralize supply chain, which really enabled us to be more nimble in terms of supplying a multiplicity of sectors, as well as the building Ontario businesses act, which received royal assent this March, which really requires public sector entities to give Ontario businesses and domestic suppliers preference when conducting procurement.

And finally, the Personal Protective Equipment Supply and Production Act, which received royal assent this past April: What it does is it mandates our ministry to ensure that we have a ready supply of personal protective equipment and critical supplies equipment, and also have prescribed requirements related to the quantity, quality, standards and specifications of the PPE or CSE that must be maintained so that we aren't in a situation where we have expired product in our warehouses. The act authorizes the minister to provide or support supply chain management in respect to PPE and CSE on behalf of government entities and prescribed public sector entities. I have my colleague from the Treasury Board who is on the line, Chris Gonsalves, who is doing great work in that space.

I'd like to turn it over to Jackie Korecki, who is our ADM of Supply Chain Ontario to talk about what we're doing on the ground and how we're working with many sectors to ensure that they continue to be supported by us with respect to critical supplies and PPE.

**Ms. Jackie Korecki:** Thank you. I'm Jackie Korecki. I'm the assistant deputy minister of Supply Chain Ontario in the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery.

In addition to the comments made by the minister and the deputy, we are working really hard with companies in Ontario who did retool. We have made a number of moves to actually adopt domestically produced PPE into our supply chain strategies. We've done a number of deals, including a contract that we have executed with 3M to produce domestically produced N95s in Brockville, Ontario. That is a five-year deal that allows us to actually have really secure and stable supply for the public sector people in Ontario who need to use N95s.

In addition, we've done an open and competitive procurement for surgical masks, and that one we've actually contracted with four different suppliers: We've contracted with Primed, who are an internationally recognized Canadian-based medical supplies company. They established a new plant in Cambridge, Ontario, to produce surgical masks. We've contracted with Canada Masq Corp. They're a new start-up company based in Richmond Hill. They answered the government's call in the early days of the pandemic to create locally made masks. The third company is Viva Healthcare Packaging Canada Ltd. They're in Scarborough. They used a grant from the Ontario Together Fund to retool their operations from cosmetic packaging to increase their mask-making capacity. The fourth company, JY Care, based in Vaughan, is a female-owned and -operated small business.

All four companies are producing masks that are being distributed to all of the public sector in Ontario. That includes hospitals and long-term-care homes, retirement homes, schools, childcare, social services, group homes, many others.

In addition to that, the government has also announced creating a secure and reliable source of domestically made nitrile gloves by enabling the construction of a state-of-the-art facility located in London by Manikheir Canada. Once the facility is fully operational, it will provide at least

500 million medical-grade nitrile gloves annually for up to 10 years. Those nitrile gloves made in Ontario will also be provided to all of the public sectors in Ontario.

There is a certain level of uncertainty around global supply chains, but we're really interested in creating a coordinated approach to the management of supply chains. So supply chain centralization was really demonstrated through the pandemic to work really well for the public sector. We don't compete with each other. In addition, we've been able to move from what we estimate to be 100% of PPE procured internationally pre-pandemic to a forecasted future spend of 93% domestically. So we're quite excited.

**0910**

We also work really hard with the sectors that we support to make sure we understand their current needs and ongoing needs. We do maintain demand models that look at how they use the PPE and what they use the PPE for to make sure that we have enough, as the minister said, to be able to continue to provide what they need on an ongoing basis. The demand models consider lots of different things, including how many people there are and where they are, epidemiological projections of what demand might look like, and those are maintained on a regular basis and compared against our stock to make sure that we have enough supply not just to meet our projected demand, but also to meet any surge in demand that there might be as the result of surge in COVID or perhaps even flu.

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** Thank you for that response. I'll go to Mr. Bailey, please.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you, Chair. Through you and to the minister: Welcome, Minister, Deputy and all the staff, a number I recognize from my time at MGCS, which I enjoyed very much.

I wanted to start out with a question very dear to my heart. The minister will know—I bet you he's looking at it already. It's One Call. I had some involvement with the bill back in the day, and so I follow it very closely. Of course, I get called by all the contractors and people down home and throughout southwestern Ontario when they're having issues.

So I wonder if the minister could speak to one part, the single locator—which I applaud; I think that's a great way to go—but there is some reluctance from some of the larger players to releasing their information and letting someone other than their own people do the locates. I wonder if the minister or the deputy, whoever, could speak to that and what we're doing to combat that and to try to speed things along, because it's not just about building better homes; we've got to have the roads and the sewers and the waterlines to service those homes.

Minister, with that, I'll turn it over to you.

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Sure. Thank you so much, MPP Bailey. I appreciate it. Thank you for bringing such a great piece of legislation forward. So thank you for that.

MPP Bailey, as we know, construction is a very vital part of our province, but it often takes too long—and we have seen this—to get shovels into the ground due to

delays pertaining to the location of underground infrastructure. As you know, we cannot hit the ground unless we know exactly, when it comes to the infrastructure that is underground, to make sure that we are not damaging anything.

And that is why we are improving Ontario One Call's process of determining the location of underground infrastructure like telecommunication lines, water mains and gas pipelines, known as locates. Our government has taken action to relieve immediate pressure points in the locate delivery system by passing the Getting Ontario Connected Act on April 14 of this year. By eliminating duplicative inspections and extending the validation period for locates, the legislation significantly reduces waiting periods for builders, strengthens safety for workers and gets construction done faster and more efficiently.

I'm sure the deputy would like to add something to it as well.

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** As the minister mentioned, the Getting Ontario Connected Act amended the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act to address the immediate pressure points in the locate delivery system and to enhance governance and oversight of Ontario One Call and improve its compliance tool in ensuring that we simplify and expedite the process.

As the minister mentioned, a number of these changes also help support Ontario's commitment to achieving 100% access to high-speed Internet by 2025 and support the building of critical infrastructure. As part of these changes we're mandating the use of a dedicated locator model, particularly where a single locator is selected to provide better Internet service providers with control for responding to locate requests, so helping to expedite that process, and also ensuring that locate validity periods are—

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** Thank you, Deputy. I have to excuse you now from that response. The government's time is done for this round.

I'm now going to move to the official opposition. MPP Mamakwa, please, you have 20 minutes. I'll let you know when you're halfway through that.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetich. Thank you, Chair. *Remarks in Oji-Cree.* Good morning, everyone. Good morning to committee members, minister and also the staff.

I know that yesterday my colleague started some questioning on price gouging and also the food inflation that has been happening and reported in the news as well. I know there was a report regarding children's Advil being sold online for \$200. I know that, even yesterday, I asked a question to the government about the shortage of children's acetaminophen and having far northern First Nations going to the States to pick up their supply.

My question would be, on the price gouging that's being reported, if any fines are being issued in relation to that. If there are none, then why not?

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Thank you to the member for the question. We are also aware of the things that are happening in the news, particularly with respect to some

of the medications that are in short supply. We're also working closely with our federal counterparts to await further details about incoming shipments, particularly of children's acetaminophen. So we're working closely with the federal government and the Ministry of Health to look at some of these acute issues.

We do take matters of consumer protection very seriously. It is reprehensible—the reselling of children's medications at higher prices. We understand that the federal government has been in touch with Amazon, and Amazon has committed to taking action with respect to some of the stories that have been reported.

The Consumer Protection Act forbids businesses from selling essential products at a price that “grossly exceeds the price at which similar goods or services are readily available to” Ontario consumers. Any individual who is convicted of an offence under the CPA can face a fine of up to \$50,000 or imprisonment for up to two years, or both. Similarly, a corporation is liable to a fine of up to \$250,000.

I have colleagues from our ministry here who are in Consumer Protection Ontario. Barbara Duckitt is on the line and she's the assistant deputy minister responsible for consumer services operation. It's really important to note that Consumer Protection Ontario, our staff in that division, manage a significant number of complaints—over 8,465 complaints between January 1, 2017, and November 2, 2022, recently—and that we have good processes in place to triage those complaints and a lot of tools with respect to education, awareness, mediation and enforcement, ultimately, with respect to prosecution.

**0920**

I'm going to ask Barbara to talk a bit about the work that the consumer services operations division does in the consumer protection space. Also, we're part of a broader ecosystem of a number of delegated administrative authorities who also support that consumer protection mandate.

Over to you, Barb.

**Ms. Barbara Duckitt:** Thank you, Deputy and Minister. Good morning, Chair and committee members. My name is Barbara Duckitt. I'm the assistant deputy minister of the consumer services operations division in the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about what we do in consumer protection.

We have a range of processes that we apply in respect to complaints so that we are taking a progressive approach in how we deal with businesses: We will look at whether we can educate the business and have the problem resolved that way; we will look at whether mediation is appropriate; we may do inspections; or, in cases where there appears to be clear evidence of an offence, the file may be referred to investigation. At that point, an independent investigator will undertake an investigation into the facts of the case to assess whether or not an offence has been committed and whether action should be taken.

If we determine that action should be taken in terms of—you asked about fines; that would follow up on

charges. If charges are laid and approved by our crown counsel, they would then proceed through the court system. So we don't have the capacity under our act ourselves to levy fines. The fines come through a court proceeding, which, as you will understand, will take some time. In the future, when we're looking at modifications to the Consumer Protection Act as part of an ongoing review, there's an opportunity to explore whether administrative monetary penalties may be available to our division. That would give us a more immediate tool to use. But, certainly, we do pursue charges to the courts. We have also seen, unfortunately, because of COVID, we have a lot of cases in the queue.

At this point in time we haven't actually received, to my knowledge, any complaints directly to us about the price gouging relating to children's Advil, but obviously this is something we are aware of and tracking.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch. What about the process, when we talk about the process of choosing a supplier for a centralized procurement system? Can you outline the process for the supplier? Also, what accountability measures are there to avoid any favouritism, among other things?

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Thank you to the member for the question. It's Renu Kulendran. I'm the deputy minister for the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery. I'm joined here by my colleague Jackie Korecki, ADM for Supply Chain Ontario.

There are a number of procurement directives in place to ensure fairness and consistency, and, as much as possible, we pursue competitive open procurement. There is a provision in the directive that provides for an emergency procurement, but as much as possible we try to ensure that the process is fair and open. As I mentioned in my previous response, we are moving to criteria that help support domestic production, particularly Ontario production, as much as possible.

I'm going to ask Jackie to talk a little bit more about our policies and procedures and how we evaluate procurement bids overall. Over to you, Jackie.

**Ms. Jackie Korecki:** In our procurement policies we really follow the requirements of many trade agreements that require us to be, wherever possible, fair, open and transparent in our procurement practices.

Most procurements done by the public sector are posted on open tender platforms. For Ontario government procurement specifically, we use a platform called the Ontario Tenders Portal that suppliers can access for free, and we post procurement opportunities there for suppliers to bid upon. Once suppliers have bid upon an opportunity, the evaluation of that opportunity is actually disclosed to them in the posting process, so they know how we're going to evaluate their bids, so they understand what they need to tell us in their bid process.

In addition, we have many practices in place to ensure that those doing evaluations are not conflicted in the procurement process. There is a process where evaluators need to declare and be screened for conflicts of interest in the evaluation process.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Thank you for sharing the process. I want to go back to—we had a conversation yesterday regarding your two-year plan or pilot, so to speak, with regard to—the one in Serpent River First Nation. I've been hearing the dialogue, but also after I spoke about a possibility of expanding that, especially to the northern fly-in First Nations, or even in Kiiwetinoong, for that matter.

I say that because when we talk about mobile units, when we talk about Serpent River, Serpent River to Pickle Lake by road is 1,385 kilometres, which is part of my riding. Serpent River to Red Lake is 1,400 kilometres. Serpent River to Ear Falls is 1,344 kilometres. Even the drive-in First Nation of Grassy Narrows, from Serpent River, is 1,347. In my riding only, there are 24 fly-in First Nations.

I spoke about the closure of the Pickle Lake ServiceOntario office. I think sometimes for a person who does not live in these places, they do not understand the impact or the need for identification, whether it's a birth certificate or whether it's an Ontario health card. When the government speaks and they say "all Ontarians," sometimes I don't agree with that comment, that equitable access to services, because of where we are, because of who we are and where we are on the reserve.

So I think what I'm suggesting—is there's an opportunity for ServiceOntario to have a mobile unit to the fly-in First Nations? Is there an opportunity for this ministry to actually fly in to First Nations and provide that service? I say that because when a child is born in Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay and Winnipeg and they go back to the reserve, they're not registered. There are families who do not have credit cards. There are families who cannot afford to pay for a birth certificate, and it stops. We have so many children who are unregistered as status Indians, and that has an impact on their access to health care, where the federal government pays for it—access to travel, access flights, access to room and boarding, food, to travel or to get a medical appointment.

**0930**

I remember this one particular First Nation, because they had so many children unregistered as status Indians. They paid \$250,000 of their own money to access their health care, to access care. So that's why I'm saying it's so important to be able to provide that service. I think that would do a lot of families—a lot of First Nations—good, if you did that. Would you be open to that?

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you, MPP Mamakwa. You and I had a chance, an opportunity to speak about this after our last committee session yesterday in the House. To further elaborate on your question, I'll request the deputy minister to address that.

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the member. I appreciate the question, and I realize there are many streams of work that we need to connect and get under way.

You spoke about the barriers in terms of access to identification, in terms of what that translates into in terms of a person's life and their ability to do basic things. I wanted to mention that we are very open to working with



First Nations communities, as well as political territorial organizations, to look at how to address those barriers, including working with our partners at the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and other ministries that work closely with the First Nations community and leadership.

I mentioned the work we're doing with NAN around barriers for Indigenous youth, and that work involves multiple ministries. It really is aimed at developing a collaborative approach to addressing the full sweep of these barriers to government identification. We're also doing work around customary and kinship care providers, who may not be parents or legal guardians, but who also are looking to help address the barriers around getting access for birth certificates for children in their care and how to facilitate that more nimbly.

We've learned a lot of lessons through the pandemic in terms of how we can be nimble and mobile, in terms of the services that we provide to fly-in communities and how we can work across jurisdictional barriers in that regard with the federal government. I think about the work that was done by Ornge in terms of the vaccination campaign into fly-in communities. There's a lot that I think we can explore based on those models in terms of how mobile clinics are not just about buses, but how we can triage and work to provide services to people where they live and where they need support, and maybe we look at that model.

I have on the line here my colleague, Nelson Loureiro, who is an assistant deputy minister at ServiceOntario. He worked closely with North Shore Tribal Council. He is doing other work in other communities, including exploration around Pickle Lake. I would like to turn it over to him to add any additional comments, if he has something to add.

**Mr. Nelson Loureiro:** Thank you, Deputy. I'm Nelson Loureiro, assistant deputy minister, ServiceOntario customer care division. Good morning, Chair, and thank you, MPP Mamakwa, for the very important question.

Adding to what the deputy just said, we recognize the important role that ServiceOntario plays in communities in northern Ontario and remote First Nations Indigenous communities as well. We're very proud of the work that we've done in partnership with North Shore Tribal Council in Serpent River, with Cutler, Ontario, as well as the communities they serve with their mobile units.

We are very interested in this pilot program and how it delivers services, specifically in the mobile units, so that we can reach the northern, remote, rural communities, including Indigenous communities in the north. MPP Mamakwa, we're very interested in what we can do in Kenora district, and we are working very, very closely with the Kenora District Services Board and the CAO there in resuming services in Pickle Lake. That is of utmost priority for us, and we're working in partnership with Kenora district and, specifically, with the municipality in Pickle Lake so that we can bring services back there.

In addition to that, we are going to learn from this pilot on mobile service delivery. I'm very interested in how we can expand that pilot to what you mentioned, into the

remote areas, so that people can be served within their communities, by their communities—

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** Excuse me. I'm going to have to stop your response, please. The time for the official opposition is concluded.

I'll go now to the government. MPP Riddell.

**Mr. Brian Riddell:** Minister, I would like to speak to you today about some of the issues happening in the Cambridge riding that I'm finding quite disturbing. What it is is that there are some bad actors and scammers out there, and they're not treating our people right.

I know the Consumer Protection Act falls under the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, and I would appreciate hearing more about what can be done to protect people in the province of Ontario. When I read through the estimates, I noted millions of dollars spent to ensure this ministry is equipped to deal with such serious issues. They came through the CPA, and I know that we put in place such things as the Consumer Beware List to keep our consumers safe. However, I would love to hear more about what's being done.

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you so much, MPP Riddell. I appreciate the question. As we have discussed in the past as well, unlike the former Liberal government, we are actually building and strengthening consumer protections for Ontarians. That is why we have conducted the first comprehensive review of the Consumer Protection Act in over 15 years. Over the past two years, our government consulted with the people and businesses of this province on how the CPA can be updated and improved to ensure that we are best protecting Ontarians, especially during the pandemic. It was this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, that stepped up to protect Ontarians by taking on price gougers and resellers who tried to take advantage of hard-working people.

Every day, as was previously discussed, we see new types of scams that seek to take advantage of our most vulnerable people, and that's why we are building protections that better reflect today's changing technologies: marketplace innovations and business practices to ensure we are staying ahead of those who seek to rip off and scam vulnerable Ontarians.

I'm sure that the deputy minister would like to add something on the great work that the government is doing when it comes to the CPA as well.

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Thank you, Minister. I thank the member for the question. We have strengthened protections for consumers, particularly vulnerable consumers. We think about door-to-door sales, and you talked about scammers in the community. The Consumer Protection Act sets out requirements that protect consumers from deceptive door-to-door marketing and contracting practices. It provides a cooling-off period of 10 days for such agreements, so that if there is a concern, there is that out for the consumer, so consumers can consider and cancel the agreement within that 10-day period.

**0940**

In addition, businesses are not generally allowed to solicit or enter into contracts at consumers' homes for

certain restricted products unless the consumer has initiated that contact with the business and invited the business into their home for the purpose of entering into such an agreement. Restrictive products include water heaters, filtration systems, heating, ventilation and cooling equipment. We know HVAC has been an issue, and this effectively prohibits door-to-door sales for these products.

I would also say that my colleague Barbara Duckitt and her team are doing a lot of proactive work and outreach, particularly to vulnerable communities, seniors. We work very closely with the OPP in fraud to publicize potential scams. We look at complaints, and we've even done some work with our federal counterpart in the Competition Bureau around some of the systemic issues.

I am going to ask my colleague Barb to talk a little bit more about the work of the consumer services operations division in that regard.

**Ms. Barbara Duckitt:** Thank you for the question. We've done a lot of work around the HVAC sector, as the deputy mentioned. It forms probably the largest part of the cases that we currently have in the court system. We do have court cases that have been backlogged because of COVID and the shutdown of the court, but we have achieved some successes when we go to court against some of these HVAC companies, which is important to note. As the deputy mentioned, we've been doing a lot of work to try to proactively empower consumers—and I think this is something the minister referenced yesterday—so that they can go into contracts with knowledge of their rights and remedies and be more secure in what they're doing.

Obviously, prevention from both the perspective of the consumer and from the perspective of the ministry is better than having to react. So we do work with seniors' organizations. We're looking at ways to get information out through a broader network of organizations with whom we can partner.

We also work with an organization called Pro Bono. In some cases where consumers have an issue that may not be an offence under our act but they have suffered a loss as a result of one of these door-to-door contracts or other systems, we can refer them to Pro Bono, which is an organization of lawyers who will provide services for free. It's a complementary service to what we do, and certainly looking at different ways of outreach and education for consumers through as many channels as possible in addition to our enforcement activity.

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** I have MPP Ke, followed by MPP Kusendova.

MPP Ke, please.

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** Minister, in your presentation yesterday, you mentioned the digital dealership registration. I know your ministry was working on this a couple of years ago. This actually is a great project, because before, when dealerships had a sale on a car, a transaction, they needed to go to ServiceOntario in person to register. So it really takes time. With DDR, you can really save them time and really make it easy to do business. So my question is, there are a couple of thousand dealerships in Ontario. Is every

dealership, including in remote and northern Ontario, now able to do online registration?

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you very much, MPP Ke. Our government is always working to find new and innovative ways to leverage technology to benefit the lives of Ontarians. That is why, as you know, we are modernizing our province's vehicle services and improving Ontarians' experience with the automobile industry through the Digital Dealership Registration Program. Dealer vehicle registration transactions account for almost 4.8 million of ServiceOntario's transactions, all of which have to be done in person.

Now, as you said, for the very first time—and I did mention it in my remarks, as well—over 7,000 car dealerships will have access to register new cars online and issue permits and plates directly to customers. This will make it easier, faster and more convenient for Ontarians to buy a car and, honestly, enjoy their new car almost immediately after purchase. It will also reduce the administrative burden dealerships face and save them additional costs and time.

As mentioned, DDR also facilitates more accurate and error-free registrations while protecting the security and privacy of Ontarians' data. So this is some great work that is happening for Ontarians, and again it goes back to my remarks yesterday that we are trying to make life easy for Ontarians, whether it's the public or business, and our goal is to make sure that, at the end of the day, we continue to bring products and services that will continue to make our life, Ontarians' lives, easy.

Deputy, I know you would like to add something to this as well. Please.

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the member for the question. We're fortunate to have our project lead in the room, Joanne Anderson, who is leading this initiative as part of ServiceOntario. She's an ADM with ServiceOntario.

Just building on what the minister said, we launched the Digital Dealership Registration Program in March with a limited number of new dealerships to pilot the approach. We are taking a phased approach to onboarding, allowing the ministry to test the system and to gather feedback to ensure that the process is seamless.

I'll ask Joanne to talk a little bit more about the work that she and her team are doing. Thank you.

**Ms. Joanne Anderson:** Thank you, Deputy. My name is Joanne Anderson. I'm the assistant deputy minister of citizen experience, strategy and integration with ServiceOntario, with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery. I'd like to thank the member for the question and I'd like to add further to what the minister and the deputy said.

In March 2022 we released a minimum viable product for the digital dealership registration, and this is the first time that we've ever had this service available online, which is a huge improvement for dealerships in the province. Previously, dealerships would have to come to ServiceOntario to drop off paperwork. They would then have to return and pick up stock—licence plates and

permits—and if there was an error with any of the paperwork that was completed, they'd have to come back again, a third time.

With digital dealership, this allows the dealerships who are participating to immediately do the registration online and issue the licence plates and permits almost instantaneously to Ontarians. This has been a huge improvement for dealers to reduce their administrative burden, and it's fantastic for Ontarians who can almost drive off the lot immediately with a car.

We are continuing to expand upon the minimum viable product and we'll be adding additional functionalities over time so that over 8,000 dealerships will eventually be able to participate in the program. Any dealer who is currently in good standing with OMVIC will be able to participate in this program, and we're looking at different models to make it easy for large dealerships, medium dealerships and small dealerships to be able to participate, and looking to take the user feedback that we get from dealerships and make sure that we're improving the application to reflect the feedback that we get from dealers who are currently participating and also Ontarians who are benefiting from this service. Thank you for the question.

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** Thank you for that response. The government has six minutes and 44 seconds left. Next question, please. MPP Kusendova.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Thank you very much. I will be brief. Good morning, Minister. Bonjour. I wanted to ask, with regard to our francophone community—I know that ServiceOntario has been doing a great job in delivering services not only in English but, of course, in French, especially in our 26 designated areas.

0950

Minister, as you know, in 2021, we passed the francophone emblem act, which made the beautiful green-and-white flag an official symbol of Ontario. And we also had a campaign last year that ensured that the francophone flag was delivered to all the locations that, indeed, did service our francophone community.

But recently, we also had another very exciting announcement, and that was to do with French-language symbols on the health cards. By that measure, our francophone community can now go and exchange their health cards to add their symbols so that they are reflected on our government ID. So, Minister, can you talk about the importance of this action, and how is it going right now?

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you so much—actually, I should be saying merci, MPP Kusendova-Bashta, and bonjour. Honestly, I just want to say thank you to you and Minister Mulroney for doing such an incredible job for the francophone community in Ontario and always supporting our Franco-Ontarians.

My ministry recently made changes that allow Franco-Ontarians the option of French-language characters such as accents on all government IDs, and you spoke about that. But what we did is that, now, Ontarians with French names can have this change added free of charge at any ServiceOntario. And honestly, as we have said, as the deputy has been saying, I've been saying, we are trying to

make life easy for Ontarians, and we will continue to support the Franco-Ontarian community in Ontario.

But I know the deputy would like to add something to this as well, too.

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the member for the question. I wanted to add to what the minister said by really focusing also on customer service and ways that we are trying to improve our service delivery through ServiceOntario and, really, through all our services, and working with our delegated administrative authority community in the consumer protection space to ensure that French-speaking Ontarians can access all our services, publicly facing services, in English and French.

So I'm going to ask my colleague Nelson Loureiro to talk a little bit about some of the work that his division is doing specifically in ServiceOntario to improve access. We know that we're getting better, but there's always work to do to ensure that services are available in our official languages. Over to you, Nelson.

**Mr. Nelson Loureiro:** Thank you, Deputy. Thank you, member, for the question. I can say that we proudly display the francophone flag in our designated communities, both in our public and private ServiceOntario locations.

To your point, Deputy, we are always looking to improve and expand services to francophone Ontarians, and I'd say, both in our digital space, in our online space, as well as in our front counter spaces. Not only in designated communities, but we're looking to expand across all of Ontario. Where somebody enters our facilities looking to speak and be served in French, we are looking to how we can accommodate that, using channels like video. So if somebody were not available in the front counter, we would look to connect them through a video channel to somebody that is French-speaking.

In addition to that, we are fully bilingual in our contact centres, so as we provide services on the phone and through those channels, we are fully bilingual there as well.

In addition to that, as we are introducing new technologies like chatbots—ensuring that we provide those services to francophone communities, and bilingual, as well.

As we expand our services, this is paramount to us. As we think about what the ServiceOntario future is going to be, it is paramount to us that we continue to expand the francophone services and the ability to provide services in both official languages in all of our centres.

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** Thank you for that response.

The government has one minute and 17 seconds for a quick question and response. MPP Jones, please.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Through you, Chair: Minister, thank you for sharing a personal story about your father, who puts his best suit on to go into a ServiceOntario office to get his APP permit. I have a father who does the same thing.

Can you share briefly about the technology we are using to improve services like this so that Ontarians don't

have to do that, so we can better serve people with disabilities and different needs?

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Yes, absolutely. Thank you, MPP Jones. What we are trying to do is we are trying bring a lot of services online. As of right now, there are close to 40 services that are currently online, such as that you can renew your driver's licence and your health card online. This is exactly what part of our mandate is: to make life easy for Ontarians.

With ServiceOntario, I always use this line in our ministry—we always talk about this: Every transaction online is one less person in line, which means the more transactions we bring online—now, basically, ServiceOntario is there to offer services to individuals such as your father, my father and our seniors, but then we have a generation that would like to do these transactions online as well. That is exactly what we want to do, to make sure that if I can do a transaction from the comfort of my home, I am able to do it. I think our team at ServiceOntario—

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** Thank you, Minister. I'm going to have to ask you to conclude.

We're now going to move to the official opposition, and they have 20 minutes for additional questions. When you are ready, MPP Mamakwa, please.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch, Chair. In our last line of questioning, after 20 minutes, one of the assistant deputy ministers was speaking on some of the issues or the plans for going to the fly-in First Nations. Just thinking about it, I have various sizes of First Nations that are fly-in. There is one First Nation that is about 4,000 people, there's another First Nation that has about 3,500 people and then there are others, kind of mid-size, probably around 1,800 to 2,000 people. Those are the communities I would be recommending to go to, to try and start the process.

When you say "all Ontarians," you cannot forget the people who live in these First Nations. I think it is important that we start looking at this. I know when you and I have these discussions that you want to come to my riding, there's that opportunity to see those mobile units in fly-in First Nations in action.

But also, on a side note, I hear people talking about "remote communities." I'm just going to share a story. Sometimes I used to say "remote communities" or "remote First Nations." I used to say that. Elders came and told me, "We're not remote. We've been here for thousands of years. I don't know how long Toronto has been there; I don't know how long Ottawa has been there. They're the ones that are remote." But anyway, it's just a story.

But I wanted to start the discussion again. I know that deputy—I think his name is Nelson Loureiro—was beginning to speak when he got cut off.

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Sure. Thank you, MPP Mamakwa.

ADM Nelson, maybe want to continue from where you left off?

**Mr. Nelson Loureiro:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the member for the story; it is an important one. I

will change my language as well, in recognition of that story.

We are, again, very proud of the work we have done in partnership with North Shore Tribal Council and Serpent River. We want to use that work to look at how we can expand with other Indigenous communities in the north, including fly-in communities. And ServiceOntario is not about delivering only to municipalities; it is about delivering to communities, and it is about delivering to all communities. So we are looking at ways of expanding that work.

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We are looking at partnerships. As I said, we are working with the Kenora District Services Board, which includes a partnership with NAN, on both how we deliver services but also how we look at ID clinics and things of that nature as well. This work is of great importance to us, and it's of great importance to how we bring ServiceOntario into communities and looking for partnerships that look at how communities can be self-sufficient and deliver for themselves as well in terms of providing ServiceOntario services. So we are working with municipalities, we are working with First Nations, we are working with libraries, and we are working with social services. In terms of where there is need, we want to be there to provide those services, and that's part of our plan.

So I appreciate the question, and we are committed to providing services where those services are required and needed and ensuring that people aren't having to travel long distances to get ServiceOntario services.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch. Thank you very much for your response. I'm going to pass my time to MPP—

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** All right. MPP Wong-Tam, good morning. Welcome.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Good morning, Chair. Thank you. Can I just get a time check to see how much time is left?

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** Yes. You have 14 minutes left in the questioning, which will take us right up until we conclude the committee meeting.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much. And thank you, Minister, for being here once again. Sorry, everyone; I was a little bit late—just stepping out of another event. So if I ask a question that's been asked, please forgive me. You can just say, "Asked and answered."

I wanted to maybe start off in the area of elevators. I represent Toronto Centre. We have some of the tallest residential buildings in Canada and certainly in North America—a very heavily dense environment. We've put people into a lot of high-rise communities, so our communities are oftentimes reliant on elevators and other types of elevating devices. We shop in malls that have escalators, and oftentimes chairlifts are required because we want to be AODA compliant, and we've been moving rapidly to get there. But as all urban areas intensify, we see more reliance on elevators. More people are getting

elderly. The need for accessibility is not just a nice-to-have, but a must-have.

I'm just really curious regarding elevator standards and minimums. We oftentimes hear stories of people getting stranded in elevators. But even more common than that are elevators leaving people stranded—elevators that are not just broken for a few hours, but out for days, weeks and, believe it or not, even months. Seniors having to carry their groceries and heavy parcels, caregivers having to somehow manoeuvre and lift those very heavy SUV-style strollers in and out of their buildings—if they happen to live on the ground floor, they're very fortunate, but most of us don't live on the ground floor.

I'm just curious, Minister, because I know it's been brought up on numerous occasions around the standards of elevators, elevator repairs: Can you tell me how many elevating devices there are in the province of Ontario that the TSSA is in charge of and taking a look at? Is there inventory of that?

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you so much, MPP Wong-Tam, and definitely no one asked this question before, so I'm happy to address it.

Our government recognizes the importance of TSSA's mandate to protect the public's safety and provide Ontarians with the very best service possible. That is why we reduced the permit and licence fee by 75% for 163 businesses operating. In April 2021, regulatory changes were approved under the TSSA, Technical Standards and Safety Act, to improve elevator safety and availability—

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Minister—sorry, I'm just going to take my time back. My question was, just to clarify, how many elevating devices are there in the province of Ontario?

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Before I hand it over to the deputy minister, I just want to say that the changes that came into effect as of July 1, 2022, also include providing TSSA with the ability to impose administrative penalties, to your point, for non-compliance with elevator laws, and requiring the reporting of elevator outage data to TSSA, and TSSA publishes the data online. But I'm going to hand it over to the deputy minister to address that for you.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you.

Deputy Minister, as you're getting ready to answer that question, maybe I'll ask a few others, because they're all going to be connected to the issue around elevators.

With respect to the collection of data—and hopefully there's aggregated data—my question to you, and I'll just expand it a little bit, because I suspect you might have this information, is: How many elevating devices are registered and regulated under the TSSA in Ontario? Roughly how many of them—if you don't have the actual number, perhaps percentage-wise—are down at any given time, meaning non-functional?

And is there an average time that then gets elevators and elevating devices back up and running so that people have access to places where they need to go, including, of course, home or their place of business?

And then, finally, what are the minimum standards? How long is an elevator or elevating device permitted by

the government, allowed to be down, meaning not functioning, not working safely, before penalties and investigations kick in, so therefore perhaps the operator/owner/building manager has greater incentive to fix that?

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Thank you for the questions. I'm also joined by my colleague Michèle Sanborn, who is the assistant deputy minister for policy, program and oversight division. Her division works very closely with the Technical Standards and Safety Authority and provides oversight, has worked very closely with the TSSA around the Auditor General's recommendations, including some of the recommendations on improving elevator safety that were made.

To answer your question, roughly 60,000—I think your question was about elevating devices, so I just want to differentiate. You're talking about elevators, or—

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** You can give it to me as an aggregate, and if you do have the disaggregate, I'll accept that as well, but I'm interested in it all, just from a point of accessibility.

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Sure. Because there are elevating devices that the TSSA inspects that are actually elevating devices used in construction, so there's a range.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** We can remove those ones.

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Okay. I'm going to call a friend here and I'm going to—I think we have about 60,000 in the province?

**Ms. Michèle Sanborn:** Yes.

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** Yes, 60,000. And with respect to—obviously, the TSSA is an arm's-length delegated administrative authority. It is responsible for operationalizing its inspection cycle and program and has technical experts in this space.

I'm going to ask Michèle to expand a little bit on the work that TSSA has done around elevating devices and hopefully get to the heart of your questions.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I appreciate it.

Michèle, what I'm really chasing after is just the quantum: How many elevating devices do we have in Ontario? How many of them are operational at any given time? You can give me estimates and percentages; that's okay. I'm just really curious to know how many of those devices are down, the duration of time they're down, and when consumers, residents, workers and employees can expect them to be back up. What would be the absolute minimum standard?

**Ms. Michèle Sanborn:** Good morning. I'm Michèle Sanborn. I'm the assistant deputy minister of the policy, planning and oversight division.

I'll try my best to answer the question from, it seems, the data perspective. You're interested in data. What I don't have here, we can certainly submit to the committee. That would be fine.

Just to elaborate on what the deputy was indicating, there are about 62,000 elevating devices, but of those—and I think this gets to a bit of your question—20,000 are actually passenger elevators at 10,000 residential and institutional buildings in Ontario.

You're quite right that there were recent regulatory changes that required elevator outages to be reported to the TSSA so this could be tracked. This just actually came into force over the course of last summer, as you know. We're happy to go back and look at what that data is. But I will say, this is a very new requirement. This is just starting to be reported through the TSSA.

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**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you. That's really helpful. So because that data is now being collected, and centrally collected, where is that posted? How do members of the public get that information? I mean, of course notwithstanding the fact that we have this opportunity. But not every member of the public will have this opportunity, and I'm asking on behalf of seniors, I'm asking on behalf of people who are really reliant on elevators: people using mobility devices, pushing strollers, carrying heavy parcels. We're really interested in that.

**Ms. Michèle Sanborn:** The information would be posted through the TSSA.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** It's on their website?

**Ms. Michèle Sanborn:** It will be posted through the TSSA.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** When will it be on their website? It's good to hear.

**Ms. Michèle Sanborn:** We can bring that back to the committee. But it should be posted—as I said, it's a new regulation, so the TSSA is just collecting this data. It's a very good question. For example, through this regulatory change, if you were going to purchase a condo in a building you would be able to look at the track record of elevator availability in that condo. That was one of the primary benefits of the regulatory change. As I said, we're happy to go back to the TSSA, see what has been collected, and bring that back to the committee.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I would very much welcome that. Thank you. In the new era of open government, open data, I suspect that that information would be helpful.

I'm just going to move on, because I know my time is—

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** You have three minutes.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Three minutes? Oh, okay. I spent more time on that than I wanted to.

I'm going to move onto the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, everyone's favourite topic these days. I understand that they have 6,000 builders and vendors that are registered with the authority now. I'm just really

curious, because I've heard—and this is anecdotal—some stories that the authority is not very good at licensing, at transparency; they're not great at enforcement, they're not great at collection of fines. They're just not great. Now, I know that it's early days, but considering that there is a lot of expectation for this authority to perform well, I think right now it's not meeting the standards of consumers in Ontario.

I had a chance to go onto their website myself just to see exactly how inaccessible this information is or how well they are doing. To my surprise, the website was very thin on information. What I did gather was that there were probably about three—maybe one to two or three vendors that have been successfully investigated and charged out of the hundreds of complaints that I know that have been filed.

So I'm just curious to know the capacity of this HCRA. When can we expect them to be fully up and running? Have all those hundreds of complaints actually been thoroughly investigated? Are they dismissed? How does someone who is a complainant actually determine where their complaint is in the process, and at what stage? Is there timely reporting that goes back to the consumer? And when can we see the website updated with more publicly accessible information?

**Ms. Renu Kulendran:** So perhaps I'll start and Michèle will jump in with some details, but I wanted to talk a little bit about the fact that we are actively making changes to the regulatory framework to actually provide more tools to the HCRA. We had legislative changes through the More Homes for Everyone Act, and we're further strengthening the ability of the HCRA to do more by proposed changes under the New Home Construction Licensing Act. That includes, as mentioned yesterday, increasing the existing maximum financial penalties—

**The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe):** Thank you very much, Deputy.

This concludes the committee hearings. Minister Rasheed, thank you very much to you and your staff for the level of preparation and responses to the questions. To the committee members, thank you very much for the level of preparation and participation in your questions to the people appearing before us over the last day and a half.

That is all the time we have for today. The committee is now adjourned.

*The committee adjourned at 1015.*



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