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Lundi
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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 28 September 2020 / Lundi 28 septembre 2020

Royal assent / Sanction royale

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott) 9345

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

COVID-19 response

Ms. Doly Begum 9345

Affordable housing

Mr. Toby Barrett 9345

COVID-19 response

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell 9345

John Vandertuin

Mr. Will Bouma 9346

Education funding

Miss Monique Taylor 9346

United Way

Mr. Randy Pettapiece 9346

Public health

Mr. Kevin Yarde 9346

Police

Ms. Christine Hogarth 9347

Max Keeping

Mr. Jeremy Roberts 9347

Legislative interns

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott) 9347

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

COVID-19 response

Ms. Catherine Fife 9347

Hon. Christine Elliott 9348

Hon. Stephen Lecce 9348

Hon. Christine Elliott 9348

Long-term care

Mme France Gélinas 9348

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton 9348

COVID-19 response

Ms. Marit Stiles 9349

Hon. Stephen Lecce 9349

COVID-19 response

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed 9350

Hon. Christine Elliott 9350

Commercial rent protection

Ms. Peggy Sattler 9351

Mr. Stan Cho 9351

Taxation

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios 9351

Hon. Paul Calandra 9351

Public transit

Ms. Christine Hogarth 9352

Hon. Caroline Mulroney 9352

Small business

Mr. Faisal Hassan 9352

Mr. Stan Cho 9353

COVID-19 response

Ms. Mitzie Hunter 9353

Hon. Paul Calandra 9353

Tourism

Mr. Toby Barrett 9354

Hon. Lisa MacLeod 9354

Education funding

Ms. Doly Begum 9355

Hon. Stephen Lecce 9355

Child care

Ms. Christine Hogarth 9355

Hon. Stephen Lecce 9355

Manufacturing jobs

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell 9356

Hon. Caroline Mulroney 9356

COVID-19 response in northern Ontario

Mr. Deepak Anand 9356

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria 9357

Special-needs students

Miss Monique Taylor 9357

Hon. Stephen Lecce 9357

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Mr. Jeremy Roberts 9358

Report presented 9358

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Multiple sclerosis

Mme France Gélinas 9358

Long-term care

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell 9358

Services for persons with disabilities

Mr. Percy Hatfield 9358

Autism treatment	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	9359
Public sector compensation	
Mme France G�linas	9359
Health care	
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9359
Long-term care	
Mme France G�linas	9359
Education funding	
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9359
Gasoline prices	
Mme France G�linas	9360
Alzheimer’s disease	
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9360
Documents gouvernementaux	
Mme France G�linas	9360
Long-term care	
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9360
Autism treatment	
Mme France G�linas	9361

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020, Bill 204, Mr. Clark / Loi de 2020 visant � soutenir les locataires et les petites entreprises, projet de loi 204, M. Clark	
Mr. Kaleed Rasheed.....	9361
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9363
Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	9363
Ms. Peggy Sattler	9363
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9364
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell	9364
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	9364
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	9364
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9367
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	9367
Mr. Aris Babikian	9367
Mr. Michael Mantha	9368
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	9368
Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	9368
Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	9369
Mr. Tom Rakocevic	9369
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff	9370
Mr. Michael Mantha	9370
Hon. Paul Calandra	9370
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9370
Ms. Jane McKenna.....	9371
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9373
Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	9373
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	9374
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9374
Mr. Tom Rakocevic	9374
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	9375

Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	9375
Mr. Will Bouma	9379
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	9379
Ms. Christine Hogarth	9379
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell	9379
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9380
Mr. Jeff Burch	9380
Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios	9380
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9381
Mr. Jamie West	9381
Hon. Paul Calandra	9382
Mr. Kevin Yarde	9382
Hon. Paul Calandra	9382
Mme France G�linas	9382
Mr. Deepak Anand.....	9383
Ms. Doly Begum	9384
Mr. Will Bouma	9384
Mr. Kevin Yarde	9384
Mr. Toby Barrett	9384
Mme France G�linas	9385
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9385
Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	9385
Mr. Will Bouma	9386
Mr. Jamie West	9387
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9387
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	9387
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	9387
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	9388
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff.....	9389
Mme France G�linas	9389
Ms. Christine Hogarth	9390
Mr. Wayne Gates	9390
Ms. Jane McKenna.....	9390
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	9391
Mr. Aris Babikian.....	9392
Mme France G�linas	9392
Mr. Will Bouma	9392
Mr. Jamie West	9393
Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	9393
Mr. Wayne Gates	9393
Mr. Will Bouma	9395
Mr. Jamie West	9395
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	9395
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	9395
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9396
Mme France G�linas	9396
Ms. Doly Begum	9396
Mr. Will Bouma	9398
Mme France G�linas	9398
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff.....	9398
Mr. Kevin Yarde	9399
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	9399
Hon. Paul Calandra	9399
Second reading agreed to	9400

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 September 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 septembre 2020

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to proclaim the month of July as Tibetan Heritage Month / Loi proclamant le mois de juillet Mois du patrimoine tibétain.

An Act to proclaim Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day / Loi proclamant la Journée pour l'élimination de la cyberintimidation en Ontario.

An Act to amend the Franco-Ontarian Emblem Act, 2001 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur l'emblème franco-ontarien.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Doly Begum: I rise today to recognize the great work our local business associations, namely the Crossroads of the Danforth BIA and the Scarborough Business Association, have been doing to support and advocate for our small businesses in my riding of Scarborough Southwest.

I joined the leader of the official opposition to meet with these BIAs a few weeks ago. They shared with us the struggles that local businesses are facing and the work they're doing to help local businesses get through this pandemic. It is clear that these businesses need more support from this government if they are to keep their doors open after this pandemic, especially as we head toward a second wave.

Last week, the Ontario NDP presented an updated plan on how we would support small businesses. I am proud to stand by this plan that proposes exactly what the business communities have been calling for. The updated measures include a ban on commercial evictions; a no-strings-attached rent subsidy of 75%, which would be a significant

improvement on the CECRA; a utility payment freeze; a limit on food delivery fees to help our restaurants; a mandate to reduce commercial vehicle insurance rates; and preventing insurance companies from denying business interruption insurance.

Mr. Speaker, businesses in Scarborough Southwest and across this province need our support urgently, so I call on the Premier and his government to take the necessary steps, adopt our Save Main Street plan and protect the backbone of our economy.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Toby Barrett: There's a movement afoot to take back downtown Simcoe and assist those without a home, those suffering from mental health problems and those with addictions to narcotic analgesics.

I was very pleased to have my colleague Steve Clark, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, join me in Simcoe to announce over \$3.1 million through our Home for Good program. This funding will renovate the downtown Simcoe Norfolk Inn into a three-storey, 50-unit residence for supportive housing. When completed, the complex will include seven accessible units, community space and commercial units at street level.

1020

We congratulate all who have been involved with the Norfolk Inn renovation: the team at Indwell, Schilthuis Construction, the broader business and social service community, volunteers and the fundraisers. Norfolk county and the Haldimand Norfolk Housing Authority continue to lead in providing quality affordable housing.

Speaker, homelessness is a serious issue, and those experiencing homelessness often have complex needs. This is a critical project. It will help to provide some of the most vulnerable members of our community with a roof over their heads and access to programs to stabilize their lives, find employment and become contributing members of our society.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Last Wednesday, I was saddened to learn that a student at École Gron Morgan in Thunder Bay tested positive for COVID-19. My heart goes out to the student, the parents and all of those affected. When I saw this news, all I could think is this Conservative government needs to get its act together. They had no plan. We knew all summer that a second wave was coming, yet where were they?

For parents in my riding, no plan means there are no good choices. Parents can send their children to school where cases are rising. At the same time, fewer people are allowed to get a COVID test and there are few resources. The other option, keeping children at home, requires Internet. In many parts of my riding, there is no Internet, or no high-speed Internet, or it's simply unaffordable. Barbara Saxberg copied me on a petition from Oliver Paipoonge sent to Tbaytel about the lack of Internet service. Tbaytel responded that they are waiting on this government to decide if they will fund high-speed Internet to 1,752 addresses.

So there you have it: On COVID testing, on education choices for parents and on rural Internet, this government needs a plan. Enough is enough, and now is the time to act.

JOHN VANDERTUIN

Mr. Will Bouma: Today I am pleased to rise to bring attention to a very special anniversary for one of my constituents. I just want to apologize for being six months late because of the delay with COVID. Dr. John Vandertuin is a concert organist with an exceptional talent. He has distinguished himself not just by his organ skills, but also by the fact that he can play so well while being blind from birth.

Dr. Vandertuin began his career at age 12. Since that time, he has studied around the world with some of the greatest organists and performed in some of the most noteworthy locations. He honed his craft at a young age in places such as Paris, Amsterdam and the United States, and right here at home in Canada at the University of Western Ontario in London. He is known as an outstanding recital organist and memorizes his repertoire from Braille or by ear. Again, he has performed in locations around the world.

He is now, this year, celebrating his 50th anniversary as a concert organist. To clarify, it has been 50 years since his first complete organ recital at age 12. This is certainly something to celebrate. For the past 50 years, we have been fortunate to have the music of Dr. Vandertuin sounding throughout churches and concert halls in Canada and around the world.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: Over the past few weeks, we've watched the government's awful school reopening plan unfold. We've seen the government vote against our motion for safer, smaller class sizes that would have capped class sizes at 15 students, and now we're seeing COVID-19 cases rising fast.

We have 240 confirmed cases in dozens of schools around the province. In Hamilton, I have heard from many parents who feel their child is at risk of falling behind. I've also heard from parents of special-needs children not getting the one-on-one support their child needs, and educational assistants who support these kids have told me that they are stretched much too thin. Teachers and education workers are burning the candle at both ends, trying to

provide in-class and online learning and ensure that students don't fall behind.

Further, in Hamilton, school buses are being rationed. The boards are rotating bus schedules because this year we have cancelled 17 routes due to a shortage of drivers. These buses are packed full of kids, so cohorting and distancing is impossible.

At the end of the day, parents and students are feeling the impact. They're wondering, where is the government? As cases of COVID-19 are on the rise again, why won't this government shrink class sizes, like the experts recommend? Families should never have to choose between their kids' safety and their education, but that is exactly what this government is forcing them to do.

UNITED WAY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: On Friday, the United Way Perth-Huron held their semi-virtual campaign kick-off event. The video presentation featured campaign co-chairs Martin and Kathryn Ritsma. Along with executive director Ryan Erb, they spoke about some of the unignorable issues we face. They shared stories about those experiencing poverty, homelessness and social isolation.

These issues are really about people, people in our community who are experiencing hardships. Meeting their needs takes effort and leadership. We have that in the United Way and all the organizations they support. It also takes financial resources. As part of Friday's event, the United Way announced its most ambitious local fundraising campaign goal ever: \$1,762,200.

Ryan Erb gave a few examples of the kind of help they can provide. "We want to be able to help people who might be experiencing a challenge right here and right now," he said. "Maybe they need a bit of help paying their rent. Maybe they need a bit of help with paying for that car-repair bill so they can get to their job and don't lose it."

In response to last year's fundraising goals, the community stepped up. Workplaces of all sizes, hundreds of them, made donations. Let's encourage each other to do it again this year. I'm confident we will do it again, because that's the kind of community we are. The need is great, but so is our collective capacity to give.

To everyone involved in the campaign, thank you for making our community stronger.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My motion calling on the province to provide assistance to Peel public health passed last week. The government so far has failed to deliver the help that should have come by now, help that would have supported more testing, more community outreach and more proactive workplace inspections.

What we need is unrestricted funding of the provincial component to hire various staff that can continue to support—and I'll name the staff that we require: six full-time-equivalent public health inspectors; 10 case and contact managers to support COVID now, but also to

support with other communicable diseases once the pandemic is over, particularly given the backlog to date and concerns of spread as well. Having more permanently would allow flexibility between the COVID response and other infectious diseases.

We require eight immunization coordinators to support influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations; one analyst and one coordinator to support harm reduction efforts—we have seen opioid overdoses also surge during the pandemic—additional data coordinators, epidemiologists and analysts, all to support public reporting of data and public education around what we are seeing in respect of clusters.

Long story short, Mr. Speaker, at least 26 full-time equivalents is what we need, which would come up to a commitment of around \$2 million from the province. All of this would go to supporting the continued control of COVID, rollout of a mass immunization program, as well as protecting against influenza.

POLICE

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Last year at this time, I had the privilege to speak at the National Peace Officers' Memorial Run kick-off. The event was held right here at Queen's Park. The memorial run honours the hundreds of police and peace officers who have died in the line of duty.

Last year's event saw runners start here at Queen's Park and run along the 460-kilometre route to the Canadian Police And Peace Officers' Memorial in our nation's capital. This year, the event was cancelled in Toronto due to COVID-19 restrictions, and a muted ceremony was held in Ottawa.

This is a chance to reflect and honour those peace officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their communities. This year, four more names were sadly added to the honour roll, including that of RCMP Constable Heidi Stevenson, who died in the shooting rampage in April in Nova Scotia.

1030

Every day, peace officers face challenging circumstances, difficult decisions and complex workloads. Often, their work is silent, preventive and unseen. And sometimes their jobs require them to put themselves in harm's way to keep others safe. It's heartening to know that we can always count on our front-line responders to keep us safe.

Thank you to all our police and peace officers for your service to your country and to your community.

MAX KEEPING

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: For those of us who are from Ottawa, we will remember the late Max Keeping, our former CTV Ottawa news anchor for many, many years. Max was well known in our community for always bringing us together in our moments of greatest challenge.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen that in the city of Ottawa his legacy lives on. At the onset of the pandemic, the United Way of eastern Ontario, under

their CEO Michael Allen, brought together all of the community organizations and agencies across Ottawa on a COVID-19 community response table. I was honoured to sit on that table as the provincial government's representative, alongside these representatives of agencies, different levels of government and local businesses.

Just as Max taught us, during this incredibly difficult period, the community rallied. We made sure that different agencies, businesses and political leaders were working together to tackle the challenges of gender-based violence, mental health issues, refugee supports, and we saw some really fantastic, innovative solutions come out from all of that.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I would like to thank the United Way of eastern Ontario for their leadership, thank all of the agencies across Ottawa that have been valiantly working together to combat this difficult challenge, and to the people of Ottawa, I want to say thank you. I know that Max Keeping is smiling down on all of us.

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask oral questions, it gives me great pleasure to introduce some special guests who are with us in the Speaker's gallery. They are this year's interns from the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme: Mackenzie Bonnett, Amelia Boughn, Gurkamal Dhahan, Ritika Gupta, Elizabeth Haig, Monica Mann, Meriem Mezdour, David Nightingale, Alexander Stover and Chelsea Tao. Please join me in welcoming them.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Although this is a unique year, as we know, this talented and enthusiastic group of scholars is looking forward to working with you, and I would ask you all to keep an eye out for the application package which should be going out to your offices very soon.

Once again, welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. With more people being affected by COVID-19, this government's actions are weeks late, incomplete and contradictory. They are scrambling. They are chasing the second wave instead of being in front of it with a clear and cohesive plan.

Last week, the Ford government had to scramble to ration COVID-19 testing, just a day after the Premier announced the scheme for asymptomatic testing. Then the Ford government had to scramble with new closing times for bars and restaurants, four months after Toronto Mayor John Tory and Toronto Public Health called for that to happen—four months late.

When COVID-19 is moving so rapidly, why is the Ford government moving so slowly?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say that while the increase in COVID-19 cases is very unfortunate, it's also not unexpected. We have prepared for this throughout the summer months. We knew that we were going to see an increase in cases. We know that we're facing flu season as well, and we're trying to keep the number of scheduled surgeries and procedures also on track.

That is why we developed our comprehensive plan, Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19. It is a six-pillar plan that comprehensively deals with the issue: first of all, maintaining public health measures; secondly, implementing the largest flu immunization campaign in Ontario's history; third, quickly identifying, managing and preventing outbreaks of COVID-19; accelerating efforts to reduce health service backlogs; preparing for surges in COVID-19 cases; and, of course, dealing with the health human resources that we need in order to keep Ontarians safe. That is a comprehensive plan. That is what we are putting into action right now.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Premier should be moving swiftly and making urgent investments—which is not happening—yet the Ford government seems surprised by developments, hoping to save a buck, especially in our classrooms. Nearly 200 schools now have reported cases of COVID-19. Public health experts, including the Hospital for Sick Children, have been very clear: It's impossible to safely distance in classes of more than 15. Yet the Ford government refuses to make the investments needed to safely cap class sizes, which is what needs to happen.

How long will parents have to wait before the government takes the measures we know are needed now?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I'm proud that the government has unveiled a plan endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health of this province—\$200 million in investment. Speaker, let me tell you what that investment is yielding province-wide: As of this morning, over 2,044 teachers have been hired because of government investment in ensuring the safety of our schools; over 92 mental health workers; over 1,100 custodians have been hired; an additional 372 early childhood educators; another 162 education assistants; another 551 nurses, doubling the capacity of mental health nurses within our schools.

This is investment, this is leadership, and it demonstrates that we'll do whatever it takes to keep our students and staff safe in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yet COVID-19 is expanding in our school system.

Parents and families are watching Ontario slide backwards. Cases continue to grow in our schools and long-term-care homes. There is a backlog of 65,000 people waiting for test results. In over half the cases, we don't know how people got sick, and we lack contact tracing in this province.

The Premier has spent the last week slowly rolling out one pillar at a time. Those pillars change day by day. There is no confidence in this government's plan. Why, with the second wave of this pandemic upon us, is this government still scrambling to chase the crisis?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the member that the plan has been in place for some time. It has already been in implementation for a long time. What we're doing is building on some of the basics that we started with testing, tracing and isolation to make sure that we can reduce community transmission.

But, specifically, in terms of contact tracing, we are investing over \$1 billion—\$1 billion—to expand efforts to test, trace and isolate COVID-19 cases. As part of this, we are going to be bringing in more than 500 new contact tracers on top of the 2,750 already in place. We are working with Statistics Canada. They are also providing another 500 employees to help with contact tracing, so we will have 3,750 contact tracers in place to deal with the increase in cases. We were prepared for it, and we are dealing with it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

In our long-term-care homes, the need for action is literally a matter of life and death. Over the weekend, another resident of the for-profit Extencare West End Villa in Ottawa died due to the COVID-19 outbreak that has now claimed 13 lives. Now the for-profit Norwood nursing home in Toronto reports 18 new cases of COVID, up from 12 just yesterday.

For weeks, the Ford government has insisted these outbreaks were under control, even when staff were pleading for access to PPE and infection control. After all of the horrors that we saw in long-term care just this spring, why are these homes and this government still unprepared?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care.

1040

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Again, our government's commitment is to the safety and well-being of residents and staff in our long-term-care homes. That's the main thing that we are acting on, to make sure that everyone understands that PPE is necessary in our long-term-care homes, getting that supply to them, making sure that our homes are connected with IPAC specialists. That is an ongoing effort. We have never stopped doing that. We went right from the first wave and have continued to develop an action plan and a fall preparedness plan with the Ministry

of Health, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, and the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility.

This is ongoing. An outbreak in long-term care can mean no residents in the home—and in fact, the majority of our homes have absolutely no resident cases. So an outbreak is one staff or one resident case, and in the majority of our homes right now, there are no resident cases.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: On Friday, CBC Marketplace revealed that the Ford government knew that resident quality inspections helped identify infection control concerns in our long-term-care homes, but they cut them anyway, leaving nursing homes vulnerable and unprepared for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Facilities that are currently facing outbreaks, like Extencare West End Villa, like Norwood nursing home, have not had a thorough resident quality inspection in years. How can the government claim to know what is happening in these facilities when they cut funding and cancelled the inspections that would have told them so much?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again for the important question. There is a lot of misinformation circulating surrounding inspections, and I want to make sure this is clarified.

Since January, my ministry has completed over 1,339 inspections. Every home in Ontario is inspected at least once a year. There were 2,800 inspections last year. We also respond immediately to any reported information where there is serious harm or risk of serious harm to a resident by making inquiries and conducting inspections—processing thousands of intakes last year.

These outbreaks right now are being assisted with through public health. We know that our inspectors are active in the homes that are affected. Public health is engaged. The inspections have been done, and the Auditor General report back in 2015 caused a change to high-risk inspections and the focus to clear the backlog. This has been an ongoing effort, and we will continue to make sure inspections are done.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: There is a difference between a full resident quality inspection and the inspection the minister is talking about.

Last week, the Ford government insisted that the outbreaks were under control in long-term care. Just like last spring, they said that there was an iron ring around our long-term-care homes. Yet long-term-care operators and families of residents have been pleading with this government for, first, a dedicated infection control consultant in every home, which we don't have; and second, guaranteed access to personal protective equipment, which many of them still don't have.

So why is it that, with over 700 new cases of COVID right here in Ontario today, the Ford government is continuing to try to save money by ignoring this expert advice?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I will take exception to the statement that we are ignoring expert advice. We have acted consistently and are continually taking expert advice.

All our homes are partnered with hospitals. The homes in outbreak, the majority have no resident cases. And as we see community spread and as we do testing surveillance, it's very likely we will see more outbreaks with a staff member isolating at home and no resident cases.

This is a collaborative effort with Public Health Ontario, the public health units, the Ministry of Health, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the experts at the command table, the science table, the public health table. These are the responsive ways that we make sure we get care to our homes.

In terms of testing, yes, the absence of rapid tests is something the federal government could be assisting us with and that would make a difference to long-term care. So I ask the federal government to please help us get those rapid tests. It's imperative.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier.

While Ontarians wait for the government to bring forward a plan to contain rising COVID-19 numbers—and we know today there are 700 more cases—many are wondering if there is a plan at all. We know of 36 more cases in 27 more schools and 272 cases in 137 schools across the province. It was reported over the weekend that almost one in five schools in Ottawa has reported a case of COVID-19, and as of this morning, an outbreak at an elementary school in Scarborough will see it closed until at least next week.

Because the government has failed to keep class sizes under 15, it means that more of our children are exposed. More of their parents are left scrambling to take time off work or to stand in long testing lines. More of those grandparents are cut off from seeing their grandchildren.

When will the Premier bring in a second wave plan to ensure schools can safely remain open?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We have allocated well over a billion dollars of investment, unlocking it for school boards, because we appreciate that the risk is real. We have a duty to work with our school boards and public health agencies on the ground and to have every layer of protection in place to mitigate the risk of transmission.

We know it is rising in our community. It's why the Deputy Premier and Premier have announced a suite of actions, \$740 million, just days ago to reduce the backlog, to increase the amount of flu vaccines for all students—700,000 more—and to increase testing capacity.

Within our schools, we are hiring more staff. We are ensuring every layer of prevention, including the doubling of public health nurses, additional custodians, improvements to ventilation and, of course, action to hire well over 2,000 net new teachers in a one-time investment to reduce

classroom sizes, increase distancing—all to make sure that our students are safe in this province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The minister's repeated assurances just do not line up with the reality of what's happening in our communities, and I think the members opposite know that.

This money is a shell game. That money is not flowing, and the proof is again in what we're seeing in our communities and in our schools. It is status quo class sizes in most schools in this province, and the members opposite know that.

When cases are identified in schools, it also means that teachers and other education workers—custodians, ECEs, EAs—are out of our schools for 14 days. On Friday afternoon, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board wrote to parents to warn them of the impact of staff shortages. They wrote, "Parents should be prepared for the possibility of school closures if we do not have enough staff available to safely supervise students."

Speaker, we can no longer afford this Premier's wait-and-see approach to this pandemic. This is the situation now. Will they deliver the funding and the plan to keep schools safely open?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We are spending more in this province than any province in the country—twice the New Democratic Party in British Columbia, which is quite telling. When the member opposite seeks evidence of the investment, let me just enumerate what we are doing and what so far, midstream, early in this process, early in this semester, we can see investments delivering: 2044 net new teachers—that excludes Toronto; that number will be much higher when that data is known—2,000 more teachers to reduce classroom sizes province-wide; 92 more mental health workers—we're the only province to add net new investment in mental health, because we appreciate the impact of the isolation of students from schools—an additional 1,000 more custodians, and the hiring is ongoing. There are challenges hiring more custodians, getting access to that skilled labour. We have over 162 more education assistants, over 372 early childhood educators.

Speaker, what we have done is put funding in place for boards to do the hiring they need to ensure our schools, our staff and, ultimately, our communities remain as safe as possible as we respond to COVID-19.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Over the past week, we have seen the number of cases increase. I know that you have stated that you are extremely concerned and have taken immediate action in response. This includes stronger penalties for breaking social gathering rules and closing down businesses that continue to ignore health and safety requirements.

We always knew that a second wave was coming, and our government has been able to prepare for months

thanks to the efforts from our dedicated front-line heroes in my riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville and across the province. Speaker, can the Deputy Premier please share with this Legislature what our government has done to provide additional support to enhance our testing and contact tracing systems during this time?

1050

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville for the question and for your continued advocacy. The member is correct that Ontario is a leader when it comes to responding to the COVID-19 crisis, and that includes on the issue of testing.

This is why, last week, we announced that we're investing over \$1 billion in enhanced testing and contact tracing. That is \$1 billion dollars to support testing, and that investment is going to make a huge difference. This month, we've added 500 more staff for contact tracing and case management, and we'll be hiring another 500 staff on top of that 500. We're investing \$30 million to enhance our response. We have a robust surveillance and testing strategy for schools and for long-term-care homes. We now have 151 assessment centres, providing tens of thousands of tests each and every day across this entire province. As well, we now have up to 60 pharmacies that have also joined the assessment centres to help increase our testing.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: These numbers are incredible and speak to our government's commitment to fighting this virus, and follow your strong creed that we will do whatever it takes to help the people of this province. This new funding will mean thousands of additional staff will be hired to support our contact tracing system. This builds on our government's previous announcements of \$30 million to fight outbreaks and \$70 million for the largest flu vaccine campaign in Canadian history.

As you have said, we need the support from the federal government during this time. Until we get Health Canada's approval for new rapid tests—rapid testing that other jurisdictions are currently using—the health experts are telling us that we need to be more strategic with testing. Can the Deputy Premier tell the Legislature more about our continued advocacy to the federal government on this front?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you again to the member for the question, because there's no question that Health Canada and the federal government play a massive role in all of this. Just imagine if we had a rapid test so that we could do in-place testing and we didn't have to send tests to the labs. It can take 24 to 48 hours for the response to come back. If we could do it immediately, that would certainly assist us tremendously with our testing.

Right now, there are a number of rapid tests that are being assessed by Health Canada. We have called upon both Health Canada and the federal government to assist with this, to move this forward as quickly as possible while, of course, still maintaining the rigorous scrutiny they have to put these tests through. But that is something that we are going to continue to move with, because we

know that we have to move. As COVID moves quickly, we have to move faster in order to make sure that we can get the latest in testing, to improve our technology and make sure that we can test, trace and isolate as soon as we can.

COMMERCIAL RENT PROTECTION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Sally Anastasiadis and her family have been a mainstay of London's food and hospitality industry for 35 years. They operate three local businesses, including Mustang Sally's just down the road from my constituency office. In April, Sally's landlord reluctantly agreed to enrol in the commercial rent relief program. Earlier this month, however, Sally was told that full rent would be due for July, August and September, because the landlord had unilaterally decided to withdraw from CECRA. Sally invested in PPE and was able to keep 20 staff on the payroll because she believed rent relief would continue. She now feels like she has been tricked.

Instead of relying on the goodwill of landlords, will the Premier implement a stand-alone emergency commercial rent subsidy to help struggling businesses like Mustang Sally's make it through the pandemic?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Stan Cho: Certainly, we recognize the difficulty for small businesses in this province, including Mustang Sally's and those in Willowdale and in every corner of Ontario. This has been a challenging time. As we know, running a small business is hard even at the best of times, let alone difficult times such as a pandemic.

That's why this government has reacted by providing \$241 million to support the commercial rent relief program. We continue to collaborate with Minister Freeland and try to work to improve the program. But as the member opposite will recognize, this is a federally administered program, so we need to continue to work with our partners at the CMHC to advocate to make sure that we do fill those gaps, and our heart goes out to Sally in these difficult times.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, many London businesses did not get any commercial rent relief at all, like Jean Coles of Sport Clips, because their landlords refused to participate in the program. Some landlords wanted to enrol but were not eligible.

Fixed overheads and soaring insurance costs, coupled with a steep decline in revenues, is putting many well-established businesses at risk. Some have permanently closed, like the Four Seasons Restaurant, after more than 25 years in London West.

As patios close and COVID-19 case counts rapidly rise, London restaurant owners like Jess Jazey-Spoelstra of Craft Pharmacy fear they won't survive the winter without additional government support.

Speaker, why is this government sitting on the \$6.7 billion that has been allocated to help with the pandemic instead of using that funding to save jobs and keep small and medium-sized businesses afloat?

Mr. Stan Cho: Certainly, as this pandemic has progressed, our government has recognized the need to bolster our supports for small businesses, and that's why we announced an increase to the \$17 billion in support, to \$30 billion in August. We recognize that these are incredibly challenging times.

There have been, however, 54,482 tenants that have participated in the program. That's nearly 545,000 employees that have been assisted by the commercial rent relief program. We call on all landlords, wherever you are eligible, to participate in that program, because we are all in this together.

I come from a background of small business, and I understand how difficult small businesses can be. Certainly, we must continue to work together and advocate and collaborate with the federal government. If only we had that level of collaboration from the members opposite, imagine what we could accomplish in this House.

TAXATION

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. This government called Ontario's cap-and-trade scheme a "job-killing carbon tax." His predecessor, the Minister of Finance, said the government was opposed to any kind of carbon tax. The Premier said that the carbon tax's days were numbered. But last week, they reached a deal with the federal Trudeau government to put in an industrial carbon tax that is just like cap and trade. A deputy minister to Alberta Premier Jason Kenney previously referred to this government's carbon tax scheme as being "exactly the same" as the federal plan.

Can the minister explain why they promised to scrap the carbon tax when all they did was replace one carbon tax with another?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member will know that the government actually moved forward very quickly with a made-in-Ontario plan to continue to cut emissions.

Ontario has always been a leader when it comes to environmental protection. This is something that we started, frankly, in a non-partisan, way back in the 1970s, before the premiership of Bill Davis.

Our record is built on the backs of our nuclear sector. The hard-working men and women in the nuclear sector who provided clean energy for the province of Ontario have led us to the point where we have reduced emissions far quicker than any other jurisdiction in the country. They are an example of what other jurisdictions should be doing to reduce their GHG emissions.

We will continue to build on that, as we have always done in the province of Ontario. We will meet our targets with a made-in-Ontario plan that tackles pollution, that tackles litter and, ultimately, leads Ontario to continuing to be a national leader that others can look up to.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Let me just be clear: This government didn't scrap; they replaced one carbon tax with another. They received the blessing of the Trudeau government. They blew their opportunity at the Ontario Court of Appeal to stop a carbon tax on fuel, and today, as a result of this amateur policy-setting, Ontario taxpayers are now paying two carbon taxes: a carbon tax on fuel and another by this provincial government on consumer goods.

The FAO reported in 2018 that by 2022, taxpayers will be paying twice as much for these two carbon taxes as they would have been paying under the cap and trade. Can the minister tell us why this government thinks that two carbon taxes, costing twice as much, are better than one?

Hon. Paul Calandra: It is true, the federal government has forced a carbon tax not only on the people of Canada but the people of Ontario. We have done our part, Mr. Speaker. Generations of Ontarians have done their part on the backs of our nuclear industry. We were able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 22%, far in excess of what any other jurisdiction was able to do. We should all be proud of that. We continued to do that in a very non-partisan way, whether it was Conservatives, NDP or Liberals, to find ways that we could meet our environmental priorities.

1100

But make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker: We are not in favour of the federal carbon tax. We do not believe that the people of Ontario should continue to be punished when we have done what we have been able to accomplish: 22%. We think that what we have done is an example which other jurisdictions should look at. That's why this government is working with the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick to research into greater technologies, like the SMR reactor, Mr. Speaker, which I think will have the potential to do great things for the entire country.

I am very proud of the record we have, but make no mistake about it: We do not believe the federal carbon tax is in the best interest of the people.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Public transit plays a critical role for many Ontarians. Our government has tasked Metrolinx with the most ambitious subway expansion plan this province has ever seen. When it comes to GO Transit, Metrolinx is always looking to enhance the customer experience. That's why, in recent years, Metrolinx has introduced programs like Kids GO Free, Sunday Funday, and lower short-distance fares which actually save my taxpayers in Etobicoke-Lakeshore who take Mimico and Long Branch some savings every day.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that as of today, GO riders will have access to WiFi on board. Could the Minister of Transportation please tell us more about this exciting announcement?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you very much to the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for the question. I am

pleased to confirm that, beginning today, customers will be able to access GO Wi-Fi Plus on all GO buses and about half of GO trains. We expect a full rollout on all GO trains to be completed by early 2021.

We understand how important it is to stay connected. This exciting news means that GO riders will now have the option to stay online during their travels. Be it work or play, customers will be able to check emails, connect with family or friends, or keep entertained with TV shows, e-books and podcasts by connecting to the on-board portal.

Speaker, we're looking to make Ontario's transit network not only bigger but better. GO Wi-Fi Plus is a step to doing just that.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you very much, Minister, for your response and for that fantastic news for riders of GO Transit. This is great news for riders of all ages. I understand that Metrolinx has done their due diligence to ensure that WiFi access is both safe and reliable for their customers.

I also understand that Metrolinx is working hard to protect their staff and employees during this unprecedented time, and I actually had first-hand experience when I toured the site with the Associate Minister of Transportation and our Minister of Finance.

Could the minister please share what Metrolinx has been doing to limit the spread of COVID-19 on our transit?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you again to the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for the question.

To date, Metrolinx has taken a leadership role to help limit the spread of COVID-19. Dozens of safety measures have been implemented on GO Transit, including protective barriers on buses, trains and at stations; hand sanitizer dispensers on buses, in stations and entry zones of train fleets; deep cleanings on all vehicles and at all stations; and health checks and screenings for crews and critical staff. These are just a few of the critical steps that Metrolinx has taken in order to keep their customers and their staff safe.

I want to commend not only Metrolinx but also transit agencies across the province for doing their part to make their transit systems as safe as possible during this pandemic.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Faisal Hassan: My question is for the Premier. This past Friday, I was pleased to be joined by the leader of the official opposition in a visit to my riding of York South-Weston for a much-needed announcement of our plan, Save Main Street. Small businesses in my riding and across Ontario have been clear: They need direct support, and they need it now.

Why doesn't the government support the main street businesses in my riding who, desperately, are looking for rent relief now?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Stan Cho: Certainly, as I said in my previous answer, we recognize the challenges that small businesses are going through in this province. This is a very difficult time. Our government has responded with a series of relief measures, because it's not just the rent that businesses are struggling to pay; it's the hydro. That's why we've provided \$175 million in relief to cap rates at off-peak hours. That's why we've cut taxes for small businesses.

I'll remind the member opposite that we are a 40% equity partner in the commercial rent relief program. But, through you, Speaker, the federal government holds the key to this program and we cannot change it without their collaboration. So work with us to continue to collaborate with the federal party in Ottawa to make sure that we fill those gaps for small businesses up and down main streets, so we can continue to prosper as we move forward out of this pandemic.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Again, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier.

What I am hearing from small business owners is that many have been forced to close their doors or lay off their staff. We need an economic recovery plan, and we have suggested a number of ideas. Business owners like Jamie and Raymond have told me they are in dire need of rent relief. We have asked the government, months ago, for a 75% commercial rent relief and a utility payment freeze.

What is the government's plan in helping Jamie, Raymond and the many other struggling small business owners in my riding of York South–Weston?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Stan Cho: We recognize the challenges of the businesses in York South–Weston and in Willowdale and throughout this province, Mr. Speaker. That's why our government has responded by increasing the \$17 billion in support we announced on March 25 to \$30 billion in August.

When it comes to the commercial rent relief program, \$700 million in participation has been requested here in the province of Ontario. I'll remind the chamber that that is nearly 55,000 tenants and 545,000 jobs that have been assisted through this program. Having said that, we recognize that there are still challenges to small businesses out there and that we must continue to work to support these small businesses.

The message to small businesses out there is clear from the government: We have your back. We're going to continue to work hard so we weather this storm together.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. Ontario is at a critical juncture. It will be remembered as one of those life-changing events, with COVID-19 ravaging our province. We are at a turning point. The government's actions will determine whether we come out of this pandemic for the better or for the worse. With the 700 cases today that are positive, we're headed in the wrong direction.

The people of Ontario are facing immediate critical needs like housing, food security, mental health, employment and education. If the Premier keeps allowing the federal government to do all of the heavy lifting while he watches schools like Mason Road Junior Public School in Scarborough close, because it has not received the investments that it needs, Ontario will see serious trouble down the road.

Speaker, will the Premier commit today in this House to keep the legislated election date that is fixed for 2022? Yes, or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Response? Government House leader.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Stop the clock. Minister of Education, come to order. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, come to order. Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, come to order. Member for Ottawa South, come to order.

Restart the clock. The response: government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I don't even know what to say to that question. We're in the midst of a global health and economic emergency—the member prefaced that in her question—and the leader of the Liberal Party has a former Minister of Education get up in this House and ask the date of the next election. What it says to me is that the Liberals have learned absolutely nothing since being reduced to a party of seven people in the last election.

We have continued and we will continue to focus on what matters most to the people of the province of Ontario: making sure that they are safe, making sure that the economy continues to grow, making sure that our students are safe in school and making sure that our main streets remain vibrant and active.

1110

I will let the Liberals worry about the next election. I know that the people of the province of Ontario want us to continue to focus on what matters most to them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order.

Restart the clock. The supplementary question.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Back to the Premier: The fact of the matter is that this government is not rising to the moment. It is not business as usual. The Premier can't keep touring the province doing election-style events when we are in the midst of a pandemic.

What can the people of Ontario rely on? Because we have seen the consequences of the provincial Conservatives' indifference to social welfare before. Let me remind you, in 1995, Mike Harris's deep cuts to programs and services that anchor young people in this province resulted, within a decade, in the—

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. I'll allow the member for Scarborough–Guildwood to place her question.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: If we want to avoid the poverty, crime and violence that followed the Harris years, we need a Premier who will invest now in proper supports for education, particularly for young people who are at risk. We need supports in testing so that people in my riding don't have to line up for four and a half hours without a working washroom.

Will the Premier invest in the root causes of poverty—

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

The government House leader to reply.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, what the people of the province of Ontario know is that when that member was a minister in a government that led this province close to the brink of bankruptcy, they wanted a new government in place that would make those investments.

It has become even more challenging to fight COVID because of the disaster that was the previous government. They made no changes to health care. They made no changes to social assistance. They closed hundreds of schools across the province of Ontario. They left our transit and transportation system in a complete mess. They left our energy sector—one of the highest rates across—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Guildwood will come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: They drove jobs away from the province in record numbers, Mr. Speaker. And what does this member come forward with? “When is the date of the next election?” What makes it even more ironic is that they fixed the date of the next election before they were thrown out by the people of the province of Ontario.

We'll continue to work until the next date of the election to do what's right for the people in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Government side, come to order.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Unanimous consent to give Mitzie another question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Natural Resources, come to order.

You know, we were doing so well. Let's try again. Restart the clock.

The next question.

TOURISM

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries: Yesterday, September 27, marked World Tourism Day. It was created by the United Nations World Tourism Organization to foster awareness of tourism's social, cultural, political and economic value.

Minister, it would be an understatement to say that 2020 has been a tough year for tourism here in Ontario—anywhere in the world, really. We've heard you say time and time again that no other Ontario industry has been hit harder. The sectors you represent were hit first, hardest and are expected to take the longest to recover.

Minister, you have been a strong and vocal champion for this sector long before the pandemic hit. Tourism is a

key economic driver. How is our government supporting this sector during these trying times?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to say thank you to my colleague the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his steadfast support of these sectors within his constituency. Many members may not know that he's a bit of a historian himself. I had the opportunity to spend some time with him, as well as the member from Brantford–Brant, over the summer to visit their constituencies and, in particular, to take in Indigenous tourism in their community and visit Her Majesty's Royal Chapel of the Mohawks. It was quite touching.

This year, World Tourism Day obviously has a different context, as we recognize Ontario is dealing with about 700 cases of COVID-19 and these industries have been impacted. The member opposite for Scarborough–Guildwood just made a joke about the Premier touring the province; it's the Premier's job—all of our jobs—to reconnect Ontarians and ensure that they have confidence in our small and local businesses. When she said when I got a question today that this was not serious business—this is a \$75-billion suite of sectors that lost \$20 billion in four months. That's serious business, these are serious sectors, and this year—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Minister, for your commitment to the tourism industry during these troubling times. This year's World Tourism Day has been designated as the year of tourism and rural development, to promote the potential to create jobs and opportunities in our rural areas. Rural Ontario is a place where it's easy to find some solitude, to keep your distance, to reconnect with nature and to clear your mind. The best part is that it's right in our own backyard.

Minister, you mentioned your tour of rural Ontario. That was a wonderful day at the Mohawk chapel. You were able to see first-hand not only some of the best attractions, but also to observe the strenuous safety standards that the tourism businesses have been adhering to. My question: Can you tell us about your experience visiting rural Ontario and explain what this government is doing to support the industry across the province?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I had the opportunity over the summer to announce over \$14.2 million in hyper-local marketing to encourage Ontarians to safely reconnect with their loved ones, their neighbours and their community, and to find out what was in their own backyard. We were able to do that, particularly in your area and many parts of rural Ontario that did have an opportunity to salvage some of these rural jobs over the summer because of increased tourism during that period of time.

We invested over \$600,000 in Celebrate Ontario funding for 14 different festivals in the southwestern region, including \$27,000 to the Norfolk county fair and \$15,000 for the Hagersville music festival. We recognize that those festivals couldn't continue on, but we want to make sure their position next year, when we finally get out of COVID-19, is that they're there.

The other thing that we've done is made significant investments into LGBTQ+ tourism and the Culinary Tourism Alliance to support local, as well as \$100,000 into Indigenous tourism. I'm looking forward to the Minister of Francophone Affairs joining me in Ottawa so we can make further announcements for arts and cultural funding for the francophone community.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Parents, educators and students are feeling more and more anxious about this government's school reopening plan. A constituent in my riding, a single mother, shared that her child is literally sitting in front of the computer without a teacher to teach him. She said, "It is a shame that our government has placed so little importance on my son's education, and I'm afraid that the ramifications of this will impact him in the long term, where he will fall behind in his academics and not be able to catch up to what's expected of him."

For two weeks, this mother has been struggling to find out when her son will actually start his classes. She even reached out to the Minister of Education and hasn't received a response. Will the Premier tell the House what measures he will actually take to manage the chaos of virtual schooling, so our students can finally start their school year?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It was this government that announced \$36 million to hire principals to staff, manage and create accountability for our virtual schools. Let's just remind members opposite of what we've done during this pandemic: We've created a concurrent online learning program that has never existed in schools before, with the exception of high school online learning courses. We've literally created concurrent delivery of education in addition to in-class. That is something we should be proud of as a province, not for government but for the people working the front lines who are trying to make this work in the extraordinary challenge of a pandemic and a recession that is impacting the ability of school boards largely to get access to supply.

1120

The Ontario College of Teachers on Friday put out a notice to retirees to come back. We need our educators to work with the school boards and to come back to help us fill the shortages that exist within our boards. It is why we should all be pleased to note that over 2,000 net new educators have been hired—hundreds in Toronto—benefiting the in-class and online experience. We'll continue to invest to ensure it is strong and—

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Doly Begum: In case the minister hasn't noticed, they have created a mess in this province in our education system. This government had months—literally half a year—to prepare and fund a plan that works for Ontarians.

As more and more schools are declaring COVID outbreaks, including one in my riding as of this weekend, parents are switching their kids from in-person to virtual learning, because they have no other option. But parents are being told that they will be put on a wait-list extending to next term.

One family wrote to us, "Right now it feels like we're left to figure this out on our own. The government didn't ensure that families like ours are able to start school and give our child the education that every child in Ontario deserves."

Parents who are trying to return to their jobs are now being forced to deal with this virtual mess created by this government. Parents should not be on a wait-list to see if their kids will be able to get an education. Will the minister tell us when he will start listening to parents and educators in the province and finally provide a fully funded plan with enough resources, like educators for our children?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We did listen to parents, the basis for why this province uniquely has an online learning option where we've set a standard that is rather high: 75% of all classes, the 300 minutes of instruction, must be delivered as live, synchronous, Zoom-style learning—a method of education delivery that was fundamentally and philosophically opposed by that member and all members opposite. It is an element of curiosity. They've come around to online learning. They opposed it in the negotiations, they opposed it in the spring, and now when parents expect it, they're on the bandwagon trying to champion it. You should have been there for parents in the spring. You should have been there in the fall.

This government will insist—we will raise the bar, expect the best and defend the interests of all students who expect the very best of learning. We will be there for students. We will ensure it is safe, but most importantly, that the quality of learning remains sound in all parts of our province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport will come to order. The member for Scarborough Southwest will come to order.

The next question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is actually for the Minister of Education. Parents in my riding speak to me regularly about the importance of access to affordable child care spaces. It can be a significant pressure on young and growing working families, especially during this unprecedented time. After 15 years of neglect from the former Liberal government, this government is putting the needs of families and kids first.

Can the Minister of Education please tell this Legislature what our government is doing to support accessible and sustainable child care across this province?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her leadership and advocacy for affordable and accessible child care in this province. We understand how important child care is to getting moms

and dads back to work and for their confidence as we all respond to COVID-19.

We've seen great disruption to the labour market. We know that we have to do more to ensure child care is available for working parents. That's the basis for why I joined the member in her riding with the federal minister to announce the Safe Restart Agreement, an additional investment of \$234 million to ensure sustainability.

I am proud that as of this morning, over 93% of all child care operators have reopened in this province, demonstrating that our investments and our protocol are very much in the best interests of the staff, the students and the operators. We will continue to do whatever it takes, working across party lines and with the federal government and the municipal governments, to ensure that they remain open for decades to come.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. It's heartening to know that our government is taking child care so seriously.

Speaker, COVID-19 has brought challenges that few could have imagined, including the temporary closure of the majority of child care centres across the province. It's great to see so many centres reopening following the difficult period of closure. Child care centres in my riding—and, as the minister mentioned, the Learning Garden centre, which we both visited with the federal minister—are doing an excellent job at keeping our kids and staff safe while helping parents get back to work.

Can the minister please share some of the ways that child care centres are keeping everyone safe and healthy?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Obviously, the safety of our youngest learners is our most pressing priority as we respond to this pandemic. We have had child care open for our first responders, our emergency workers and our essential workers really since the very beginning of this pandemic. I want to, on behalf of all parliamentarians, express gratitude to our ECEs and our staff in our child care centres, who rose to the challenge and did something that I think was very important to support our front-line staff, women and men who served our province at a difficult time.

Our child care program, our protocol, informed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health and endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, ensures we've established a COVID plan with strict cohorting, with a mask policy for staff, stringent screening of the children and staff before they enter, thorough and enhanced cleaning, additional PPE for all staff, training and, of course, attendance records for rigorous contact tracing. We have done this following the medical advice, and we will continue to respond to the risk as it emerges, working closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health of this province.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: My question is for the Premier. Two hundred workers at the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay are losing their jobs this fall. Toronto needs

new streetcars and subways, and we can make them in Thunder Bay. What is this government doing to keep the plant running and put Bombardier staff back to work?

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

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Our government has unveiled and put into motion the most ambitious subway expansion program in the history of this province. Part of our subway expansion program enables the city of Toronto to fund the purchase of new vehicles that can be built and will be built at the Thunder Bay plant.

I've had the opportunity to speak directly to the mayor of Thunder Bay about this, who understands that through our negotiations with the city of Toronto, we have provided the ability for the city of Toronto to then put in orders with the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay.

We are working very hard to execute on our plan, to get shovels in the ground and get vehicles built so that people across the GTA and York region can be riding subways sooner.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: The mayor of Toronto says that he has his share of the money put aside, so I hope this government will come forward and have theirs.

Over 1,000 people were working at the Bombardier plant last summer and now that number is way down. More layoffs are coming and the province needs a strategy to get that plant running at full capacity soon. When will this government ensure the Bombardier plant has the transit orders it needs so workers can get their jobs back?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'm so happy that the member opposite talked about funding. Our government has been very clear that we are supporting and investing in much-needed transit infrastructure in the GTA and across this province.

What we need is the federal government to come up with their 40%. During the election, the federal government, the Liberal Party, said that they supported our transit plans—transit plans that have been endorsed by city council by a vote of 22 to three, by York regional council and by our government.

What we need now, and what I would ask the members opposite to do, is to go to the federal Liberals, the federal government, and say, "You need to show up at the table now." We have been waiting for a response to our request for funding. We are confident that the federal government will get there, but we could use the help of all the members in this House to call upon the federal Liberals to support Ontario's transit plans.

COVID-19 RESPONSE IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Deepak Anand: As we know, COVID-19 has placed an incredible burden on the business sector across Ontario, and when we talk about northern Ontario, it has put an incredible burden on businesses across all the sectors. Ecotourism, for example, and Indigenous tourism had

contributed \$622 million to GDP—around 13,000 jobs and over 550 businesses—in 2019. They have seen the loss of over \$300 million in revenue. They have seen the loss of 4,000 jobs and the loss of around 150 businesses. This is an example, Mr. Speaker.

1130

COVID-19's restrictions and bar closures made it almost impossible for these tourism outfitters to have a successful season. Can the minister please tell the House what our government is doing to support northern Ontario businesses during this difficult time?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you to the member for Mississauga–Malton for his question.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Northern Ontario has been hit hard by COVID-19 and this pandemic. That's why today our government launched the Northern Ontario Recovery Program. The NORP will deliver targeted funding to help businesses get back on track and adapt to the new normal.

Businesses can apply to NORP for assistance immediately until the end of the year for projects that help them adjust to the unique impacts of COVID-19. This includes projects like buildings and new construction, customer and employee safety installations or marketing for new business initiatives.

This has been a challenging time for many of us, but it is the true northern resiliency that has and will carry us through. I know that northern Ontario will return stronger than ever before.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the minister for the wonderful answer. I would like to say thank you to our Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines for doing an incredible job.

I know that the companies across the North will appreciate the support being offered through the Northern Ontario Recovery Program. Mr. Speaker, we know that business owners are facing unique challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many are adapting to the new normal to keep their businesses open. It is important that, as a government, we adapt with them and offer them the support that they need.

Will the minister please tell us why it is so critical to create these new funding programs for northern businesses?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The NOHFC has been a critical source of targeted investments in northern Ontario. We've heard from many stakeholders, like David MacLachlan, the executive director of Destination Northern Ontario, who stated:

“Recovery for northern Ontario's \$1.6-billion tourism industry depends on the sector's successful adoption of new operating protocols to keep visitors, employees and destinations safe.

“The Northern Ontario Recovery Program goes a long way to assist northern Ontario's tourism entities with the costs to implement these new safety protocols.

“We thank Minister Rickford and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation for their continued support of the sector and in this special time of need.”

Debbi Nicholson, the president and CEO of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, also stated, “The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce welcomes the Northern Ontario Recovery Program announcement made ... by Minister Rickford as another opportunity to help”—

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

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Education.

Parents of children with special needs always had to fight for the supports that they need in schools. Now education workers who help these children are stretched even more thinly, and special needs students are supported even less.

I spoke with one parent whose child was held back in kindergarten instead of moving to grade 1 because the school cannot support the transition. Stories like these are all too common, both before COVID and now.

Speaker, when will this government make children with special needs a priority?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We're obviously very concerned about the impacts of COVID-19 on children with mental health and special education needs in the province. Obviously, we appreciate that the lack of continuity and the disruption of COVID has really impacted them. It's the very basis why this government has invested over \$42 million of net new funding to hire more EAs, to hire more ECEs and to provide more special education educators in the classroom. In fact, we have well over 162 new EAs supporting special education children in our schools. That is the hiring so far, supported by an additional 372 early childhood educators.

We appreciate that there's more to do. That's why this province uniquely invested in mental health and more than doubled mental health funding. As we see the impacts and we hear the feedback of parents and stakeholders, we'll continue to be there, as we've demonstrated, to all schools and to all parents in the province of Ontario.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Children with disabilities in our school system were already treated like an afterthought. One parent in the Ottawa region shared that their child, who has a hearing impairment, has had their class collapsed into a much larger one and, due to the added noise and masks, is having a very difficult time understanding and following along. This parent is upset about the lack of accommodations for children with special needs.

Why does this government always forget children with special needs, particularly in our education system?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, I take exception to that positioning, because the investments, the additional staffing and the new programs in place would demonstrate

that this government is very much seized with the improvement of the quality of learning and also the mental resiliency of these children.

I joined Minister Smith just last week at Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf in Belleville—really a beautiful school and example of a community that is embracing the very best, embracing a message of inclusivity, providing the highest standard of educational supports for those very kids.

We are fully committed to ensuring that they succeed. They are going to benefit from an additional 162 EAs, funded and hired by the province, by our investment. We'll continue to be there for all students in the province of Ontario.

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

There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I beg leave to present the fifth interim report, Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Infrastructure of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Roberts presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: This is our fifth interim report following our sectoral study on the infrastructure study. We began this study by hearing testimony from the Minister of Infrastructure, and then following that, we heard from over 40 different witnesses and stakeholders who provided testimony on how we can help support that industry in the aftermath of COVID-19.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank everybody who took the time to present their opinions and share their views with us. I also want to take the opportunity to thank all of the committee staff for their hard work and commitment throughout this long summer study.

Report presented.

PETITIONS

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Sue Dufresne from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“MS Specialized Clinic in Sudbury...”

“Whereas northeastern Ontario has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis (MS) in Ontario; and

“Whereas specialized MS clinics provide essential health care services to those living with multiple sclerosis, their caregiver and their family; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is ... a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To immediately set up a specialized MS clinic in the Sudbury area that is staffed by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of multiple sclerosis, a physio-therapist and a social worker at a minimum.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'm happy to present a petition called “Supporting Quality Care for Ontario Long-Term-Care Homes.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas quality of care for the 78,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families;

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents' increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours;

“Whereas several Ontario coroner's inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommend 4.1 hours of direct care” per day;

“We, the undersigned, petition” the Legislative Assembly of Ontario “to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I'm happy to sign this petition and send it to the table.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas when children living with developmental disabilities turn 18, support from the Ontario government drastically changes; and

“Whereas families in Windsor-Essex and across Ontario are met with continuous waiting lists and other challenges when trying to access support under the Passport Program; and

“Whereas waiting lists place enormous stress on caregivers, parents, children and entire families; and

“Whereas it is difficult to access safe and affordable housing, adequate supports and respite services without immediate access to Passport funding;

“Whereas all Ontarians living with developmental disabilities are entitled to a seamless transition of services from childhood to adulthood;

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

“To take immediate action to eliminate the current waiting lists for Passport funding so that people living with developmental disabilities and their families can access the support they deserve.”

I fully agree. I'm going to sign it and make sure it gets down to the table.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition signed by many residents of London, entitled “Support Ontario Families with Autism.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every child with autism deserves access to sufficient treatment and support so that they can live to their fullest potential;

“Whereas the Ontario Autism Program was badly broken under the Liberals, and the changes introduced by the Conservatives have made it worse;

“Whereas the new funding caps are based on age and income, and not the clinical needs of the child;

“Whereas Ontario needs a true investment in evidence-based autism services that meets the needs of autistic children and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to invest in equitable, needs-based autism services for all children who need them.”

I affix my name to this petition, support it and will send it to the table.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Francine Couvchesne from Chelmsford in my riding for the petition. It's called “Pandemic Pay.

“Whereas the pandemic pay eligibility needs to be expanded as well as made retroactive to the beginning of the state of emergency; and

“Whereas Premier Ford stated repeatedly that the workers on the front lines have his full support but this is hard to believe given that so many do not qualify; and

“Whereas the list of eligible workers and workplaces should be expanded; and

“Whereas all front-line workers should be properly compensated;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To call on the Ford government to expand the \$4-per-hour pandemic pay to include all front-line workers that have put the needs of their community first and make the pay retroactive to the day the state of emergency was declared, so that their sacrifice and hard work to keep us safe is recognized.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the ... government has passed omnibus legislation to drastically overhaul our health care system with no commitment to publicly delivered health services;...

“Whereas every night hundreds of Ontario's patients wait for care in hospital hallways, showers and TV rooms;

“Whereas Ontario sits near the bottom of developed countries for hospital beds per patient and has the fewest registered nurses per patient in Canada;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Ontario government protect and invest in a robust, publicly funded and publicly delivered health care system and reject any further private delivery of health services.”

I agree 100%. I'm going to sign it and deliver it to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Colin and Helene Pick from Capreol in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Support Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part act.

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents' Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

1310

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “Petition to Stop Education Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government's new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

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

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

“Whereas the government’s changes will rip over \$1 billion out of Ontario’s education system by the end of their term;

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

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

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

I fully agree. I’m going to sign it, and perhaps David will take it down to the desk for me.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Fern Frappier from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. It reads as follows:

“Gas prices....

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas ... regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it, and send it to the Clerk.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired; and

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion...; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

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

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

I fully agree. I’m going to sign it, and perhaps my friend David can take it down to the desk for me.

DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier la ministre des Transports : nous avons maintenant les accents sur nos permis de conduire. Mais on les veut également sur nos cartes santé.

J’aimerais remercier Lise Cardinal d’Azilda dans mon comté pour la pétition.

« Alors qu’il est important d’avoir le nom exact des personnes sur les cartes émises par le gouvernement » de l’Ontario, telle « la carte santé...

« Alors que plusieurs personnes francophones ont des accents dans l’épellation de leur nom »—comme moi;

« Alors que ... le ministère de la Santé » a « confirmé que le système informatique ... ne permet pas l’enregistrement des lettres avec des accents; »

« Ils pétitionnent « l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario pour qu’elle s’assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur » toutes les cartes santé émises « par le gouvernement de l’Ontario » et ce, « avant le 31 décembre 2020. »

J’appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer, et on l’amène à la table des greffiers.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My petition is “Support Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part act.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario”—it comes from people all across Windsor.

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 ...;

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents’ Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

I fully agree, Speaker. I’m going to sign it, and I’m going to have it brought down to the table by my good friend Ilhan.

AUTISM TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Ginette Chouinard from Val Caron in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Support Ontario Families with Autism.

“Whereas every child with autism deserves access to sufficient treatment and support so that they can live to their fullest potential;

“Whereas the Ontario Autism Program was badly broken under the Liberals, and the changes introduced by the Conservatives have made it worse;

“Whereas the new funding caps are based on age and income, and not the clinical needs of the child;

“Whereas Ontario needs a true investment in evidence-based autism services that meets the needs of autistic children and their families;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to invest in equitable, needs-based autism services for all children who need them.”

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING TENANTS AND SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2020 LOI DE 2020 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES LOCATAIRES ET LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 24, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 204, An Act to amend various Acts respecting municipal elections, to amend the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 and to provide for a temporary residential rent freeze and specified temporary protections for certain commercial tenants / Projet de loi 204, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait aux élections municipales, modifiant la Loi de 2020 sur la réouverture de l’Ontario (mesures adaptables en réponse à la COVID-19) et prévoyant un gel des loyers d’habitations temporaire et des protections temporaires précisées pour certains locataires commerciaux.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I rise today to speak to the merits of the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act brought forward by our great minister for municipal housing. Thank you so much, Minister, for doing an incredible job during these tough times and helping Ontarians—especially when we talk about this bill, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act. Thank you so much to you and your entire team at the ministry.

I want to thank our Queen’s Park staff administrators, the security team, as well as the Clerks, the ushers, translators and media team for continuing to perform exceptionally to keep this Legislature running and for allowing us the time and space to safely perform our duties in the service of this great province.

It has been said many times in this House that the COVID-19 crisis has become a defining moment in the history of our great province of Ontario. Indeed, we have spent the better part of this year facing off against a tremendous number of challenges. Every corner of this province has felt the effects of this pandemic.

1320

I’m very proud to stand in this House and speak about the excellent work that the government, alongside our opposition and independent colleagues, has undertaken to assist our front-line and essential services in carrying out their duties to keep this province running smoothly. Together with the opposition and independent members, we swiftly and decisively passed legislation to protect and support Ontarians, because the people of this great province expected us to work together, and so we did.

Since this pandemic hit our province and our country, we passed, especially in this province, roughly 18 bills, and one third of them by unanimous consent of all parties. So thank you to the opposition and independent members for working together with us—to make sure we continue to work together during these difficult times. This is exactly what the people of this province expect us to do—collaborate and continue to work together.

Especially, since the beginning of this pandemic in March, I think we have seen that regardless of what party background—whether it’s blue party, orange, red, green—we all have come together. Regardless of the level of government, whether it’s the federal, provincial, municipal governments, we all have been working together. This is something we all should be very, very proud of.

Emergency legislation introduced and passed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic includes the reopening of Ontario act, as well as the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020.

When we talk about this bill that has been introduced by our government, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020, what I have seen and heard in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville—and I’m sure my colleagues here in this Legislature—is that the people of this province are struggling because of this pandemic. We have seen this all across the globe, as well. We hear every day news about the economies being impacted by this COVID-19 crisis—and definitely in our province, as well.

The most important thing here is the fact that the residents, the people of this province who have been struggling—they lost their jobs, unfortunately. It breaks our hearts to see people losing their jobs, but also when they are struggling to pay their rents.

Back in March, when this pandemic started, we announced that tenants won’t be able to be evicted from their homes or businesses, because that was the first thing that, as a government, we could do to make sure to give that certainty to individuals out there that, yes, we understand. We want to make sure you have that peace of mind that, even though you may not be able to make your rent for the next month or the month after—we wanted to make sure you are not going to be evicted, because a home is a safe place for any individual or family. We just wanted to make sure that that doesn’t happen.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I come from the riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville. I represent this riding, and it is absolutely an honour for me. What I heard during the early days of the pandemic was that families came to meet with us—they came to us asking for some support, for some help. The stories we heard—I think anybody would feel the pain. Definitely we, on this side of the House, felt the same thing.

I met a family where both the husband and wife, unfortunately, lost their jobs due to COVID-19, but they had a very positive attitude. They understood that this pandemic is something which we are all in together. The only request they had was—they said to me, “Kaleed, please make sure that we don’t lose our apartment, our rent, just because right now we are all struggling.” I said to my constituent, “I’m going to make a commitment to you that we will do everything in our power to make sure that you stay in your residence, that you are not evicted just because you are not able to pay the rent.”

In my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, I have a lot of constituents who are living in rental buildings. I have a mix of rental apartments, condominiums and homes. I just wanted to make sure that these individuals at least have shelter. With that in mind, I had a great conversation with our Premier, the Honourable Doug Ford, and the Minister of Housing, where I brought forward the concerns of the residents. And the commitment that I received from our minister and the Premier was, “Kaleed, we will make sure that these residents stay in their homes.” That, I really appreciate. As I said earlier, there was nothing

where we said that residents would be kicked out of their homes just because they’re not paying rent. Rather, we said, “Just relax. You don’t have to worry about paying rent. You will have shelter.”

So far I’m really grateful and I thank God every day that the people of this province are in a position where at least they have this peace of mind—making sure that they have shelter and they don’t have to worry about it. So far—knock on wood—I haven’t come across in Mississauga East–Cooksville, and also when I speak with my colleagues, where someone has been evicted because of non-payment of the rent.

Actually, just this morning, one of my staff members reached out to me and said that we have a constituent who would like to meet with me to discuss this rent freeze bill that, if passed, is definitely going to provide help and support.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work for the people of this great province to help them get back on their feet as we chart a path to recovery for every region in this province.

Back in March, we had to literally shut down the province, whether it was restaurants, bars, public recreation. I know that because, especially with three out of four kids who love to go to the park or public libraries, they were not able to do so. I’m one of those parents who were definitely struggling in the very early days of this pandemic, where I was saying, “The kids are at home. I cannot even take them out anywhere.” We couldn’t even go for go-karting, because everything was shut down. And I know we saw that all public events were cancelled, including services at places of worship.

1330

I believe that we have come a long way from where we started back in March. We have come to where we now see that businesses are reopening slowly. I met with so many businesses in my riding, where, yes, they were originally—definitely there was so much uncertainty, where businesses were asking, “What’s next for us?” And thanks to the federal government, along with our government—again, going back to this example of collaboration—we came up with a plan to help small businesses during this time. Even though, Mr. Speaker, when I was meeting with these businesses—not only the businesses, but also the landlords of these businesses. I was encouraging them to participate in the rent relief program, because as a member of provincial Parliament, I just wanted to make sure that the businesses can continue to operate. What I saw was that a good number of landlords participated in this program to provide support to our businesses.

Just this past weekend, on Saturday, I met with a business—it’s a restaurant. Originally, he was struggling. Then, he had a meeting with his landlord for the business, and they came up with a program together. I was actually brought on the call, as well, where I explained to the landlord about this program—that the federal government and the provincial government are working together. I was

just so happy to see that that business is still active and they are coming out of this crisis.

Again, we just need to continue to do our part to make sure that we provide relief to the people of this province. This bill—helping tenants—I think, is a bill that assures the people of this province that we as a government are doing everything to make sure that we provide support to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work for the people of Ontario to help them get back on their feet, as I said, as we continue to do this recovery program. But unfortunately, the nature of this virus is that it is persistent. Regrettably, we have seen a rise in cases, not just in Ontario, but, again, across Canada and around the world. As we see that the fall season is approaching, we must admit that we are not quite out of the woods just yet. Whenever I'm having a conversation with my constituents, or just people out there in general, we are always saying that this crisis is a defining moment in our province's history. I'm sure we all will agree. There are still many more challenges ahead of us in the battle against COVID-19, and there is still much work to be done in our economic recovery efforts.

But one thing I know—and I'm so proud of the fact—is that the people of this province have been working harder than ever to support one another through this difficult time. We have shown one another that we are strongest when we work together. We have maintained an approach to facing off against the challenge of the crisis.

I believe the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act is a crucial step in assisting a large number of Ontarians who are residential tenants, commercial tenants, or both.

In the time I have left, I just want to talk a little about my experience in my riding during this COVID-19 crisis. What I have seen is that from the beginning of this pandemic, into the lockdown, and through the subsequent phases of reopening, my team and I have received many concerned calls from our constituents, especially residential tenants who have lost their jobs and had concerns about paying rent and who feared being evicted.

I remember speaking with one of the constituents, and they were concerned that they may just lose their home. I remember calling the minister that same evening. We had a great conversation where the minister was assuring me, “Kaleed, we will do everything in our power to make sure that your constituent doesn't lose their home, their memories”—because at the end of the day, they were struggling to pay rent. I remember, after speaking with the minister, I reached out to the constituent again and had a conversation where I said, “I just finished speaking with the minister, and we are going to make sure that we do everything in our power so that you do not lose your home.”

Just about a month ago, I had another follow-up conversation with this constituent. They are still living in the same home. What the family is doing now is that they are giving back to the other residents of this riding, making sure they do their part, because they felt like at least the government stepped up and helped them.

With that, I once again thank you, Minister. Please continue the great work.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Are there questions to the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I do have a question for my good friend from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

He talked about the tenants in his riding. I have wonderful tenants in my riding, as well, in high-rises. I heard from them this week, in one building in particular, where the landlord has put in a notice that he's going to raise the rents by 5% on the 1st of December. The deadline coming in is for January. The landlord has given notice—5%, the 1st of December—trying to get ahead of the deadline, obviously. In this building, there's a whole bunch of seniors on fixed incomes.

I want to know what the government plan is to head off all these landlords coming in now and saying, “I'm going to raise it 5%,” before you put your freeze on.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: What I know is that this bill is going to help the people of this province to make sure that—especially next year, because we haven't come out of this pandemic yet. We are still in this pandemic. What I know is that this is going to help the residents of this province, especially the tenants, to have the security or the peace of mind—to make sure that their rent is frozen. If they are struggling, we as a government want to make sure that they're not struggling with paying their rent because—that peace of mind that they will have in making sure that, with the rent and everything.

1340

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question for the member is about the increased fine piece.

We've taken advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and health experts, and we thought that, due to the recent spread of COVID-19—we hear about parties happening and people not following the social distancing practices that we've all asked people to do.

Do you think that it is important that this legislation is passed as quickly as possible so those new offences can be established?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to my colleague for the question.

Mr. Speaker, what I have seen in the last few weeks is the fact that, yes, a lot of people are not listening to the advice of the health officials or the government. We see that parties are happening. Again, as we have said—and even the Premier has said many, many times that 99.9% of the people of this province are listening to the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health or the health officials. Unfortunately, there is a small percentage of people who are not listening. Maybe these new fines will help our government to make sure that these individuals don't continue with this kind of habit, moving forward.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I listened to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville talk about the importance of ensuring that people don't have to risk losing their home in the middle of a pandemic.

Has he read Bill 204? Has he read Bill 184? Does he understand that the legislation we're debating today does

absolutely nothing to prevent somebody from being evicted and that the legislation that his government passed earlier actually fast-tracks the process to allow people to be evicted?

Can the member explain how this legislation will prevent anyone from being evicted from their place of residence?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Yes, I have read the bill, and that's why I was able to go out there and explain to my constituents about the rent freeze and how it's going to help them during this crisis.

Madam Speaker, since the beginning of COVID-19, our government has called on landlords and tenants to come together and just be reasonable with one another, and many landlords and tenants across the province have done that, and I truly appreciate that. I have spoken with many landlords and businesses and tenants who have worked together to make sure that these residents or businesses are able to live and operate without being evicted.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: To the esteemed member: I know that people in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington are struggling. Many are struggling to pay rent, and they welcome this legislation.

This move to freeze rents in 2021 is a positive step to protect the 1.7 million Ontarians who rely on rental housing.

Could you please tell this House more about what our government has done to support renters during the COVID-19 outbreak?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to my colleague for the question.

Our government is proposing this rent freeze as part of our initiative to make sure that the people of this province have the peace of mind that they are not going to lose their homes or, basically, are not going to be evicted. That's why we are introducing this bill. This freeze would also include apartments, townhomes and other places where we are just making sure that the people—and when it comes to the investments that we are making, as you know, we have been investing millions and millions of dollars to make sure that the people of this province—

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Since 1997, a landlord in Ontario has been able to charge a new tenant any rent the landlord chooses. It's called vacancy decontrol. For example, think of an apartment where a tenant is currently paying \$1,000. When the tenant moves out, or is evicted, the new tenant could be charged \$1,500 or \$2,000 a month by the landlord. There is no limit.

Ontario doesn't have comprehensive rent control, and it's tenants who have lost out as the average rent has skyrocketed. Why does this bill not end vacancy decontrol?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

When we talk about this bill and the relief that it is going to bring to the people of this province, we are talking

about—again, I'm going back to my original point—making sure that during this crisis, the people of this province know that they don't have to worry about a rent increase. That's why the minister brought this bill forward—to give that peace of mind to the people of this province. When you're putting food on the table, with rent and other expenses, and if you have, unfortunately, lost your job, you are under tremendous pressure. This is exactly what our government is trying to do—take that pressure away, making sure that they don't have to worry about the increasing rent—

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you to the member for such an encompassing, 20-minute speech.

I know that I hear the other side talk about renovictions, but we've taken care of that previously, in Bill 184, by having landlords actually now having to provide that information if it is challenged through the Landlord and Tenant Board. And we've increased the fines for landlords who are guilty of such a thing. We've doubled them, up to \$250,000 if it's a corporation.

Maybe you could you elaborate on some of the benefits of the rent freeze that we're putting into this bill?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member.

This is exactly what we have been saying. We want to make sure that the tenants in this province continue to feel that this government has their backs. With this freeze, we just want to—

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: It is a pleasure today to rise and speak to Bill 204, the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, which—it will come as no surprise to the government—we on this side of the House believe is a wholly inadequate bill to address any of the issues with the second wave. It's a piece of legislation that deals with four major issues: a residential rent freeze for 2021; a commercial evictions ban extension until October 30, which, my colleague from Waterloo has pointed out a number of times, is quickly approaching; merging provincial and municipal enumeration under the municipal voters list; and the increased penalties for hosting overcrowded events during the pandemic.

1350

With respect to merging provincial and municipal enumeration, the bill transfers responsibility for preparing and maintaining voters lists from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. to the province's Chief Electoral Officer, who will now maintain a single registry for both municipal and provincial elections. This change has long been requested by municipal clerks and is long overdue.

With respect to crowded events, this bill authorizes law enforcement to shut down overcrowded public events or gatherings whose attendance exceeds the number of people allowed under provincial orders, which, of course, we in this House are in favour of. Hosting an event now carries steep financial penalties of up to \$100,000.

Ontario needs a comprehensive second wave strategy; threats of fines cannot be the only options. We're well into the second wave. It's something the government has known about for some time, that we would be dealing with a second wave, and this bill is very inadequate for dealing with that as it relates to residential renters or, certainly, businesses, which I'll be talking a lot about.

Also, I would like to point out that these fines are actually higher than the fines for for-profit long-term-care homes who violated their oaths, causing deaths in long-term-care facilities. So you have to wonder where the priorities are.

With respect to a rent freeze, there has, I think, been some misunderstanding from what I've heard so far in the House. This bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act to set the guideline rent increase for residential tenants at 0% for 2021, instead of the 1.5% increase that would have applied. Across-the-board rent freezes are a welcome move. No one should be facing a rent increase when their financial stability has been shattered by COVID-19. No one should be forced out of their home in the middle of a pandemic, Speaker. However, freezing rents for 2021 is by no means going to rectify the very serious economic circumstances our constituents are facing.

Back in 2018, I spoke in this House regarding this government's action in decreasing ODSP rates. ODSP was set to increase an already meagre 3%, and this government reduced that number to 1.5%. That same year, this government allowed rent increases of 1.8%. This increase could apply to all tenants, including tenants in affordable housing. The problem is one of simple math, which legal clinics have pointed out: 1.5% minus 1.8% equals homelessness. That's the part of this government's record on rents.

Rents were increasing at a rate that was unsustainable for most people in this province, and they have been for a long time. Many people in Ontario who were behind on rent were paying more than 50% of their income just to keep a roof over their head. That's why a rent freeze for one year, while welcome, will not give the people of this province what they need.

Many people started this pandemic behind the eight ball. For thousands, CERB was the first time they knew they had consistent income that they could rely on. I met with two legal clinics recently, Justice Niagara and Niagara North Community Legal Assistance, who can clearly see on the ground what's happening with this government's action, with their failure to act with people on ODSP and other social supports.

I'm going to spend the remainder of the time on small business concerns, because that's certainly what we're hearing lately. There's a lot of fear out there. We hear numbers like one in six, one in seven businesses could go bankrupt—in the restaurant industry, much more than that. Small and medium-sized businesses have been fighting to keep their heads above water since this began. The current commercial evictions ban does not go far enough, as the stringent criteria allows just a few businesses to qualify. I can't emphasize enough how important a direct rent

subsidy to businesses is to get our community through the next number of months. That's really, for me and for my constituents, the big thing that's missing from this government's actions.

This section of Bill 204 is very similar to Bill 192. Businesses are only eligible if they qualify under the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program, and if their landlords did not already apply. So the evictions ban does not apply to businesses if the landlord has previously been approved for the program but is no longer receiving assistance.

Since the start of the program, we've seen the impacts on those who fall through the cracks from exceptions. In my riding, Ryan, who owns Tailgates in Welland—a real community treasure and local restaurant—when COVID-19 hit, his 190-seat restaurant could only serve 25 guests. The landlord expected full rent and refused to take part in the commercial rent assistance program, making him ineligible for help. That's the story of so many small businesses.

In Port Colborne, a local chiropractor, Dr. David Salanki, had to cash in his retirement savings because his landlord refused to apply for the Ontario-Canada emergency rent assistance program. His once-thriving practice was decimated when he had to close his practice due to the pandemic, and with an income of just over \$9,000 total from March to May, there was no way Dr. Salanki could afford to pay his \$11,400-a-month rent for April and May. After 30 years in the same location, he was given an ultimatum: Pay or leave. On May 12, I wrote the Premier about Dr. Salanki's situation, and I have yet to receive a response.

Another interesting issue as we see the pandemic unfold, with respect to small business, is the difference between large businesses like banks and insurance companies and small businesses that you might find in the downtown of a small community. In February, I wrote a letter to the RBC president, David McKay. The RBC was pulling out of my hometown, Thorold, despite a \$12.4-billion profit. Banks are making record profits even now. All they've really done is deferrals. One can really question whether they're doing their part, as well as insurance companies, who, I think, we know have often failed to pass on savings to the consumer during this really difficult time. This is why we need direct supports for business.

I want to talk about downtowns a little bit. Downtown areas are the heart of our communities. As city councillors, my friend the member from St. Catharines and I worked hard to revitalize the St. Catharines downtown. South St. Catharines is part of my riding, as well. With many municipalities like Thorold currently working to revitalize their main streets, now, more than ever, we have to ensure that these vital pillars of our community are supported.

Downtown businesses rely on one another, Speaker. When one fails, others face challenges. In Niagara, we have seen the impact of very difficult times on our communities. In the early 2000s, Niagara faced devastating job losses. The loss of jobs at GM, closures of Welland facilities like GrafTech, Stelco's pipe operation, Henniges

Automotive, Fantom and John Deere, to name a few, saw thousands of people in our community lose their jobs, and we saw the ripple effect on small business, on business areas and on people. The fear of that kind of ripple effect happening is very real for people now, with Ontario entering a second wave.

The members from St. Catharines and Niagara Falls and I held a press conference on Friday. We joined together with other members in releasing an updated plan to support jobs in our community by helping local businesses. We call it Save Main Street, and it's something we hope that this government will listen to. It's what we believe this government should do, and if we were in government, it's what our government would do.

It includes:

- a ban on all commercial evictions;

- a 75% commercial rent subsidy, which I mentioned is absolutely crucial for many small businesses in all of our communities as we get into the second wave;

1400

- a made-in-Ontario plan for sick days for all—I'm glad to see some federal action happening on that;

- a fund to help small business with safe-reopening costs and remote-work set-up costs;

- more non-profit and public child care spaces for working parents—many of the members of our caucus have talked about the importance of a she-covery and how important it is that we address the disproportionate affect that this pandemic has had on women; and

- an end to insurance gouging, which I've already mentioned.

I can't emphasize enough how important a direct rent subsidy to businesses is in getting our community through the next number of months.

It's not just St. Catharines downtown in my riding—in Thorold, we've had some great initiatives to revitalize the downtown area. Recently, the mayors of Port Colborne, Welland and Thorold came together with their local MP and the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority—and you'll probably know that the Welland Canal runs right through my riding, through the communities of St. Catharines, Thorold, Welland and Port Colborne. This meeting was to advance the development of three hubs in the jurisdictions along the canal facing canal properties. The prediction before the pandemic was that it could bring 50 new businesses in the next five years to this area. It's a great initiative. But, of course, with this happening, we don't want to see those kinds of plans that people have spent time and resources on endangered because we're not supporting our small businesses enough.

There are some businesses in my riding that have also had a really hard time dealing with a lot of the confusion around rules in my riding. I just want to mention Howells pumpkin farm. A lot of pumpkin farms all across the province are struggling to provide some opportunities for families to get together in a safe environment. Many of them were not allowed to open because they were coming under rules that were probably not meant for farms, with respect to people gathering in outdoor spaces. I just want

to congratulate my staff for working with them and working with the ministry. We were able to get some changes there.

We have a speedway in our riding—and there are speedways across the province that have had a very difficult time. They have capacity for thousands of people. They put plans together that this government asked for. The government provided a portal, provided a template for businesses to come forward and put plans for safe reopening together. It wasn't that they were denied permission; it's that the government didn't even respond. We've been dealing with that lately. Months went by, and these businesses that were struggling just for survival couldn't even get a response from this government on the reopening plans. That's been a source of real frustration in my riding.

We have a number of cultural halls. These also are a form of business across the province. These are pillars of our community. They're places where seniors go, where families go. They're having a very, very difficult time operating. I just want to mention a number of them in my riding that are working really hard under really difficult circumstances to offer food to the community, just so they can run a little bit of a food business and keep their cultural hall or organization afloat without weddings and without other gatherings.

We have a huge, huge Italian population in my riding, right through all of the communities, and so I just want to mention the great work that Club Roma is doing in St. Catharines; Club Capri; Club Belvedere; Club Castropignano; Casa Dante; the Italian Hall in Port Colborne; Club Italia in Niagara Falls. They're working really hard to keep afloat, along with all the other cultural halls.

We have a big Hungarian community in my riding, a large French community, who have a hall, as well, and they're really, really struggling—some of them with issues around rent, as well.

I also want to mention cultural festivals. In my hometown of Thorold, we have a popular place called Donnelly's Pub, which has put together one of the top blues festivals in all of Canada, called the Canal Bank Shuffle. It's a co-operation or partnership with Buffalo, New York, and one of the top blues festivals in Canada. For a small town, they've done an incredible job. That was cancelled this year, and so people in Thorold are having a really hard time. A lot of businesses, with that loss of business—Riganelli's, Henderson's Pharmacy; some of the real pillars of the community—they're doing the best they can, Speaker, but a lot of them are really struggling and need help. This bill, as we've mentioned, is not doing much to help them.

The same thing has happened in Port Colborne, which is the home of Canal Days. Every August, the city of Port Colborne hosts Canal Days along the Welland Canal; 400,000 visitors visit Port Colborne. That has been cancelled, and so a lot of businesses are having a really difficult time. The Green Apple café, Storky's pizza, the Classi-Cuts hair salon and Grant's Gifts—all little shops that have called our office, letting us know that they're

having a very difficult time and need more help from this government.

For businesses in Welland, it's the same thing, Speaker. Businesses like Bogner's and the Rex—which is a four-generation family restaurant that has been around for 104 years, in the same family—are struggling. They're doing the best they can, but they need more help. Evelyn's Sandwich Factory, Big Red in Thorold—these are all calls that my constituency office has had from businesses that are struggling with rent, struggling with rules that they find confusing, and that are frustrated with what they see as a lack of a strategy from the government.

Speaker, there's an awful lot missing from this bill. The government changed the standing orders recently, allowing them to move legislation much more quickly. But we wonder, on this side of the House, if they're going to ram legislation through the House, why don't they use that power to ram through some legislation that's actually going to help people at a very difficult time, rather than passing bills that are, as I said, wholly inadequate and don't really address the real concerns that are out there, that people are feeling.

In conclusion, I have to say that this bill aims low. It's falling short, which means that Ontarians aren't getting the help that they really need. Obviously, we're going to support the bill—because there's not a lot in it, quite frankly; there's nothing harmful in it—but the problem with it is that people really deserve so much better than this, especially at this time, entering the second wave. With the commercial evictions ban, small businesses have been fighting to keep their heads above water, and working folks and small business owners need more financial stability right now, not less.

One of the things we heard in our press conference last week, Speaker, in downtown St. Catharines was a business owner saying, "Look, it takes us a long time to build a business up. It takes a downtown area a long time to revitalize. What costs more: Does it cost more to watch one in seven businesses fail, to watch 60% of restaurants in the downtown area fail? Or does it cost more to move forward with a direct rental subsidy so that we can keep as many of these businesses viable as possible and help them to survive the pandemic?"

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You hear a lot of rhetoric from the other side with regard to, "Well, we knew this second wave was coming" and so on. Nobody has a crystal ball to determine exactly when and where or if.

We have put through amendments to the reopening Ontario act, included in this bill, which, in fact, would create a new offence for individuals who host private events that are in violation of social gathering limits.

1410

What I would like to ask the member from Niagara Centre is, do you agree that this is an important step to help stop the spread of COVID-19—and simply yes or no, but why to either one of those. I anxiously await the response from the member from Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank the member for the question. One of the nice things about the rules is that I don't have to just answer yes or no; I can actually give a full answer.

The member mentions that there seems to be some confusion about the second wave. Every pandemic in the history of the western world, I think, has had two or three waves. The last one 100 years ago was no exception. So I think we all knew there would be a second wave.

What we've been saying on this side of the House is that the government had a lot of time to prepare, especially when it comes to kids going back to school. They knew the effect that it would probably have on businesses. So what mystifies us on this side of the House is the lack of planning over the summer on how they were going to deal with the second wave.

In terms of the penalties, I already said in my speech that we agreed with that part of the bill.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from Niagara Centre, who accurately indicates why this piece of legislation is the bare minimum that this government can be doing, as we are in phase 2 of a global pandemic. There is a statistical certainty that we were going to end up here. The lack of planning on the part of the government—and then to put a piece of legislation like Bill 204 before us, which, as I stated, does the bare minimum—one could argue, is completely irresponsible.

Thank you to the member from Niagara Centre for bringing the voices of businesses to the floor of this Legislature. Why does he think that this government refuses to honour those voices, to respect those voices or to even listen to the solutions that businesses have brought forward, particularly on rent abatement?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank the member for the question.

I'm not sure why that is. As I indicated, I think we're all kind of confused on this side of the House as to why the government, after having the entire summer, knowing that this was going to happen—why there seems to be such last-minute planning. It was really shocking around the whole education issue—the lack of preparation, the lack of planning.

With respect to businesses, anyone would have been able to see the businesses in their own community having difficulty. You can easily surmise that during a second wave, those difficulties, after going months and months without much real revenue, and certainly not making any profits, but struggling—that this was going to be a real problem. So why they wouldn't have had some direct rental subsidy ready to go at the beginning of this crisis is a real mystery to me.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Our government has been taking decisive action to help tenants, while balancing the interests of everyone in Ontario's rental market, while even investing \$510 million into our communities as a direct response to COVID-19, to build innovative housing solutions for the long term. At every step along the way, the opposition has opposed our measures.

Why do the members of the opposition continue to oppose measures that will help tenants, including significant investments in affordable housing and ensuring tenants won't see rent increases in 2021?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank the member for the question.

It's not that we have opposed the government. Actually, as I indicated, we're voting in favour of this bill. It's not that we oppose it; it's just not enough. It's not addressing the issues that people need addressed—that, as I said in my presentation, small businesses need from the government.

I keep hearing this thing about increasing housing supply. It's very strange to me, Speaker, how this government believes that by simply increasing supply, some magic hand is going to increase affordable housing and social housing and all the things we really need in the province. More and more, people are becoming homeless. The affordable housing crisis is getting worse. So this thing about, "All we have to do is increase supply and people will have more affordable housing"—clearly on this side of the House, we don't agree with that.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm going to thank the member from Niagara Centre, who took the time to go through the four major pillars that this government has in this bill, which are the rent freeze, the commercial evictions ban extension, the emerging provincial and municipal remuneration, and the increased consequences for hosting.

Part of our role as opposition is not only to oppose, which we're very good at doing, but we also propose. There are a lot of good ideas that have come not just out of us but through our engagements that we've had with the public.

This government has been very reactive instead of being proactive with regard to coming back, as we were going into the summer months, when they could have been very aggressive in their nature, as far as what we're going to be discussing, what legislation is going to be dealt with here in September.

This is a band-aid solution, as far as what we're doing, and you're grasping at the low-hanging fruit, basically holding on to hopes that the federal government will step in.

To the member, I hear the story of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank the member for the question. He raised a great point that one of the things that we have to do prior to action is listen to people.

We heard all kinds of people make presentations to the finance committee over the summer. My friend from Waterloo spent many, many hours listening to people. I've listened to people in my riding, as I think I've demonstrated. I know my colleagues have gone back to their ridings and listened to the stories of small business and to business organizations, like the chamber—organizations that this government seems to always suggest they champion.

Our proposal that I went over in my presentation is what those associations and what those businesses asked for.

We know what to put in our proposals because we listened to people. and that's the biggest job we have as politicians.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Over the summer, we had numerous round tables—I know we had a number of ministers—talking with small businesses and just what they would need to get through this. This is the second time our government is bringing forth legislation on commercial evictions that is made to match and to work with the federal plan. There's no question the feds have a greater capacity to borrow money, greater capacity to raise money.

This program—we're working with them as they've made some changes to it. We're following through with our legislation to put in changes, as well, to make them match. But each time we put this through, we run into opposition from the official opposition—not wanting to pass this legislation.

I'm just wondering what you would do that—the federal plan is there and we have to follow it to gather the funding.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank the member for the question, but he shouldn't be surprised that he faces opposition from the opposition.

As I pointed out, we have supported legislation like this legislation. It's just, again, not enough. It's inadequate. It's not addressing the concerns that we've heard from our constituents, from small businesses in our community. What they need is a commercial rent subsidy. They need that to survive. The cost of not providing it is going to be far more than if we listened to them and provided real assistance.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill 204, and I just want to remind everyone in the House that we're actually debating this bill on a day with over 700 new COVID-19 cases—a record. It's clear the second wave is here. The leaves are turning. Winter is just around the corner. So I want to look to my colleagues from all sides of the House, from all parties, and say that, together, we must do everything possible to make sure that people keep a roof over their heads and that our small businesses survive a second wave. I'm going to ask the members on the government side of the House to work with the opposition when this bill goes to committee, to amend it to make it even better. Let's work together to take some of the good ideas that are in this bill and make them better.

1420

The government grabbed headlines when they announced that there would be no rent increase for 2021. But if you dig into the details of the bill, you find that there are some loopholes that we need to close. For instance, if you had a rent increase at the end of last year, you could still be vulnerable at the end of this year. The freeze on rent increases should happen now and last through to the end of the pandemic. Now is not the time to price people out of their homes. That's why we should apply the freeze on increases to all rent increases.

As we speak, right now, when I come into Queen's Park every day, I see people on the north side of the circle sleeping in tents. As a matter of fact, there are over 10,000 homeless people in Toronto alone right now, 2,000 of them sleeping in encampments. So we must do everything to prepare for a second wave. We shouldn't ask people to risk their health and the health of others while they're struggling to put a roof over their head.

At the same time—and I want to be clear on this—we have to look out for landlords, as well, especially small landlords. That's why we should have a rental assistance program in Ontario to help small landlords with tenants who cannot pay their rent. We have to look after these folks.

But none of that's in Bill 204, at this point. It would be great if we could amend it at committee to put those in there. So I'm asking the government to work with us to fix the bill.

We also have to look at what small businesses are telling us. There are so many small businesses in this province barely hanging on right now, if they haven't gone under already. At committee over the summer, small business after small business came to the committee and said, "Fix the rent relief program." I want to know if the government actually listened. It's great that we spent all this time doing hearings, but you actually have to listen to people and then act. Small businesses said that the rent program isn't working.

They asked us for an extension of the commercial evictions ban, at least until the end of the year, because they need some long-term certainty. To do it until the end of October, when we're moving into the second wave, just doesn't provide the certainty they need.

They asked for it to be tenant-driven instead of landlord-driven.

The government talks a lot about getting rid of red tape, but right now the rent relief program has a big, thick roll of red tape around it that prevents tenants, small businesses, from applying directly for rental assistance.

They asked that the threshold to qualify be lowered from a 70% loss in revenue to something less than that. I can tell you, as a long-time small business owner, that if you lose 69% of your revenue, if you lose 50% of your revenue, heck, if you lose 40% of your revenue—a lot of small businesses aren't going to be able to pay the rent; they just can't.

The government keeps passing the buck to the feds on this one. They keep saying it's the federal government's fault.

I want to say to everyone in the House today that if the federal government is not going to fix the commercial rent program, then let's work together across party lines to create an Ontario rent relief program that actually works for small businesses.

Speaker, in conclusion, I want to say that Bill 204 has some good ideas in it, but it doesn't go far enough.

Here's an opportunity to do something in this Legislature that we haven't done very often: to actually have this bill go to committee, work together, listen to what small

business and residential tenants need, and come back and deliver a bill that's going to ensure that we keep a roof over people's heads during this second wave and that small businesses don't go out of business.

If we keep saying we're all in this together, then let's prove it by bringing back a bill that actually works for small businesses and tenants. That's what I'd ask my colleagues on the other side of the House to help us do.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I thank the member for his statement. I heard him talking about how there were some things that he liked in the bill.

I just want to talk a little bit about the fines. We've been given advice from our public health officials indicating that unmonitored social gatherings have been a driver behind some of the higher COVID-19 cases. I just wonder if the member opposite agrees that it's important to pass these amendments quickly so that we can stop some of these parties from happening.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question from the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Yes, absolutely, we should be increasing the fines, and let's get this bill passed. So why don't we quickly take it to committee and bring in some amendments to fix the rent relief program for small businesses and fix some of the loopholes that threaten tenants from being evicted, and then let's bring this back as fast as we can?

As far as I'm concerned, I haven't held up legislation. When we've needed unanimous consent for legislation to provide help for people, I've said yes. I've worked with the government side to make that happen. So I'm more than happy to quickly get this bill through, but let's bring through some amendments to fix it so we actually have a better bill.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I thank the member from Guelph.

Long-term care: Everyone in this room was horrified to see what happened in the first wave to some of our most vulnerable. While this government is proposing increased fines for social gatherings and whatnot, when it comes to some of their most loyal followers, people running private, long-term-care facilities, they've got soft gloves.

Do you think they should be considering more action in terms of punishment when long-term-care facilities are failing the people we should be helping the most?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question.

One of the things I find a bit concerning—and this is a bit off your question, but it's related—is, we reopened casinos today in Ontario when we're having a record number of COVID-19 cases. I just want us to avoid another lockdown because I don't know if small businesses can survive it, and so we have to do everything we can to contain the virus to prevent that from happening. And that includes ensuring that we invest in our long-term-care homes.

I don't know why, over the summer, we didn't hire more registered nurses and more personal support workers

to be in our long-term-care homes, to ensure that we had a minimum standard of care of four hours every day, to ensure that we pay the staff a fair living wage so they can work at one facility to maintain the spread of the virus.

So, yes, we do need to do more in long-term care.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you to the member for his comments this afternoon.

I have a question to the member. I'm sure he works very closely with his local municipality and understands the importance of working with those partnerships, as do we on this side of the House. I know one of the changes that this legislation makes is a proposed change to the municipal voters lists, to respond to requests from municipalities and work with the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario. I'm wondering if he could speak a little bit more about this change, if he's supportive of this change and why he believes this should move forward.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question.

Yes, anything we can do to improve the voter rolls and to make them more efficient and accurate, we should do. With respect to the member, I did not get up and oppose that part of the bill at all. As a matter of fact, I'm not even opposing this bill.

What I'm suggesting we do is take the opportunity to work across party lines on a few of the items in this bill that I think we can strengthen so we can actually fulfill the intent of—and I think the government's intent here is good. We want to protect small businesses, and we want to protect tenants. So why don't we focus on fixing those parts of the bill so they actually work for tenants and small business owners? That's what I'm asking us to do. Let's come together and listen to what people are telling us and fix the bill.

1430

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member from Guelph for his comments.

I'm sure he knows that 97% of the funding that has come has trickled down from the federal government.

Again, I want to go back to what I said earlier: We're not just opposing; we're proposing ideas.

I want to put to the member: With the \$6.7 billion that this government is sitting on, do you think that investments in long-term-care homes would be beneficial? Education—classroom sizes, investing in more teachers? A ban on evictions? A utility-payment freeze? A 75% commercial rent subsidy? How about paid sick days? How about remote work set-up from a fund for small businesses? How about increased child care spaces? How about a little bit more of a retraining fund? Are those good proposals that would make sense in order to help small businesses and many across this province?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. All those ideas make a lot of sense to me.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes or no?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I support using the money that the government has not allocated to do everything we can to prevent a second wave.

I can't tell you how many small businesses said, "You have to have a safe school reopening plan—no more than 15 students in the classroom—because we can't afford another lockdown."

Do you know how many businesses said, "We need adequate child care because our workers need a place for their kids to go that is safe, but also because we need safe child care to contain the spread of the virus"?

I can't tell you how many people said we need more investments in long-term care to ensure that we're ready for a second wave.

I want to be really clear, to anyone watching today, that the best thing we can do for the economy is to make the kinds of investments that are going to contain the spread of the virus so we can avoid another lockdown. Unfortunately, those investments haven't been made.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm listening very intensely, and I appreciate the honourable member's support on a number of the initiatives within the bill.

I think, also, as the member for—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Algoma–Manitoulin.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —Algoma–Manitoulin has suggested—he's made some suggestions with respect to a number of programs across government that there should be additional funding on.

I wonder if the leader of the Green Party has had the opportunity to cost out some of the initiatives that he's talking about, not only with respect to rent relief, but across all of the sectors—that have been suggested by the opposition and yourself. What is the cost to some of these programs?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. It's a good question, because we do need to cost things out.

According to the Financial Accountability Officer, there is \$6.7 billion of available funds that have not been allocated. What I'm suggesting to the government is, allocate those funds to the things that we need to contain the spread of the virus in a second wave. The funds are available. Let's use them.

I would argue that, from a fiscal responsibility standpoint, it makes sense to use those funds because the investments we make now to contain the second wave as much as possible will save the kinds of economic slow-downs that will actually hurt and further reduce the amount of revenue coming into government to spend on the programs the people of Ontario need.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The member from Guelph talked about homelessness. He talked about the rising cost of living and rents. We get letters from our constituents. I heard from Nancy this week. She just can't afford \$1,300 for a one-bedroom apartment. She only makes \$1,600. She said she could sell her car and save \$96 on the insurance, but then how would she go get her groceries with the cost going up, as well? We've got 5,000 people on the waiting list for affordable housing in Windsor. Nancy is afraid she's going to have to end up living in her van.

We talked about a rent freeze, as you did, until the pandemic is over. You talk about the tent cities up there, tent cities all across Ontario. What could this government have done and put in this bill to resolve some of those problems?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. Thank you.

I think two things that could be in this bill to strengthen it are (1) make the rent freeze immediate and until the end of the pandemic and (2) have a moratorium on evictions. I realize, then, if you do that, you have to look out for small landlords who are struggling, as well—and so to have a rental assistance program that supports those small landlords in particular whose tenants can't afford to pay their rent.

There have been some studies that have come out that have shown that the reactive mode that we're doing—particularly, having to house people in hotels—is actually more expensive than if we'd address the challenges up front. I would argue that it would even be more fiscally prudent on the part of the government to prevent a lot of the encampments and homelessness we're experiencing by taking more proactive measures.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for introducing this important legislation. I've always said since I got in here—prior, in 2011—that he is a statesman in this House, and I am very grateful for all of his capabilities of listening to everybody and the consultations that they've done through this bill.

If passed, Bill 204, the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, would make a number of simple changes to seven acts. The Residential Tenancies Act would be amended to enable a rent freeze in 2021 for both rent-controlled and non-rent-controlled units. The Commercial Tenancies Act would be amended to extend the temporary ban on evictions of commercial tenants and protect them from being locked out or having their assets seized during COVID-19. The Assessment Act, Election Act, Municipal Elections Act and Municipal Property Assessment Corporation Act would all be amended to enable the creation of a single voters list for all municipal and provincial elections in Ontario, and the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act would be amended to give police officers, special constables or First Nations constables enforcement powers relating to organized public events and other gatherings.

Madam Speaker, no one in Ontario who has been financially impacted by COVID-19 should have to choose between putting food on their table and paying rent. In my riding of Burlington, I've heard from a number of constituents who are struggling to pay the rent. They appreciate the rent freeze contained in this legislation. If passed, this bill would freeze rent in 2021 for rent-controlled and non-rent-controlled units under most circumstances and provide 1.7 million Ontarians who rely on rental housing with financial relief as the province continues on the path of renewal, growth and economic recovery.

For those watching at home, Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act applies to most private residential rental units, including those in single and semi-detached houses, apartments and condominiums, and secondary units like basement apartments. Some types of rentals aren't included in the act, such as university and college residences. For years, the Residential Tenancies Act has set out the formula for calculating the maximum allowed rent increase for the year to come in rent-controlled units. If Bill 204 passes, the guideline for rental increases for 2021, which is currently set at 1.5%, would be frozen at 0%.

Madam Speaker, we know that stabilizing and adding predictability to rents in 2021 is one of the best ways to assist Ontarians who are struggling to get back on track as a result of COVID-19. That's why, prior to introducing this legislation, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing held engagement sessions with both landlord and tenant groups, community housing providers and local service managers. We wanted to ensure that any approach taken was fair and balanced. We also looked at the temporary rent freezes implemented in some form in other provinces, including Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba. And, of course, we considered feedback from the official opposition, as well as independent and Liberal members of this Legislature, all of whom asked the government to freeze rent increases for 2021.

1440

Since the introduction of Bill 204 on September 17, we've also heard from the mayors of our largest cities, including Toronto's John Tory, Mississauga's Bonnie Crombie and Brampton's Patrick Brown. All of them have come out in support of this proposed rent freeze in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, since the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, our government has called on landlords and tenants to come together and to be reasonable with each other. We passed the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act this summer to encourage landlords to negotiate repayment agreements with tenants before seeking eviction, if rent had not been paid during COVID-19. All across the province, the majority of landlords and tenants have come together during these unprecedented times.

Historic times call for historic action. That's why our proposed rent freeze will not only apply to rent-controlled units, but we're also freezing increases from units that are not rent controlled until December 31, 2021. In fact, most tenants living in apartments, townhouses, rented houses, semis, care homes, basement apartments, condos as well as mobile homes and land-lease communities will benefit. This rent freeze will also include units in community housing where tenants pay market rent or rent-g geared-to-income, as well as affordable rental housing units created through various federally and/or provincially funded housing programs.

While we know that families are continuing to be impacted by COVID-19, we know that most landlords have worked hard to be accommodating and have made sacrifices. And we know that by continuing to work together, we will move past this extraordinary time and get

Ontario back on track. Introducing legislation now will provide certainty to both renters and landlords. It builds on the previous work we've done to ban evictions and encourage repayment agreements between tenants and landlords, as well as the \$510 million in social service relief fund money from municipalities to support the housing system across the province.

The Ontario government remains committed to fostering a healthier rental market and increasing rental housing supply. But Madam Speaker, this is not like every year. We know people need support, and we are acting quickly to make sure the vast majority of families do not face a rent increase next year, while doing so in a way that minimizes impact to housing supply over the long term.

Before COVID-19 turned the world upside down, Ontario was reporting the highest level of new rental construction since 1992. In fact, current data indicates that new rental housing supply has continued to grow despite the pandemic. From January to August 2020, rental starts in Ontario are up 15% more than in the same period in 2019. It's even better news in Toronto, where rental start-ups are up 44% and the number of proposed rental units in the greater Toronto area at various stages of the planning or approvals process currently stands at 67,090 units, up 52.5% over last year. I don't envy the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; he has the nearly impossible job of finding a way to support tenants in the short term, while at the same time ensuring that future rental housing supply is not reduced by the actions government takes today.

For those at home, it's important to note that under certain circumstances a landlord can still apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to increase rent, but only under limited circumstances. The board could consider whether a landlord undertook a capital expenditure; for example, if a landlord did extraordinary or significant renovations, repairs, replacements or new additions to a building or to individual units. Additionally, if the landlord's cost for security services increased, or the landlord began providing security services for the first time, this would also be considered.

Of course, a landlord can only make a claim for security services provided by people who are not the landlord's employees, and it cannot be bundled with increased maintenance or operating costs related to COVID-19. Simply put, landlords can only apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to recoup the additional costs the landlord has incurred above regular annual operating costs.

Madam Speaker, it's no secret that businesses across Ontario have been strongly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. As our province has transitioned through the stages of reopening, businesses have reopened their doors and have adapted to the new normal. But many small business owners have expressed concerns about paying for rent, as some struggle to stay afloat. That's why our government committed up to \$241 million to deliver the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance for small businesses, in partnership with the federal government. It's also why our government joined most of our provinces in banning commercial evictions from May 1 to August

31. This support helped businesses that were eligible for the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program but whose landlords chose not to apply. For landlords who applied and were approved from the CECRA program, they were prohibited from evicting tenants as a consideration for receiving the loan.

I'm especially proud of the work done by Ontario's Minister of Finance and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. By working in partnership with the federal government, we were able to make changes to this program to better support Ontario businesses. We changed the program to base eligibility on total rent. We pushed the federal government to include properties with or without a mortgage. We helped simplify the application process for all applicants. And we pushed for the removal of the requirements to claw back insurance proceeds for both existing and new applicants. Many of these changes made the difference for many small businesses between keeping their lights on or closing up shop forever.

Madam Speaker, as you know, on September 8, the federal government announced an extension to this program for businesses to the end of September, while they explore other supports for small businesses. As part of Ontario's continued response to help businesses recover, our Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act will extend the ban on commercial evictions to match the federal government's extension of the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program. As always, the eviction ban will apply to all businesses eligible for rent assistance through this program but whose landlords have decided not to apply.

We're also working to protect small businesses from being locked out or having their assets seized during COVID-19. If a landlord exercised a right of re-entry between September 1, 2020, and the start of the non-enforcement period, the landlord must restore possession of the premises to the tenant or, if unable to do so, must compensate the tenant for damages. Also, if a landlord seized a tenant's goods between September 1 and the start of the non-enforcement period for arrears of rent, the landlord must return any unsold goods to the tenant.

Under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's proposal, Ontario's eviction ban could remain in place until October 30. Doing this allows us to further support small business owners who are working harder than ever before to get back on their feet and to help rebuild Ontario's economy.

In my riding of Burlington, I've heard from small businesses who are concerned that their landlords do not want to participate in the program. My office has reached out to landlords and tenants to help find some middle ground in order to protect local jobs. I was certainly happy to see that, as of September 7, roughly 23,100 landlord applications for properties in Ontario have been approved, representing roughly 52,600 tenants.

1450

As always, I strongly encourage commercial landlords in Burlington, Halton region and across Ontario to apply for the program. It's really in their best interests to do so.

Madam Speaker, we know that voter turnout has been declining in Canadian elections at all three levels of government. This trend is even more pronounced at the municipal level. But some academics, local governments and professional organizations believe the extent of the decline in municipal voter turnout is unknown. They believe this to be the case because Ontario's municipal voters lists are not as accurate as provincial and federal lists.

The Ontario Municipal Property Assessment Corp. creates the preliminary list of electors, which is provided to municipalities. In fact, Ontario is the only place in Canada where the property assessment corporation develops the preliminary voters list. Municipalities take the list provided by MPAC, and are then responsible for finalizing the voters list, creating ward and poll boundaries and administering elections. The current system of developing municipal voters lists is inefficient and costly for Ontario's municipalities. That's why there has been a long-standing request from municipalities to combine municipal and provincial voters lists into one single list.

Following the 2014 municipal election, the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario released a position paper entitled *Time to Fix the Voters' List*. The report advocated for a new approach to building the voters list in Ontario and identified municipal voters lists as an issue requiring immediate attention. It was shared with the previous provincial government, which responded by engaging in discussion with key stakeholders. As a result, minor tweaks to the voters lists were implemented ahead of the 2018 municipal election.

While the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario welcome these changes, they continue to advocate for more fulsome change.

During the 2018 municipal election, I heard from a number of candidates seeking election and members of their campaign teams about the lack of consistency when it came to voters lists across the province. Lists were provided in different ways, using different formats and at different times. And on election day, the format, frequency—and even whether lists of who voted were provided at all—was different, depending on where you lived in Ontario. This is not acceptable.

On April 18, 2019, Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, tabled a report entitled *Modernizing Ontario's Electoral Process*. The report included 13 transformational recommendations to improve the municipal voters list and enhance the electoral process in Ontario. Two key recommendations in this report had been advocated for for years by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario: the first being establishing a single address authority to standardize addresses across Ontario and improve services that rely on address information; and the second was making Elections Ontario responsible for municipal voters lists to increase consistency and accuracy. While we'd all like to see these changes implemented in time for the 2022 municipal election, the Chief Electoral Officer has recommended an implementation date of January 1, 2024.

In response to Elections Ontario's report, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced in October 2019 that our government intended to combine the municipal and provincial voters lists with a single voters list managed by Elections Ontario. MPAC would continue to be responsible for providing school support data to Elections Ontario.

A single list is expected to be more accurate, could mean fewer corrections for voters at polling stations and fewer delays for people lined up to vote on election day, and will reduce costs for municipalities. The list could also be updated each year, when people file their taxes.

If passed, Bill 204 will amend the Election Act to extend the Chief Electoral Officer's responsibilities—to create a permanent register of electors that includes everyone entitled to vote in municipal elections, beginning in 2024. It will also amend the Assessment Act to reflect that the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. will no longer be carrying on enumerations for the purposes of the Municipal Elections Act.

Bill 204 also amends the Municipal Elections Act to move the responsibility for preparing the preliminary voters list in municipal elections from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. to the Chief Electoral Officer, beginning in 2024.

In closing, the measures contained in Bill 204 will help protect those who are most vulnerable. We will help protect small businesses struggling during these unprecedented times. We will help increase voters' participation in municipal elections by ensuring those who are eligible to vote are on the voters list.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I always enjoy listening to my good friend from Burlington.

I'm going to touch on a couple of things she mentioned: basement apartments and renovations.

I had a letter this week from a man named Ray in my riding. He went to Home Depot, and he is outraged. He went there to finish off a basement renovation, and he's outraged at the price gouging going on in the construction business, I guess it is. The cost of a two-by-four, according to Ray, had been jacked up 130%, from \$3.33 to \$7.70, pressboards tripled from \$9 to \$27, drywall from \$9 to \$12.

Ray believes that without government intervention in COVID-19-related price gouging, the economy is headed for an economic disaster. I wonder what you have to say about that, and what could be in this bill to take care of the price gougers in the construction industry?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thanks so much for that question.

We hear this all the time. That's what the market is for lumber presently, right now, and there is a shortage. There's a shortage in lumber. There's a shortage with employees. But this bill will make a difference, coming forward, to make changes for that.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I listened intently to the member from Burlington speak.

Along the Kingsway, along the Queensway and along the lakeshore are small businesses in my riding, and they have been strongly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. I speak with the BIAs quite regularly and they know; they've adapted to the new normal. But many small business owners have expressed concerns about paying rent, and some struggle to stay afloat.

I was just wondering if the member can tell us in the House what steps our government has taken to support businesses.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much for the question from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

We want to ensure that businesses have the support they need to recover from this unprecedented situation. That is why our government has committed up to \$241 million to deliver the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance for small businesses program, in partnership with the federal government. Our government initially banned commercial evictions from May 1, 2020, until August 31, 2020, for tenants who are eligible for CECRA but whose landlords choose not to apply. As part of our continued response to help business recover, we are proposing changes to the Commercial Tenancies Act, to extend the temporary ban on eviction of small commercial tenants and to protect them from being locked out or having their assets seized.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from Burlington.

There is an apparent disconnect here, though, because Bill 204, which purports to support businesses, actually doubles down on a flawed federal plan, the CECRA plan, which for some reason the PC government has embraced, regardless of the fact that we heard from businesses for four months who said that it is a complete and utter failure. The CECRA plan is landlord-driven. Imagine being a small business owner and having a landlord determine whether or not you actually get to stay in business. It also has a 70% revenue threshold. If you lose 65% of your revenue as a small business, you don't qualify for this. The member said that this is historic investment.

1500

Why has the government failed so abysmally to actually invest in businesses in Ontario?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much for that question. I'm actually just thinking about this, because we've all had these questions come up, obviously, in our constituencies. The reason that we brought this bill forward, Bill 204, is to make sure that all of these things change.

This temporary ban on evictions will continue to apply to small businesses that are eligible for federal and provincial rental assistance through CECRA but whose landlords choose not to apply for the program. Landlords that applied and were approved by CECRA would already be prohibited from evicting their tenants as a condition for receiving a loan. The amendments will apply to evictions that occur on or after September 1, 2020—and an

unwinding provision will require landlords who evicted tenants or seized their assets.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We all know that the COVID-19 outbreak has affected every Ontarian, and it is clear that this is a challenging time for everyone. We also know that housing affordability has never been more important, and families need to know that they have a safe and stable place to call home in this time of uncertainty.

My question to the member is very straightforward: Can you explain exactly what this bill will do and how it will help protect renters?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much for that question.

I know—along, as I've said, with everybody who is in this House—that we've had so many people call our office in tears; it was, could they put food on their table or could they pay their rent? I know, with this Bill 204, that it was imperative that we listen to those people who were calling in to our offices.

These are unprecedented times. These are times when people are so unsure of what's happening, and we needed to give them some confidence in what we were doing. So our government is proposing to freeze rent in 2021 at the 2020 level for rent-controlled and non-rent-controlled—which is important, that they're both there—units alike. If passed, this would give the vast majority of Ontario tenants relief while working to get Ontario back on track.

Thank you so much for that question.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Even at the outset of this pandemic, even in the midst of the first wave, we heard scientists and doctors warning and threatening of a second wave, even possibly worse in terms of numbers. It sounds prophetic, because today, as we debate in the House, numbers hit the highest they have ever been: 700 in a given day.

What's interesting is that we are debating legislation that seeks to end the eviction ban as of the end of this month. The same scientists and doctors are stating that in fact, the numbers, if it continues like this, would be even higher, and as a result, you will have businesses and tenants facing potential eviction, perhaps at the time that this pandemic has been at its worst ever.

Will you consider to extend these eviction bans?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much for that question.

We've also heard over and over again from the command table of doctors and everybody else all of the things that we need to be doing right now. We've made legislative changes to strengthen tenant protection by discouraging renovations and bad-faith evictions, while encouraging more repayment agreements between tenants and landlords. And we have invested \$510 million in the social services relief fund to municipalities. I know my mayor was absolutely thrilled to get that, and I'm sure your mayor was, as well. This money is being used to help people stay in their homes by providing funding for rent

banks, utility banks, and emergency loans for those who need it most.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I know that this legislation is part of many of the actions this government has taken to help tenants. I, too, sat on the committee this summer, when we heard many different speakers talk about some of the issues they had, and many landlords talk about the problems they had trying to make ends meet.

At the onset of COVID-19, this government introduced a social services relief fund to inject much-needed funding into the community. The minister, at the time, realized just how much trouble some of our communities—we've given out \$520 million to the service managers to help them look after people who are in homeless situations.

Could the member explain just how this funding has helped tenants?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you for the question.

I think the most important thing is, when we work alone, we make progress, but when we work together, we make history. I think it's so important, with so much that has gone on with COVID-19, how much we have all rallied together and worked together for the good people of Ontario. It's our job, in this House, and as a government, to make sure that these people are taken care of, in, again, these unprecedented times.

I just want to quickly go back to your question. The social services relief fund is a \$510-million investment to our Indigenous and municipal partners—which, again, my mayor was quite thrilled with, and I am sure yours was, as well—to provide relief to our most vulnerable. The funding has been used across Ontario to expand on shelter networks, purchase PPE, and create and top up rent banks and utility banks.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Today I rise to speak to Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act. This legislation deals with a number of issues, including a rent freeze for 2021, and extends a ban on commercial evictions until October 31.

Speaker, we have just entered the second wave of this pandemic. Many experts have said that the second wave will come at us even harder than the first wave. Just today, 700 new COVID-19 cases were reported. This is the largest number of new reported cases in Ontario in a single day. Doctors and scientists are predicting that the second wave will peak between the middle and the end of October, right when the commercial eviction ban contained within this bill is set to expire.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the lifeblood of our economy, and we need to do everything we can to help them survive. We also need to ensure that struggling businesses receive commercial rent subsidies to help them weather the storm. This subsidy will also make sure that landlords receive rent payments. This legislation also freezes rent for all tenants for 2021. Millions of Ontarians have struggled through financial instability during this pandemic. Many have struggled to put food on the table.

So the last thing they need right now is a rent increase. A rent freeze is certainly the least this government could do.

But what tenants need right now is more than just a rent freeze. What they also need is a rent subsidy of 80% of their monthly rent, up to \$2,000 a month, like we in the NDP have proposed for months. This way, not only will tenants be able to pay their rent, but it will also ensure that landlords will be able to receive the rent payment.

I, myself, was a tenant for over 30 years, and I know the challenges that many tenants face. COVID-19 has only made many of their experiences worse. It is difficult to expect those who have suffered some of the most severe economic hardships during COVID-19 to be able to afford rent, groceries and other necessities when the average rent in Toronto is over \$2,000 a month for a one-bedroom unit. A rent freeze would help ease the minds of so many Ontarians who are already dealing with the everyday stressors of living in a pandemic.

This bill also places the responsibility of maintaining eligible voters lists for municipal elections onto Elections Ontario. This is something that municipalities have been calling for and is long overdue.

The bill also significantly increases fines for those who are hosting large gatherings during the middle of the pandemic. With case numbers beginning to rise, there is no doubt we need to do everything we can to stop large, private gatherings where the virus can be easily transferred but difficult to trace. It should be noted that the fines imposed within this bill are actually higher than the fines that were imposed upon private, for-profit, long-term-care home operators, where 1,829 residents have passed away—when this government or the previous one even bothered to inspect them. This includes the 48 residents who tragically passed away at Hawthorne Place in my riding and the 64 residents who passed away at nearby Downsview Long-Term Care Centre.

Despite the experiences of the first wave, the Ontario Health Coalition has warned us that this province's long-term-care homes are not yet ready for a second wave, and that's very disturbing. I certainly appreciate any effort to discourage people from gathering in large groups, especially at this stage of the pandemic. At the same time, this government also needs to take urgent action to ensure that this fall we don't have a repeat of the tragedy that unfolded in our long-term-care homes this past spring.

Ontario desperately needs a comprehensive second wave strategy, and if this government wants to take real action to slow down community spread, it needs to do much more than place fines upon people for social gatherings. This includes putting more money into our public health units to speed up testing and tracing, and taking real action to reduce class sizes. Just this morning, Mason Road Junior Public School was forced to close down due to a COVID-19 outbreak. Sadly, if we don't take action to reduce class sizes, there are likely to be more shutdowns across the province.

1510

This government recently rejected a motion by the leader of the official opposition to cap class sizes at 15. I

am hoping that this government will revisit this issue and take the time to listen to the scientists and doctors who have warned that proper physical distancing cannot be maintained in classrooms with more than 15 students.

This entire bill attempts to take some action to address some of the many issues our province is facing in the wake of the unprecedented challenge we faced during COVID-19, but ultimately, more is required to help struggling Ontarians get through this pandemic.

I'd like to use the rest of my time here in this House today to focus on how this pandemic has deeply affected small and medium-sized businesses in the province. When Ontario went into lockdown in mid-March, all but the most essential businesses were forced to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I apologize to the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will, therefore, be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I turn to the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Given the importance of this debate, I think it would be wise for us to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I return to the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I appreciate the opportunity to continue.

Again, when Ontario went into lockdown in mid-March, all but the most essential businesses were forced to shut down. Many of them were not able to open again until the end of June, when Toronto moved into stage 2.

The Emery Village BIA, located in my riding, is the largest business improvement area in Canada. It comprises more than 3,200 businesses and its members employ nearly 30,000 people—both of which have been deeply affected by this pandemic.

I want to read to you a statement that the Emery Village BIA sent to me on behalf of its members:

“Our business owners, commercial property investors, merchants and service providers reflect the concerns, fears and uncertainties shared by their fellow Canadians. The recent uptick in cases, especially those in the ‘community spread’ category, means that we have yet to ‘turn the corner on the pandemic.’ This is unwelcome news for our business community and bodes ill for business confidence. Like all fellow citizens, business people are worried for their families and dependants. But at the threshold of a second wave, and with growing uncertainty of when this is to end, the survival of their enterprise, along with their livelihood and that of their employees, is adding additional burden to their lives. No doubt, business debt is a paramount issue.

“One of our businesses described his experience as ‘physical and emotional exhaustion,’ while others say they’re ‘living on fumes.’ Those that survived the first wave echo concerns that this new challenge will drain their resources and resolve to continue.

“Businesses continue to see the need and are grateful for the support programs. However, uncertainty in the immediate and foreseeable future is an anathema to business planning and investment. Even the businesses that managed to survive the first wave, including some who thrived with new opportunities related to the demands of the COVID-19 environment, are now facing supply chain issues with sourced inventories—both local and overseas—shrinking rapidly. Beyond current program supports, all levels of government need to look at a long-term industry strategy to promote growth and sustainability.”

It's true that many business owners have been able to weather the storm by pivoting their business operations to meet the growing need for PPE and other supplies desperately needed during the pandemic, and I thank them dearly for their help in this regard—people like tailor Raj Singh of the Bespoke shop. Raj told me during the pandemic that he has lost more than 30% of his business since demand for suits had gone way down. Raj shifted his operations from making some of the city's finest old-school tailored suits to producing cloth reusable masks, many of which he donated to families in need in the surrounding area. Thank you so much, Raj.

Raj told me that business has been tough because the majority of masks on sale in Ontario have been imported rather than made here in Ontario, and if he could just get one contract to sell the masks he produces right here at home, it would make a massive difference for his business.

Raj told me, “Personally, I don't want a grant or anything like that. I want to work. The government has to create more opportunities for businesses like mine to be able to work. If other businesses are using products from outside, how is that helping us?”

I've heard these same sentiments echoed by other business owners I have spoken to. These business owners aren't looking for handouts; they want work. They want to continue to help drive our economy forward. Many of them have been forced to shut down for months during the pandemic, through no fault of their own. These business owners are looking for assistance to help to keep their businesses afloat. And while they've had to shut their businesses down during the pandemic, their overhead costs continue to pile up. Businesses like hairdressers and hairstylists had to remain closed for nearly four months. Despite the fact that their businesses were closed, the rent still needed to be paid.

Adeola has operated HommeSpaFemme, a beauty salon in my riding, for seven years. She told me, “COVID-19 has affected my business severely. I had to close down around March 15 and was not able to reopen until July 2 or 3. I run a service-based business so there was no opportunity to offer curbside or virtual services. This has really impacted our profits and what we can pay employees.” Adeola told me that she has had great difficulty accessing the information she needed to find out protocols for reopening her business and what PPE was required. She also had to pay for the additional cost to get her business ready out of pocket.

Adeola said she applied for grants to help offset some of the costs, and she considers herself lucky that her landlord allowed her to defer her rent payments. She told me that she understands fully that many other businesses in this province were not so lucky.

Adeola told me that what is needed is a centralized information system to provide constant information and updates regarding businesses like hers.

She continued: “The government should and can provide more subsidies for business owners. A one-time subsidy doesn’t necessarily cover what is to come. It feels like we are entering a second wave and the costs will add up in the coming months. Extra subsidies will be needed and will be helpful to keep businesses like mine afloat. Some of my friends who are small business owners have told me stories or I have even heard on the news about commercial landlords evicting tenants. We are the businesses that drive the community and employ people. This needs to be fixed and the government needs to step in and help us and landlords as well.

“Our community here was hit the hardest. So my business has been affected even worse. There are many people of colour in my area and many of them were deeply impacted financially. Many no longer have the disposable income to afford the services my salon offers. I’ve had a big decline in people coming into the salon but I understand it. It has hit us all really hard, and I hope the government will do more for local businesses especially in this community”—as you can see, different businesses, different opinions, but they are unified in their call for help.

Adeola’s landlord was willing to defer her rent payments.

I have also heard from somebody who runs a community art space. They also told me they consider themselves lucky that they were able to negotiate with their landlord because without that, they would not be able to keep their space. The owner told me that the only way their business is surviving right now is through a combination of rent negotiations and crowdfunding, after they were not able to reopen due to the pandemic.

This business owner reminded me that when a ban on commercial evictions was put into place in the United States, the number of commercial evictions increased right before the ban went into place. The owner suggested that it would be beneficial for small and medium-sized businesses facing this situation to have some sort of legal counsel in place for this reason.

One of the industries that has been the hardest hit during this pandemic is the travel and tourism industry. I heard from the operator of a local travel agency in my riding, who sent me this statement, which I think captures the sentiment of so many in this industry. They wrote:

“I recognize the severe trauma that the travel industry has undergone and while we are strong and resilient, we are definitely dealing with new experiences in unprecedented times.

“I have owned and operated a small travel agency in a community strip mall for just over 43 years and was not prepared for COVID-19.

“Even before the Canadian government declared a state of emergency our office was working 24/7 to rearrange flights for our clients. We frantically worked on getting passengers back to Canada, rearranging flights, calming clients down but most of all, receiving the short end of everyone’s patience.

“Word was out, and everyone was starting to panic. Never in my wildest dreams did I think this was the beginning of a global pandemic. The financial hardship has been unbelievable.

“I have zero income coming in but still have a ton of expenses!

“With cancellations comes sending back our hard-earned commissions. We have slowly cancelled all booking for 2020. Some passengers received future travel credits that protect a portion of our commission and some refunds that we had to refund all out of our commissions. Imagine working up to a sale, waiting for the passenger to travel to receive commissions and then having to do all the work again and now forfeit all your commission and not get paid for the time to finalize the file.

“Utility companies that say they offer a one-time credit but again did not co-operate. Imagine Hydro saying, ‘Because you paid every month, you do not qualify for assistance.’ Should I have not paid my bills, had my hydro cut off, and cut off all my lifeline to the airlines and clients? Extra expenses for cleaning products, Plexiglas and general office expenses such as phone, Internet, trade connections (airline access, memberships, insurance), paying back commissions, to name a few.

“Time is spent on applying for government assistance, which has had its own obstacles dealing with difficult, unfamiliar forms to deal with. EI forms for employees, fixing emails, website, phones, processing files, all with no staff. CEWS is good if an employer can afford 25%, but how do I do that with zero income?”

1520

The business owner also went on to say that they understood the precarious position the pandemic not only puts on business owners but on landlords, as well.

They went on to say: “Landlords are also going through a hard time and it is not fair to expect them to not receive compensation for their premises. They too have expenses; property taxes, insurance and maintenance of the property.

“I worry about my staff who are my team, my support system, my family. I worry about the labour laws and how they will affect me when it is time to rehire. I worry about my suppliers; will they be around in a few months for my clients to use their future travel credits?

“I wish all levels of government would look at ways of financially assisting small businesses to stay alive and reassess how financial support to individuals could be better utilized.”

They stressed how important it is for us, right now, to support local businesses. They summed up their feelings with a statement expressing how I am sure many small and medium-sized business owners in this province are probably feeling: “The motto of ‘we are in this together’ seems so far away when I’m drowning financially and

morally. I am losing hope that we are truly in this together. Send me a lifeline before it's too late!"

Sensei Dino, who has operated Black Tiger Karate in my riding for many years, has told me that if he does not receive any help, his business may have to shut its doors for good. I want to share some of his words right now:

"I have been a business owner in this area, teaching martial arts, for over 40 years and I do hope for longer, as my heart is with my establishment which I put endless amounts of hours into keeping it running. I have never been so hard-hit financially in my lifetime.

"Taking this pandemic seriously was the right thing to do, but it came at such a huge cost for myself. I closed the door for the safety of the community to show support. I am not the most tech-savvy person, so to find information and assistance was extremely difficult. I finally connected with some representatives and have been passed off to other individuals, and in the end never got complete answers or much help at all."

Sensei Dino did his research and relied on his personal network to find leads, but in the end, he was not able to receive assistance. His landlord was only willing to defer his rent for 30 days. He, like Adeola, also had great difficulty in figuring out the procedures he needed to follow to reopen his business, and the cost of PPE came out of his pocket. He said that it was very difficult for him as prices fluctuated.

Like many other business owners I have spoken to, Sensei Dino was not able to get any assistance because the CECRA commercial rent subsidy program disqualified far too many people. First of all, in order to qualify for this program, business owners would have had to prove that they had lost 70% or more of their income. This leaves many business owners in a position where they are unable to receive any assistance while their rent payments continue to pile up.

Second of all, even if they do qualify, it is up to landlords to decide whether or not to opt in. As part of this program, landlords would have to agree to take a 25% loss on their monthly rent payments. Sadly, these terms are simply something that many commercial landlords were not willing to accept, putting many business owners and their livelihoods at risk.

This strategy also does not consider the way in which tenants and landlords are pitted against each other during these difficult times. It should not be up to the landlords to opt in or to risk losing a large chunk of their rent payments. It is the government's responsibility to make sure that it takes care of all people and ensures that both tenants and landlords feel financially secure during this pandemic.

While this bill would ensure that any business owner who would qualify for CECRA would be protected from commercial eviction regardless of whether or not their landlord applied for the rent subsidy, there are many business owners like Sensei Dino who don't meet this prohibitively high threshold. Without help, they may lose absolutely everything.

Sensei Dino went on to say, "Having any assistance for a small business like mine is deeply needed. As I have

never closed my doors before except for holidays, it looks like I may have to close it again but for good this time."

Silvio, who owns NEG Audio Visual and Emery Village Hockey Training Rinks in my riding said that flawed decisions by both the provincial and federal governments have put businesses like his in a spot where it is almost impossible to recover. He said that during the pandemic he has struggled to keep his business afloat and that he also found it difficult to get his landlords to participate in the commercial rent subsidy program.

Of course, things did not have to be this way. There was a better option. Back in April, the Ontario NDP came up with our Save Main Street plan. Under this plan, we called for, amongst other things, a 75% rent subsidy for all businesses able to apply. If implemented, this plan would have worked for businesses and it would have worked for landlords. Businesses would still have had to pay 25% of their monthly rent, just like under CECRA, but landlords would not have had to forgo 25% of their rent.

Additionally, many more businesses would have been eligible to receive this assistance. Once this pandemic comes to an end, these businesses would be in a great position to kick-start this province's economic recovery.

This bill places a retroactive ban on commercial evictions going back to September 1, the day after the previous commercial evictions ban expired, and the landlord must allow the tenant to return to the lease if they have been locked out before the new eviction ban comes into place. But this does little to recoup revenue losses incurred by businesses that have been locked out during this gap.

A recent article written by Lauren O'Neil on BlogTO told the story of Kabob Boys, who were locked out of their business earlier this month. By the way, they were locked out after the Premier had announced he would extend the ban on commercial evictions in this province. On September 17, Kabob Boys were served with a notice that if they did not repay the more than \$21,000 they owed within five days, all their property within the establishment would be appraised and sold to cover their debt. If their business was eligible for this retroactive ban, it wouldn't help them much because by the time this legislation is passed, the assets they need to run their business would have already been sold. They are also in a position where they are unable to fight it because they simply could not afford to hire a lawyer. Kabob Boys is now looking at a \$250,000 business loss from the pandemic, and they are not the only business that now finds themselves in this precarious position.

I have more to say on this, but as time winds down, I do want to say, I know that this government didn't listen to us back in April, but as we are now entering a second wave, I sincerely hope this government is listening to us now. Many small businesses—and medium-sized, as well—have told us that if there were to be another shut-down, they would not survive. If we're going to save these businesses and the jobs that go with them, there needs to be a plan. This government had months to come up with one.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the time to have a conversation with my colleague from Humber River–Black Creek. I always appreciate listening to the words he has to say because, even though we're not exactly the same size, I think his heart is bigger than I am. I really appreciate him sharing the struggles that his constituents and the businesses have, because I've heard the exact same thing.

I always appreciate how he is able to bring such a reasonableness to the debate, and I guess that leads me to my question. I don't disagree with everything you've had to say, and some of the limitations in the CECRA program through the federal government that we had to use in order to activate those things with the limitations they placed on them, but I'm just wondering as to exactly your suggestions of adding some of that. What would that cost—if you could put some estimates on that—the taxpayers in the province of Ontario in order to roll out that kind of an assistance program to small businesses in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm not going to pull out some accounting documents and go line by line, but I'm going to say this one thing: This government is sitting on billions of dollars of unallocated funds that could solve so many of the issues we've discussed today. Furthermore, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce supports the NDP plan that the government is not. When we are on the right side of tenants and all the people struggling as well as businesses and the landlords, and the government isn't listening during the pandemic, I think they need to go back to the drawing board.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member for his comments. He took quite an extensive time talking about his local businesses that are really hurting in his area. He talked about how the rent subsidies would be able to assist some of these businesses. Whether it's a travel agency or one of the dojos or one of the gyms that are there, these rent subsidies would be really, really beneficial, along with some relief on their utilities as well.

One of the things that is also missing out of this is the mental anguish that these small businesses are feeling, because small businesses have always been accustomed to, "Give me the opportunity to figure it out and I'll figure it out," but nobody prepared themselves for this type of pandemic.

Can the member please talk a little bit more in regard to the messaging which everybody in this room heard in regard to how substantial rent relief would help these owners?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you for mentioning the mental health issues that many are facing. It's not just lack of socializing, but businesses here, their families are counting on them to put food on the table. What they're facing during these unprecedented times is absolutely immense, and so many businesses right now who have struggled through COVID, only to possibly now see, as we now enter a second wave—they have so much fear about what will happen for the future. That's why this government has to come to the table and do everything

they absolutely can to be able to help them. If you don't spend now, and if you don't have a plan to help them now, you're going to pay later, and it's going to be a lot worse off for everybody. So I'm calling on this government to do the right thing. Let's support our leaders in the business community, whether large, medium or small. They're counting on you. Do the right thing.

1530

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the member from Humber River–Black Creek. As my colleague said, we certainly always enjoy listening to you and your thoughtful statements whenever you debate.

My question is—and I don't think you touched on it in your speeches—about the voters list, which is an important part of this legislation. As a fellow member from Toronto, we know that a lot of people move in and out quickly and it's so hard to keep up to date, especially with all those condos and people moving in and out. We are proposing changes to the municipal voters list which respond to requests from municipalities and also the Chief Electoral Officer. Some of these changes will deliver better lists for Ontarians and improve the election process and the services. Given that this change would be widely supported, what do you think? What is your opinion in the House here on the changes to the election list? Would you be supportive of that change?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I appreciate the kind words of both government questioners as well, so thank you for that.

Certainly, there is often supportable stuff within legislation, and definitely that is supportable. It is a long time coming. It's unrelated to COVID, but you've introduced this in the bill. It is an improvement and it's supportable.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: As I rip off my mask, I'd like to thank the member from Humber River–Black Creek for his comments. I really appreciated them, especially your call-out to helping small business because, in northern Ontario, the tourism sector—those are often very small businesses—and the service sector have been suffering and have come to our office to ask for help.

One of the areas that you touched on but that I'd like you to talk a bit more about is the bureaucratic barriers to small business, when you're having a one- or two-person operation, trying to navigate the programming that's out there.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: None of us saw this pandemic coming, of course. Business owners in many cases are told there's relief out there, and they're unsure if it's just politics or if it's real in many cases. Then they're left to have to go out there and figure out how to sift through all sorts of paperwork. Many of them have been very disappointed. In the case of rent, many people have been forced to have to fight their own landlords who don't want to forgo any amount of rent. Perhaps they have mortgages or whatnot. So both the federal and the Conservative governments have chosen plans that have actually, in many cases, caused increased friction, and I'm hoping

they'll go back to the table and improve on some of that stuff, because people are counting on them.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: A question to the member—and I do appreciate his debate style. He's very calm and very deliberate and very methodical in his approach, too, and I do appreciate that; I truly do.

Our government has been working hard from day one to increase housing supply, and it's been working. We've seen record highs for new rental starts, applications and completions, but we admit we do have a housing supply problem in Ontario. Just in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington recently, the municipality has approved more housing units out on Grand Avenue East. There are also condo-style rentals that are being built, 242 of those units, as well as 365-plus single-family home dwellings being built in Chatham.

So the program is working. Why can't the opposition admit that our plan is working to create more much-needed housing in Ontario?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I will point out that if you look back at—and this government seems to be willing to do anything that builders and developers ask them to do. If you actually look back in the city of Toronto at the number of applications—this is prior to the government taking office—within a couple of years it was equivalent to that of 15 years prior, and the government brought in legislation to actually require developers to give less back to communities and also allow communities to have less input in terms of the types of development.

I'm happy that you're satisfied with what's going on within your constituency, but in my constituency communities are asking for more say when it comes to development, and they're asking developers to give more and improve communities when they do develop. Again, I thank you for your kind words.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Question? The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: You got it, Speaker. Thank you. I thank the member from Humber River-Black Creek for, as usual, a well-prepared presentation.

We already touched on rent subsidies, and the member did a great job of explaining how important that is. Some of the other parts of the plan that the opposition put forward last week—one of them in particular is about insurance gouging, and I know the member has been very outspoken on this topic and other consumer issues related to his critic portfolio. I'm wondering if he could tell us what's happening in his riding, what he sees across Ontario in terms of insurance gouging. How important is it that insurance companies pass on savings that they're seeing to small businesses?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: In the midst of this pandemic, we're seeing insurance costs to businesses rising. We've had a couple of restaurants within my constituency report a doubling of their insurance costs. We're seeing this across the sector, and this is absolutely an increased burden for our small businesses.

You talk about insurance; I will mention auto insurance. This is something that the NDP have been fighting for, and what I've been fighting for: a 50% reduction, rebates for all drivers, because the risk of accident was so much less during this pandemic. What we saw was the government allowing insurers to make a lot of money on the backs of hard-working Ontario drivers when they needed the help the most. So thank you for the question. There has to be change in the insurance industry.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Good afternoon. I'm quite happy to join the debate on Bill 204 today. I would like to discuss my concerns with two parts of the bill, specifically schedule 7 and schedule 6.

My concern with schedule 7 relates to the blanket, across-the-board rent freeze for residential buildings that has been criticized by both landlord and tenant advocacy groups. Quite simply, it is a lazy public policy solution.

First, those tenants who can't afford to pay rent because they have lost their income as a result of a lockdown that went on longer than 14 days are not going to be assisted by knowing their rent won't increase by 1.5%. They still have to figure out how to pay the other 98.5% at a time when our economy has taken a tremendous hit and when the government continues to put barriers on small businesses.

Second, a rent freeze across the board will be helping tenants who may not need the help, while not doing enough for those who are desperate.

Third, landlords are going to be asked to shoulder the load of increases in utilities and municipal property tax increases during the rent freeze. For example, the city of Toronto has threatened a 47% increase in property taxes. Other municipalities may soon follow with heavy increases in municipal taxes. Unless landlords obtain an exemption under section 126 from the board for any property tax increases, they will be left shouldering the load. For the mom-and-pop landlords, they will also be shouldering this burden. Perhaps the government should have looked into a corresponding freeze of municipal property taxes as a more effective way to keep rent down during this period.

Madam Speaker, I now turn to schedule 6. I have concerns with the fines being imposed: \$10,000 for an individual. I do find it curious that just a year ago, when I presented Bill 150 in the House that would create a \$5,000 fine for anyone committing voter fraud in an internal political party election, which is outright fraud where there is an intention to do something wrong not by accident, the government, led by the Premier, took the position that political parties were above the law and they could "govern themselves." They scoffed at a \$5,000 fine to protect against those committing voter fraud in internal party elections—the audacity, they suggested, of a political party and its operatives being subject to a law against voter fraud.

Here we are now, one year later, Madam Speaker. This government believes that political parties get to run

themselves and make up their own rules and laws, but the citizens of our province—from the north to the southwest to the east, rural and urban, all 14.5 million of them—should be subject to a \$10,000 fine if they have people over for Thanksgiving and, by some mistake, an 11th person shows up.

Clearly—I'm being sarcastic here—the people of Ontario do not know how to govern themselves, so they need to be subject to a \$10,000 fine by a government that believes they're above a law against them committing fraud and that offered up half the fine. It's clear that there's one law for the people and another law for government.

1540

Secondly, I find it curious that initially, the government said it would take a regional approach to further restrictions. On that same day in question period, I asked the government if it had a framework or criteria it would disclose prior to imposing further restrictions. No commitment was given and it didn't seem like there were any plans on releasing a framework. Three days later, the government announced further restrictions would be imposed right across the province, not regionally, despite 70% of COVID cases coming from three regions. They were going to crack down on wild parties, supposedly. As a result, residents of rural Ontario and other regions who have not experienced significant increases in positive COVID cases are living with new laws telling them they can't have more than 10 people in their home for Thanksgiving. Madam Speaker, 11 people over for Thanksgiving does not constitute a wild party.

Six days after I asked about a framework or plan and didn't receive an answer in this House, I saw the government release a fall preparedness plan. It's too bad the government wasn't willing to listen to the suggestions of their MPPs while they were in caucus. Rather, they make things up as they go, seemingly based on whatever public criticism it receives. I have doubts that such a fine on an individual would withstand the scrutiny of section 12 of the charter that protects against cruel and unusual punishment.

In my opinion, a fine that excessive isn't going to be taken seriously, especially if it's beyond one's ability to pay or unlikely to withstand a charter challenge. We have also seen news reports of police being unable to restrict social gatherings, in the hundreds, of young people. The problem with these types of laws is that they are unlikely to be enforced when their application is so broad as to make it impossible to monitor every interaction.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I look forward to the questions.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: To the member from Cambridge: I have a couple of questions here for you. First of all, you know the amendments to the Reopening Ontario Act included in the bill would create a new offence for individuals who host private events that are in violation of social gatherings. I know you talked about the in-house, informal gatherings of up to 10 and/or informal gatherings outside of up to 25. The true intent of the guidelines, I

think, is to stop those 100 people or more gathering in a backyard, as we have heard especially in the Toronto area. But my question to you is very simple, and that is, do you agree that this is an important step to help stop the spread of COVID-19? A simple yes or no, but then I also want to know why you feel that way.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you to the member from Chatham–Kent–Leamington. The private event: We'll use Thanksgiving dinner as the example of 11 people. We have these laws that are being imposed where you're now pitting neighbour against neighbour. A few months ago we were saying, "Go outside with your neighbour and clap your hands for health care providers." Now you are saying, "Hey, if your neighbour has too many cars in the driveway, call bylaw or call the police." This one part of the bill where we're having fines on the people of Ontario is not a Conservative aspect of this bill. No offence to my colleagues who are part of the NDP caucus, but you guys both agree on the fines.

My question to you, then, is, do you not trust the people of Ontario to actually take things seriously without imposing ridiculous fines on them?

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

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the member from Cambridge for her comments. I agree with her. It seems ridiculous that if you have 10 people for Thanksgiving and an 11th person shows up that you get a \$10,000 fine. It seems restrictive to treat the whole province as a whole. It resonated with me when you talked about your riding being treated like the hot spots across Ontario, because the Premier was in my riding of Sudbury and told the press that northern Ontario shouldn't be affected by hot spots in southern Ontario, and then three days later the new legislation came out restricting sizes.

My question is fairly simple and similar to the one previous to the member opposite: What's a better approach to controlling COVID, provincial or regional measures?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you to the member from Sudbury. Yes, this whole putting the fines on the province as a whole when first talking about a regional approach lacks clarity. It lacks transparency. There was no answer provided when I asked for clarification in terms of a framework or any type of criteria that would be followed. I think what's happening is that the people of this province are feeling that the whole truth is not being presented.

We have things like how the tests are up today; that has been mentioned a few times today. In April, we had about a 3.75% positive test rate based on the amount of tests given; and now, at 41,400 tests and 700 that are positive, that's a 1.7% positive test rate. People are going to look at these numbers and start questioning things.

I'm not saying that COVID-19 isn't real; yes, people are getting sick from it. It's clearly quite real. But my issue is that we're now asking government—the government is saying, "Trust us. We know what's best. We're not going to let you make those decisions as people; we're going to make the decisions for you." That's where my issue is.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I rise only because I wanted to drill down a little bit into what the member from Sudbury just said. The member from Sudbury just talked about regional approaches to attacking COVID-19, and I respect his opinion on that, but it seems to run counter to what the NDP message has been throughout this pandemic, whether it's on schools and classroom caps or whether it's on support for small, medium and large enterprises in this part of this debate, with respect to rent relief.

I wonder if the honourable member, seizing on what the member for the NDP has just said and the new approach that the NDP seems to be taking, would then agree with the NDP that the approaches that we take, whether it's to rent relief or to schools, should be regionally based as well?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thanks to the government House leader. Putting the approach at a regional level, I think, is quite frankly passing the buck. It's saying, "We didn't do it; the region did it." Look at the mask mandates, for example. Some regions imposed it and people got angry at the regions instead of the province. While each region is dealing with COVID differently and is being affected differently, this government has a responsibility to be creative with the way that we're handling things.

What has been done, these fines—they don't make sense. Charging someone \$10,000 and pitting neighbour against neighbour is just something, to me, that's quite surprising coming from a Conservative government.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question to the member from Cambridge: You said, just a moment ago, "Should the people trust us as politicians?" Well, they were the ones who put us here in office to make these difficult decisions. That's why we're here, so they have to trust us, because we're the ones who were elected to come here. So my question to you is, would you agree that we should leave these decisions as to how many people are supposed to be in a household up to the individual populace and let them decide how many people are supposed to be in a house?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thanks to the member from Brampton North for his question. Yes, when we are elected as members of provincial Parliament, we are asking for the trust of the people to make the right decision, but that requires listening on our part and not breaking that trust.

I think, too, that oftentimes people get elected in this province, in this country, and they become complacent and think that they've got a job for four years and they can do what they want, especially if you're in a safe seat, where you know that people aren't going to vote any other way. And so people, politicians, may make decisions that may be contrary to what their constituents agree with, simply because they can.

I know I'm not going to have enough time to address all of this. My point is that we need to trust the people of Ontario to be adults and to not throw things like wild parties. Punishing them with \$10,000 fines on the eve of Thanksgiving does not make any sense.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I want to drill down on this, because this was a very important part of today's debate and one of the reasons why we extended the debate on this not long ago. The member for Sudbury has just suggested that everything that the government does should be based on a regional approach. I respect the member for his opinion. But I wonder if the member from Cambridge would then agree with the NDP position that supports and services—whether it's rent relief, whether it's a rent freeze, whether it's fines, whether it's class sizes—should also be based on a regional basis, given the new ground that the NDP has just announced to us today.

1550

Mr. Jamie West: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I recognize the member from Sudbury on a point of order.

Mr. Jamie West: The government House leader keeps saying my perspective. I was asking her opinion of her perspective.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Member from—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Sorry? Government House leader? Okay. It wasn't a point of order.

Back to the member for Cambridge for a response.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you to the government House leader, once again.

Again, I'm saying regional approaches—it's passing the buck. I'm saying the provincial government needs to make a decision, consult with the public, actually listen to the people these rules and these fines are going to affect, and realize that the things we're doing today are going to have implications in the future that are far-reaching. We have seen that already with the two-week "let's not overwhelm the health care system" becoming six months of lockdowns and restrictions and issues within communities of neighbour against neighbour.

So, yes, the government needs to do its job and to make these decisions and be cognizant of the impact that they are going to have in the future.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas:

My question for the member for Cambridge really has to do with—a lot of Ontarians have had a really tough financial time through the pandemic. Many, many businesses were ordered closed, which was the right decision to do, but which means that a lot of people were left without employment. When we say a lot of people, we can really look at the Black, the Indigenous, the people of colour who are the ones most affected by the lack of employment, by the financial hardship.

Would the member from Cambridge agree with the NDP idea that we put forward a rent subsidy so that households that have been impacted have an opportunity to apply for up to \$2,500 a month in rent subsidy?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Unfortunately, we don't have time for a response.

Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Good afternoon. It's always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak, and every time I rise in the House, I always first thank God for giving me the ability and opportunity to represent the residents of Mississauga–Malton. I can't thank enough the volunteers, supporters and all the residents of Mississauga–Malton for putting their trust and confidence in me to represent them and their voice at Queen's Park.

During COVID-19, Ontarians have seen the efforts of their government, under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, who has done exceptional work to keep Ontarians well informed and safe. The health, safety and well-being of all Ontarians has always been the government's number one priority. The golden rule that we always follow is doing things so that we have a better well-being of everyone and reducing the risk of COVID-19.

In order to continue our effort on increasing the well-being, I am pleased that Minister Clark, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, along with his PAs, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and the member from Milton, have worked hard to introduce Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act. I believe that this bill is a good step in the right direction to support the residents and the businesses that have been hit hard during COVID-19.

If passed, as the minister communicated earlier, starting on January 1, 2021, until December 31, 2021, for almost all of Ontario's 1.7 million tenants, this legislation will freeze the rent increases. Why it is important is because as we are going through COVID-19, those tenants need predictability, and this will provide predictability to them.

We talk about these small businesses, and every time we talk about small business—it is the engine of our economy. As we know, the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program is available for small businesses, and it has been extended by a month to help eligible businesses pay rent. Ontario will continue to participate in this initiative and collaborate with the federal government to provide rent support, so that these small businesses, those who are most in need, can get help. We know that the current commercial rent assistance application deadline has been extended to accommodate the proposed changes to the Commercial Tenancies Act.

Madam Speaker, I want to share with you that my office has received many calls from tenants whose landlords are not applying for rental assistance. Some of them are at risk of losing their business—they will be evicted.

If passed, Bill 204 will continue our ongoing effort to help small businesses by extending the temporary ban on evictions for those small businesses whose landlords are eligible for the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program.

Through Bill 204, our government has proposed to stabilize rents for Ontario's 1.7 million rental households. A freeze on rent is essential, as we know the tenants are experiencing intense pressure, and this will provide

financial security, predictability and stability to the majority of Ontario tenants as we continue to work hard, sacrificing, coming together and to recover from the impact of the pandemic. At a time when so many Ontarians are facing temporary changes to their work, to their lives, with a reduction in their permanent or temporary job hours, we need to ensure they don't have to worry about rent increases.

We know we're in an unusual time, and when we talk about COVID-19—every time I meet people, whether it's on the phone, through Zoom or in person, I always ask this question, "Do you think COVID-19 is real?" I want to share with you that about 10% of the time I get the answer, "No, it's a hoax"; 10% of the time I hear from the people as if the whole sky is going to fall; and then there are those 80% right in the middle.

I think it is fair to say that COVID-19 is there but it's not necessarily the end of the world. At the same time, I would say that when we talk about COVID-19, it doesn't mean if you have COVID-19, you're going to die, but if you have any other condition and you get COVID-19, that leads to the chance where the mortality rate is higher; the chances are higher. So in order for us to make sure that we do our part, I believe it is our responsibility—we don't know who is at risk or not at risk, so if we do our part, maybe we can avoid those risks for those who have other conditions.

That's why I think it is important to continue our sacrifices, continue to stay disciplined. Bill 204 actually supports making an amendment where we can make sure that the people who are not following the rules can be given a fine so that they understand the need and they understand that they are risking the lives of others.

Going back to talking about the rent increase: As we said, we're in an unusual time, as everyone has been impacted, so our proposed rent freeze would apply to all units covered under the Residential Tenancies Act. This includes apartments, townhomes, detached homes, semis, care homes and rented units in mobile home parks and land-lease communities. This will support people living in care homes—paying the low-end-of-the-market rent for those who receive assistance in community housing.

Along with this, we have seen that this bill will help to put together one voters list. One voters list is extremely important for us because we want to increase the voter turnout. We want to make sure, especially at this time, that we have better efficiencies so that we can save money. We can take that money and put it into the things that we need most today: health and education. So having this amendment would help us in doing that.

1600

Madam Speaker, we know that it seems a critical juncture in our peril that our children are heading back to school, more businesses are opening up, and flu season is around the corner. We have seen an increase in the number of COVID-19—and especially, as an example, today we've seen the number of 700, different data than what we'd seen in the summer. So that's why we need to make sure that the people who are having the private parties and

social gatherings understand that they need to have compliance. That's why the government is introducing a \$10,000 maximum fine for non-compliance. It is sad that it has to come to this. However, I firmly believe that it is a critical tool in our struggle against COVID-19.

Finally, I want to say that this bill will bring the necessary amendments to contain the spread.

During COVID-19, we have all worked together to ensure each other's health and safety.

I hope members from both sides of the House will come together and join me in supporting this bill, which will provide relief to tenants and ensure the well-being of Ontarians, and reduce the risk to everybody.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member for his remarks on this bill.

It's interesting, because this government has the power, as a majority government, to do a tremendous amount of work to help people struggling in this time.

I'm a little disheartened to hear—and I'm quoting the member somewhat, if I understood her correctly, and correct me if I'm wrong—“Kids may get COVID-19, but they might not die.” That's a little scary for me to hear in this House, because we don't even know the impacts of someone getting COVID-19, let alone children.

My question to the member is, does he think this bill goes far enough to help people struggling during COVID-19?

Mr. Deepak Anand: I want to add to that. To the member: I have a daughter in grade 10 and she's actually in school. As members, we are also parents, so we believe that it's our responsibility to take care of Ontarians, including the kids.

You're talking about this bill. This bill is on making sure that there is no rent increase, that there's a rent freeze, and it's talking about commercial evictions. I think it is one of the many good steps the government is taking to make sure that we protect Ontarians in COVID-19.

Mr. Will Bouma: To the member from Mississauga–Malton—it's very good to hear him speaking in the House today, my former seatmate. The incredible thing about being here is that you get to meet such incredible people. I don't think I know of someone else in this House who has his finger more on the pulse of what's going on in his riding, with individuals and with businesses.

With that in mind, I want to ask him: We know that COVID-19 has affected every Ontarian—that is clear—and that it is a challenging time for everyone. We also know that housing affordability has never been more important, and that families need to know that they have a safe and stable place to call home, especially in this time of uncertainty. Can the member explain exactly what this bill will do and how it will protect those renters?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member for Brantford–Brant. I do miss sitting with you, by the way.

Thank you for that question. Since the beginning of COVID-19, our government has called on the landlords and tenants to come together, and we have seen the benefit of coming together and working together—and to be

reasonable. Many landlords and tenants across the province have actually done that, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank those landlords for their help and support.

As the Premier said multiple times, no one in Ontario who has been financially affected by COVID-19 should have to choose between putting food on the table and paying rent. That's why our government is proposing to freeze rent in 2021 at the 2020 level for rent-controlled and non-rent-controlled units. If passed, this will give the vast majority of Ontario tenants relief while we work to get Ontario's economy back on track.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I just want to go back to an earlier statement from the member. My colleague from Scarborough Southwest touched on it. It's a little bit scary, I guess, for lack of a better word, to hear the member say that you may not die if you get COVID-19. Now, this is something that people are hearing. People are listening; people are watching. Maybe people under the age of 40 or people in their twenties may hear this and think, “Okay, well, then I can go out and party. I don't have to socially distance. I don't have to do any of the things that public health tells us.” I'm hoping that he'll retract what he just said—unless, of course, he's a doctor; then maybe he knows what he's talking about. I'm not sure, Madam Speaker.

My question to the member: We've already seen today 700 cases of COVID-19 in Ontario, so the numbers continue to rise, and this government is opening up casinos.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: So I want to know if the member believes that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

Stop the clock, please. I'm just going to remind members to be listening for the Speaker to recognize when your time is up.

Back to the member for Mississauga–Malton to respond.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I want to say one more time to the member for Brampton North, when I talked about COVID, what I talked about was when we were reaching out to the people and asking them about COVID. I had the opportunity to ask the Premier a question on social gatherings. I actually firmly believe that we need to work under the guidance of public health units, and I firmly believe that we need to follow those guidelines.

What we're talking about here, as you said, is about the commercial evictions and the rent freeze. This is what the bill is doing, and this is one of the many things which we're doing as a government to help Ontarians. Thank you to the member.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly enjoy listening to the member from Mississauga–Malton. As the member mentioned, we're all thankful that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is proposing this ban on commercial evictions. Those who rent space for commercial purposes are seeing, apart from the coronavirus, some very tough times in parts of Ontario as far as the price of rent, the ever-

increasing price of rent in some areas, perhaps as a result of foreign investment buying up buildings, sinking money into buildings. In my riding, in one county alone we've got about 70 cannabis operations. It's very hard to compete. I would like to have some more details about how we're going to help these people.

Mr. Deepak Anand: To the member, thank you for that important question. This temporary ban on evictions will continue to apply to small businesses that are eligible for federal and provincial rent assistance through CECRA but whose landlords chose not to apply for the program. Landlords that applied were approved and would already be prohibited from evicting these tenants as a condition for receiving it. These amendments will apply to the evictions that will occur on or after September 1, 2020.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions? The member for Sudbury—I mean Nickel Belt. My apologies.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We're close, we're close. Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to ask the honourable member if he agrees that COVID has been very difficult on many, many people financially. When all of the businesses were ordered closed, which was the right thing to do, many people lost their jobs. They lost their income.

1610

And when you quote things like, "We don't want anybody to have to choose between putting food on the table or paying rent," which is a quote that I fully agree with, do you really think that allowing evictions right now, allowing rent to increase—because the rent freeze won't happen until next year—is really going to help all of the people who are affected? The people who were affected are mainly Black, Indigenous and people of colour who were severely affected economically and health-wise by the pandemic. Do you really think that this is enough?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thanks to the member for an important question. Absolutely, we're talking about the rent freeze in this bill. But along with this, our government has made a number of legislative changes to strengthen the tenant protections. The last bill that was passed discouraged renovations and bad faith evictions. And if you remember, we also invested now the total of \$510 million in our social services relief fund, where we have encouraged municipalities and our other providers to strengthen rent banks and utility banks. Many of them have created temporary assistance programs that kept people in their homes. That's how we have helped.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Time for a quick question: the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I will be quick.

Because we know that COVID-19 has really impacted many people, and the province is doing their best—there's no game plan for this. But many small business owners have expressed concerns about paying for rent, as some struggle to stay afloat. Can the member explain what steps

the government has taken to support businesses with regard to rent support?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for that important question. I'll be quick because I don't have much time. I want to say to the member that we want to ensure that businesses have the support they need to recover from this situation. That is why our government has committed \$240 million, and that's to help—

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise today on behalf of the decent and hard-working people of York South-Weston to speak to Bill 204, the government's ambitiously titled Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act.

Madam Speaker, very much like many efforts of this government since the pandemic began, I would describe this bill as too little, too late.

Interjection: Better late than never.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: On a day when COVID cases hit 700, this government decided to allow casinos to be opened. Casinos are hardly essential and hardly a venue where safety could be adequately addressed.

Small businesses in my community of York South-Weston and across Ontario are struggling to keep afloat and, in many cases, have been forced to make the heart-wrenching decision to close their businesses. Many of these main-street businesses are family-owned and often have been for generations. They employ people and are essential to this province's economic recovery. They need real relief and they need it now.

Bill 204 has a schedule dealing with a commercial eviction ban. Well, Madam Speaker, it should go without saying that so many small businesses are fighting to stay open. With this storm brought by the COVID-19 global pandemic, no business should be facing eviction at this time, but this bill falls so short of assisting businesses that face eviction. Businesses in York South-Weston tell me time and again that criteria for the eviction ban is like the failed federal program: Very few businesses actually qualify. The commercial eviction ban in this bill being debated today expires in a few short weeks on October 30. I mentioned our record COVID numbers today. We're facing what looks like a long haul, Madam Speaker. Does this government believe that on October 31, Halloween, the threat to the stability of businesses will be over?

I continue to be amazed by how this government not only always seems to be playing catch-up, but still falls short, time and again—very much like the lack of a safe school plan, despite knowing since March that, as sure as September follows August, students would need a safe school-return plan, not a last-minute scramble. Bill 204 does not apply to businesses that have entered into a rent reduction agreement with their landlord and are unable to comply.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to small businesses and our main streets in Ontario, on this side of the House, we do have a plan. Just this past Friday, I welcomed the leader of the official opposition along with our outstanding critic

for economic growth and job creation to York South–Weston to tour some of our main street businesses and talk to the owners and hard-working staff about how they have been coping during this difficult time.

What we have heard from businesses that they would have loved to see in bills like this one is that—they need direct support, and they need it now. Since the pandemic began, they have dealt with, first, access to PPE, and now it is the increased cost of PPE and cleaning supplies. They say the complex rent relief program has treated them like an afterthought.

Our Save Main Street plan, first launched in the spring and updated last week with our announcement in York South–Weston, is complete with ideas this government could implement in bills like Bill 204. Why not a complete commercial eviction ban that will afford more stability to working people and the businesses that employ them? We have long called for a 75% rent subsidy, along with a utility freeze, to help businesses stay afloat and keep people employed. These measures are not in Bill 204, Madam Speaker. Am I to tell businesses worried about eviction to not worry because, for some of you that qualify, this government has extended the eviction ban for the next few weeks? That is not good enough, and it is nowhere near the response or support main street businesses are looking for from the government to act as partners in keeping them afloat and having our economy stage a successful comeback.

Madam Speaker, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has suggested this government's plan with the federal government has been an absolute failure, and they have supported our Save Main Street plan.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, in a recent survey, reported some startling statistics. Some 48% of business owners are concerned about the physical toll this crisis is having on their physical health. Only 58% of businesses have fully reopened; Ontario has the lowest percentage in the entire country. Only 23% are earning their usual revenue. Only 21% said the rent relief program was helpful.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to Bill 204 and helping businesses survive during this difficult time, I understand the government does not want to listen to us. However, they are also not listening to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business or the many small business owners across the province. I wonder who indeed it is that this government is listening to?

Bill 204 also touches on the Residential Tenancies Act and lays out a residential rent freeze subject to specified exemptions for the 2021 year. Well, Madam Speaker, when it comes to tenants, I could speak all day on what they need and the struggles they have. York South–Weston has one of the highest eviction rates in the GTA. COVID-19 has only made the situation of insecure housing incredibly worse.

A study by the non-profit research institute, the Wellesley Institute, shows that 75% of formal eviction applications were linked to late or non-payment of rent. A

real freeze is welcome; even better if not full of loopholes. But Bill 204 had an opportunity to prevent residential eviction orders. These eviction orders and notices, made easier under Bill 184, continue to proceed at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

1620

The Premier always talks of being a “champion” and “raising alarm bells,” along with “having your back.” Those words, like this bill, fall short. Back in March, the Premier stated that “No one will be kicked out of their home or their rental apartments based on not being able to pay the rent.” Well, Madam Speaker, that was said months ago, and that is not the reality I hear from tenants in my riding of York South–Weston.

We here have called for months, indeed, since the Premier sent that strong promise to tenants in March, that we have ideas for policies to protect renters, protect families and protect seniors in keeping a roof over their heads. It is precisely those Ontarians who will help drive Ontario's economic recovery. Raising rents, evicting families to the streets helps no one. We suggested residential rent subsidies for families impacted by COVID-19, real solutions that ensure tenants and landlords can keep putting food on their tables and not getting left behind in our recovery.

Madam Speaker, my office has had to deal with the heartbreaking stories of the sheriff's office padlocking their doors and removing families. It is not just a single story. This is happening, and it is happening now in Toronto and across Ontario.

Bill 204 was an opportunity to add safeguards for businesses and residents, but once again the mark was missed. Sometimes strong words of concern are not enough. This Premier and this government need to work with the opposition and truly listen to the voices of those struggling in Ontario. If not now, Madam Speaker, when?

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I always appreciate listening to my friend from across the way in York South–Weston, and how much he appreciates bringing the concerns of his constituents and indeed all of Ontario here to this House.

What I wanted to know is, I recently read that the federal NDP party, under the leadership of Jagmeet Singh, had made a deal with the federal Liberal Party to stave off an election. But I didn't see anywhere in there anything about support for rental supports for individuals and for corporations. I was wondering if the member could tell this House why that was not a priority for the federal leader of the NDP and if he could say something to the federal leader, because we need the federal support, obviously, in order to make this happen, because Ontario just doesn't have that kind of pockets. If he could fill us in on how that conversation went, I would appreciate that.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you for the question, the member from—Brant?

Interjection.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Brantford? Thank you.

But I think you have a majority government right here in the province of Ontario, and we're talking about Bill

204, not the federal government. I said earlier, Madam Speaker, that the program the federal government brought in restricted many small businesses. They're not qualified, and a majority of the landlords do not agree to that plan. What we need now—and I've stated in my comments—is that we need to support small businesses. They need our attention, they need our support, and now it is the time.

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

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to the member for York South–Weston for your amazing work in your riding.

Early on in your speech, you said that this bill feels like too little, too late, and one of the Conservative members said, “Better late than never.” I was reminded, when he said those comments, of the businesses in Sudbury that went bankrupt. For those businesses that have already gone bankrupt, late is never.

We've talked about the Ontario NDP's Save Main Street, about a 75% rent subsidy. This bill talks about delaying commercial bans for one month. It seems we have the support of the chambers of commerce and the different business associations. I'm just wondering, to the member from York South–Weston, could you maybe help the government to understand why money in the pockets of commercial tenants is better than a one-month commercial rent eviction ban?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you to the member from Sudbury for the question. Yes, we provided, right in March, exactly what the communities and small businesses across this province needed. They needed assistance. They needed support to survive, to continue the work they are doing.

As you know, 80% of the jobs—across the province, across the country, small businesses are the creators of jobs. If it is a pandemic period, this is the time we need to support them. The Conservative government rates themselves as supporting businesses, but what kind of businesses are they supporting? Across the province, every business—small, large and mid-sized—is struggling.

I urge that our proposal is a good idea. Why don't you support it and implement it right now? It is needed now across the province.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The proposed amendments to the reopening Ontario act also include a minimum \$10,000 fine for individuals found to be violating the new offence. Let's take a look at that for a moment. I see that as the big party organizers and big partygoers because it's been told, and we've identified, that COVID spreads with those big groups, where there's no social distancing and no masks. It's just a free-for-all, in a sense. This \$10,000 fine would in fact be the strongest penalty in Canada for offenders.

Again, I mention common sense needs to prevail here. Our health experts are the ones that determined the 10- and 25-people limits. We even had mayors asking us to have their municipalities included when, originally, it was Toronto, Peel and Ottawa. My question is, does the member opposite agree that it's important to send a signal to offenders that we need to be playing our part to stop—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. The member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you for the question from the member from the government side. I think what we are discussing today—even though there are so many rules in the books, what small businesses need right now is also a stimulus. Yes, safety is important and we have to have our mind on that, but at the same time, we don't want our businesses to wither away. We don't want businesses to die. We want our economic recovery to include small businesses across the province.

That's why I say that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce supports our plan. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business supports our plan. This is a good plan. Would you support it now so that they go back to business and we help our businesses to get the help they need right now?

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to get a question on the record to my colleague from York South–Weston. In response to his remarks, as he has already highlighted, the various business voices, be they the chamber of commerce, the CFIB, the folks who are connected intimately with business, are in support of our Save Main Street plan.

My question is, what are some of the pieces of our Save Main Street plan that we have proposed based on what we heard at committee? I know the member spent a lot of time listening to businesses at committee. How can we connect what we heard with what we're proposing, and why on earth wouldn't the government support that?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you to the member from Oshawa for the good question. We are in a pandemic, COVID-19, and businesses are struggling. We have also witnessed many of them shut down. They are laying off, and the federal government's program is not helping a majority of these businesses. Our plan, which is really a good plan—professional organizations such as the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—the representative of businesses—the BIAs across every municipality and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business are saying that these are good ideas: freezing hydro, trying to help with 75% rent subsidies—and providing them now, because now is the time that they need them. We want these businesses—

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

Interjections.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's not often you get applause from the opposition.

1630

We've been working with the federal government on this bill. They issued a bill that provides 75% rent relief to the tenant and to the landlord. We needed to put legislation in in this House to make us agree with that bill and to work with it to the extent that they've extended it and made some changes. And that's what this bill does.

I sat in on those committee meetings this summer and listened to some of the issues with small businesses. There

are many of them that have been unable to open, and some of them just for a short time. We know there's an issue. We're asking for co-operation with the federal government. I guess we're wondering, through your federal members, if you're making deals with the federal government, the Liberal Party, if you could ask them to come forward with—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Response, the member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you for the question from the member from the government side. We are the provincial government and we are the provincial Legislature and you have a majority government. I think we have seen that the federal government, a minority government, has had a plan that is not working for small businesses. The majority of them do not qualify. We need to correct that and provide direct support to those small businesses that have fixed costs so that they can continue to operate.

This bill is not supporting our plan, a plan that will address many of the concerns of your constituents, our constituents and the people of Ontario, small businesses. We want to help small businesses now, not later.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to have my opportunity to speak on government Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act. It's always a privilege, I know, for all members of this House to stand and bring the voices of their communities, of their businesses, of their families, and so here I stand.

I want to revisit some of the voices that I actually have shared in this House before, because this is an opportunity for us again to drive home to this government that there are folks being left out of this so-called plan, that many of our small businesses are still asking for the same support that they have been asking for at the beginning of this pandemic. They would like as much clear direction and clear understanding of a plan, just as they did at the beginning. I know that things have evolved, but they're still asking for that direct support.

As we've heard here today, a number of us had the opportunity to hear from folks at committee, to sit at committee or sit in a room by ourselves, in an empty committee room with folks onscreen. But from across the province, we heard that whether rural, whether northern, whether downtown Oshawa, that businesses are asking for help. They want to follow the rules. They want to implement and observe these protocols. They want to do well. They want some kind of certainty in a world that is so uncertain right now. They want to be able to stay open, if they have been able to survive to this point, Madam Speaker.

Whether we heard from businesses about the need for broadband; whether we heard from businesses about the need for programs like Digital Main Street, which allows businesses to pivot to the online world, which we have seen has been the lifeline for so many small businesses—those businesses that were able to avail themselves of that program, of the Digital Main Street program, that has been

what has allowed them to get their goods to market, to connect with people across their community.

We had all called on this government to extend that. I understand that had happened—which was good that they listened to the business community on that point. I do understand, though, that on that money, there's still a cap, so I would challenge the government to ensure that programs like that—that we are hearing from business—are working, that they not run out, that they continue to invest in business in that regard.

These are businesses that need direct support. That's not in this bill. There are things in this bill that we support, and we've heard from tenants' groups that they're glad of the rent freeze, but where's the rest?

So while we support what we have in front of us, we're desperately missing what isn't in front of us. We are desperately missing that flexibility that businesses need to plan. We're desperately missing the supports that families are begging for. Families and tenants do not want to lose the roof over their heads, if they're lucky enough to have one, and, in Oshawa, as in other communities, we are dealing with a significant homeless population. We've got folks with significant financial needs, mental health needs. We're doing our best as a city, as a region. Our best isn't good enough right now, though. I'm going to be connecting with this government and really, frankly, begging for help and supports on the mental health front, the local community services. Again, that's not in this bill.

When the government is going to table government legislation, we have the chance to make the world a better place—they have the chance. We have the chance to support or challenge it. I really would like to be able to stand during a global pandemic and say to this government, “Yes, we see something that is a reflection of what we have all been hearing,” and yet I can't.

We have all been hearing the same things. All the government members who are here today who aren't making eye contact—that's okay; these are tough decisions. When someone calls your office and says, “I am worried that I'm going to lose my job” or “I am worried that I will not be able to keep a roof over my family” or “I took the Premier at his word that we wouldn't get kicked out during a pandemic, but now I'm not so sure that I won't be evicted”—I don't know how the government members handle that. I'm sure some of them answer the phones and hear this. I don't know what they say to them. Do they just give that list of, “But our government is investing in X, Y, Z”? Or do they actually recognize that there is still work to do, and that sitting on money or just pointing to the feds and saying, “Bad Justin,” and not actually saying as a provincial government, “Hey, we have a responsibility. We have a majority government. We could do better. We could do more for folks”—I would challenge them to do more for folks.

We've got letters that we've been reading to you in this House—but I'm sure your offices are already aware—from business owners who are asking for that help. They want to be able to keep their doors open. Any businesses that I have had the opportunity to see up close in this last

chapter that we have all been going through, as we've been back out in our community in different ways—the businesses are so eager to do right by their neighbours and customers. They want to be able to continue to not only exist but one day thrive, and if we have to shut everything down again, they won't survive, whether they be businesses or another group that is not in this bill—when we're talking about the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act.

I've got a letter that the government can look forward to on behalf of Legions. Legions are the heartbeat of our communities, and many will not continue, will not survive. Legions and service clubs will not make it through—and that's not me fearmongering; that is dollars and cents and real folks. They will not exist, shortly, unless we figure out how to actually spend some money. This government—I would encourage them to actually spend some of the money that they're so comfortably sitting on and figure out how to make sure that our businesses, our Legions, our community spaces are able to continue; that folks can sleep at night without losing the roof over their heads.

I've got a letter here from Susan Goldie. She said:

“Small businesses in Oshawa are in desperate need of government support. The physical distancing requirements to protect the public from COVID-19 have had a devastating impact on small businesses. While small businesses were quick to close to help save lives, the government has been slow to provide basic support to ensure they're able to reopen.

1640

“As your constituent, I am seeking your support to protect small businesses. Without your help, many will be unable to survive.

“The single greatest challenge facing small business owners is rent. If rent protections are not put in place, thousands of businesses will be forced to close. The economic impact of choosing not to support small businesses will be disastrous for both our local and national economy. Any plan to reopen must include rent support; without it, most small businesses will be unable to do so successfully....

“With less than 20% of landlords expected to participate in CECRA, the provinces have to step in to ensure that small businesses, the heart and soul of our community, are protected. There is little time to act.

“Show ... that you care about small business before it's too late.”

We all got letters like this, almost verbatim—“Please help,” and that help is not here. There are some pieces. You guys want us to congratulate you for everything that you do that's okay. Okay, so you get a sticker for some of the pieces. But what about the rest? Businesses want to stay open. They need more help than this.

Something else that's missing in here: testing and contact tracing, all of that.

The government needs to be doing the hard work to figure out how we solve these issues.

I just recognized that I only have 40 seconds left, and that's disappointing. I would have loved a whole hour,

quite frankly, because I've got a significant pile here. But I know that during the questions and comments I'll have the opportunity to further challenge some of these government members to do more, to listen to those businesses.

Think of the businesses that you like, think of the businesses that you recognize, that are part of your community's story, and imagine them not being there. Think about your community neighbours who are struggling with their health and their concerns over school, over how to pay the rent. What are you doing for them? That is my question.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you to the member opposite for speaking to this legislation this afternoon. I want to thank her for representing, also, her constituents and bringing their concerns forward to the floor of the Legislature. It's a primary role of each and every one of us.

The speaker did speak about some of her concerns and some of the particular ways that she feels we could have improved upon this. So I'm just wondering if she can do sort of a 30-second elevator pitch. Imagine we're presenting before Treasury Board, for example. What would your particular pitch be, and why is that something that would be so important to the people in your community, rather than the substantive legislation that's been brought before this House, which actually deals with the issues that have been raised in a substantive way, as well?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be asked that. I don't know if I could distill the need into an elevator pitch. I've never been asked to do that. My job is to bring the voices and concerns and suggestions of my community.

Working folks would actually like to know that the government is putting dollars into making sure that they can't be evicted. Businesses have been asking for direct support. Deferrals have their place, but they cannot be—that isn't what pays the rent; that isn't what people can count on. We have families who cannot sleep at night because they don't have a clear plan from this government. Parents who have children in classes online—up in the 30s—and in class are very concerned that this is a government that voted against the 15-student cap.

So I guess an answer is, please do better, and please make your plans based on what you're hearing.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: That was a very good response from the member from Oshawa, kind of along this line: We all know that a lot of people are having a hard time economically. She shared some of those stories.

What difference would it make to your constituents if they would be able to have a rent subsidy, up to about 80% of the rent, to a maximum of \$2,500 a month? Would that make a difference to your constituents? Same thing with the small businesses, some of whose stories you shared—would it make a difference to your constituents, to the small businesses in Oshawa, if there was an eviction freeze so that they would have some certainty in their business that they will be able to continue to be there? Would that make a difference to the people you represent and the businesses you represent?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you for the question.

I'm going to combine those two answers, because the businesses are the families in my community, and the families are the businesses and the customers. We are community, all of us. We represent communities.

Their being able to depend on money coming in and to make plans would make an unbelievable difference. It would mean that a business could figure out if there is money to invest of their own—what they say to the banks, what they can depend on from the province. All of this allows them to make plans.

The same thing is true for someone who is constantly worried that they're going to lose their home. If there was an actual rent subsidy, if there was a utility freeze—these are things where with that comes certainty. We're all surrounded by so much uncertainty.

That is what is needed—this government needs to be clear and provide certainty.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you very much for your speech today and joining in on debate.

Our government wanted to ensure that businesses had the support they needed to recover from this unprecedented situation. I know the member opposite mentioned that we didn't give anything; we actually have committed \$241 million to deliver the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program for small businesses, in partnership with the federal government. So don't forget about that \$241 million that has been invested.

This is the second time that our government is bringing forward legislation to put in place a moratorium on commercial evictions for businesses eligible for CECRA. We want to ensure that small businesses impacted by COVID-19 aren't forced from their livelihoods. I hear about this in my riding all the time. From the Queensway to the Kingsway, they just want to continue with their businesses. So why is the opposition opposed to these measures each time?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As if. Clearly, the opposition supports things that work. When we hear from the same businesses that they purport to hear from that something is working, we are grateful. We've said that, and I said that in my speech. We will support things that make a difference for community members and businesses. When it falls short, then we want better, and we deserve—as communities, as businesses—better.

I already said that I will give them a sticker for the things that they do well, that businesses and community members have asked for. But what about all of the other pieces? The Save Main Street plan is being supported by chambers of commerce, the CFIB and other folks who have said that there are pieces in that plan that they want to see.

I'll lob it right back: Why won't they support what is being supported by the business community—they who are open for business? Are you available and listening to business? There's my question.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: To my colleague here: I'm not so sure you want to give them any stickers, because the stickers they put on usually fall off.

This morning, I was watching question period—although I wasn't here physically; I watched it on TV. It shows you how exciting my life is that I was watching question period this morning. The PCs continued to blame the federal government for the rent subsidy, as businesses in the province of Ontario are closing and people are losing their jobs.

Do you believe it is just the federal government's responsibility for small business in Ontario, or do we need a made-in-Ontario plan to protect businesses in the province of Ontario?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As I said in my remarks, this government is looking for every opportunity to point to the feds and say, "It's not good enough." I'm not going to stand here and defend the feds as being good enough, but I am going to say that the province has a responsibility. They have a majority government. They can make decisions, and those decisions can even be based on what you hear and what the needs are in the province. The province has a responsibility for health care, for helping businesses out here. So when they're talking about the feds being a partner, where is the province as a partner?

When we hear from municipalities that also need the province to be a partner, the province has a responsibility. They actually fit into this story. This is a puzzle where we're all figuring out how it's supposed to fit, but the province is supposed to fit in. They're also supposed to show some leadership and take responsibility—because you are ultimately responsible to the people in Ontario. That's why you were elected.

1650

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: Members of the opposition have repeatedly called for a rent freeze, and that is exactly what this government has proposed to do. We are working to provide stability to Ontario's 1.7 million renters at a time of uncertainty. This legislation also stops evictions for small businesses and responds to a request from the Chief Electoral Officer.

Could the member opposite explain what is wrong with these measures and what you would do?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the question.

To her point, the rent freeze is something that we've all been hearing about from the business community. You've certainly been hearing about it from the opposition benches. But the residential rent freeze, as introduced in Bill 204, applies only to the 2021 calendar year. So rent increases of up to 2.2% may still be imposed in 2020, despite the fact that we have a global pandemic.

The deadline for giving the required 90 days' notice of rent increase applying in 2020 was September 2. And the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced the rent freeze on August 28, which was before that deadline. Well, that was helpful, but not to people; that's helpful to landlords. It's unknown how many landlords rushed to give their notice before the deadline.

The point is, if you're going to do something, do it properly, because this wait for folks to finagle, who may not have the best interests of Ontarians at heart—that is not what should underpin this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): We don't have enough time for another question.

Further debate?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I rise on behalf of my constituents to speak to Bill 204, entitled Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020. I've reviewed the bill and I think that it should be renamed "barely helping tenants and small businesses," because that's what it does—the absolute minimum when it comes to helping tenants and small businesses. This bill aims so low, falling short on things that matter, which means Ontarians are not getting the help they really need. Speaker, people deserve so much more than this from their government.

Most tenants across Toronto were already barely hanging on because of skyrocketing rents. Wages have remained stagnant, but rents have continuously increased. Tenants were already facing rent increases of 5% to 6%, year after year, before COVID-19. Then COVID-19 hit, and tenants were put in a position of having to choose between putting food on the table and paying for basic necessities like medicine and utilities, or having to pay rent, through no fault of their own.

Of course, no one should be facing a rent increase right now. But a rent freeze alone is not enough. Freezing rents for 2021 is literally the least the government could do. We must do more to protect tenants. Let's start with no COVID-19 evictions. No tenant should face a COVID-19-related eviction. If the government, as they claim, really wants to help tenants, then make evictions during the pandemic illegal. Make sure that no one is forced onto the streets or into shelters. And let me remind this government that not only is the pandemic far from over, but we also have a homelessness crisis that this government has failed to take action on.

This bill does nothing to stop evictions during the pandemic. In fact, as we know, in the summer, this government passed legislation lifting the moratorium on evictions, and so evictions are happening daily.

Across the province, tenants are organizing and fighting these evictions. In Parkdale–High Park just yesterday, tenants at 22 Springhurst, with the support of their neighbours, were able to get the landlord to withdraw eviction notices. At Goodwood Park in the east end, tenants had to form a blockade to stop sheriffs from enforcing an eviction of an Indigenous woman who couldn't pay her rent because she lost her income due to COVID-19. It's not that she doesn't want to pay; it's that she has no money to pay. All she was asking for was to be able to negotiate a fair deal with the landlord. This is what it's come to. The only line of defence for tenants right now is to form a blockade to stop an eviction, because this government is on the side of big landlords who want to maximize profits, even during a public health crisis. These are just two examples where tenants have been successful in stopping evictions from being carried out.

But there are so many more evictions that are happening across this province and happening quietly. We don't hear about them. We know that the big landlords are pushing through with evictions. We know that over 6,000 notices were filed while the eviction ban was in effect. Imagine how many more thousands were filed since the ban has been lifted.

Speaker, recently I attended an eviction hearing online for my constituent Theresa, who is a senior and the sole caregiver of her adult son Anthony, who has a disability. The landlord was trying to evict Theresa, who has lived in her apartment since 1987, simply for failing to be able to pay a \$180 pest management fee. Let me remind you, pest management is a responsibility of the landlord, yet this was being used against Theresa and her son Anthony.

Then there are these numbered corporations who have bought up buildings and are trying to evict tenants who have paid rent through renovation, like they are doing at 12 Lansdowne in Parkdale–High Park. They're trying to force all of the tenants out of the building.

Speaker, this is what it's come down to, because it's all about maximizing profit. This is the state of housing in Ontario; it has been for the last 20 years. This pandemic has made it easier for big landlords to profit off of tenants, and the government is simply helping them along. I'm not talking about landlords like seniors who are renting out their basements to supplement their income; I'm talking about corporations who are profiting off tenants—the same ones who profited off our long-term-care homes, like Rancee Management, that owns Goodwood Park, where the blockade happened. They own thousands of other apartments across the GTA, and they also own Anson Place, Eatonville and Hawthorne Place, three homes that had seen some of the worst outbreaks of COVID-19. The Ontario Nurses' Association had to take them to court just to be able to access proper PPE, and they failed to provide basic health and safety measures for these residents.

Over 85% of rentals are corporate owned, and so our laws need to be able to recognize that and act accordingly. Even doing the bare minimum of freezing rent for 2021, the government has left a gaping loophole: allowing above-guideline rent increases despite the rent freeze, and allowing rent increases if it's under a lease agreement. Speaker, we already know that corporate landlords often abuse above-guideline rules to squeeze tenants out. So why is the government allowing that? Why not freeze rent completely with no loopholes?

Also, the rent freeze only applies to the 2021 calendar year. Rent increases of up to 2.2% are still going to be imposed for this year, despite the pandemic.

The one thing that really, really bugs me is that the deadline for giving the required 90-day notice of rent increase applying for this year was September 2. The government made the announcement on the rent freeze on August 28, prior to the deadline. It is unknown how many landlords rushed to give notice before the deadline, after learning about the rent freeze.

This bill also preserves vacancy decontrol, meaning that landlords are still allowed to raise rent to whatever

they wish, even during the rent-freeze period, if the rental unit becomes vacant. So in effect, the government, through the rent freeze, is increasing landlord incentives to use unethical tactics to push tenants out so that they can raise the rent.

This pandemic is far from over. We are now at the start of the second wave. The weather is getting colder. Winter is coming, and still the government is allowing tenants to be forced out of their homes and to be pushed onto the streets. The Ford government is creating another public health crisis on top of COVID-19.

With the few minutes remaining, I quickly want to talk about small businesses in my community. Bill 204 extends the ban on commercial evictions for rent arrears until October 30. This eviction ban for commercial properties is still based on the very narrow eligibility criteria of the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program. That means it still excludes a majority of the businesses.

Small businesses in Parkdale–High Park and across Toronto and Ontario have been asking this government for rent relief. This bill does not include any rent relief. As part of our Save Main Street plan, we proposed a 75% rent subsidy, a utility freeze and other small business support measures, and we have been asking the government to take action on this plan.

1700

Without a full plan that includes rent relief, what the government is basically doing is pushing the problem down the road. They're basically telling small businesses, "Don't worry. You won't be evicted in October; you'll just be evicted in November."

Also, they're putting small businesses in a position where they have to choose between going deeper into debt, which many cannot afford, or giving up on their homes and dreams and everything that they've invested in and shutting down.

Speaker, the decision that the Ford government is making is not helping tenants, it's not helping small businesses during the pandemic, and it's not helping Ontario have a faster and more equitable recovery.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stan Cho): Questions?

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you to the member from High Park for her passionate presentation.

My question is related to the fines. The proposed amendments to the ROA also include a minimum \$10,000 fine for individuals found to be violating the new offence. This would be the strongest penalty in Canada for offenders. Does the member opposite agree that it is important to send a signal to the offenders that we all need to be playing our part to stop the spread of COVID-19?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I thank the member for his question.

We have to understand that when we impose fines on people, we have to do it in a way that does not target Black, Indigenous and other marginalized groups. So I really hope that when the fines are being imposed, we're doing it in a way that does not disproportionately impact certain minority groups. We know that many minority groups

have already faced the brunt of COVID-19. The hot spots and the number of cases and rates are much higher in Black communities, in racialized communities. So we really have to be careful about that.

Having said that, everybody is doing their part in terms of making sacrifices to flatten the curve. Small businesses were doing their part, which is why they shut down. They wanted to make sure that they were also doing their part, which is why now they are asking the government to please help them—because they were simply following government recommendations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stan Cho): Questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I truly enjoyed the sharing of constituent stories from the member from Parkdale–High Park.

You talked about an Indigenous woman who was being evicted. In the NDP plan, we would like to have a rent subsidy available to people who have been affected economically because of COVID-19: if you've lost your job because your employer was forced to close down, haven't been able to have any income, haven't been able to pay the rent. Do you think that a rent subsidy of up to \$2,500 a month would have helped your constituent?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I thank the member for her question.

Absolutely. This is what tenants from not only Parkdale–High Park but across the province have been asking for. Like I said in my remarks earlier, tenants are being forced to choose between putting food on their table and paying for basic necessities or paying rent. As a result, they, of course, are going to choose to put food on their table for themselves and for their family.

As well, we have to keep in mind that the government, during the summer, brought in Bill 184, which, among many other things, forced tenants into repayment plans that did not help tenants. Basically, if the landlord came to a tenant and said, "My repayment plan to you is, pay everything up front right now or face eviction," that would technically count as an arrangement, which is completely unfair to tenants, and which is why we really need to see the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stan Cho): Thank you. Questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: To the member from Parkdale–High Park: I was wondering—because I've asked this question before, and it was nice to hear the member from Nickel Belt express a number of up to \$2,500 per month for a business. I was wondering if you might be able to fill us in on how many businesses would probably partake of a program like that. Again, this afternoon I'm looking for an estimated budget of what this kind of program would cost.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: The Save Main Street plan that the NDP has put out has been fully costed and is actually something that we have been public about—we have been telling the government for a very long time. Again, it goes back to what we've been saying. It's everything that we've been telling the government; they simply refuse to listen. They just want to do whatever they want to do. All of our input has not been utilized. What we're offering the

government is simply what small businesses across the province are asking for.

What we want to make sure of is that there is at least a 75% rent subsidy for small businesses. We want to see a utility freeze. We want to see other measures in place that would help them through the pandemic, to adapt, like starting online businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stan Cho): Further questions?

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Parkdale–High Park. I also want to congratulate you on the passage of your private member's bill for Tibetan Heritage Month. I was really happy to see that go through. I think that's wonderful.

You talked about freezing rent for 2021 and the various loopholes, and you talked about the large corporations in your riding. In my riding of Sudbury, the majority of landlords are what I call the mom-and-pop landlords. They rent their basement; they live on one side of the duplex and rent the other side; and basically they rent for a retirement fund. They're hoping to pay off that mortgage by the time they retire. The thing the government doesn't seem to understand is that when you freeze evictions or you cap rent increases, for these mom-and-pop landlords, it's difficult to make ends meet.

So I was hoping you could talk more about the Ontario NDP's plan to have a rent subsidy for people and how that way tenants win and also the landlords win.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I thank the member for his question.

I do recognize that in his community landlords look very different. I would assume that many of the small mom-and-pop landlords are also struggling because of COVID-19. The NDP has proposed rent subsidies, and rent subsidies would help the mom-and-pop landlords in your community.

In addition to rent subsidies, one of the things that we have called for the federal government to take action on is no foreclosures. If there are families—and this goes not just for mom-and-pop landlords, but many people who are homeowners—if they miss mortgage payments because of COVID-19, because they've lost their job, they should not be in a position where they would lose their homes. We want to make sure that the federal government is putting pressure on the banks and that they are doing their part so that people won't lose their homes, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stan Cho): Further questions?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to just follow up on my colleague's question about the cost of your program. As we know, many of us remember, in the 1990s, when the NDP almost bankrupted this province. Somebody is going to pay. And during that period of time, we looked at the largest layoffs of nurses and closures of hospitals. I just want to ask the member opposite, how much is this going to cost and how do you plan on paying for this?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Oh, the classic question: How are you going to pay for it? Do you know how much it's going to cost by not taking action? Do you know the cost

of homelessness? Do you know the cost on our health care system when we have people on the streets? Do you know the cost? "Prevention is better than a cure"—it's such a simple phrase. We've learned it since we were kids.

I will tell you, go to ontariondp.ca, the Save Main Street plan; it's right there.

1710

Speaker, again, let's just move out of this cost issue. The Financial Accountability Office has already said that the government is sitting on \$6.7 billion of COVID-19-fighting funds when thousands, maybe millions of Ontarians are waiting for some sort of relief from this government. So asking the question of how you're going to pay for this—I'm going to ask them—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stan Cho): Thank you very much. There's no more time for further questions, unfortunately.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Very good—the Niagara Falls riding, which also includes Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Davids, Crystal Beach; I just want to make sure I get all that out. I know we have a new Speaker there, so I want him to know.

It's always a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 204. I'm going to start, quite frankly—and I'm glad you're actually the Speaker right now—on what was asked this morning in question period. I know he answered the question, blaming the federal government—that they had a program that was supposed to work, but the landlords had to apply for it, which is very interesting to me. There are some good landlords out there. We can't put them all in a barrel and say, "You're all bad landlords," because there are a lot of landlords in the province of Ontario who work with a lot of the small businesses. A lot of the ones who own plazas worked with their small businesses and applied to get the rent subsidy, but the problem was, not everybody did it. Not everybody thought it was important enough to apply.

I'm going to give you an example because I asked a question in the House and I didn't get an answer. We ask questions every day in the House and we don't get answers, so I wasn't surprised that I didn't get an answer. But we were dealing with a person's life, when I was talking about it. I know it was only a mini-mart on Victoria Avenue in Niagara Falls, but the lady—I'll use her first name, Teresa—worked at that mini-mart for 20 years, had some souvenirs, the normal stuff that you see in Niagara Falls close to Clifton Hill. For 22 years, she ran that business; that was her life. She was a single mom. She called our office and said she had a landlord—I can't remember his name right now off the top of my head, but I've mentioned it a number of times in the House—who lived in Hamilton; he wasn't with our community, and all he cared about, quite frankly, was locking the door. He wouldn't apply for the rent subsidy. They got lawyers involved, and that's costly to a single mom running a store. He came down—actually, I never met the guy. I went to the store and I talked to Teresa. I talked to her staff. This

is what you have to think of, to my colleagues—all our colleagues should think about this.

We're dealing with real people, people who have given their entire lives to a small business or a medium-sized business, who belong to the chambers, who are saying, "We need help for our small businesses." I went down there. They had truckloads of stock going out, stuff going into the garbage, and Teresa was crying. Do you know why she was crying? She gave every ounce of her energy to that business, and there is no need for her to lose the business. If we had a program in the province of Ontario that said to landlords, "You have to participate"—but they decided not to.

So I'm saying to the government, when you stand up and say, "Oh, it's only a federal program," these are real people—people up north, people in Windsor, Niagara, Hamilton, Toronto. Go look at some of the restaurants even here in Toronto that are closing their doors because they can't survive any longer. Yes, it's COVID-19, and we're in times that we'll never see again—but I had to look at Teresa that day as she was crying. Her staff members were there as well, sweeping the floor—because when you get kicked out, you've got to leave it clean. That wasn't my suggestion to her, but they did. Guess what they were doing? They were crying—because where are you going to get a job right now, with COVID-19, when you're unemployed all of a sudden, when you've worked with somebody for over 20 years?

That's what's going on in the province of Ontario. This is just one small workplace.

So I say to the government: Don't stand up and blame the federal government—and I'm not sticking up for the federal government, and I'm certainly no Liberal; I wear orange everywhere in my community, just for the record. I know Jane knows that. She has come down to lovely Niagara Falls more than once. She campaigned against me, by the way—I remember that—but that's a little different. We all do that kind of stuff.

At the end of the day, we have an obligation here, all of us, to make sure that our small and medium-sized businesses are going to survive COVID-19, that the people who are working in these small and medium-sized businesses are going to keep their employees. And there was a way to do it, so don't stand up and blame somebody else. You've got a majority government. You've got an obligation for a made-in-Ontario solution to keep our small and medium-sized businesses running. You've got an obligation to do that.

Our leader came down to my riding. She doesn't come down a lot, but she had an opportunity to come down to Niagara-on-the-Lake, and she met with 40 businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake—and I know, not just Jane, a lot of people here who have been to Niagara-on-the-Lake, one of the prettiest towns in all of Ontario. We met with 40 small businesses. You walk down Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake and they have those beautiful little shops. You go in and you buy stuff that you can't buy anywhere else. They were struggling. It's the same situation, with their landlords not participating in the program.

Some of those places on Queen Street—now, listen to this, colleagues: They're paying \$100 a square foot for rent at a time when their business was down 75% or 80% because of COVID-19, because people weren't travelling. I won't mention the name, because I haven't got their permission, but one of the business owners told Andrea, myself, and I think Jennie was down there—Jeff was there—that they were losing \$70,000 a month. We have to do better. We have to do better, and you've got an obligation to do it.

I want to talk about my colleague from Oshawa, who talked about the Legions. Madam Speaker, I don't know if you know, but there's a thing called the Unknown Soldier that happened this weekend. We had a ceremony. I was talking to some of the Legion members about how they're struggling in their Legions. I know most of the people—although they're maybe not listening as much as they should. I know that in every Legion right across the province of Ontario, they're struggling to raise money. They can't have their normal fish fries inside, where they get hundreds of people—you pay 10 or 12 bucks for the fish, the best fish and chips on Friday night. They couldn't do it for a long period of time, so the Legions were really struggling. We have to do more for our Legions. Again, it's the rents. The Knights of Columbus in my riding have put their property up for sale, and that's only the start of it. We're going to continue to see that.

We met with the chambers of commerce—and how many times they said their businesses needed a hand up.

I heard from the wine industry—I know my colleague from Niagara is there, and I'm going to put a bill forward—who are paying a 6.1% tax that international wines don't pay. Some 20% of our small and medium-sized wineries may close during COVID-19, and we've got an obligation to help them, so I'm going to challenge my colleague—I'm glad I thought of it while I'm standing up here—to support my bill, so they don't pay the 6.1%, so it's a level playing field, so they get more space in our LCBOs, so we can sell VQA wines made right here in Ontario, right here in Niagara. Some 18,000 jobs are tied to the wine industry.

These are the types of things that we have to do. I don't want to be too critical of the Conservative government—although I am, quite regularly—but when I stand up here and I talk about it, it's because I believe in what I'm saying. We are sitting on \$6.7 billion that you haven't used during COVID-19. Use the money, so nobody is going to be thrown out, so that nobody won't be able to pay their rent, so that the wine industry will continue to grow and create jobs.

The wine industry, by the way, I forgot to mention—for my colleague from Sudbury. I don't think you guys have wine in Sudbury. It's so cold out there.

1720

Mr. Jamie West: Icewine.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Icewine.

Some 18,000 jobs are tied to the wine industry. Why don't we say to ourselves, let's support the wine industry. So to my colleague: We work quite well together. Support

my bill when it comes out on Wednesday and support the wine industry.

Let's be clear: These are Ontario businesses who need help from your majority government. They're not asking for much. You've got a majority government. I know that. I read it in the paper. I always hear you guys say, "We've got a majority government."

Do you believe business owners should lose their jobs because your government will not take on the bad landlords? Let's have a made-in-Ontario solution so our small and medium-sized businesses can survive.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate listening to the impassioned pleas from the member from Niagara Falls.

I took a second and looked up the Ontario NDP Save Main Street business plan, and it's estimated to run at about \$400 million a month in costs to the taxpayers in the province of Ontario, which is somewhere around \$5 billion a year to the taxpayers in the province of Ontario. And if I'm not mistaken, I just heard the member from Niagara Falls say that somebody was losing \$70,000 a month and we should fix that. Their plan was a maximum of \$10,000 a month per business; he's saying \$70,000. So we're talking about a \$35-billion-a-year plan from the NDP.

If you say that we have a \$6-billion reserve in case of unforeseen circumstances and we're now at six months into the COVID-19 crisis, how would you make those numbers work, sir?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate the question.

What I will say to you is that it's pretty rich, you standing up and asking us about our "save small businesses" plan, and you are sitting on \$6.7 billion as people are being thrown out of their stores and people are losing their jobs. It's pretty rich for you to say that. Why are you not helping them today? That's what I wanted to say. You are sitting on \$6.7 billion.

Mr. Will Bouma: I asked you a question.

Mr. Wayne Gates: And I responded to it, and I appreciate it. Thank you.

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

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the member from Niagara for his comments, as well. The part of that that stood out to me is when he said Teresa was crying. That's the part all of us—and we're aligned. I know this because I've had conversations with the Conservative members, as well.

We know what it's like to struggle in a small business. I've had conversations—in fact, the Speaker who was sitting in the chair prior to you, Madam Speaker, the member from Willowdale, we actually bonded because during his inaugural speech, he talked about his parents having a small business. My mom had a small business. The reality is that we know what it's like sometimes when you're short on payroll and you don't take home any money, and how much you invest into a small business and how important it is.

I want to recognize the Sudbury chamber of commerce for the work they did during COVID-19, as well, because

they really organized a lot of information for the small businesses in Sudbury, to be well organized.

My question to the member really is just to highlight again how important it is for these small businesses to actually have money in their pocket and not just a deferral of payment later on, and the difference it makes to their business.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Quite frankly, the deferral doesn't work. That's a whole other issue around deferrals—because if you don't have any money in September and your deferral comes up in November or December, you're still not going to have any money. So deferrals don't work.

What I will say, because you mentioned the chambers: I think we should all thank the chambers. They have been front and centre during COVID-19, trying to protect their members' jobs, trying to keep the businesses open. Like I said, I've met with a number of chambers in Niagara. We have a number of chambers that represent Niagara. I want to give a shout-out to the chambers and let them know that we're going to continue to do everything we can to make sure their businesses survive not only today and tomorrow, but also after COVID-19, because without our small businesses, the heartbeat of our economy, it will be a tough, tough time in the province of Ontario, for a long, long time.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's interesting to hear the debate going on. It always comes back to, somebody has to pay the bill.

We're working with the federal government to have a plan. This legislation really entices landlords to join in and participate, because if they don't, they get zero. This way, they get 75%. So that's quite an enticement. We can't legislate people to participate in the plans, but we've made evictions illegal, so they can't do that.

We talk about the \$6.7 billion—we're only halfway through this year. There's another six months to go before the end of March. We're working through this pandemic and working on plans. I don't think there's a problem with spending that money. It's probably the other way around.

We all remember, when we have a party in this House—that throws money to the wind and just spends it.

What would the NDP—where would you come up with the money to pay for—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Back to the member for Niagara Falls to respond.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Madam Speaker, I'm going to apologize. I didn't hear the last part of his question. Can I go back to him? I think he's not accurate in what he said, which doesn't surprise me. Is it okay if he repeats it? Because I want to address it. I don't want to say something that's not accurate.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I can't do that?

Sorry; I guess you won't get your question answered.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: To the member from Niagara Falls: One of my earliest memories after coming to Canada was visiting Niagara Falls. Of course, it's one of the

wonders of the world and it's beautiful, so I visited Niagara Falls. Even though I have not been able to make it there every year, I do attempt to. For most of the years, I've always made it down to Niagara Falls during the summer, but this summer I did not—and I would imagine many, many tourists, whether they're from Toronto or elsewhere, did not go to Niagara Falls.

You mentioned the wine industry. Can you also talk a little bit about how the tourism industry in Niagara Falls has been impacted because of COVID-19?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks very much for the question. Madam Speaker, I heard that question very well.

I will talk about the tourism sector. The tourism industry, period—not just Niagara Falls—was the first hit, and it's going to be the last to come out of this. We all know that. In Niagara Falls, for those who don't know, when COVID-19 hit, there were 40,000 people who lost their jobs. Over the course of March, April and May, some of the hotels' occupancy was around 10%. That meant that not only did we lose the tourism—they didn't come; you're absolutely right. July and August were a little better. People were travelling a little more. I think they got up to 45%, maybe 50%. We had a couple of long weekends where the hotels were full. So July and August were a little better. But about 22,000 people didn't come back to work in Niagara Falls this year.

Tourism was really hit hard. We have to support tourism. There are ways to do that—

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: To the member from Niagara Falls: There's so much that I could cover here.

Mr. Wayne Gates: You've got two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Exactly.

Our government has been taking decisive action to help tenants while balancing the interests of everybody in the Ontario rental market. We have invested over \$510 million into our communities—and that does have a direct response to COVID-19—to build innovative housing initiatives for the long term. At every step along the way, it appears as though the opposition has opposed our measures.

My question is very simple to the member from Niagara Falls: Why do the members of the opposition continually oppose our measures that will help tenants, including significant investment in affordable housing and ensuring that tenants don't see a rent increase in 2021?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to thank my colleague for the question. I guess the way to answer that would be really what's happening this week. We've been giving you all kinds of suggestions on how to make sure that our schools are safe, our teachers are safe, our grandparents are safe—whether that be in education or whether that be in long-term care—and your government has decided not to do it. We asked you to do 15 kids in a classroom not because we think it's right; it's because SickKids made that recommendation, and your party, quite frankly—I think it was in June, or maybe in May—agreed with it.

You said, “Yes, that's what we're going to have.” As we found out, as schools reopened, that didn't happen.

1730

Why are we not agreeing with you? Because we think it's wrong. We think there's a way to make sure our kids are safe in our schools. If you come up with a plan that we think is right, we might agree with you once in a while.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Just a quick question to the member from Niagara Falls: Do you think that the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act will have a significant impact in helping the families and the small businesses that you represent?

Mr. Wayne Gates: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm just going to remind all members of the House, because it has happened a couple times today, that you're to wait for the Speaker to recognize you by your riding before you get up to speak. Thank you.

Further debate?

Ms. Doly Begum: I rise to speak to Bill 204, the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act. Although I do like my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park's title better; I think it was “barely helping tenants.” It's a bill, Madam Speaker, that comes with a lot of potential, but falls short and does the very minimum.

I want to be very clear, Madam Speaker: We will support this bill. The opposition will support this bill, because I—

Interjections.

Ms. Doly Begum: Listen to this—because I, along with the official opposition members, am committed to working with the government in supporting good steps and proposing solutions when the government misses the point. As we have noticed, especially with this pandemic, you have been missing the point a lot, especially when it comes to the housing crisis, the schools reopening, child care, small businesses—I could go on with this list, but with respect to time, I will end here.

Let's be honest, Madam Speaker: With a majority government and while sitting on \$6.7 billion that is meant to help people, that is allocated for this pandemic but hasn't been allocated to a specific need yet, this government has the ability to actually sit down and help people who are struggling during this crisis, people who are struggling to put a roof on top of their head, people who are struggling to keep their businesses open, people who are struggling to put food on the table, especially as we face a second wave with the COVID-19 pandemic.

This bill is the least this government can do to help people. As we debate this bill, called the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, I want to talk a little bit about this bill in terms of my riding of Scarborough Southwest in the last few weeks, and the types of calls and messages that we have been receiving and the concerns that we're hearing from local people.

This government is finally taking a step towards helping tenants in this province by proposing a rent freeze

for the year 2021. We're still in 2020, and people are right now facing evictions, and a lot of landlords are struggling to keep up with their mortgages, but there is a serious time gap in terms of the day the evictions were lifted and when this bill will actually come into effect.

Constituents in my riding are struggling with an enormous amount of financial burden. Every single week I hear from constituents, and most of them say one thing: "There is no affordable housing I could access in my lifetime, and it is really, really hard to keep up with the market rent. Often I have to make a decision to buy winter clothes for my children or pay the rent." I get the comparisons with food and clothing and so many different ways that people are trying to figure out whether they're going to keep up with their rent or make do with their essential bills. People are getting desperate to be able to afford a roof over their head, and this pandemic made it even worse.

Madam Speaker, according to Housing Connections, who are managing the wait-list, access to housing is currently seeing an average wait time of 17 to 20 years for a one-bedroom apartment—17 to 20 years, Madam Speaker. Just in the past week, I met a constituent who has been dealing with domestic abuse at home, and during this pandemic this has gotten worse for many, many vulnerable residents across this province. This constituent's husband has now filed for divorce and said he is not going to help with the rent anymore. She is making just over \$1,000 per month, which means that she didn't qualify for the federal support. As she continues to look for other jobs, she knows that it will be extremely hard to find another job in the middle of a pandemic. Without the ability to keep up, she might face eviction soon. And when she looked into applying for housing, she was told that the wait time is close to 20 years for her. Bill 204, Madam Speaker, does nothing for her.

Another constituent—and I can share her name, because she wants me to share this story. This constituent, named Shohana, a constituent in my riding, contacted my office, and this is what she wrote: "My husband and I were both working to support our family, until the pandemic started early this year. I was laid off in March and my husband continued to work as an essential worker.

"At the beginning of April, my husband started feeling unwell. His condition only kept getting worse every day from there. He was admitted to Michael Garron Hospital in Toronto after starting to have severe breathing difficulties. He tested positive for COVID-19 and was taken to the ICU on ventilator support the same day. He passed away a few days later.

"With his sudden demise, my family and I are struggling, both mentally and financially, to make ends meet. This has caused me high blood pressure, insomnia and other health issues since my husband passed away. I am struggling to pay the rent for the private apartment building I am living in right now while also paying for all the bills and other expenses for myself and my two children."

Madam Speaker, this bill, Bill 204, does nothing for Shohana and her two children.

A senior couple reached out to our office, and this couple has managed to live in one of their relative's basements, but soon they know they will be asked to leave. They have immunocompromised health conditions and a trauma from moving repeatedly at their age. Their income has also changed drastically, and there is no way they could afford to pay private market rent. Madam Speaker, if this couple loses their basement apartment, they have no place to go.

I ask this House, where do people like Shohana and like this senior couple—where will they go? There is no place to go in this province. These people are becoming homeless in the middle of a pandemic.

This couple also applied for housing in 2012, but they were told that they might not get a house for the next decade. They're actually worried that they might not be alive to see the day when they get a notice where they will actually be getting that housing apartment for them. This bill, Bill 204, does nothing for this senior couple, Madam Speaker.

When I looked at this bill—and I started with saying we will support this bill with certain solutions that it has proposed, but we will propose amendments and we will propose suggestions that will make it better. So what do we need? We need to make sure that tenants and landlords are supported well.

The Ontario NDP and my colleagues on this side of the House have come forward with a plan. We have asked this government to listen to the people of this province, to listen to the plan that we have, where we are actually helping tenants with a subsidy so they could pay their rent. And then these landlords—especially a lot of small landlords, who put everything together to own their home, and they're renting their basement, for example, so that they can continue to keep up paying their mortgages and they can continue to own that home, because it's almost impossible to even imagine owning a home in the city of Toronto, in Scarborough and many places across this province.

This bill does nothing to stop residential evictions that are due because of the pandemic. I want to actually take a moment to quote the Premier from March: "No one will be kicked out of their home or their rental apartments based on not being able to pay the rent—it's just not going to happen; we won't allow it to happen." That's the Premier in March, and yet, right now, we are seeing evictions happening because people are unable to keep up with their rent because they have lost their jobs.

In fact, the government actually made it easier, in the middle of a pandemic, when they passed Bill 184. Let me remind the House, Madam Speaker, government MPPs voted down the amendments that we made to Bill 184, which would have actually helped people, which would have actually helped tenants and landlords.

1740

I could go on with the list of things that this bill actually misses in terms of the above-guideline rent increases. There are also student tenants; there are a lot of care

homes, all of these aspects, but unfortunately, I don't have the time so I won't be able to go on.

But I want to point out one thing: As a majority government, stop passing the buck. The Premier comes in front of the cameras and that's what he says: "The buck stops here. We're going to fix the problem." Well, if the buck stops here, then let's help people. You have the power to help people. You have a majority government. You're sitting on \$6.7 billion and you can actually help these people put a roof on top of their head, put food on the table, to help these businesses stay open so that this economy, this province, will continue to thrive. We're in the middle of a pandemic right now and this government needs to step up, because people need your help. People are crying out loud and people are really, really begging you for support. This government has the opportunity to do that right now.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate what the member from Scarborough Southwest brought to debate this afternoon and the passion that she feels for her constituents and the struggles which they have.

As we've heard this afternoon already from your colleagues, whatever surplus that we could be, as you say, sitting on in order to deal with emergency situations would have already been spent to support small business, let alone other things. Yet you brought up the story about a couple, a tragic story—I feel that pain—and that this bill does nothing for them. I was wondering: What resources, after spending \$5 billion a year to support small businesses, would you use to supply housing demand, as our government is doing for rental housing?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you for that question, because I appreciate the sentiment you that have shown for my constituents, especially the senior couple, the woman who lost her husband.

Honestly, there is so much more that could have been done with this bill. You could have helped a lot of residents across this province with rental support, with subsidies that would have helped landlords as well. I can tell you the amount of people waiting in just the city of Toronto for housing is over 100,000; it's actually 102,049 right now, depending on when the number was given from Housing Connections. That will cost a lot. That cost for housing will be a huge, huge amount, and this government, or any government, will not be able to bear that cost. So it's better to act now than later, because later this government will regret it.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you to the member from Scarborough Southwest for sharing the stories.

On Thursday, I had the opportunity to attend the dedication of a bridge to Sergeant Frederick Davidson, who died in service as a police officer. While I was there, I talked with Sergeant Randy Buchowski, who is the head of the union of the Sudbury police force, and I asked him how is it going through COVID. The number one thing, he said, is that the cases of domestic abuse are going through

the roof, often leading to women needing assistance with rent so that they can stay in their house, very much like the story that the member from Scarborough Southwest shared with us. Do you think that the NDP plan of a \$2,500-a-month rent subsidy would have helped in the case of your constituent?

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt for her question and for sharing the information that she has heard as well, because that is the case for so many vulnerable residents across this province. We are facing a crisis right now, but there are a lot of hidden crises happening across the province and one of them is domestic abuse.

This one example that I gave, the plan that the NDP put out to help people with the \$2,500, would have helped so much, because she makes just above \$1,000, which means that the federal Liberal plan actually failed to help a lot of these people. If you made just a dollar more than \$1,000, that means you missed out on this whole opportunity to get the benefit.

A lot of these people would have actually benefitted if this government had come forward and stepped up and actually adopted the plan that we put forward.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank to the member from Scarborough Southwest for, as was noted by my colleague, raising many of the issues that have come forward.

Speaker, I believe firmly in the importance of a government coming alongside and supporting people, especially in a time of need. Frankly, I believe that's also why we need to make sure that we're saving when times are good to be able to spend on the rainy days, such as the ones that we have right now. Although I don't want to play too many politics, I think it's fair to say that what we saw under the former government was a failure to set aside any funds for a rainy day, and obviously that has impacts as well when it comes to the ability of governments of all stripes, whether that's looking at governments in other parts of the country that are NDP, to be able to respond perhaps in the way that the member opposite is speaking about.

But I'm wondering, one of the key things we have to do is make sure that we're leveraging private sector investments as well, especially in the space of housing. Could she speak to some of the actions that the private sector could be working with the government on to ensure that these types of actions are in fact taking place?

Ms. Doly Begum: I appreciate the member from Niagara West and your thoughts. Do you know what? I've got to agree on one point, which was, it's very disappointing that not only did the previous government not save for a rainy day, they wasted in many, many scandals we have heard. There was a lot of wastage in terms of public tax dollars, people's hard-earned money that was wasted in a whole bunch of scandals that I don't want to get into.

The main point that I want to get across is that it is a lot better to invest now than later. We can work with different

sectors to make sure that we have housing available. In fact, one of the models we had previously proposed was co-op housing. A lot of co-op housing in my riding of Scarborough Southwest, for example, is an amazing example of what kind of housing works, and people feel a sense of ownership—

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I want to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for her passionate speech, and my condolences go out to Shohana and her two children—a very sad story for sure.

Nobody wants to be on the streets, and nobody wants to be evicted, but under the government's plan that's exactly what's happening, and that's exactly what will happen. We did mention that the government is sitting on billions of dollars of unallocated funds that they could be using right now to fix this problem. If you could tell us a little bit about the NDP plan, which will support both tenants and landlords—it's not just one or the other; it's going to help both tenants and landlords. If you can talk a little bit about how that will assist tenants and landlords here in Ontario.

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank my colleague and seatmate for his question, because it gives me an opportunity to actually thank the many small landlords across this province and in my riding who have gone above and beyond to help their tenants, because they were struggling as well. Many of them lost their jobs, but they came up with plans to help their tenants who lost their jobs, who weren't able to pay their rents.

What the NDP plan would have done, especially with the \$2,500, is provide this relief that the tenants could have used to pay their rent, and that means these landlords wouldn't have to struggle either, and they could keep up with their mortgages, for example. Let me remind you that the mortgage deferral actually ends on November 1, so starting November 1, you will have a lot of small homeowners, for example, who will be struggling to keep up with their mortgages.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a privilege to get up and enjoyable to hear the member opposite from Scarborough Southwest and some of the issues that she brought up. She brought up housing and why we aren't spending money on housing. Housing doesn't get built in six months. We've issued funds to build social housing—a number of projects are on the books—but that will take years. We haven't seen social housing built for the last 15. That's a problem.

When you talk about rent subsidies: We provided \$520 million to service managers to help with subsidies for rental units in everybody's communities across this province, so we've taken that step. That has already been done. It was done a month ago, to look after and help those people, along with previous funds we've given out already. So when we're looking at programs, this bill here was for commercial rent and to freeze next year's rent.

That's what this bill did, and I think it has done an admirable job of it.

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to remind the member that if you look carefully in this bill, first of all, it doesn't come into effect until 2021, so in the next few months we may be seeing rent increases and evictions.

The reason I want to point out housing is because we have to think forward. We are going to face a lot of homelessness. There are a lot of people struggling and there are a lot of people who are on the wait-list. You know what's going to happen when people are evicted and they're not able to keep up with their rent: They will be on the streets, and that's not what we should be aiming towards. As a majority government with a lot of power, you can be doing a lot better, so let's start doing that.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise briefly. Really briefly, before I begin my remarks, I just want to congratulate the Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire and Emergency Services. They battled a blaze last week, a very fierce blaze, and they did an exceptionally good job, so I just wanted to congratulate them quickly.

I also want to very briefly take a moment to congratulate all members of this House. Whilst I disagree with some of the things that members of the NDP are saying, I commend them for participating in a spirited way and defending the things that are important to them, especially on a day when we saw that the Liberal Party's main priority was trying to assess when the next election would be. Given all that is going on, it is absolutely incredible that there is a party in this House that is more concerned with the next election than fighting for the things that the people of the province of Ontario want. I again congratulate all the members on that.

With that, Speaker, I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Mr. Calandra has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, the bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. Prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1754 to 1824.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The vote was held on Mr. Calandra's motion that the question be now put on the motion for second reading of Bill 204.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 32; the nays are 11.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Clark has moved second reading of Bill 204, An Act to amend various Acts respecting municipal elections, to amend the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 and to provide for a temporary residential rent freeze and specified temporary protections for certain commercial tenants. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): To which committee?

Hon. Paul Calandra: General government.

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

Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1826.

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Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
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Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
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Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
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Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (IND)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
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Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

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Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
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Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
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Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
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