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Mardi
17 novembre 2020

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act
(Budget Measures), 2020, Bill 229, Mr. Phillips /
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 17 November 2020

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 17 novembre 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT, SUPPORT AND RECOVER
FROM COVID-19 ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2020
LOI DE 2020 SUR LA PROTECTION,
LE SOUTIEN ET LA RELANCE
FACE À LA COVID-19
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Phillips moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 229, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / Projet de loi 229, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter, à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll look to the Minister of Finance to lead off the debate.

Hon. Rod Phillips: I'll just inform the House that I'll be splitting my time with the member from Willowdale.

Mr. Speaker, 12 days ago I stood here in the Legislature and introduced Ontario's 2020 budget, the next phase of Ontario's plan: protect, support and recover. Since then, Ontario has seen COVID-19 case numbers shifting rapidly. That is why our government continues to take action to fight COVID-19. This budget and its enabling legislation, the latest phase of our action plan in response to this deadly virus, is how we will do it.

In March of this year I introduced the first phase of Ontario's action plan. That urgent response was focused on health care and our initial actions to ensure that everyone could be as safe and healthy as possible. Premier Ford made a simple, non-negotiable promise to the people of Ontario: Our government would do whatever it takes to get the province and its people through the pandemic.

Our front-line health care heroes were risking their safety, so we built more capacity at hospitals and other health care facilities. We purchased hundreds of millions of masks, gloves and gowns. We opened assessment centres at hospitals and in communities. We started contact tracing and tracking and introduced our COVID Alert app. In short, we built the capacity to deal with this

health care crisis for the initial wave of COVID-19 and for future waves.

In the last nine months we have learned much about this virus and how we can protect ourselves and who is most at risk. We also know about how people and economies will respond based on our experience here at home and experiences in various jurisdictions. We know how lockdowns affect us and the toll that it takes on our regular day-to-day activities.

We conducted the largest consultation process ever undertaken for a budget in Ontario, whether it was hearing from industry experts through our jobs and recovery ministerial advisory councils or through the more than 500 witnesses who appeared at the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs or numerous Zoom round tables and town halls where we got to hear from ordinary Ontarians just worried how they would get through the pandemic; we were listening, and this budget responds.

For many people in our province, there is a real worry about whether their jobs, their businesses, their ability to earn a living and support their family will survive the pandemic. But the people of Ontario have shown incredible resilience—what the Premier calls the Ontario spirit. Whenever there is a challenge, the people of Ontario rise to meet it. Small businesses that previously had only brick-and-mortar storefronts have moved their retail operations online, restaurants and bars kept us fed through take-out and patio dining, and the people of Ontario have been there for each other throughout the pandemic.

Throughout this pandemic, the government of Ontario has been there for the people. When small businesses needed support to go online, we provided funding. When restaurants and coffee shops needed help with PPE, we provided grants. When parents needed help with additional costs for their kids going to school virtually, we provided assistance. Our government has proven that it will do whatever it takes to protect and support the people of Ontario.

Our plan is based on three pillars: protect, support and recover. First, we are taking steps to protect people from this deadly virus by increasing our health investments to \$15.2 billion. These investments will help us to continue to build capacity, help health care workers, open new and better facilities for testing and tracing, and make sure that we have more beds in hospitals and in long-term-care homes.

Our second pillar is support. We will build on our earlier relief package to a total of \$13.5 billion in direct support for families, workers and employees, and an additional \$11.3 billion in cash-flow support.

Third, we are removing barriers to recovery and providing \$4.8 billion to protect and create jobs now and in the future. This phase of Ontario's action plan brings our total COVID-19 response to \$45 billion over three years.

Nothing is more important than ensuring the health and safety of the people of Ontario. That is why "protect" is the first pillar of our plan. This year, we are dedicating \$8.3 billion to support our front-line health care heroes and protect people from COVID-19. Since March, we have created an additional 3,100 hospital beds. With this budget, we invested an additional \$572 million into the hospital system to ensure they have the capacity to deal with COVID-19.

We support our robust testing network—the best in the country—with \$1.4 billion to continue to ramp up testing and contact tracing at 174 assessment centres, over 200 pharmacies, and 49 community-based sites and mobile testing units. We are leading the country in testing, with over 5.6 million tests completed since March. Over the last eight months, our testing capacity has increased tenfold, and we are not stopping now.

Our government and the Premier have led the charge to call for the federal government to approve and distribute rapid tests so that people can get quicker results. Antigen-based tests are now being ramped up and will be in use soon. This is good news, because rapid testing needs to be widely deployed across Ontario and across Canada.

The fall and winter are dangerous times for sickness, even beyond COVID-19, and so our government has invested \$70 million to purchase flu vaccines, the biggest investment the province has ever seen. Make no mistake, Ontario is also working with the federal government and other provincial and territorial partners to plan for the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines when they become available. While we've all seen promising progress from Pfizer and Moderna, it is also important to remember that a vaccine is still months away and everyone needs to continue to follow public health advice.

We know that the toll of COVID-19 is not just physical. From our most vulnerable to our youth to our front-line health care workers, many people have had to deal with enormous pressures on their mental health. That is why our government invested \$176 million this year to help expand access to critical mental health and related services as people deal with the challenges of COVID-19. This investment is part of our overall \$3.8-billion support for our mental health and addictions Roadmap to Wellness, a 10-year plan to get our province mentally healthy. This support will be targeted to communities for things like mobile crisis teams and more supports for children, youth and other vulnerable populations.

We have also invested \$270 million for community and public health. Since the pandemic, we have made close to \$800 million available to protect our loved ones in long-term-care homes. We know there are staffing challenges and bed shortages, and our government is acting on that. We will invest \$1.7 billion to build more beds and to upgrade existing ones. We will move forward to accelerate the building of four facilities for long-term care by 2022,

adding 1,280 beds in Mississauga, Ajax and Toronto. By contrast, under the previous government, only 611 new beds were added between 2011 and 2018. That's less than one bed per home in Ontario over seven long years.

0910

Now we've made a historic commitment to ensure not just the quantity of care but improve the quality of care for our loved ones. I'm proud to reiterate that over the next four years, our government will increase direct care for long-term-care residents to an average of four hours per day. We will be the first province in Canada to make good on this important commitment, one that has been called on for many years by our long-term-care partners.

We know that our long-term-care system is complex, and fulfilling this promise will take a lot of work. We know we need to work with staff, health care workers, homes, labour and others in the sector to ensure that issues in the system are resolved. This government is up to the challenge, and I'm pleased to say we have the support of the Ontario Personal Support Workers Association, who said, "[We] support this monumental shift in health care priority. As the professional association for personal support workers in Ontario, we look forward to continuing building on our important work with the Ministry of Long-Term Care to ensure these targets are met."

Our government is committed to hiring tens of thousands of new staff to help ensure the quality of care over the next four years and beyond, and, as soon as December, we will begin moving forward with a new staffing strategy. Protecting the people of Ontario is our number one goal in this budget as we continue to navigate the first, second and potentially future waves of COVID-19.

We know that COVID-19 has brought severe economic difficulties for families and employers. No one has been left unaffected by this pandemic. That is why "support" is the next pillar of our budget. Our government made the promise to do whatever it took to get people through this, and we are making key investments to deliver on that promise.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about the necessity of taking care of loved ones in our long-term care system, but that's not the only place we need to ensure dignity and safety for our seniors. They need our support to stay at home, get basic services and stay active. That is why in March, we provided \$75 million in relief by doubling the Guaranteed Annual Income System payment for six months. That helped 194,000 of our lowest-income seniors.

We've also put \$16 million into the Ontario Community Support Program to help deliver 230,000 meals and other essentials to low-income seniors and people with disabilities. We will extend this program into 2021 so deliveries will continue to their homes during the winter months. We will also increase funding to the Seniors Active Living Centres Program by 22%, making our total investment \$17 million. This will help seniors stay active, engaged and independent while respecting public health advice.

For many of our seniors and their families, staying in their homes is difficult. It requires improvements such as

wheelchair ramps, stability bars and other items to make homes safer and accessible. That is why we are proposing a new Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit. This investment will help tens of thousands of seniors stay in the homes they love longer. The tax credit will be worth 25% of up to \$10,000 in eligible expenses and will be available to every senior whether they owe taxes or they do not. It means a senior, or a family with a grandparent living in the home, could receive \$2,500 back for a \$10,000 renovation to make their home safer or more accessible. Helping our seniors stay in their homes longer is something we should all support.

Our government also knows that parents are being pulled in many directions through this pandemic. Whether kids are in daycare, at home, learning online, in-person, or a mix, every parent in Ontario is feeling the strain of COVID-19. That is why our government is investing \$1.3 billion to support the safe reopening of schools—the most robust and comprehensive plan in the country. Our government is also looking to the future, which is why we're investing \$13 billion over 10 years, including \$1.4 billion this year and \$1.9 billion next year to build new schools and improve existing facilities.

We have heard from parents that getting the resources needed at home and virtually can be costly. For those going in person to school, we know that parents have had to buy new masks, more hand sanitizer and all sorts of expenses, and, for those learning online, we know they've needed upgrades to Internet services and computers. That is why we're once again providing parents and caregivers with a payment of \$200 per child under 12 and \$250 per child 13 and over with special needs through our Support for Learners program. We know this will help families directly deal with the costs of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I've been reflecting on the important conversations that have been happening across our communities about anti-Black racism. Ontario is a place where every person deserves respect and opportunity, the opportunity to be all that they can be. Unfortunately, systemic racism and other forms of hate persist, and that is simply unacceptable. That is why our government is providing an additional \$60 million over the next three years, or doubling the base funding of the Black Youth Action Plan. This plan will support community partners in creating programs to empower Black youth to help them move towards economic and career success.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, small business has unleashed their creativity during COVID-19. These anchors of our community employ our neighbours, our family and our friends. COVID-19 has hit them hard, but in Ontario, they have responded with resolve and resilience—the Ontario spirit. That is why we've worked with our partners in the federal and municipal governments to support them, and in this budget, we have dedicated \$300 million to assist eligible businesses with fixed costs, including property taxes and energy bills.

I am pleased to let the members of this Legislature know that the portal employers can apply for assistance on opened yesterday. Businesses that need support can visit

ontario.ca/covidsupport to access these resources. Cheques will begin to flow this month to those businesses that apply.

I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage all members of this House to speak to federal counterparts to encourage the smooth and quick passage of Bill C-9, which is currently being debated in the Senate of Canada. Hopefully, this critical federal assistance will be able to flow soon.

Mr. Speaker, as COVID-19 continues to create challenges, we will continue to be there to support the people of Ontario. We have talked about protecting and supporting people and jobs and the importance of providing help right now, but I don't want to lose sight of how our actions today can make our future brighter. That is why "recover" is the third pillar of Ontario's action plan. As we all deal with the day-to-day impacts of COVID-19, it may seem ambitious to talk about recovery. But as I said last week, it is important to be prepared and it is important to have a plan, and a good plan means that we need not only to look at what we need now but what we will need to rebuild our economy.

We need to start working today on the recovery. There are gaps in our workforce and in our system that existed before COVID-19, and they still need to be addressed, so we are not waiting to act. We are protecting and creating jobs now and in the future, with a plan that trains workers, a plan that addresses job-killing electricity rates and regulations, a plan to reduce taxes on jobs, and a plan to connect every home, business and farm in Ontario to broadband.

Mr. Speaker, I know that many of our workers lost their jobs during the initial wave of COVID-19 and that there are many people who are still struggling today. And while we are working to support people and create jobs, we also need to recognize that there are jobs that are in demand in Ontario right now. We need workers to continue to build key infrastructure, like hospitals, and to help run the machinery of our factories, including making PPE, that keep our communities running.

Now is the time to invest in retraining our workers so they can be ready to contribute to the recovery of our province. That is why we are providing an additional \$181 million in employment services and training to connect workers, especially those in hospitality and tourism and industries hardest hit by COVID-19, to skilled trades training. This includes \$100 million through Employment Ontario skills training. It also includes \$60 million to help support workers acquire in-demand skills rapidly to support a faster transition to new jobs. Our government has an unprecedented skilled trades strategy that relies on breaking the stigma, simplifying the system and encouraging employer participation in training and apprenticeships.

Mr. Speaker, our businesses and economy are asking for very basic, very important things from us during this time. They want to be able to stay in business. They want to be able to pay their staff. They want to be able to continue doing the jobs they're supposed to do.

One of the ways we can support them is by lowering the costs on things that could stop a company either from coming to Ontario or staying in Ontario. We are fixing this with our comprehensive plan to reduce job-killing electricity prices. The price of electricity for commercial businesses increased by 118% from 2008 to 2019. That's more than five times the rate of inflation, and that's too much. Employers large and small have told us that despite all Ontario has to offer, it simply does not make sense for them to come here or expand their operation, because the cost of electricity is so much higher than in competing jurisdictions. That means lost jobs and lost opportunity for people across our province. Which is why, as part of the 2020 budget, we announced our plan to responsibly wind down these high-cost contracts.

0920

Removing these costs from electricity bills will save industrial and commercial employers 14% and 16% respectively. For a mine in northern Ontario, this means a savings of \$270,000 a month or \$3.2 million a year. For an automotive parts manufacturer in Mississauga, the savings would be about \$32,000 per month or nearly \$382,000 annually. And for a small gym in Grimsby, the savings would be about \$800 a month or \$10,000 a year. It is estimated that these changes will create tens of thousands of new jobs in Ontario. But don't just take our word for it; Dennis Darby, CEO of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, said, "It is clear that manufacturing jobs are a priority of this government, and we appreciate their continued support."

As part of our comprehensive plan, Ontario will go from being one of the least competitive jurisdictions for the cost of electricity to one of the most competitive, better than the US average and most of the Great Lakes states we compete with for manufacturing and commercial jobs. This will prepare our province not just for more jobs and growth today, but for a stronger economy in the future.

Helping families and employers grow and prosper means eliminating things that would hinder our growth, and that means eliminating taxes that kill jobs. Back in March, we temporarily increased the employer health tax exemption for a business with up to \$1-million payroll. We heard from employers across Ontario that this measure helped them keep workers on the job during COVID-19. That is why we are proposing to make this measure permanent. That means 30,000 businesses will no longer pay this tax, a savings of \$360 million in 2021-22. That is important, but we need to do more.

Mr. Speaker, property tax, as you know, is one of the costs that businesses cannot avoid, whether they have a successful year or they don't. In Ontario, there are a wide range of business education tax rates across the province. This creates an unfair challenge for businesses operating in communities where there is a higher rate. We are acting immediately to reduce these high tax rates by \$450 million in 2021. For many employers, this represents a reduction of 30%. It means for a small employer, like a hotel in London, they would save \$44,000 annually. Over 200,000

business properties, or 94% of the provincial total, are going to benefit starting January 1.

Among the many people who have been supportive of this initiative have been many municipalities. Lynn Dollin, the mayor of Innisfil, said that she was very pleased to see this tax relief for business. Frank Scarpitti, the mayor of Markham, said that he was pleased with the new investments and resources to fight COVID-19. Cam Guthrie, the mayor of Guelph, was pleased to see targeted tax reductions for businesses. Ed Holder, the mayor of London, said that the budget would bring much-needed relief to businesses in London. John Tory, mayor of Toronto, welcomed the cut to the business education tax rate while ensuring funding for education.

Speaking of Mayor Tory, we have also heard from many municipalities, including Toronto, that they want the flexibility to provide targeted relief to the businesses in their communities that need it most during these tough times. That's why Premier Ford, Minister Sarkaria, MPP Stan Cho, Mayor Tory and I visited the Khorak Supermarket in Willowdale last week to announce our proposal to empower municipalities with a new tool to provide a property tax reduction for their small businesses. Ontario will match these municipal property tax reductions with further reductions in the education property tax. This means that small businesses across the province could save as much as \$385 million in additional property taxes starting next year. Once again, this is help now and for the future.

Mr. Speaker, these days, a lack of reliable Internet can make it almost impossible to earn a living, get an education, see your doctor or stay in touch with loved ones. We want every home, business and farm in Ontario to have high-speed Internet service. That is why we are topping up our initial investments to our historic Improving Connectivity for Ontario plan. In the next four years, we are committing \$680 million to the next phase of our plan, bringing our total commitment to rural broadband expansion to nearly \$1 billion.

We will work with private and public partners and other governments to develop more broadband infrastructure and connect those communities that have little to no access right now. I'd like to acknowledge our federal partners for coming to the table following our recent announcement with some additional support to ensure Ontarians are connected.

As Allan Thompson, chair of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, said, "In 2020, connectivity is a necessity, not a luxury." We appreciate "the substantial increase in funding ... will help make faster broadband a reality for more rural, northern and remote communities. Today's announcement is a strong signal that Ontario will not leave" its rural and northern "residents behind."

As COVID-19 continues to cause uncertainty in the global economy, we will continue to provide support now and for our recovery in the future.

As I conclude, I had mentioned a number of quotes from health workers, mayors and business leaders, but these only scratch the surface of groups who believe the

budget is right for Ontario. Groups as diverse as the Ontario Registered Practical Nurses Association, the Council of Canadian Innovators, the Ontario Mining Association, the Canadian Credit Union Association, the Ontario Craft Brewers association, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association—the list goes on and on in terms of those who have spoken out in their support for elements of our 2020 budget.

Now is not a time to play politics. Now is a time to work together and put in policies that help the people of Ontario stay safe from COVID-19, get their finances in order and build for a prosperous future. So I'm asking today for the support of all those in the House in terms of supporting this legislation. These measures, and many others that my colleagues will touch on, are important to make sure Ontarians are protected, supported and can recover in the future.

Together, we can protect each other, work together and beat COVID-19. Together, we can recover and prosper.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): At the beginning of his address, the minister did say he'd be sharing his time with the member from Willowdale. So we turn now to the member from Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the minister's comments. Good morning to everybody in the chamber.

It was 237 days ago, on March 25, that I rose in this chamber to speak about Ontario's 2020 action plan responding to COVID-19. It was tabled a mere 10 days after Premier Ford declared a state of emergency, and it was a critical first step in responding to the double threat we all faced: a health emergency coupled with an economic crisis.

That first urgent response injected \$3.3 billion into our health care system, invested \$3.7 billion in direct supports for people and businesses, and an additional \$10 billion in immediate cash flow for entrepreneurs and job creators.

Seemingly overnight, our world had changed, and it was crucial that this government responded and responded quickly. Over those 237 days, the world has continued to change, and it's been at, really, a breakneck pace. The science has advanced. Our strategies and tactics to contain the virus have evolved, and we've learned from watching and learning from other jurisdictions around the world.

In March, we acted quickly to protect schools and long-term-care homes. We set up assessment centres, ramped up testing, protected workers and renters and brought classrooms and businesses online. We made sure that our front-line heroes had the tools and equipment to keep themselves safe, helped factories retool to protect our supply chains, and ensured Ontarians had the information they needed to protect their families and their communities.

Throughout the spring and the summer, as the pandemic advanced, this government invested a further \$11 billion to protect Ontarians and Ontario's economy. We invested \$2.8 billion to prepare for the inevitable second wave, shored up hospital capacity, launched the largest flu-shot

campaign in our province's history and increased our testing and contact-tracing capacity. We kept businesses open as long as it was safe to do so, and when it wasn't, we ensured that they had the direct support they needed to make ends meet.

A little over a week ago, the Minister of Finance set out the next phase of Ontario's action plan in the 2021 budget. This budget is not the beginning of our fight; it's the critical next step in our response to COVID-19. It builds on our investments to protect the health and safety of every Ontarian, and that is and remains from the beginning our number one priority. It also begins to lay the foundation for tomorrow, to look around the corner for Ontario's economic recovery. It's a plan that provides as much certainty as possible in the most uncertain times. It's a plan that is informed by science, a plan that is informed by public health. It's a plan that is focused on the necessary steps to stay ahead of the virus, and it's a plan that is ready to meet the needs of the people and the workforce as they navigate the second wave of COVID-19. We're looking ahead to reopening our economy in a way that's flexible and adaptive to these ever-changing circumstances.

0930

Speaker, the last 237 days have moved at warp speed. This pandemic has infiltrated every aspect of our lives, and we've all had to adapt. Our homes have become offices; they have become classrooms. We've been separated from our families and our friends, and masks have become a permanent accessory.

The government has had to adapt, too. Democracies, some would argue, were not built for speed. In a province this vast, this diverse, with this many government programs, in normal times, it takes months, if not years, to develop and implement. We've had to change the way we do government. We've had to move at warp speed.

But I want to remind the members of this chamber that we weren't able to do that alone. The measures in this budget are based on the ideas, the feedback and the first-hand experiences of thousands of organizations—businesses, labour unions, health experts, other governments and individual Ontarians who shared their stories and shared their struggles with all of us. It's thanks to them that we've been able to adapt quickly and effectively to protect Ontarians and get them the support they need.

Since March, our government has held a total of 768 consultations with communities across the province. We've heard hundreds of hours of consultations, read thousands of pages of submissions and seen first-hand the effects of this pandemic. Now, the response hasn't been perfect throughout, but at every turn, this government has listened to Ontarians, acted swiftly and done whatever was necessary to keep them safe and to protect their livelihoods.

Our government has been agile, decisive, and we've planned for every contingency. It's what Ontarians expect, it's what they deserve, and it's exactly what our 2021 budget, Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover, does. It takes the actions necessary today by investing \$15.2 billion to protect Ontarians and our world-class

health care system and \$13.5 billion to support people, communities and jobs while, as I said earlier, looking around the corner at what comes next and preparing for Ontario's recovery through \$4.8 billion in new measures to create the conditions for future economic growth.

As we look to that future, we must all recognize that we are, that the world is, in uncharted waters. We've seen over the past nine months that nothing is certain. We must be ready for the unknown.

Our plan takes that uncertainty into account also. So before I talk about some of the specific initiatives in Ontario's action plan, I want to take a moment to highlight the prudence that seems to be so often misunderstood by the members opposite—and I heard a chuckle earlier as I mentioned that prudence. From the beginning of this pandemic, our government has set aside historic contingency and reserve funds. Again, as outlined in the plan before us today, we are setting aside another \$4 billion next year and \$2 billion the year after that. These are contingencies in a dedicated pandemic fund to ensure that the resources we all need are readily available as long as they are necessary.

I'm sure that all members in this House will agree that we need to continue to have funds available to respond, and respond quickly, to this rapidly changing situation. If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it's that things can change on a dime. I believe it would be arrogant to believe that any of us know what will happen next. So I'm often perplexed, even this morning, when I hear the opposition criticize the government for holding money in reserve. Just yesterday, one member from the opposition cited the Financial Accountability Officer's first quarter report and accused the government of "hoarding" \$9 billion, money which they erroneously claimed remained unspent. And yet, Speaker, if the members opposite read the budget, they would see that the government has, in the past nine months, been able to use these reserves to provide fast, direct relief where and when it's needed most.

When the federal government asked Ontario to partner on a commercial rent relief program to help struggling small businesses, the funding was available, and it was available quickly. Why? Because this government had the foresight to be prudent.

When our front-line health care workers needed PPE, the province had funds to purchase 300 million masks, 900 million gloves, 50 million gowns and six million face shields. These were all purchased with the contingency funds set aside to respond to the uncertainty of the global pandemic. In fact, Speaker—I hope the members opposite are listening—the budget shows that 80% of the contingency funds set aside at the beginning of this pandemic have been spent or allocated.

In this budget, we've continued to top up these contingency accounts, to set aside historic amounts of prudence, so that we can continue to be agile and adapt, so that we can continue to ensure that no cost is spared to protect the health and safety of Ontarians.

As time goes on, the impacts of COVID-19 will begin to recede, and so will the uncertainty. However, we've made sure, as I've said and the Minister of Finance has

said, that because those times are still navigating through uncharted waters, we will have \$4 billion in contingencies available next year and \$2 billion available for the year after.

There will be a time, and I hope that time will be soon, when we can once again gather in groups in restaurants. I know I miss many of my local restaurants in Willowdale. I miss many of my local theatres. There will be a time when people will be able to go shop for groceries without a mask, but until that time, we continue to ask the people of this province to remain vigilant and to remain prudent. Our government will do the same.

The people of Ontario trust their government to be good fiscal stewards, even in these extraordinary times, and they deserve transparency about how the government is spending their money, now more than ever. And so, along with the historic levels of prudence, this budget also includes three possible economic scenarios that could impact the trajectory of our recovery from COVID-19. These scenarios will help us plan for the future. They will help us with future spending and future supports, and they will also help us picture what recovery looks like from COVID-19. We must, and we are, hoping for the best, but we are absolutely planning for the worst.

We've seen over the summer that jobs continue to return to Ontario, and we all know in this chamber that previous to COVID-19, our province was leading the country in job creation. We've seen in our budget the economic indicators that have emerged from COVID-19, like the housing market, household spending and consumer confidence. These are all beginning to tick up. But it's important that our government doesn't take anything for granted.

Speaker, I've talked about my family story a lot in this chamber, and you haven't heard the last of it because I'm very proud of my background. But growing up in that little convenience store in Rexdale, Ontario, my parents always taught me the importance of saving for a rainy day. I was nine and I distinctly remember when my dad pulled me aside when the store was busy. He told me that these are the times we put away for a rainy day because, in his words, "You never know what's coming around the corner."

No one saw this pandemic coming, but it's thanks to that fiscal prudence, that restraint, that responsibility shown by this government in our first two years in office that we've had the capacity to spend, now that the rainy days are here. Those storms continue to brew, but it is thanks to our fiscal prudence that we are able to adapt, and adapt quickly, to this changing situation.

Speaker, while we know that the spending outlined in this budget is not sustainable, we also know that we must spare no expense to ensure that people continue to get the protection and support they need as this pandemic continues.

0940

Protecting the health and safety of every Ontarian is this government's number one priority. After years of neglect in our hospital system—this system was running at

capacity or near capacity before the pandemic hit Ontario. Hallway health care had become the norm under the previous government, and while our government has been working since we took office to build capacity in a system already stretched thin under normal circumstances, the pandemic has pushed our system to its limits.

The urgent investments this government has been making since the pandemic began will help recruit, train and deploy thousands of new front-line health care workers, purchase much-needed equipment and ensure Ontario is ready for the months ahead. If passed, Ontario's action plan would invest \$2.5 billion in immediate operational funding in our hospital sector, a critical investment which I'm sure all members of this House will endorse.

But, Speaker, never again can Ontario be left unprepared in something as critical as emergency health care services. We all expect it to be there when we need it the most. That's why our government is also investing \$18 billion to expand hospitals and build new ones. Under this government, we will see the first net new hospital in Ontario in nearly 30 years. No longer simply maintaining the status quo, this government is taking real steps to ensure we're expanding capacity, upgrading health care infrastructure and building a better health care system to get us through this pandemic and beyond.

We're also making investments to protect Ontario's seniors and long-term-care residents. Almost a year before the pandemic began, our government created a stand-alone Ministry of Long-Term Care. We recognize the immense task of fixing a long-term-care system that had been ignored for nearly two decades. This budget would see more than \$1.75 billion invested in building long-term-care capacity, getting rid of ward-style rooms with four residents to a room and replacing them with modern, private and double-occupancy rooms.

Speaker, the tragedy we've seen in Ontario's long-term-care sector should give us all pause. We can and must do better to care for our vulnerable seniors, and while we're continuing to provide unprecedented levels of funding, it's not just about the dollars in. We know that the entire system needs change. That's why this budget will make a nation-leading commitment of providing four hours of average daily care to every long-term-care resident in Ontario.

The scale of this commitment cannot be overstated. It's truly a paradigm-shifting change that shouldn't be taken lightly, and which, unfortunately, will not happen overnight. It will mean revolutionizing the way we do long-term care here in Ontario. It will mean recruiting, hiring and training thousands of new personal support workers. It will mean looking at new models of care, new, innovative technologies and, of course, new funding.

I know that our Minister of Long-Term Care and her team are already hard at work. They've been working on a new staffing strategy, carefully considering the advice and early recommendations of the independent commission, like the recommendation to move to four hours of average daily care, and working to build new beds faster.

Speaker, our government will always support those most vulnerable in our communities. I know that in my

community of Willowdale, our seniors, and especially low-income seniors, are grappling to cope with the side effects of physical distancing. They worry if it's safe to see their grandkids or if they'll be able to continue living in their own home. This is a generation that worked hard to provide a better future, a better Ontario for their children and their grandchildren, and these are the people who are at particular risk of infection and severe illness. Many live alone. They struggle even under normal circumstances to safely complete daily tasks, to shop for groceries, to travel to see a doctor or simply visit family.

If passed, this budget would provide \$30 million for a Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit, which would provide a 25% refund on eligible expenses of up to \$10,000. That's \$2,500 to make it easier for seniors to retrofit their homes with things like accessibility ramps, chairlifts, grab rails or even wider doorways. These are renovations that will improve the quality of life for seniors and allow them to live comfortably in their own homes longer. Speaking with seniors in my community, I've heard the importance that seniors hold on maintaining their independence. So not only will this investment help relieve pressure on our retirement and long-term-care homes, but it will have huge benefits for the quality of life for seniors living in our neighbourhoods.

If passed, this budget would also invest \$3.1 million in seniors' active living centres. These will offer remote and virtual programming so that seniors living in the community have support and companionship in the community that they are in. Additionally, this budget, if passed, will have \$2 million for a new inclusive community grants program to promote and support healthy and active aging while supporting social engagement of older adults with disabilities.

This plan supports seniors living in long-term care and at home. It provides support for parents to assist with the added costs of learning in this new normal. It supports our important arts and cultural institutions and community organizations, large and small, that make our towns, cities and neighbourhoods so great. It invests in supports for the tourism sector, which has been especially hit hard during this pandemic, and it supports our main street businesses with a coordinated approach, alongside our partners in the federal government, to ensure that no business falls through the cracks.

While I'd like to go on at length about these crucial investments, I want to take a few moments to speak about the budget measures focused on Ontario's recovery. These are measures that, if passed, would provide immediate relief to businesses in our communities, but also lay the groundwork to make Ontario competitive in the global fight for economic recovery.

One day, and hopefully soon, COVID-19 will be in our rear-view mirror. When that time comes, we must remember that every government in this world will be focused on economic recovery, and it is crucial that Ontario be ready to compete. That means laying the foundation now. That means looking around the corner to see what's coming. That's why this budget would invest

\$4.8 billion to reduce commercial and industrial hydro rates, lower property and payroll taxes and ensure broadband access across the province.

Speaker, I've been touring this province recently to speak directly with these job creators, with these small businesses, with the businesses in manufacturing. We heard directly from these businesses. Just last week in Kitchener-Waterloo, in Elmira, we spoke with Krystal Darling, who is the CEO of Tri-Mach, a company which employs hundreds of Ontarians. She had to say that she was very grateful that this budget addressed hydro rates, that it addressed the tax on jobs and the BET, the business education tax, which was inconsistent throughout the province—different levels between different jurisdictions. That has been unified, and our province has reduced our portion to 0.88%. These are real savings that are going to help companies like Tri-Mach to be able to reinvest into creating more jobs, more prosperity for the great people of Kitchener-Waterloo.

Now is also the time to invest in retraining our workers so that they are ready to contribute to that recovery. Our government would invest an additional \$181 million over three years to increase microcredentials, grow employment services and expand training programs.

When we were in Sudbury last week we visited Milman Industries, and I spoke with the owner, Milad. Milad is an incredible success story. It warmed my heart to speak to an individual who in one generation had moved to this country, to this province, with little more than the clothes on his back, and is now able to employ 70 people for the great city of Sudbury.

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Speaker, the biggest challenge that Milad told me about was his ability to attract skilled workers. He has the jobs, Speaker. He has the jobs available, good-paying jobs, good careers, but he told me about his struggles to attract people into those jobs. He was grateful that we've launched an unprecedented skilled trades strategy, breaking the stigma, simplifying the system and encouraging employer participation in training and apprenticeships. These are real measures that will help industries like Milman, help them create more jobs, to fill those job vacancies that exist. Taken together, these initiatives will help job seekers, particularly those hit hardest by COVID-19, get the skills they need and help employers access the world-class talent to compete on a global stage.

Of course, that's not the only businesses we've heard from over the last nine months. I've met with hundreds of them. I've heard from the mom-and-pop shops and family-owned grocery and convenience stores in my riding of Willowdale and throughout this entire province. I've heard from farmers, advanced manufacturers, miners, breweries, banks, retailers and automakers in every corner of our province.

These businesses know that they are in a fight for survival. They know that they are competing against what will be a post-pandemic world. They will need that competitive edge, Mr. Speaker, because these businesses, which drive Canada's economy—well, they're our jewel. They're the ones that drive our economy forward, and we

know that they are going to be critical if Ontario is going to remain on that competitive edge. That's why it's so crucial to make those investments now.

I want to remind the members that this coordinated effort with all levels of government—and, Speaker, from the beginning of this pandemic, I had mentioned how this was indeed not a time for politics, that this was a time to collaborate with all levels of government. All members will know that from the beginning I have said that that collaborated effort has borne fruit.

In our most recent update, the federal government, I'm glad, has listened to our request to provide a tenant-led rent relief program. The federal government agreed to help with the rent, to help with the wage subsidy, and on our end, our Minister of Finance, who worked very hard on this budget, made sure to fill the gaps on the fixed costs. That's where that \$4.8 billion in new funding is going, Mr. Speaker. That's why, as the feds work on the wages and the rents, we fill the gaps when it comes to helping with hydro, with the business education tax credit, which I'll remind members gives fairness across the province, as well as the small business property tax rate.

This is a tool for municipalities to help retool their small businesses up and down main street, and our government will match the reductions at that level. If a municipality like Toronto wanted to distinguish that there is indeed a difference between two coffee shops next to each other, one being Starbucks and one being Mom and Dad's Java, the municipalities now have the authority or the tools to create an additional small business tax class to be able to provide additional support for those mom-and-pop shops, and our province will match the funding there to provide relief.

We also heard from many businesses, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who requested that we keep the EHT reductions, the tax on jobs, permanent. Speaker, I'm glad that our government listened, because we went one step further and we actually raised the ceiling from \$490,000 on annual wages for a small business to \$1 million a year. To be clear, a business now with a payroll of up to \$1 million a year, whether that's 10 employees or 20 employees, will pay no EHT at all. This eliminates that tax on jobs and allows these small businesses to reinvest those savings on tax into creating more jobs. Best of all, that's a permanent measure, a competitive edge as we get through our economic recovery.

We also heard from some medium-sized businesses who said that they needed relief when it came to EHT as well, and that's why businesses with a payroll from \$1 million to \$5 million a year will have an EHT reduction of 50%. This is tens of thousands of dollars in real relief. I'm sure that up and down and throughout every single one of the members opposite's ridings, there will be small businesses that welcome these tax reductions, because that is more dollars in their pocket during a time that they absolutely need it.

We're also making sure that we help with electricity rates for industrial and commercial employers. We know that the hydro in this province has been going up for a very

long time. It's because of bad contracts, terrible contracts, that are signed out till 2040 for energy we don't need—from the mistakes of the past government, supported by the opposition, that have led to the hydro situation we have today. I wish we had a magic wand that could just undo the mistakes of the past, but we don't. Ontarians have been paying for the mistakes of past governments when it comes to hydro for a long time. So this government took decisive action to make sure that that would no longer be the case. These job creators will see a hydro reduction of between 14% and 16%. We know that this is going to provide real relief for businesses.

I heard this direct from Morty's Pub in the beautiful city of Kitchener. The owners, Jay and Soupy, who sat down with me to have lunch, told me that their hydro was out of control, that they had seen it nearly double in just a decade, and that this meant that they had to make very tough business decisions. Sadly, often the toughest business decisions are made at the expense of jobs. I'm glad to report to the House that Jay and Soupy were thrilled that they were seeing that relief, if passed, of 14% to 16% on their hydro bill. This, in conjunction with the other supports that have been made available, will save Morty's tens of thousands of dollars a year, in a time when they told me they really need it the most. Again, Mr. Speaker, these are funds that can go to funding additional jobs.

I remember back to earlier this year, in January, when I was touring the province for our pre-budget consultations. I went to the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington and I visited with a company called Dajcor Aluminum. Dajcor had found great success. They were founded before the hydro file became a big mess and they were prospering. They created hundreds of jobs throughout the Chatham and Windsor area. When I met with the owners, they were proud to tell me that they had now expanded their business to the point where they needed to open a second facility. But sadly, that second facility is not being opened in Ontario; it's being opened in Kentucky. When I asked the owners of Dajcor, "Why Kentucky, when you found such great success in Ontario?", they told me simply that the hydro rates were too high.

It's not unique just to Dajcor. We heard the same from GM, a job creator of thousands in the province of Ontario, many in the great riding of Oshawa. These are the real stories of the businesses throughout this province. So I encourage the members opposite to engage with these sectors, because they are the ones telling us that they welcome this relief. They welcome the relief of 14% to 16% off their hydro bills because it allows them to remain competitive.

I was able to speak with Dajcor and remind the owners, when they expand again, to consider Ontario as the location for their next expansion. Those are the conditions that we need to create. That's what we mean by laying the foundation for the future, for one day when COVID-19 is behind us and but a distant memory. We will have planted the seeds of that competitive edge so that Ontario can lead the world in job creation. Not investing in the people of Ontario today will cost them tomorrow. So these measures

are designed to focus on those very seeds, to make sure that we are planting competitiveness for the future.

While we cannot deny that these are challenging times, we cannot forget that we face them together, that no one is alone. We face these challenges together with our families and our communities, as Team Ontario. We know, Speaker, that it will be hard, and it has been hard, but we will get through this together, because Ontarians are strong, and our government will do everything necessary to protect them.

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Speaker, this pandemic has moved very quickly, and this situation has changed not daily, but by the hour. But thanks to the dedication of Ontario's health officials, our public service and leaders at all three levels of government, we have acted just as quickly. We know that this fight isn't over, and I call on all members of this House to put partisan differences aside, to work collaboratively, as all levels of government have done throughout this pandemic, to make sure that we are talking about the best possible outcomes for the people of this province.

Speaker, our Premier said it time in and time out: Now is not the time for partisan games; now is the time to band together, to show that true Ontario spirit, to join our collective fight to protect Ontario's world-class health care system, to support families and businesses and to lay the groundwork for our future economic success. I encourage all members of this Legislature to vote in favour of Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover.

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

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to the members opposite for their debate. The member from Willowdale, earlier on, said nothing is uncertain, we must be ready for the unknown—and so I want to remind him that Ontario has had over 2,000 COVID-19 deaths in long-term care. Two days ago, I read that we have 1,248 new cases and 20 deaths in long-term care. In March, the fiscal plan had a forecast of \$4.63 billion for long-term care, and that was the same month that the Premier said, famously, "We're putting an iron ring of protection around our seniors," and that no expense would be spared to protect long-term care. It was also said by the member opposite. Meanwhile, in the city of Sudbury, St. Joe's hospital has been fighting since July to get N95 PPE; we're nearly into December.

My question, Speaker: Why is the budget for long-term care \$10 billion less than the March forecast?

Mr. Stan Cho: Thanks to the member from Sudbury for the question. I want to remind that member that there's been a huge amount of new funding for long-term care. So if we're going to just look to the only measure of success to be the funding, well, it's unprecedented in our history, with \$1.75 billion in new funding, \$785 million alone in this latest budget. So I want to remind the member that we have to look outside of funding if indeed the system is broken.

We acknowledge that the system is broken, because it was the members opposite who supported the Liberals when they did nothing to help long-term care: 611 beds

built throughout a decade, Mr. Speaker, and we all know that it takes three years—years—to build the infrastructure for those necessary beds. That's why we have created a stand-alone ministry; that's why we have dedicated record funding towards that end. No matter what, we will make sure that we protect those residents in our long-term-care system.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: As we debate the budget bill today, we have 4.6 million seniors in the province, and that represents about 16% of the population in Ontario. This budget, Speaker, as you heard today, has a home renovation tax credit available to seniors. I'd like the member from Willowdale to talk about the projected effect of that particular program on seniors in their day-to-day lives. What type of uptake does he anticipate, as well, with this program?

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you for the very important question from the member from Whitby. The member is absolutely right. We have to invest in our seniors. They built this country; they built this province. That's why this budget, along with a series of other measures announced—to the member's point, a \$30-million package to make sure that seniors can make their homes safer, they can make their homes more accessible. I discussed in my remarks some of the ways in which seniors can do this, but there's a lot of flexibility built into this program.

One thing I didn't mention in my remarks as well, Mr. Speaker, is that relief, that refund of \$2,500—I'd like to remind members that it's whether you pay taxes or not—that's available whether a senior owns their home or not. In Willowdale, I've got many multi-generational homes. In the great riding of Brampton South, I know there are many multi-generational homes. Even if seniors are living with their kids, that \$2,500 will be available to those seniors so they can also make their homes safer and they can do what they wanted to do, which is to age at home.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: The member from Willowdale would like us to relax our critical faculties, I guess, and all band together to support his government without any criticism from this side of the House. I would beg him to remember that our job is actually to ask questions. I'm sorry if that's uncomfortable for the member, but that's our job.

I do have a question. The government this year has ordered half the amount of flu vaccines that it did previously. Our vaccination target for seniors in this province is 75%. Dr. Alykhan Abdulla from Ottawa has told me that in his practice, he has a thousand seniors and he has 30 high-dose vaccines to give to them.

So I'm wondering if the member from Willowdale has some advice for Dr. Abdulla: Should he do a raffle for those 30 to figure out which seniors get inoculated during a pandemic for flu? Can he provide a justification for us as to why his government has ordered half the amount of flu vaccines that it did last year, while we're living in a pandemic?

Mr. Stan Cho: I welcome the challenge from the opposition. That's what you're here to do; there's no question about that. But we need to deal in fact. So when the members opposite talk about contingency funds and sitting on \$9 billion, which is factually incorrect, the members opposite need to be challenged on that fact.

Let's deal in additional facts, Mr. Speaker: record contingency funds for the health and safety of the people that we serve, \$8.3 billion. That's why we were able to respond to the requests of the front-line health care workers very quickly to provide more PPE. That's why there's \$572 million to support hospitals for costs incurred during the pandemic, including testing assessment centres and lab and medical equipment. That's why we're making sure we have the necessary funds during these uncertain times to be able to move to those uncertainties and move quickly in a prudent way to help the people of this province.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to take an opportunity to ask the member from Willowdale—he's done incredible work and delivered the first budget in the middle of a global pandemic. Myself, as the son of two small business owners, and I know the member himself is the son of two small business owners—he did extensive consultation across the province on what supports are needed not just today but to make businesses competitive into the future. I was wondering if he could update the House and tell us about some of those measures, permanent measures, that he's implementing through this budget that will make Ontario more competitive, that will put more money into the pockets of hard-working business owners, and allow them to create more opportunities in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Stan Cho: I want to thank the minister for that very important question. Some of these measures that we heard throughout the pandemic from small business owners that were temporary, meant to be only for the pandemic—we heard them request that they remain permanent. We are talking about the reductions in EHT. We all know this is simply a tax on jobs. We not only kept that measure permanent, but we increased the ceiling to which businesses could apply. Now a small business will have an EHT exemption of 100% if their payroll is under \$1 million a year.

But we went further, Mr. Speaker, and heard the small business owners throughout Brampton South, throughout Willowdale, throughout Whitby, throughout Burlington, and we heard them say, "What about medium-sized businesses?" So if you have a payroll between \$1 million and \$5 million, now those businesses receive an EHT reduction of 50% as well as several other supports to make sure we will weather this storm.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: This government has talked a good talk about building new transit projects, including the four priority transit projects, including the project that is going

into the member for Willowdale's riding. The problem is that when we look at this budget, it shows a cut for transit infrastructure spending for this year from \$5.5 billion to \$4.7 billion. When you take into account the rounding, that's a \$700-million cut. Investing in transit infrastructure is critical to an economic recovery. So why is this government cutting transit infrastructure spending?

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Mr. Stan Cho: I will refer the member to page 183 of the budget, which outlines our line expenditures, which show me investments into transit. We have to remember to include the Safe Restart Agreement, which had \$4 billion for municipalities and transit systems. This includes spending into the other programs. I want to encourage members to dive deep into the figures, because the figures actually outline, line by line, those investments into critical transit.

I want to thank the member for mentioning the transit expansion in Willowdale. It is the only riding that I know of that has the dubious distinction of having two transit lines, two subway lines that just dead-end in my riding. So \$28.5 billion is going to go—and I'm so happy to say this, I can't stop smiling—to make sure that that is no longer the case, that Willowdale will see a transit expansion, that we will extend the Yonge North line to the great city of Richmond Hill and extend the Ontario Line so we have a relief line downtown.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Like many members here in the chamber today, we've hosted virtual town halls with members of our small business community, but in particular the travel and cultural sectors of my riding have certainly been challenged by the pandemic. I'd like the member from Willowdale to talk about the feature within the Ontario budget that's going to address some of the challenges within the travel industry, but more importantly, for the broader community.

Mr. Stan Cho: I have limited time to talk about this, but \$100 million over two years for the community building fund to support tourism, culture and sport organizations, and one-time emergency funding of \$25 million for Ontario's arts institutions to help cover operating losses. And I can't wait to talk about the year of the staycation in 2021, when the conditions are safe to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Are we ready for statements? We're a little bit early, but rather than take a recess.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Kulvir, like many Bramptonians, is an essential worker who lives at home with his wife, his kids and his parents. One day, his dad was complaining about a cough. He was a healthy guy with no

underlying health issues, but just to be safe, Kulvir dropped his dad off at the hospital. He didn't know, but that would be the last time he would ever see his dad. His dad died from COVID-19.

His story is the story of Brampton. We are a city of essential workers who don't have the privilege to work from home. Is that our fault? We are city of workers who literally risk their lives every day moving our economy in trucking and in factories so that others can work from home. Is that our fault?

Now Bramptonians are being told that we're to blame for the spread of COVID-19 in our city. Well, are we to blame for the fact that we're a city of over 600,000 people with only one hospital? Are we to blame for the fact that our health care system is broken, and this Conservative government, just like the Liberals before them, has decided to do nothing? Are we to blame for the fact that this Conservative government has voted no to a 15-student class size cap—and the resulting COVID-19 outbreaks in our schools? Are we to blame for the fact that this Conservative government has abandoned Brampton during a pandemic?

Well, I won't. I'm going to stand up for Brampton because I love this city. Our city deserves better. We deserve more than one hospital. We deserve a health care system that works. We're a city of fighters. We're going to keep on fighting until we get the support that we need so Brampton can beat the COVID-19 pandemic.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Last Thursday, Minister Phillips and I had the privilege of hearing directly from small business owners in Niagara West in a virtual town hall organized by three of our local chambers of commerce.

Minister Phillips highlighted how measures in the 2020 Ontario budget are directly helping Niagara's job creators and across the province by ensuring that we have a strong economy by lowering electricity prices, providing property tax relief, cutting red tape and supporting in-demand trades through training and upgrading skills.

The minister and I heard from several local business owners as they stressed the importance of reducing business education tax rates, supports for new businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs, promoting our local grape and wine industry and addressing Ontario's job-killing electricity prices.

I am proud to be part of a team, including Premier Doug Ford and the Minister of Finance, who understand the challenges facing job creators. Almost 98% of employer businesses in Canada are small businesses, and Ontario has the highest number of small businesses in the country. Small businesses are the engine of our economy and vital to our recovery from COVID-19 and the future prosperity of our province.

I want to thank Rebecca Shelley, executive director of the Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce; Anna Murre, executive director of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce; and Denise Potter, executive director of the

West Lincoln Chamber of Commerce for hosting last Thursday's virtual town hall and for all the hard work local chambers do to support small businesses in our region.

Our action plan to protect, support and recover is further proof that our government stands side by side with small business owners in Niagara and across the province.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Last week we held a town hall on long-term care in Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, and I want to thank everyone for participating and for sharing your stories and your concerns about what's happening to the workers and to our residents living in long-term care. I imagine our conversation was very similar to ones that are taking place at kitchen tables across Ontario as people continue to worry about residents and our seniors in long-term care.

We talked about the awful lessons we all learned during the first wave; the shocking Canadian Armed Forces report; the need for full-time, well-paid PSWs; the need to mandate and to fund a minimum of four hours of hands-on care; and evidence that tells us residents in for-profit long-term-care homes are four times more likely to die than those in publicly funded homes. We all agreed that urgent action was needed before we lost more lives.

We listened to the Premier and Minister Fullerton say all the right words while we waited for action, but we now know without a shadow of a doubt that those were empty words, because, instead of action to protect our seniors, the Premier rushed through Bill 218. This is a terrible bill that will protect for-profit long-term-care corporations from any liability or accountability for death during the first wave and now for deaths that are happening in the second wave.

Instead of protection for residents in long-term care, this government is protecting for-profit long-term-care corporations. Instead of an iron ring around our loved ones, the Premier is putting an iron ring around bad operators in long-term care. This is a cold-blooded bill, and the Premier and the Minister of Long-Term Care should be ashamed of themselves.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Billy Pang: This month I attended Union Villa Long-Term Care's 50th anniversary celebration. For 50 years, the wonderful facility, staff and volunteers have given outstanding care to their residents through kindness, love and respect. Throughout this pandemic, they continued to find innovative and safe ways to entertain and ensure its residents are connected to their families and community. I want to congratulate Union Villa Long-Term Care for this memorable milestone.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to serve and protect long-term-care residents, staff and visitors. That's why over the next five years our government is investing \$1.75 billion in long-term-care homes, and introduced a

redesigned funding model that will help build and modernize care homes and deliver the government's commitment to creating 30,000 long-term-care beds over 10 years.

To help seniors on long-term-care wait-lists, our government launched the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care program in five communities across the province. This \$5-million program will leverage the skills of paramedicine practitioners and provide seniors on the wait-list with access to health care 24/7 and in-home testing procedures.

Mr. Speaker, our seniors built our province, and our government is committed to taking every measure and action possible to support them now and beyond.

PAT SAUNDERS

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I want to recognize Pat Saunders, a trailblazer and long-time community activist in my city of Hamilton. Pat recently celebrated her 90th birthday, and I want to wish her a very happy birthday.

Pat has contributed to more than 60 years of community service in the area of women's well-being, civic engagement, mental health and heritage. Her list of accomplishments is long. She helped found the first women's centre and helped create the Women of Distinction Awards. She was a founding member of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Hamilton branch, and helped establish a mental health clinic to serve our community.

She was the first woman chair of the Hamilton-Wentworth Police Services Board, and she is still very active in local history and heritage groups. She has saved historical buildings from demolition and moved the city of Hamilton to better recognize local historical figures.

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In 2019, Pat was inducted into the Hamilton Gallery of Distinction for her substantial and lasting impact on our city.

On her 90th birthday, Pat wore a T-shirt that read, "The first 90 years of childhood are always the hardest." That is Pat's spirit. She is a spitfire.

Happy birthday, Pat. Thank you for all of your hard work that you have done and continue to do to make Hamilton a better place to live for us all. Happy birthday.

RICHARD ROHMER

M^{me} Lucille Collard: It is my pleasure to rise to honour the long service and courage of Lieutenant General Richard Rohmer, a many-times decorated veteran with decades of service in the Canadian Armed Forces. Having enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force at the age of 18, Lieutenant General Rohmer served as a fighter-reconnaissance pilot during the Second World War. He took part in the D-Day operation in Normandy and served in Holland, Belgium and Germany, completing a 135-mission tour of operations in November of 1944, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

A lawyer of aviation and commercial litigation—and as far as I know, apparently he still practises—author, historian, raconteur and friend of the royal family, Lieutenant General Rohmer is one of the most highly decorated Canadians ever. He remains an active member of the community, and he also helped to create the veterans memorial here at Queen's Park. Lieutenant General Rohmer, now 96 years old, continues to be a strong advocate for veterans and faithfully participates each year in Remembrance Day ceremonies.

I wanted to take the time today to recognize the remarkable contributions that he has made to this province, to this country, to our military. Thank you, Lieutenant General Rohmer, for your many years of distinguished service.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Lindsey Park: On Friday, I had the privilege of joining our Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, and Ontario Power Generation at the Darlington nuclear generating station in Clarington for some very exciting news. OPG announced that they are resuming planning activities to host an on-grid small modular reactor for future nuclear power generation at Darlington.

Speaker, earlier this year, I was pleased to table motion 91 in the Ontario Legislature, a motion to include nuclear energy and the development of small modular reactors as a clean energy option in its environment, climate change and clean energy planning and policies. Friday's announcement is a step towards that vision, a step towards our clean energy future.

Climate change is a challenge facing us all. This global challenge requires serious solutions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario and across the globe. Nuclear power is one of those solutions. Because of nuclear power, Ontario has one of the cleanest electricity grids in the world. Nuclear energy is clean energy. Now is the time to commit—and we recognize it—to including clean, reliable nuclear technology in our clean energy future for the next generation in Ontario and around the world.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a very, very important situation that we're facing with COVID-19 and the second wave coming up, specifically around long-term-care homes. We have seen that it hasn't gotten better, and the government lacked the planning for the second wave. There were many lessons learned in the first wave that we could have adopted; for example, having the right PPE, making sure that every home had access to the PPE that they needed; making sure that PSWs had full-time jobs where they were only able to work in one location so that they wouldn't be spreading it from place to place; making sure that PSW jobs were a living wage, respecting the work that they did. But not only that—because if we had those things in place, like the Time to Care bill, where we had four hours of direct, hands-on care, we would have

saved lives. Our loved ones, our grandparents who built this province, who raised us, deserve so much better than what's been happening right now.

It's true—and the government has known this for a long time; successive governments have known this for so many years—we have not acted when we're supposed to. Now, we have an opportunity, and the government announced in 2025 that they're going to have an average of four hours of care. That isn't what's needed. From report after report, expert after expert, it needs to be four hours minimum of direct, hands-on care. That's why I ask this government again to pass my Time to Care bill.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to rise today about exciting research related to early detection of COVID-19 in waste water. As identified last week in the provincial budget, waste water testing can be a crucial component in preparing for future waves of COVID.

Researchers from Ontario Tech University's faculty of science are working with the Durham region public health department, the regional works department and other key partners to collect and test dozens of untreated sewage samples weekly from multiple water pollution control plants across Durham.

This waste water monitoring will provide reliable data for potential infections within a particular area—in some cases, between five and 10 days before residents start to show infection symptoms—providing community health officials with new tools to protect the public.

Not only does this research have broad applications across communities, but I understand it can be specifically targeted to long-term-care homes eventually to improve the protection of our seniors. I'm proud to inform the Legislature about this vital work in Durham region led by Ontario Tech University to protect Ontario during this pandemic and potential future ones.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The time for members' statements has expired.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, as you know, our leader is doing a pre-op medical exam tomorrow, and we're seeking unanimous consent for opposition day 2 in the name of Ms. Horwath, scheduled to be debated on Wednesday, November 18, 2020, to be rescheduled to be debated today, Tuesday, November 17.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for opposition day 2 in the name of Ms. Horwath, scheduled to be debated on Wednesday, November 18, 2020, to be rescheduled to be debated on Tuesday, November 17, 2020. Agreed? I heard a no.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Seeing that the government has said no, I seek unanimous consent for the member from Brampton Centre to move the opposition day motion instead of Ms. Horwath on Wednesday.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Timmins is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for Brampton Centre to move the opposition day motion on Wednesday instead of Ms. Horwath. Agreed? I heard a no.

Another point of order?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm just asking the government House leader if we're expecting the Premier. We may need to stand down our lead.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I will ask all members not to make explicit reference to the absence of any member of the House for obvious reasons at this time. It's never in order; it's especially inappropriate at this time.

But I think I did hear you say you're seeking unanimous consent of the House to stand down the leads, which is an appropriate thing to seek. Agreed? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I will call the House to order so that we can commence question period.

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QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier told reporters, "I won't hesitate to lock things down." Unfortunately, it seems obvious to everyone—perhaps except for the Premier—that he will hesitate to put recommended public health measures in place even when lives are at stake.

If the Premier meant what he said yesterday, perhaps then he could tell us today exactly what the threshold will be for this lockdown.

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question, Mr. Speaker. All throughout this pandemic, what we do as a team and as a province—we listen to our professional health experts. That's what we are going to continue to do, listen to the health experts and listen to Dr. Williams and the health team.

When we see the numbers going up as we did, we acted immediately. When we saw numbers potentially hitting 6,500 cases a day, again, we acted immediately. We lowered the threshold, and I know the health experts around the province thanked us for doing that, along with many local mayors right across the regions.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in fact, on this side of the House, we are siding with doctors and front-line health experts calling for a "circuit breaker" to halt the pandemic spread, and support for small businesses being devastated by the second wave of the pandemic. Sadly, the Premier

has decided to gamble with people's lives, even when his own health experts begged him not to.

At what point will the Premier admit that crushing the virus is, in fact, the best way to protect small businesses and jobs, and offer the financial support that businesses need to survive instead of leaving them on their own?

Hon. Doug Ford: First of all, you can't have it both ways. You can't vote against our budgets, supporting small businesses to the tune of billions and billions of dollars, and then come out and say: What are we doing for small businesses? There has never been a more pro small business government ever in the history of this province than this government that we have right here.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the budget that our great finance minister put together, we put a tax reduction that will reduce all BET rates by 0.88%. That equals thousands and thousands of dollars for these small businesses. It will benefit, as a matter of fact, over 200,000 businesses and properties, or 94% of all business properties in Ontario. This represents a reduction of 30% for businesses subject to the highest rates, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have news for the Premier: A business education tax reduction is not going to matter if you can't pay your bills and you're out of business boarding up your front windows and doors.

The Premier needs to realize, however, that there are lives at stake here. It isn't a time for empty promises and make-believe claims about flattening the curve.

Yesterday, the Chief Medical Officer of Health for this province actually said Ontario could be in the green zone by Christmas, yet the government's current path actually leaves us racing in exactly the opposite direction.

When will the Premier make crushing the virus the priority, put health measures in place that will actually slow the spread and offer direct, immediate support to businesses to help them survive, which is what they've been asking for and still don't have?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, not only are we lowering the BET, we're also looking at the EHT, the payroll exemption of about \$490,000 to \$1 million, which is absolutely huge. This meant 90% of Ontario private sector employers are exempt from paying the EHT. That's, again, money being put in the pockets of small businesses. We also have \$14,500 monthly rent that they could save over a certain period of time—that's roughly 90% of rent relief.

Mr. Speaker, we have put in billions and billions of dollars, no matter if it's 65% of the payroll, if it's 90% with co-operation with the federal government, 90% with rent subsidy. We're there to help the small businesses. I just wish the Leader of the Opposition would vote for some of these bills that support small businesses than always vote against small businesses and the hard-working people of Ontario.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, but I think everybody who understands what the

EHT is knows that small businesses are not going to benefit, because it's about businesses with big payrolls, not small businesses. We know what the threshold was, we know what the new threshold is, and it's really clear that the Premier is trying to make something out of nothing.

But nonetheless, throughout the pandemic the Premier has repeatedly insisted, "You know what I know." But it's become even more clear over the last week that that is just not the case. It has not been the case, and it's become more clear. Yesterday, Toronto's Board of Health was informed that every member of the provincial table providing public health advice to senior government officials has been made to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

If the Premier wants us all to know what he knows, why is he muzzling people who are advising the government?

Hon. Doug Ford: Going back to businesses from the beginning of this, unfortunately, through COVID, there were 1.1 million jobs that disappeared because of COVID. From June to October, Ontario gained 868,000 more jobs back; 144,000 more manufacturing jobs we've regained from June to October. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we have more manufacturing jobs now than we did pre-pandemic. We're going to continue supporting the small businesses.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, Her Majesty's loyal opposition is going to keep asking the Premier to be transparent about the decisions he's making on COVID-19. Muzzling health experts would be concerning at any time, but it's especially concerning in the middle of a worldwide pandemic. It is outright dangerous when you have a Premier who has already proven that he will claim he has the support of health experts even when they disagree with him. Will the government stop muzzling these experts, make all recommendations from the COVID-19 tables public today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize. Stop the clock. The Minister of Education, come to order. The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, come to order.

Start the clock. The Leader of the Opposition can resume.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Will the government stop muzzling these experts, make all recommendations from the COVID-19 tables public today and tear up those non-disclosure agreements?

Hon. Doug Ford: I feel it's very insulting towards our great medical team that's been working here day in and day out. That being said, there is no government, there is no elected official that has been out there every single day like we have. Our team has been out there at 1 o'clock. If you want to know what's going on, Mr. Speaker—I'm being transparent—it's at 1 o'clock that we go out there every single day.

What I don't accept, someone criticizing me—the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Liberals, they've been hiding out like Bonnie and Clyde for the last seven months. That's what bothers me.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, you know what? That kind of nonsense from the Premier of Ontario in the midst of the global pandemic is nothing less than shameful and irresponsible. He has to answer questions of the official opposition whether he likes it or he doesn't.

It became tragically clear last week that the Premier will claim that he has the support of medical experts even when those experts disagree with him during a pandemic when people's lives are at stake. The people of Ontario have a right to know when the Premier is following the best medical advice and when he's rolling the dice with their health and with their well-being.

How can anyone believe the Premier is following the advice of experts when he's actually literally muzzling them, preventing them from sharing the advice with the public?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, our government has been completely transparent with the public since this pandemic began with the briefings that we have every day at 1 o'clock where the Premier comes out and answers questions from the media on a whole variety of topics. We also have Dr. Williams coming out two times a week to independently answer questions. All of that is completely independent. People can ask whatever questions they wish to ask. We also have our modelling experts come out.

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As to the suggestion that every single member of the pandemic table should be coming out with their views of things one bit at a time, that's not the way this thing works. What happens is, we receive the recommendations through Dr. Williams. That is something that cabinet then discusses and makes final decisions upon. That is the way any private sector organization or not-for-profit operates. You don't have all the directors speaking; you have one representative speaking—and that representative is Dr. Williams. We rely on his advice every single time.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. As outbreaks in long-term care continue to grow faster and larger by the day, the minister continues to pretend that everything is A-okay; their stats show they've got everything under control. But while this government downplays how many seniors are getting sick or dying, nearly 250 more residents have already lost their lives in this new wave of outbreaks.

Speaker, the minister and the Premier want a pat on the back for saying things are going better than the first wave, when over 1,800 seniors lost their lives in long-term-care homes, but the cold statistics can't hide the fact that families are losing their loved ones. The people who have lost their lives are more than just statistics. Their families are devastated.

Why won't this government act now?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Our government has been absolutely clear that the top priority is the safety and well-being of residents, staff and loved ones in long-term care; there is no doubt about that. We have put every measure behind that, starting with the urgent and decisive action that we took at the beginning of this pandemic—\$243 million to help stabilize the sector, that went out.

Recently, we announced another over half a billion dollars—\$540 million—including staffing supports, including dollars for operational specs to improve infection prevention and control.

The list goes on in terms of the dollars that we have resourced our long-term-care sector to support them in their time of need—\$40 million to support homes that have been impacted by the changes in the occupancy that we've had to address because of ward rooms and the 1972-built homes that were so badly neglected by the previous government and supported by the NDP; and the PPE, getting all of these measures to our long-term-care homes.

We have taken decisive action for the benefit of—

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I'm asking the Premier. The government's handling of the first wave was so bad that families of those who died at Orchard Villa, one of the worst-hit homes in the first wave, are now concerned that not only are these homes covering up the number of people who died from COVID-19, but they're also concerned about deaths that the homes say were from COVID-19—but they believe that they're really from starvation, dehydration and neglect. This is what the families are saying. That's what they want to know. They planned to take Orchard Villa to court in order to get answers, but the government has now changed the law, making it nearly impossible to take for-profit homes to court.

Why are the Premier and the minister still protecting their friends running private, for-profit long-term-care homes? When are they going to do the right thing and just take over all these homes and ensure that this gets sorted out and that this never happens again?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Let me be absolutely clear: Individuals and organizations that ignore public health guidance and act with gross negligence or intentional misconduct will not be protected by this legislation. The narrow-targeted civil liability protection in this legislation has only to do with the inadvertent transmission of COVID-19 and nothing else. This legislation does not protect any other type of negligence that we heard from the opposition in this House or at committee, like if a resident is not given proper medication, or if a long-term-care provider fails to provide the necessities of life, or if a long-term-care operator communicates inadequately with families. Ontarians will continue to be able to file claims and seek justice in the court for all of these matters.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Premier: Premier, as we work through the second wave of COVID-19, now more than ever we have to make sure our health care heroes have the access to the critical PPE they need to keep themselves and others safe.

Early in the pandemic our government mobilized our manufacturing sources to make masks, gloves, face shields, hand sanitizer and other supplies we need. This was all able to happen in just a matter of months, not years. The response we've received has been incredible and inspiring. Ontario businesses moved fast, they innovated, they adapted, and now it's time for the government to do the same. We need to be smarter about getting those critical supplies into the hands of the front-line health care heroes.

Premier, you pushed the government to move at the speed of the private sector, and we need to make sure we're spending tax dollars wisely. When families are shopping, you go to a place, let's say a Costco, to buy groceries in bulk so you can save money, so, Premier, can you please elaborate further on how our government is ensuring that we are protecting taxpayer money—

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

The Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you so much. I want to thank the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for doing a great job. Again, people love him out there. When I go out there it's absolutely fantastic.

I want to demonstrate to everyone the current situation in Ontario—I used Canadian Tire as a good example. They have 50,000 SKUs, 50,000 different products; they have 65 procurement officers—purchasing agents—compared to Ontario here that has 7,000 purchasing agents. The system's broken, very simply.

Through the great work of our Minister of Economic Development, he has created a separate organization called Supply Ontario. Supply Ontario is going to centralize procurement, standardize procurement. Rather than going out and buying pens and paper from 10 different locations through distributors, jacking up the price, we're going to go directly to the source and we're going to be buying the pens and paper and every other supply that they need in a central procurement system. We're the first government in the history of this country that's doing that, municipally, federally or provincially—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Premier, that is absolutely great news, to hear that. This new initiative will ensure that it is easier for businesses of all sizes to work with the government of Ontario. From the mom-and-pop shops to the larger companies, our government wants to purchase and promote more Ontario-made products. Premier, thanks to your leadership, Ontario is once again a manufacturing leader in the country and in North America.

Our industries and local manufacturers have proven time and time again during this pandemic they can make anything happen. Ontario-made products are second to none in quality and excellence. With these investments and today's announcement, we are making sure that Ontario will never ever be left at the mercy of other countries and leaders when it comes to the critical supplies that we need.

Can the Premier please share with my constituents and all Ontarians about our government's efforts to ensure that manufacturing jobs are coming back to Ontario, especially as it relates to PPE?

Hon. Doug Ford: I thank the member there. I'm so excited to announce that we signed a contract with a company called PRIMED. PRIMED is going to make 50 million surgical masks, which is amazing. And it's amazing for the people of Cambridge. Congratulations, Cambridge, for attracting such a great company, to see them expand.

Not only PRIMED, but, as you remember, Mr. Speaker, we signed a great deal with 3M over in Brockville, again, to produce millions and millions of N95 respirators, which is great, great news. We also want to thank Linamar and O-Two Medical Technologies for investing in ventilators.

Now we don't have to rely on anyone; we're under no one's thumbs. We can manufacture anything here in Ontario. We're doing that. We're going to be self-sufficient. Not only are we going to supply Ontario, we're going to supply the rest of the country when they need PPE.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Ontario hospitals are struggling with a tidal wave of COVID patients, and cases continue to spike every single day. The strain on our system caused by the government's chronic underfunding and slow adoption of public health recommendations will have a lifelong impact on children awaiting pediatric surgery. At SickKids, two thirds of the children waiting for surgery are now outside of the developmental window for when their surgery should have been performed.

The government refused to listen to advice, and now COVID cases are surging in our hospitals and 4,750 children are languishing on surgical wait-lists. Why did the government refuse to listen to the best medical advice from our hospitals?

1050

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. This is a really important topic. But we have been listening to the experts. In fact, continuing with the surgeries and procedures that were postponed during wave 1 is part of our fall preparedness plan. We want to make sure that even as we're dealing with increases in cases of COVID-19 and dealing with the flu season, we can continue with those surgeries and procedures.

It is particularly concerning with respect to children. I have been involved in several conversations with the children's hospitals and with parents of some of those children who are very concerned that these procedures need to go on so that their children can continue to develop, continue with their normal development and, in some cases, be able to walk with some of the supports they're receiving. This is something that is particularly important to us and one of the key parts of our fall preparedness plan that we need to keep moving so that these children get the support they need.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The disturbing pattern of increased cases has only made the situation in our hospitals more desperate. It should never have come to this.

By adopting recommendations from our hospitals early and making proactive investments, this exponential spread could all have been avoided and these children could have gotten the surgeries they need. As Dr. Kelley said, children with scoliosis, cleft palate, hip dysplasia and limb deficiencies are losing developmental ground they will not be able to make up.

Make no mistake, Speaker: Once the window is gone, it never comes back. But the government has prioritized businesses over the health of sick Ontario children. Why do doctors and public health experts in our hospitals have to beg for help from this government?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the member opposite, through you, Mr. Speaker, that it's absolutely to the contrary. The health and well-being of all Ontarians, particularly our children, is our top priority, full stop. We want to make sure that everybody gets the help they need, and we know through discussions with the Hospital for Sick Children, CHEO and others that there are many procedures for children that need to be advanced.

That is why we have created additional capacity in our hospitals. We've added more than 3,000 new hospital beds since the beginning of this pandemic to be able to handle the additional capacity, and that, of course, includes in our children's hospitals: CHEO, the Hospital for Sick Children, McMaster. All the hospitals that are providing support to children are getting the resources and the help they need, because health is our number one priority and we need to make sure that all of these children get the support they need right now, because it's key to their development.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. After Hurricane Hazel claimed 81 lives, destroyed nearly 2,000 homes and cost us \$1.3 billion in 1954 dollars, Ontario strengthened the mandate for conservation authorities to protect us from flooding. Their work has been a huge success. A resident in the Grand River watershed pays just \$2.81 per year to protect their lives and property from flood damage. It's a bargain,

especially when you consider that the average cost of cleaning up a basement flood is \$43,000.

Speaker, one of the tragic lessons we've learned from COVID is that failing to listen to scientists can have catastrophic consequences, so I ask, why is the Premier risking people's lives and billions of dollars in property damage by gutting the non-partisan, science-based expert conservation authorities—

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

The government House leader to reply.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I completely disagree with the member opposite. In fact, the proposed legislation does just the opposite. It refocuses the conservation authorities on their core mandate, on, as the member opposite mentioned, flood mitigation. That's what is very, very important. It changes the composition of the boards of conservation authorities to ensure that elected officials are part of those boards. It goes a little bit further than that. It ensures there are representatives of the agricultural community on that.

I agree with the honourable gentleman: The conservation authorities do have an important role to play, and that role is flood mitigation. This legislation will redouble their efforts on that while making it more accountable to the people.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, with all due respect to that answer, I would suggest that the government House leader actually read the legislation, because what it does is it takes the power of conservation authorities to make science- and evidence-based decisions and puts it in the hands of the minister to make politically based decisions that can put development in the wrong place.

Here's the bottom line, Speaker, and this something I really believe the government needs to understand: When you allow development to happen in the wrong places, it can have catastrophic consequences. When you pave over wetlands and green space, there is no place for floodwater to go. It can only go into our streets. It can only go to places that damage our infrastructure. It floods people's basements.

The Premier says, "Call me if you have a problem." So if your basement is flooded, can people call the Premier and ask for the \$43,000 to clean up the mess this decision—

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: One would wonder, if the conservation authorities were doing such a good job, why there are flooded basements at all across the province of Ontario. What the member talks about is completely wrong. What we're doing is strengthening conservation authorities to do exactly what he says: to bring it back to its core mandate, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I know that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Leader of the Opposition, come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —the opposition are opposed to accountability, and that's why they are against the changes that we're proposing on the conservation authorities, by making sure that elected officials are—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know that they're not in favour of enhancing the roles of agricultural communities when it comes to conservation. We believe just the opposite. That's why this legislation does that.

But I agree with the honourable gentleman: For far too long, our conservation authorities have strayed from their mandate. That's why we have flooding in basements. That's why the people of Mississauga have had to endure so many challenges. This legislation brings us back to the original mandate while making it more responsible to elected officials.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Could you please stop the clock for a second? We've got about halfway to go. I think the people of Ontario would expect a certain standard of professionalism and decorum in the House today.

Start the clock. The next question.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M. Sam Oosterhoff: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Affaires francophones.

La pandémie a été particulièrement difficile pour les organismes à but non lucratif francophones, qui offrent des services essentiels à leur communauté. Qu'est-ce que le gouvernement a fait pour répondre aux besoins des organismes à but non lucratif francophones?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie mon collègue pour sa question. Dès le début de la pandémie, j'ai établi un conseil consultatif sur la relance économique francophone afin de comprendre et de répondre aux besoins de la communauté francophone. Nous avons répondu à la recommandation première du comité, soit d'investir 500 000 \$ dans la création d'un réseau économique francophone et dans une campagne de promotion de produits et de services franco-ontariens.

J'étais fière d'obtenir l'appui de Glenn O'Farrell, conseiller spécial en développement économique francophone pour ces projets. Il a déclaré : « Cette mesure concrète du gouvernement répond aux besoins clairement exprimés lors des consultations de la ministre. Les entrepreneurs et le milieu des affaires francophones de l'Ontario tireront certainement parti de ces deux initiatives complémentaires qui contribueront à renforcer l'avantage économique que représente la francophonie de l'Ontario. »

Monsieur le Président, dans le cadre du budget 2020, nous avons annoncé un investissement de 2 millions de dollars pour un fonds de secours pour les organismes—

Le Président (L'hon. Ted Arnott): Merci.

The supplementary question.

M. Sam Oosterhoff: Merci pour cette réponse. Je remercie la ministre pour tout son travail au soutien de la communauté francophone. Peut-elle expliquer aux députés ci-présents comment elle travaille directement avec les communautés franco-ontariennes pour répondre à leurs besoins importants?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie mon collègue encore une fois pour sa question.

Dans le cadre du budget 2020, nous avons mis sur place un nouveau groupe de travail unissant le ministère des Affaires francophones et l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario afin de maximiser l'aide aux organismes à travers les différents programmes gouvernementaux qui existent déjà.

Sur ce nouveau groupe de travail, Carol Jolin, le président de l'AFO, a déclaré : « Je suis heureux que le gouvernement de l'Ontario, et plus particulièrement la ministre des Affaires francophones, nous ait entendus et souhaite poursuivre la discussion au sein du groupe de travail. »

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Monsieur le Président, nous avons également mis en place plusieurs recommandations du conseil consultatif lors du budget pour répondre aux besoins et aux aspirations des francophones : notamment, un investissement de 680 millions de dollars dans l'amélioration du service Internet à large bande, un investissement de 59,5 millions de dollars dans une stratégie de micro-crédit en relation avec les métiers spécialisés et un financement d'urgence en arts et en culture de 25 millions de dollars.

COLLEGE STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, Ontarians are outraged that the Premier's long-time political supporter Charles McVety is getting a new university from this government. It's a strange coincidence that in the PC race just over two years ago, the Premier used Canada Christian College as a voter booth for his party leadership. The Premier tweeted for his supporters to go to the college to vote for him, following weeks of campaigning for him by Charles McVety, but strangely, neither the college nor the Premier himself have claimed this on their charity returns or on the leadership campaign expenses.

Ontarians deserve to know why this government, in the middle of a pandemic, has prioritized legislation to give Charles McVety a degree-granting university. Did the Premier insert this section in the bill as payback for Charles McVety's support in his leadership race—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): —imputing motive, and I would caution the member: You can't impute motive. It was raised as a question.

The Minister of Colleges and Universities to reply.

Hon. Ross Romano: The answer is simple, Mr. Speaker: There are three universities or colleges that are seeking university status in the legislation that is presently before this House, presently being debated. All of those

institutions are moving forward in a process. The institution that has been referenced here is in the midst of the process, which is—as I've explained numerous times in this House and will continue to explain—part of a process that we have put together to ensure the most transparent and accountable way of ensuring that we follow the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees that every individual has the right to life, liberty and security of the person, and not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

Mr. Speaker, every person has the right to be equal before and under the law, and they have the benefit of equal protection and equal benefits under the law without discrimination. We have a fair, transparent process, and that's what we'll continue to do.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Back to the Premier: Upholding election law is fundamental to our roles as legislators. Elections Ontario rules are clear that the Premier's renting of space at the college should have been recorded as an expense, but no one can find that kind of an expense anywhere.

This legislation would give Charles McVety an even bigger platform to spew his hatred, bigotry and intolerance, and Ontarians remain committed to ensuring that we uphold people's human rights. They are reaching out to me, asking, "Why is this prioritized in this legislation?"

So far, the Premier has sat silent while Charles McVety took nearly a million dollars in loans from the college, and he has nothing to say about Charles McVety's hateful rhetoric or intolerance. So will the Premier finally speak up and tell Ontarians whether Bill 213 is a reward for Mr. McVety or if Bill 213 is actually supposed to be there to help small businesses?

Hon. Ross Romano: As we indicated—and will indicate time and time again—this bill is about reducing red tape. This is about something that we've done in the past and we will continue to do moving forward. We have created a system for obtaining this type of status that is clear. It is transparent. It is accountable. It follows the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We have continually spoken about this, and we have continually indicated that we are creating the most fair and transparent process. We took a ministerial consent process and we made it entirely independent and reviewed by an independent body.

We have legislation which is here in this House that is being debated openly in this House—transparently, Mr. Speaker. Why does the opposition—all members of the opposition—continually ask us to interfere with an independent process? It's illegal, Mr. Speaker. You can't interfere with independent processes.

COLLEGE STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier.

I had a question about the flu shot, but all week long, I've been—last week, when I was back home in my riding—thinking about one thing: There are thousands of Muslim families who live in my riding, thousands of Muslim children who go to Ontario's publicly funded schools. There are more than 600,000 Muslims in Ontario. Many of them live here in Toronto—in your riding, Premier, as well—thousands of children in school. Charles McVety, amongst the other hateful things that he has said about the Muslim faith, has said that it's not a faith, that it's a hostile takeover. What he's saying to those children and to those families is, "Your faith is a threat." I can't think of anything worse.

So Premier, through the Speaker to you, can you stand up today and disavow yourself of that statement that Charles McVety made? I need you to stand up—Ontario's Muslims need you to stand up and say that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind all members to make their comments through the Chair. Please make your comments through the Chair.

The Minister of Colleges and Universities to respond.

Hon. Ross Romano: Again, to the member opposite, to all the members of the opposition: It is impossible to interfere with an independent process. I know they have no respect for the charter; they demonstrate that over and over again. On this side of the House, we believe in the values of the charter. We believe in the values of fundamental justice. We believe in process, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The official opposition will come to order and allow the minister to respond.

The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Ross Romano: As the member from Hamilton Centre, I believe, indicated, there is a licensing process, and when any individual applies for a licence or a designation of this nature, they have the right to make that application. The application, under ministerial consent, goes directly to the independent reviewing body. We have no influence. We have no part to play in it. That application goes directly to that body. What would the opposition have me do? Hack the computer systems? I'm not sure what they think we can do. There is no basis to interfere with—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Fraser: That was disappointing.

I'll try to put it another way. In this building, in this room, there are people of the Muslim faith. They work all the way through government, in hospitals, in long-term-care homes, all across this province. Charles McVety has said that their faith is a threat. He's getting a special deal. There's no question about that. We know that. It's evident. Members are uncomfortable all over this House. I can see it in their faces. This can't continue.

Leadership means sometimes you stand up and say, "We're going this way," and then everybody else has to follow. So what we need is for the Premier to stand up today and say, "I am instructing my House leader to

remove schedule 2 from Bill 213," and put an end to this debacle.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Liberal member—he can play politics and bring in the Muslim community. What he hasn't done that I have done, our family has done—we brought a young Muslim boy into our family, who lived with us for 10 years—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the Premier. I have to interrupt.

I'm asking the official opposition to come to order. The clock is ticking.

The Premier has the floor to respond.

Hon. Doug Ford: I call Mohsine my Muslim brother, who I shared a room with, I shared my clothes with, I shared my food with for 10 years. That's what you don't understand. You're playing politics. I don't play politics. I support the Muslim community unequivocally, 1,000%—no arguments.

Interjection.

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

The member for Ottawa Centre will withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Joel Harden: I can't withdraw, Speaker. This man is supporting a bigot.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will give the member for Ottawa Centre one more opportunity to withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Joel Harden: Withdraw, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The government House leader will come to order. The member for Ottawa Centre withdrew the comment.

Restart the clock. The next question.

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COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Jane McKenna: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. In response to COVID-19, Ontario's inventory of PPE and other critical supplies is strong, but it did not get that way overnight. At the start of the pandemic, we discovered the existing fragmented supply chain system put us in a precarious position. We didn't have guaranteed access to the products we needed.

But our government quickly adapted and in a cross-government effort, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services worked with Sol Gen to get masks to firefighters, with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to supply the food industry, with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to get med students N95s, and with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to meet the needs of women's shelters. The list goes on and on.

On Monday, MGCS announced the next step in our coordinated effort to shore up our supply chain and ensure we are never left with low quantities again. Can the Minister of Government and Consumer Services explain

how our new supply chain agency, Supply Ontario, will ensure that we have stable access to critical supplies?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you to the member for Burlington for this very important question, because I want to recognize the efforts of our ministries, which have worked so well together to ensure that we modernized a fragmented system that had thousands of entities purchasing. Now, through our leadership, our government—Ontario—is going to buy as one.

In short, Supply Ontario will lead by example when it comes to supply management. We will manage inventory to ensure that we have the supply that meets our demand from sector to sector, ultimately ensuring that we have the resources to keep Ontarians safe and secure.

It will leverage, also, the experience that we have of the businesses that stepped up during the pandemic and answered the Premier's call. We also had hundreds of consultations, whereby people wanted to be involved in this modernized approach to supply management. Supply Ontario's objective is simple—

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: This is very welcome news. Speaker, by enabling our entire public sector to buy as one, it is easy to see that Supply Ontario will deliver better value to taxpayers.

When people go shopping, they often buy in bulk to save money. They also often buy local. Looking to our education system, for example, it only makes sense to leverage the collective buying powers of school boards when building up needed PPE inventory, and to give opportunities to Ontario suppliers.

Can the minister explain how we are going to take advantage of this opportunity and drive innovation and economic development in Ontario?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you so much to the member for Burlington for your interest in this important initiative. We all should be celebrating the fact that Supply Ontario will deliver, for the first time, the best value for taxpayers by sourcing high-quality goods at scale.

I can tell you, from day one, we are very much committed to taking a regional approach, connecting businesses of all sizes and inspiring entrepreneurs, including small, medium and rural businesses of all sorts, to get involved and to have an opportunity to supply the Ontario government as well as its customers. By acting as a first purchaser for emerging technologies, Supply Ontario will pave pathways for innovation.

We just heard the Premier moments ago speak about PRIMED, a perfect example of a local, grown-in-Ontario company that stood up, and it's going to be hiring, in full production, upwards of 250 people in Cambridge.

It's important to note, Speaker, that Supply Ontario and the merits of employing a proper, modern supply management process have been well received.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is for the Premier. Today, according to the Toronto Star, Brampton has one

of the highest positive test rates in the country, at 19%. We are one of Ontario's hardest-hit regions, Mr. Speaker.

But the reality is that our health care system does not have the capacity to keep up with the demand in caseloads. The Brampton health care system has been underfunded for decades. Previous Liberal and Conservative governments have not made the investments we need to increase our health care capacity.

Brampton Civic is consistently in gridlock because of the failures of this government. That means that our hospital is not able to service patients and that outpaces the demand that our hospital is seeing. Peel region and the city of Brampton simply do not have the dedicated resources they need to prevent the crisis unfolding in our city.

Speaker, the people of Brampton are risking their lives to move goods across this province. What does the Premier have to say to those hard-working Bramptonians who can't take a day off or find a hospital bed when they need one?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. You're absolutely right; we're certainly aware that Peel, particularly Brampton, is going through a very difficult time right now with increases in COVID-19 cases, but we are supplying additional help in many areas.

First of all, we have established three new community-based testing centres that were established by November 10. We also have implemented mobile testing sites to respond to particular needs in particular communities. We also have limited walk-in availability at some of the assessment centres because we know for some people there are language barriers and other issues that present themselves that make it difficult for people to phone ahead and get an appointment. We want to make testing as easy as possible, but we also have implemented up to seven pharmacies or specimen collection centres as well. We're working on that.

We also have provided over 70 additional case and contact managers into Peel to assist with the follow-up to make sure that we can follow up with those cases that have been identified, and we have 10 public health units—

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

Ms. Sara Singh: With all due respect to the minister, the Premier continues to make these empty promises at press conferences, but folks in Brampton have yet to actually see those real investments flowing into our city.

Health officials, community members, regional council, the mayor, everyone has been clear: Brampton needs its fair share. Brampton only has 0.96 beds per 1,000 residents. The provincial average, as you know, Minister, is well above 2.19 beds per 1,000 residents. Our chronically underfunded health care system is putting our community at risk.

When is the Premier going to address these health care inequities and ensure that our growing community receives the supports we desperately need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, investments have been made in Peel region throughout this pandemic. I can also advise that we are investing \$42 million for up to 234 new

beds at three hospitals, including alternate health facilities in Peel region, to support hospital capacity pressures and the continuation of surgeries and procedures.

We are also aware that a case has been made for Peel needing a new 24-hour emergency department. We have provided a one-time planning grant of \$500,000 to support early capital planning for the Peel Memorial Centre phase 2 project. We are reviewing all additional options, including the request for 24/7 emergency funding. That is something that's working through the health department right now.

We would all like to say that this can happen tomorrow, but the reality is it can't. It takes a long time to develop a new hospital plan. It has to be done properly to properly serve the constituents of your riding.

LOGEMENT ABORDABLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Ma question est pour le ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement. À Ottawa, où se trouve ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Vanier, il y a 12 000 personnes, dont plusieurs familles, qui n'ont pas accès à un logement. En fait, depuis la pandémie, c'est plus de 12 500 maintenant. Ce chiffre est une augmentation de près de 15 % depuis 2017. Il est également estimé qu'un individu à Ottawa doit gagner au moins 26 \$ de l'heure s'il veut avoir accès à un logement avec deux chambres sans dépenser plus que 30 % de son revenu.

Contrairement aux élections municipales, monsieur le Président, la crise du logement que la pandémie a accentué est un réel problème qui nécessite une intervention urgente. Malheureusement, il n'y a aucun financement pour la construction de logements abordables dans le budget. Ma question est : qu'est-ce que le gouvernement compte faire pour aider la construction de logements abordables dont les Ontariens ont tant besoin, et de façon très urgente à Ottawa-Vanier?

L'hon. Steve Clark: Merci beaucoup à la députée de la circonscription d'Ottawa-Vanier pour la question. Pour répondre à la pandémie, notre gouvernement a investi 510 millions de dollars dans les municipalités pour créer de nouveaux logements abordables.

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Our government has been clear, Speaker, throughout the pandemic. We've provided municipalities with \$510 million to be extremely flexible and create those long-term affordable housing opportunities that our communities need, now more than ever. We're accelerating our supportive housing consultation. Right now in Ontario, we have about 20 supportive housing programs within three ministries. It's very confusing to navigate. We need to collaborate with our municipal partners. We also need to collaborate with the federal government. We are working with them, and we are providing additional dollars.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Merci pour l'introduction du français dans votre réponse. J'apprécie beaucoup l'effort.

Once again, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Earlier this fall, the federal government, through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., launched a \$1-billion Rapid Housing Initiative to help address the urgent housing needs of vulnerable Canadians. Provincial governments are eligible to apply for this funding, and the application deadline is December 31 of this year, 2020.

Can the minister reassure this House that he is taking the necessary steps to ensure that Ontarians benefit from this available federal important funding so that we can put shovels in the ground and begin to address the urgent affordable housing needs in the province?

L'hon. Steve Clark: Merci beaucoup pour la question. Après des années d'inaction dans le dossier du logement, notre gouvernement a commencé à revitaliser le secteur du logement.

I want to assure the member opposite that we are working collaboratively with the federal government. In fact, I had a fantastic conversation this morning at 8:30 with my federal counterpart, the Honourable Ahmed Hussen. We spoke about the program that the member opposite mentioned, the Rapid Housing Initiative. We're hoping that with the \$510 million we're providing municipalities and the rapid housing program at the federal level, that we can co-operate with our municipal partners to actually do what we all want. We all want safe, affordable housing built for our most vulnerable by the end of next year.

I've also offered the minister that if we have a municipality that wants to build something faster, I'd be more than happy to provide a minister zoning order to move that project forward.

MIGRANT WORKERS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is for the Premier. Good morning, everyone.

Speaker, as you know, we're well into the second wave of this COVID-19 epidemic. The first time around, migrant workers down in my area were the hardest hit. The government's response at that time was to allow them to keep working if they were infected and asymptomatic. Hundreds were contagious. Three migrant workers died in Ontario.

What is the government's plan today to get ahead and stay ahead of this next wave when it comes to the men and women from other countries working in our fields and greenhouses?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much. It's obviously a very good question. It's something that we work in co-operation with the federal government on. He is quite right. There was certainly a problem last year. We have learned a lot from the first wave, a lot of lessons learned that we will work co-operatively with the federal

government to ensure that as the next planting season comes, we will address many of these concerns.

But the member is quite right. This is an important community for us. They do so much work in our agricultural sector, and we could not be as successful as we are without their assistance.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The spike in cases down my way last week identified nearly 50 new COVID cases in the agri-food sector. We had another three cases yesterday in Essex county.

Municipal leaders say provincial leadership was missing in action for most of the first wave of this COVID crisis. Will the government commit today to invest in the resources needed to make sure migrant farm workers in Ontario have adequate sick pay and accommodations and that farmers have the support they need to ensure the safety of our local food supply?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Burlington.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much for the question. We're committed to the health and safety of all workers in this province, including temporary foreign workers. Ministry inspectors conducted 740 field visits at farms and issued 236 orders to ensure employers keep workers safe.

Health and safety laws apply to all workers in Ontario. A worker's passport does not determine how they are treated. This is not the Ontario way. All employers have a duty to protect the health and safety of their workers. Workers do not have to choose between their job and their health.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. For the last few months now, we've been hearing an alarm every day of the second wave. The Premier, his cabinet and public health continue to spread a relentless message of great danger that COVID is about to collapse our hospitals and our health care systems, and that we are in imminent peril. However, the Toronto Sun reported today the total number of COVID patients across the entire University Health Network, with over 1,200 hospital beds, including the Toronto General, Toronto Western, Princess Margaret and others.

Speaker, can the Premier inform this House how many people are presently in these five Toronto hospitals with COVID, and how many are in the ICU?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, I can certainly advise the member opposite that—you probably heard the modelling that was presented last week that indicates that we may be up to 6,500 cases per day in Ontario by mid-December, if we don't take any action. That's why we did set up the framework that we set up, to be able to move public health regions from one zone to another, with additional

restrictions, because if we don't take any action we will be in the same situation as countries like Italy and Spain and other areas where their hospitals are overwhelmed.

Right now, our hospitals are operating, most of them, at about 100% capacity, including, in some cases, even a little bit more than that. But we know that hospitalization is a lagging indicator, so as the number of cases climbs, we're going to see the number of hospitalizations climb as well. We need to do whatever we can to keep those levels under control, even as we're adding extra beds in the process.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier. I believe the Deputy Premier is preoccupied with the projections and the models. In the Toronto Sun today, the facts are that there's less than 10 in ICU with COVID—and I make this distinction: “with” but not necessarily “from” COVID. While the Premier threatens ever more business closures and restrictions, in Hamilton, St. Joe's hospital today, with over 1,200 beds, is reporting two people with COVID.

Speaker, it appears the Premier may be slightly overstating or relying on only models that have proven to be false, because the facts don't reconcile with the message. How can we consider the total closure of major cities like Hamilton due to two patients in their largest hospital? My constituents are asking me, with the Premier's relentless message of alarm, is there proof, or is it just—

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: In addition to the modelling that was presented, I can assure the member opposite that we are speaking to people on the ground each and every day within our hospital situation, in individual hospitals and within the Ontario Hospital Association.

I read this yesterday, but I think it's particularly relevant again today, from the Ontario Hospital Association, with respect to the changes that we made to our framework: “The OHA thanks the provincial government for listening to the concerns of the hospital sector and its system partners, and for its leadership in responding rapidly to the alarming COVID-19 modelling data presented yesterday.”

Those are the facts.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ian Arthur: My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. As cases rise once again, for-profit long-term-care facilities are once again failing the people of Ontario. Data shows that in homes experiencing an outbreak, for-profit homes have seen nearly 10 times the number of fatal cases per bed than not-for-profit homes—but still this government is refusing to crack down. And yesterday, with the passing of Bill 218, they've made it harder for families to hold LTC facilities to account.

Speaker, a chief investment officer for Chartwell, a for-profit LTC chaired by former Premier Mike Harris,

suggested that lawsuits from the loss of human life were—listen carefully—“frivolous,” and assured shareholders that the legislation “mitigates the risk” and makes the threshold for proving damages “very high.”

Why is the government trying to protect the profits of private LTCs instead of standing with the Ontarians who lost their loved ones during a pandemic?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond? The parliamentary assistant, the member for Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Let me be absolutely clear: Individuals and organizations that ignore public health guidance and act with gross negligence or intentional misconduct will not be protected by this legislation. The narrow, targeted civil liability protection in this legislation has only to do with the inadvertent transmission of COVID-19 and nothing else. This legislation does not protect any other type of negligence that we heard from the opposition previously or at committee, like if a resident is not given proper medication, or if a long-term-care provider fails to provide the necessities of life, or if a long-term care provider fails to communicate adequately to the families. Ontarians will continue to be able to file claims and seek justice in the court for all of these matters.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: Back to the member: They said it “mitigates the risk.” They’re no longer worried because of that legislation. So no matter what the member opposite is claiming, the people at these companies are very, very pleased with that legislation. They are very happy that they won’t be on the hook for what they did.

But now to my question. Since the beginning of this, it’s been about families who have lost loved ones—families such as Terri Daniels’s, who lives in my riding, whose father tragically passed away. I have heard an absence of comments or compassion from the members opposite for those who have lost their loved ones during this pandemic.

On Twitter and in the press, several reporters, including Mike Crawley, have criticized the Minister of Health for updates not having death tolls included in them. I decided to go back and look to see when the last time the minister had that number in her daily updates. I couldn’t find any tweets from before June 6.

I’m wondering where these tweets have gone and when the minister will actually begin giving—

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, this information is readily available to all Ontarians on the daily updates that they can see on our coronavirus site. With respect to tweets, I think it’s important to be respectful to the many families who have lost family members. This isn’t something that one should be tweeting about. This is very serious. It’s very tragic for these families. However, the information is available in another location.

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

The House recessed from 1133 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated November 17, 2020, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOCAL CHOICE FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS ACT (RANKED BALLOT BY-LAWS), 2020

LOI DE 2020 FAVORISANT LA PRISE DE DÉCISIONS À L’ÉCHELLE LOCALE (RÈGLEMENTS MUNICIPAUX SUR LE SCRUTIN PRÉFÉRENTIEL)

Ms. Hunter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 232, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 with respect to ranked ballot by-laws for council elections / Projet de loi 232, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto et la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités en ce qui concerne les règlements municipaux sur le scrutin préférentiel pour les élections au conseil.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’ll invite the member for Scarborough–Guildwood to briefly explain her bill.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: The City of Toronto Act, 2006, and the Municipal Act, 2001, are amended to allow municipal councils to pass a bylaw adopting a ranked ballot election for the election of members of their councils. The Lieutenant Governor in Council may prescribe public consultation requirements that the councils must meet before voting on a ranked ballot bylaw. The bylaw only has force and effect if ratified by more than 50% of the electors in the municipality. A procedure for the ratification vote is provided.

If ratified, the bylaws prevail over and may modify the application of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, and its regulations.

The Local Choice for Local Elections Act would allow municipalities to elect their representatives by ranked ballot elections without the provincial government’s permission.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COVID-19 RESPONSE

RÉPONSE À LA COVID-19

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'd just like to say the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have profound impacts on how we live our daily lives, how we do business and how we provide government services.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen the Ontario spirit shine through. Businesses have been stepping up by using our Ontario Together Web portal to donate hundreds of millions of pieces of personal protective equipment, worth more than \$855 million to date, to support front-line workers, who tirelessly dedicated themselves to keeping the people of Ontario safe.

The people of Ontario continue to do their part. They follow social distancing guidelines, wear masks and adapt their lives to help keep their neighbours and fellow citizens safe.

Ici à Queen's Park, nous contribuons, nous aussi, aux affaires. Nous avons pris des mesures immédiates pour protéger les Ontariens et les Ontariennes, mis en place des règles de santé publique nécessaires et offert du soutien aux hôpitaux, aux entreprises, aux ménages et au personnel de première ligne.

Every day, our website, ontario.ca/COVID19, provides thousands of Ontarians with clear, up-to-date information on the pandemic and how they can keep themselves and their loved ones safe. Already, over 15 million users have visited the site, and over four million Ontarians have used the website's COVID-19 self-assessment tool to find out if they should get tested and where their nearest assessment centre is located.

One of our most important tools is the COVID Alert app. I want to take a moment to recognize the partnerships that made this possible. Our team at the Ontario Digital Service came together with the federal government and the Canadian Digital Service, Shopify and BlackBerry to build a made-in-Ontario app that keeps people safe while also protecting their privacy. By working together—provincial and federal, public and private sector—we were able to accomplish an incredible feat in an incredibly short amount of time. Throughout this pandemic, we have seen just how much we can achieve when, as Premier Ford says, we're all pushing in the same direction. Since its launch on July 31, COVID Alert has been downloaded more than five million times by Canadians, and more provinces are adopting the app every day.

Mr. Speaker, as we have done throughout the crisis, we'll do whatever it takes to keep the people of Ontario safe, healthy and prosperous. We are committed to keeping the government services people rely on available and accessible to everyone. To that end, I stand in this House today to talk about Ontario Onwards: Ontario's COVID-19 Action Plan for a People-Focused Government.

Le plan d'action est une feuille de route visant à apporter des changements profonds et durables au sein du gouvernement. Il nous aidera à bâtir un avenir dans lequel les services gouvernementaux seront fondés sur des données et le numérique et centrés sur le client.

To accomplish this, the action plan includes more than 30 projects that will change the way people and businesses interact with government. Mr. Speaker, these projects will focus on making government services more digitally accessible. These projects will push government services to put the citizen at the centre of everything we do. For example, our digital identity wallet is one initiative that would make it safer and easier to interact with government online. Every Ontarian could have a digital identity that securely combines information they would normally keep on several pieces of government ID. This means that you can prove who you are without having to visit an in-person office or produce a specific set of plastic cards to verify your age or your address.

Of course, a key component of our plan is reducing red tape and simplifying policies, while protecting health and safety. Les projets que nous proposons faciliteront la vie des gens et des entreprises de l'Ontario. They will streamline and simplify reporting and filing processes, making the government services they require more convenient and easily accessible.

This plan also helps to bring life an important project: improving government purchasing. Nous souhaitons transformer la façon dont le gouvernement de l'Ontario achète des biens et des services. Not only will we be able to harness the power of bulk-buying to save taxpayer dollars, we will also make it easier for Ontario businesses of all sizes to compete and open up new opportunities for them.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this action plan will help us create more responsible and flexible public services. Nos projets donneront les moyens à la fonction publique et au secteur parapublic de l'Ontario de mieux servir la population de la province. This includes simplifying government forms and applications, and making services more accessible to Ontarians all the time, anywhere, from any device.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that change can happen quickly. When there is the need, the will and the dedication to see it through, it happens.

Notre plan d'action protège la sécurité et la santé de la population de l'Ontario en modifiant les façons de faire du gouvernement et en permettant l'offre de services plus pratiques, plus accessibles et mieux adaptés.

Mr. Speaker, the world has changed, and government must change with it. This action plan is just the beginning. A lot of good work has already been done, and there is more to do, but we are up for the challenge and know that the future looks bright.

1510

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have to say that I'm always curious to hear what the President of the Treasury Board has been

up to, and so this gives me an opportunity to really see the work that he's doing on behalf of the people of Ontario.

I think there's no opportunity that I like better than to be able to talk about King John and the Magna Carta, and as we know, the role of the President of the Treasury Board is simply that—it's to oversee the finances, the money, for the people of the province of Ontario. It's essentially the role of keeper of the public purse—and that's what we here in this Legislature are. We have ultimate oversight of the money that's being spent, and we are the keepers of the public purse.

While I think that the government's plan to do central procurement is a good idea, I think that we could be more efficient and that we certainly need to make sure that we are making wise and effective use of the people's money in this House.

I would caution the government that they have a bit of a spotty track record in the last little while when it comes to their procurement decisions—and we have had evidence, when the government contracted out the COVID-19 testing to a US company that had already been fired by the state of Florida and Puerto Rico. That was not good use of the procurement process for the people of Ontario.

We also have heard that contracting out of COVID-19 testing of migrant workers—and we heard today in this House of the terrible unfolding tragedy of COVID-19 cases and deaths of our migrant workers across the province of Ontario. That was contracted out to a company that did have ties to the Conservative government. They failed to complete that testing—yet again, another poor example of procurement that was supposed to help the people of the province of Ontario and make good use of dollars, and it didn't.

We talked a lot about contracting out the licence plates in the province of Ontario. We haven't talked about that lately, but that really created a quite a debacle, when those licence plates had to be recalled. We've since gone on to COVID-19 and some other very serious issues, but that still remains evidence of the government's failure to handle procurement in a way that's effective and efficient for the people of Ontario.

Again, the government did spend quite a bit of money and quite a bit of effort purchasing stickers to put on private gas pumps, and we know that didn't work out that well.

So while I would like to see the government make progress on this, I would like to make sure that the government is aware that we are Her Majesty's loyal opposition and we will be keeping an eye on how this is moving forward and keeping an eye to ensure that in fact what the Treasury Board is doing and what the President of the Treasury Board is saying is in fact so. We do know that the Auditor General will be reporting on many of these items in the future, and we hope that the government will listen to those recommendations from the Auditor General on some of the past procurement practices and that we will in fact do a good job of this in the province of Ontario.

We all know from our ridings and from businesses in our community that small businesses are struggling. They're closing their doors as we speak. I would caution the government that I would think that it would be critically important to ensure that the government just doesn't pick big winners and then we have losers like the small local businesses in the province of Ontario. I would hope that in this government's project to award big contracts to corporations and businesses in the province of Ontario that may be delivering on some of the made-in-Ontario products that we need, they ensure that we do not shut out small business from this process, because they, too, need to be able to do business in the province of Ontario.

Again, I'd like to thank the President of the Treasury Board for his ministerial statement today. I'll pay attention with fascination to see how this large project unfolds. They're not easy. Conservative governments in the past have taken on large projects—I point only to the Phoenix program. Hopefully, we have better success here in this province with the procurement product than the Conservative governments did at the federal level.

Good luck to the President of the Treasury Board. We will be paying close attention to this as it rolls out in the future.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's a great opportunity to respond to the Treasury Board president's statement. Speaker, I'm going to focus, in the brief moments I have, on three critical areas.

I just want to say ahead of time that I think it's important to digitize government services, I think it's important to make them more accessible online, and I certainly appreciate the minister's efforts in doing that. But in the process of doing that, we need to ensure there is fair and equal access to online services. There are many members of our community who don't have access to broadband Internet, either because they live in a part of the province that doesn't have it or their family can't afford it. So we need to make sure that there are adequate investments in community spaces like libraries that provide digital access for anyone in our community, regardless of their income level. If we're going to digitize services, we need to do it in a fair way, and we need to end the fact that libraries receive so little provincial support. I'd like to see more investments in libraries so that people can access those digital services.

The second one is around procurement. We had the opportunity over the summer to hear from many businesses about how the provincial government could help them, particularly when it comes to innovation. As a matter of fact, I just met with Life Sciences Ontario earlier today, and we were discussing the critically important role that government procurement can play in helping support small businesses and helping support innovation, particularly through proof of concept. And so I want to make sure that any centralized government procurement supports small businesses. I think back to school buses. When school bus delivery was centralized, a lot of the small school bus companies went out of business because they

couldn't access that government procurement. So it must be done in a very careful way.

The final point I want to make, Speaker, is that when we talk about reducing red tape to government services, the people who experience the most red tape are the people on social assistance. We need to make sure that people on ODSP and Ontario Works have the red tape removed for them to access government services.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to rise today and respond to the President of the Treasury Board.

Absolutely, digitizing government is a worthwhile endeavour, but I know that this government loves to boast about the great work that they are doing by presenting large numbers with no context.

I have another large number of my own that I cannot forget, and that's \$10 billion. This government introduced a \$17-billion action plan in March, when the pandemic was just hitting, and of that, \$3.5 billion was new spending and \$10 billion of the so-called "support" from this government was through temporary tax deferrals. Despite prolonged restrictions in many pockets of the province and the second wave, this government is determined to collect all \$10 billion in tax deferrals. This budget doesn't offer an extension or forgiveness of these deferrals, even as independent restaurants, gyms and retailers are closing because of the pandemic—and the bankruptcies that are ensuing. It is unconscionable that the government is pushing forward to squeeze businesses when the pandemic and the challenges that it poses on businesses are ongoing.

The President of the Treasury Board has also spoken about investing in expanding and improving broadband services, but the government's record does not inspire confidence that action will be taken on this file. The government has made promises before but cut \$31.8 million from broadband and cellular infrastructure in the 2019-20 budget and did not spend a single penny of allocated funds in the first quarter of 2020-21. This is especially concerning given that the Minister of Education is considering a closure, potentially, or an early winter break for schools, because it creates a further digital divide for students who have to access broadband in areas where they simply don't have it.

I want to also raise the issue of the "last mile," because this is a concern in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. There are many small businesses that are impacted by infrastructure that runs by their door, but they cannot connect or afford to connect to that service, or it is slow and inadequate. This, too, needs to be paid attention to.

I also want to say, in my last few seconds here, that instead of weakening environmental protections and other services from the conservation authorities in this budget, this government needs to continue to invest in the key areas that businesses and communities need.

1520

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 101(c), a change has

been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mrs. Martow assumes ballot item number 40 and Mr. Gill assumes ballot item number 88.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Jacques Rancourt from Hanmer in my riding for this petition.

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

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

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulations have seen an end to wild price fluctuations and a shrinking of the price discrepancy 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 sign it and send it to the Clerk.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Mr. Aris Babikian: Before I read my petition, I would like to thank John Lo from the Toronto Chinese Christian Short Term Mission Training Centre and the 220 members and residents who signed this petition which I am tabling today. The petition reads:

"To Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Green Bud Inc. has applied to the AGCO to obtain a licence to open a cannabis retail store at 63 Silver Star Boulevard, unit C6;

"Whereas the store mentioned above is located in close proximity to:

"—Yahu Community Association of Canada (dance programs for youth aged five to 12) 63 Silver Star Boulevard, units E2 and E3;

"—Music of May (music lessons for youth aged five to 12) 63 Silver Star Boulevard, unit D3;

"—Toronto Chinese Christian Short Term Mission Training Centre, 63 Silver Star Boulevard, unit D6;

"—Scarborough Community Alliance Church (youth and seniors programs) 139 Silver Star Boulevard;

"—Scarborough Community Alliance Church (youth and seniors programs) 135 Silver Star Boulevard;

"—Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church (youth and seniors program) 3223 Kennedy Road;

“—Sylvan Learning Centre (children and youth programs ages five to 15) 3320 Midland Avenue, units 201-203;

“—Brainchild Education Centre (children and youth programs ages five to 15) 3320 Midland Avenue, units 205 and 218;

“—Light and Love Home in Toronto (seniors program) 3320 Midland Avenue, units 215-216 and 223-225;

“—Scholars 101 Education Centre (children and youth programs ages five to 15) 3320 Midland Avenue, unit 120;

“—Positive Tutorial School (children and youth programs ages five to 15) 3300 Midland Avenue, unit 211;

“—Iron Tutor (children and youth programs ages five to 15) 3300 Midland Avenue, suites 208 and 218;

“—Tamarack Day Care Centre, 3315 Midland Avenue;

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

“To disallow the opening of Green Bud Inc. at 63 Silver Star Boulevard, unit C6, due to the potential health and safety risk it poses to youth, children, tenants, and seniors. Furthermore, this location is not in the interest of the public.”

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

HEALTH CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas according to the Canadian Hearing Society, nearly one in four Canadians report having some hearing loss and 10% report themselves culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing;

“Whereas hospitals and other health care organizations have a duty to accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing patients by providing sign language interpretation, according to the 1997 Eldridge Supreme Court decision and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act;

“Whereas hospitals and other health care organizations often fail to provide sign language interpretation for deaf or hard-of-hearing patients;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Health to ensure sign language interpretation is available to all deaf or hard-of-hearing patients throughout the health care system.”

I fully support this petition. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to the usher to take to the Clerk.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

Mr. John Fraser: This petition was sent to me by Charles Love of Kitchener.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Re COVID-19 Command Table to Appear Before the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight.

“Whereas the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight was struck with a mandate to provide

Ontarians with the government’s rationale for extending the COVID-19 emergency orders;

“Whereas the orders have been extended three times since the committee was struck, most recently until November 21;

“Whereas Ontarians expect transparency from their government;

“Whereas Ontarians deserve to hear what advice the Premier and his government are being given, when that advice was given and the evidence that underpins the recommendations;

“Whereas Ontarians should hear directly from members of the COVID-19 command table and be given the opportunity to ask questions about their advice and recommendations;

“Whereas the Premier shall designate, as is within his power, members of the COVID-19 command table to appear before the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight in the form of a public hearing to provide a brief presentation on the advice provided to the Premier and his government, followed by questions from members of the committee;

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

“To demand the Premier designate members of the COVID-19 command table to appear before the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight in the form of a public hearing at the next scheduled meeting.”

I agree with this petition and I’m affixing my signature to it.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I received the same petition that is against Green Bud Inc. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Green Bud Inc. has applied to the AGCO to obtain a licence to open a cannabis retail store at 63 Silver Star Boulevard, unit C6;

“Whereas the store mentioned above is located in close proximity to:

“—Yahu Community Association of Canada...;

“—Music of May...;

“—Toronto Chinese Christian Short Term Mission...;

“—Scarborough Community Alliance Church (youth and seniors programs)...;

“—Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church (youth and seniors program)...;

“—Sylvan Learning Centre...;

“—Brainchild Education Centre (children and youth programs...;

“—Light and Love Home in Toronto...;

“—Scholars 101 Education Centre...;

“—Positive Tutorial School...;

“—Iron Tutor (children and youth programs ages five to 15)...;

“—Tamarack Day Care Centre, 3315 Midland Avenue;

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

“To disallow the opening of Green Bud Inc. at 63 Silver Star Boulevard, unit C6, due to the potential health and safety risk it poses to youth, children, tenants, and seniors. Furthermore, this location is not in the interest of the public.”

1530

I agree to this and I'll sign my name to it.

ANTI-VAPING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Pauline Fawcett-Poitras from Capreol in my riding for these petitions that read as follows:

“Protect Kids from Vaping....”

“Whereas very little is known about the long-term effects of vaping on youth; and

“Whereas aggressive marketing of vaping products by the tobacco industry is causing more and more kids to become addicted to nicotine through the use of e-cigarettes; and

“Whereas the hard lessons learned about the health impacts of smoking, should not be repeated with vaping, and the precautionary principle must be applied to protect youth from vaping; and

“Whereas many health agencies and Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada fully endorse the concrete proposals aimed at reducing youth vaping included in Bill 151;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To call on the Ford government to immediately pass Bill 151, Vaping is Not for Kids Act, in order to protect the health of Ontario's youth.”

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

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Mr. Billy Pang: Today, I want to read this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Green Bud Inc. has applied to the AGCO to obtain a licence to open a cannabis retail store at 63 Silver Star Boulevard, unit C6;

“Whereas the store mentioned above is located in close proximity to:

“—Yahu Community Association of Canada...;

“—Music of May...;

“—Toronto Chinese Christian Short Term Mission...;

“—Scarborough Community Alliance Church...;

“—Scarborough Community Alliance Church (youth and seniors programs)...;

“—Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church...;

“—Sylvan Learning Centre...;

“—Brainchild Education Centre...;

“—Light and Love Home in Toronto...;

“—Scholars 101 Education Centre...;

“—Positive Tutorial School...;

“—Iron Tutor...;

“—Tamarack Day Care Centre”—all of these facilities serve people as young as age five;

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

“To disallow the opening of Green Bud Inc. at 63 Silver Star Boulevard, unit C6, due to the potential health and safety risk it poses to youth, children, tenants, and seniors. Furthermore, this location is not in the interest of the public.”

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

AUTISM TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Melissa Robinson from Garson in my riding for these petitions. They read as follows:

“Support for Autistic Children in Ontario....”

“Whereas every autistic child in Ontario deserves access to evidence-based therapy so that they can meet their” full “potential;

“Whereas the capped funding system is based on age and not the clinical needs of the child;

“Whereas the program does not ensure access to services for rural,” northern or “francophone children;

“Whereas the new Ontario Autism Program does not provide additional funding for travel costs;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: “to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to ensure access to an equitable, needs-based autism services for all children who need them.”

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

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Diana Smith from Capreol in my riding for these petitions called “Time to Care.

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

“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; and

“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;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To amend the LTC Homes Act ... for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Aline Rochon from Chelmsford in my riding for these petitions. They read 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 recognized as a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“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 physiotherapist and a social worker at a minimum.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT, SUPPORT AND RECOVER FROM COVID-19 ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2020 LOI DE 2020 SUR LA PROTECTION, LE SOUTIEN ET LA RELANCE FACE À LA COVID-19 (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 229, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / Projet de loi 229, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter, à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is always an honour to rise in this House to represent the people of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. It is an honour for me to serve my constituents. I am so proud of my constituents always, but especially during COVID-19. I receive so many phone calls and emails from people who have real challenges, but at the heart of what they want and of what they’re seeking is to make sure that everyone in the community feels safe and everybody is looked after. I’ve seen so many acts of kindness in my riding, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to share with you that I’m sure that that is the same for many of us in our ridings across Ontario—that we should be proud of the people of Ontario and what we have done to pull together in this terrible time of COVID-19.

This budget was tabled on November 5. That’s not even two weeks ago, but it seems like a lifetime ago now. At the time when the budget was tabled, we in Her Majesty’s loyal opposition were dismayed by a budget that didn’t seem to understand that we were in the middle of a pandemic. We didn’t get any sense of urgency from this government or from this budget and the things that they were funding and the things that they were putting forward as priorities for this government.

We really felt then, as we do now, that Ontario was on the brink, or in the midst, of both a health and an economic disaster. We worried then that the Premier was prepared to relax public health protections too quickly because he was concerned about funding public health protections and temporary shutdowns. We felt at the time, as we do now, that the Premier was gambling with people’s lives by not taking action, and he was risking deeper lockdowns later on. So we made clear, as we will today, that there can be no economic recovery without good and adequate health care and public health care funding, and there can be no good public health care if we don’t support the economic aspects of our province. It’s fundamental to an economic recovery and to keeping us safe that this government takes a budget seriously and understands that it is their primary, fundamental tool that we can use in the province of Ontario to keep people safe and to help us pull out of this difficult time that we’re in.

At the time that I’m talking about, which was just two weeks ago, we were looking at projections that are nowhere near what we are hearing about now. It is absolutely startling—terrifying—to hear projections that the province of Ontario could be looking at something in the order of 6,500 cases per day. That’s something that should be on the top of everyone’s mind—and that the government is working to ensure that the funding is in place to address this impending crisis.

At the time, as now, we knew that our health care system was on the brink, that it was struggling to keep up with COVID-19 cases, struggling to keep up with an underfunded health care system, with exhausted and burnt-out health care staff.

1540

The government’s budget—the \$572 million in emergency funding that the government provided hospitals didn’t even cover and won’t even cover the deficits they will be running from the first wave. The Ontario Hospital Association said that COVID-19’s impact from April to June alone will mean that they’ll be running an \$850-million deficit. That’s collective across the hospitals in the province of Ontario. We felt then and we feel now that the government did not take this seriously. At the time, it was made clear that the Premier was not listening to all of the health care experts, taking into consideration all the experts’ recommendations on the measures that we needed to take to keep people safe. We had seen, subsequent to that, that the government had to do a reversal on this and change the parameters by which they looked at what areas are in different zonings.

This colour-coded health guidance had to be changed very quickly, and it remains a confusing system. I will say that, especially from small businesses in my riding and ridings that are operating in a red zone, this flip-flop, this sudden change, left them unprepared to respond to the changes, and it’s something that I think this government could have prevented, had they taken the expert warnings seriously and had they put in place at the time and if they would put in place now the kinds of funding and the kinds of provisions that people in this province need to keep safe and to keep our economy running.

We know that the circumstances since this budget have gotten so, so much worse, and the budget was inadequate a couple of weeks ago and is even more so now. If you look at this budget and what it doesn't include, essentially this is a government that's telling the people of Ontario, "You're on your own." This is a government saying, "We don't feel it's our job to protect you during the pandemic." There are absolutely no new actions to make individual people in the province of Ontario safer or healthier.

The budget really is entirely a re-announcement of existing plans and existing spending. The plan that's laid out here is virtually identical to the spending plan that existed before the previous budget and before the second wave. This is a budget that doesn't even undo the disastrous cuts to public health, to the services of the province of Ontario from the government's last 2019 budget, what has been referred to as a "slash-and-burn budget."

There are no new direct supports to help businesses through COVID-19. There's nothing in this budget—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Willowdale.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I thought you were talking to me. I used to live in Willowdale, Speaker, so you confused me there for a second.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry for the interruption. I was just asking the member from Willowdale to stop his subtle, little heckling.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, I heard it. It wasn't entirely subtle, by the way, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would call that a prop.

There's no funding to hire PSWs. There's no funding in here to pay them better than they are, and there's no funding at all here, or no new allocations, for home care. As we know, home care and community care are a vital part of the continuum of health care. It's what keeps seniors in their homes longer, prevents them from going into retirement or long-term-care homes and most often prevents them from having to go into hospitals. The fact that there's no allocation in this budget for home and community care is such short-sighted thinking on the part of this government.

Workers in the province, many workers who do work in long-term care, who work in health care, who work in the small businesses across the province of Ontario aren't even getting the paid sick days that they need—that were taken away from them by this government—to be able to stay home when they're sick and help them to get better, but also to stop the spread of COVID-19. This is a fundamental, quite obvious health measure that this government should be taking, and they have failed to do that in this budget.

As I said before, this budget doesn't even give the hospitals the funding that they need to cover their COVID-19 deficit. While hospitals are struggling—and we know the struggles, we hear about the struggles—to work on the front lines—we call them our health care heroes, and that they are, but at the same time they work in an environment

that is underfunded—this government has not stepped up to provide adequate funding to keep our hospitals running in a way that we should expect in the province of Ontario.

They have, as I said, a combined \$850-million deficit. All the while, this government is sitting on contingency funds and reserve funds to the tune of \$9.3 billion. We also know that this government has really taken a back seat in providing direct help. We know that the vast majority, 97%, of the funding that this province has put into COVID-19 came from the federal government, at the federal level.

If you look at this budget and you strip away some of those things that I mentioned, if you strip away one-time, short-term payments that the government is talking about, if you strip away the billions in contingency funds and reserve funds, there is very little here in this budget that's going to help the people of Ontario.

You even have to take away the \$6.5 billion that this government is spending every single year to subsidize a privatized hydro system. I remember, and I know my constituents remember, the government ran on a campaign promise to reduce our hydro bills by 12%. Instead, what have we seen? We've seen the cost of our bills only rise, and we also see that this \$6.5 billion is on the tax bill. So guess what? If you're a ratepayer, you get to pay twice. You get to pay because of your increased hydro rates, and you get to pay on your tax bill. The government promised to fix the hydro mess, but, in fact, it's quite clear they've only made it messier for individuals who are struggling to keep the lights on in their homes in the province of Ontario.

If you strip away all of this and other one-time funding, really, what you have is very little. What you have is about \$394 million in new program expenses, which is, in fact, a 0.2% increase—way less than a 1% increase—at a time when people have been looking to this government for help, at a time when the people in the province have been doing their part. They expected the government to do their part, as well, to help out. We can clearly see that there is very little here to help people. Essentially, again, this is a government that's telling families, telling workers and telling small businesses in this province, "You are on your own." This is a budget that shortchanges everyone in the province of Ontario.

We talked a lot in this House, on this side, about a safe return to school. We have fought hard for smaller class sizes so that our kids, our teachers and our education workers could operate and learn in a safe environment. But what we have here is a budget that doesn't do anything—does not provide any funding—to pay for smaller class sizes. I know that in my riding—in fact, in my nephew's class—they're looking at kids who are packed into classrooms of 30-plus in this province. Instead of taking the opportunity, when kids are learning from home, to keep those class sizes smaller, we know what this government is doing: They're folding these classes in together to make larger classes, because they're not prepared to spend the money to keep our children safe. This is happening at a time when we know that schools are a

significant source of outbreaks. Over 2,000 infections are recorded to date in schools across Ontario. The budget still stands—the plan that this government has to cut thousands of teachers and education workers—that’s still in the works; that hasn’t been removed by this government.

We know that this government has cut supports for families with children with autism. There was a plan to have a new program. It’s not fixed yet, and it’s not in this budget.

1550

A lot of what the school boards across the province are doing is, they’re trying to keep their kids safe, they’re trying to run their schools, but they’re doing it from their own reserves and not from support from this government.

Public health is another area where this government doesn’t seem to think it’s important to spend money and doesn’t think it’s important to expand public health measures that will keep people safe. There’s no new money here for public health. This is despite what we, if we didn’t understand the important role of public health before—and the Premier has expressed that he didn’t understand it, because he did at one point say those are the people who put the little stickers on the restaurant. I know we’ve all come a long way. We understand the importance of public health. But you would think that this would be a government that would understand the importance of public health in a way that they actually ponied up. If they understood the importance of public health, then they would put their money where their empty words are.

Our public health agencies across the province are still on their own. They have seen no increased funding. They’re struggling to do the contact tracing that will keep people safe. They’re struggling to provide the testing. We know the challenges that people have had—the long waits that people have had trying get a test and trying to get their test results back. That was something that this government could have fixed way back then, something that they could have taken care of that would not only have kept people safe but would have ensured that we would have had a faster return to the rebuild of our economy.

The funding that was cut in the public health budget from 2019 is still there—those cuts have not been reversed. There were controversial and unplanned, willy-nilly plans on the part of this government to merge health units across the province. Those have not been taken off the table, despite the evidence we see of public health being on the front line, protecting us from the pandemic and ensuring that they do their best to not only keep people safe but to support small businesses that are struggling to understand what they need to do to keep themselves safe, their customers safe and their communities safe. How is it that, in the middle of a pandemic, we haven’t learned the importance of public health enough to fund them properly? They continue to operate in an environment of uncertainty, when the last thing that we need in this province is to have public health agencies that are in any kind of disarray. They need to be well funded. They need to be well organized and feel that they’re well supported because they are doing incredibly important work, and we all know it.

I just have to say, what would a Ford government bill of any kind be without a little side attack on our environmental protections in the province of Ontario? It seems like in any bill that comes forward, there is a little schedule in there that helps to water down our environmental protections, to make Ontario a place that’s easier for developers but does not protect our environment, our green spaces for the future generations. And this bill is no different. Schedule 6 of this bill, essentially, guts Ontario’s conservation authorities. Instead of giving conservation authorities the ability to weigh in on plans for development in watershed areas, in natural areas, areas of protection, this government is gutting their authority and will now allow ministerial orders to approve these plans. This morning, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing made a joke about how, if the member from Guelph wanted, he could issue a ministerial zoning order. I don’t think that’s very funny for the people of Ontario, who cherish their protected lands. I don’t think that’s very funny for the people of Durham, who have seen an attack, an erosion on endangered and protected lands. So if we weren’t clear about schedule 6, that this is a government that will attack our environment at any turn, we have seen it by the government’s willingness to just issue ministerial zoning orders without or with very little input from the public.

Our member from Niagara Centre, MPP Burch, had this to say, because this is something that is creating outrage in his riding, as it is across all of Ontario: “The people of Niagara ask that you,” meaning Ontario Premier Ford, “stop using this devastating pandemic as cover to suspend laws and impede conservation authorities that exist to protect our environment. This short-sighted decision is irresponsible and disrespects the people of Niagara.” I couldn’t agree more, Mr. Speaker. And it doesn’t just disrespect the people of Niagara; it disrespects all of the people in the province of Ontario who have worked in the past and continue to work so hard to protect our cherished protected areas. This government has chosen to slip this into a bill, hoping perhaps that no one would notice. This is a budget that is designed to, as they say, “protect, support, recover”—it says nothing about a plan to dismantle environmental protections.

I would like to also read what Environmental Defence had to say about this schedule in the bill. They said, “These provisions, long demanded by developers, will allow the accelerated destruction of wetlands, forests, wildlife habitat and natural spaces. These changes will increase flood risk, and reduce oversight over illegal dumping of toxic soil all at a time when we need natural spaces to help protect us from the growing effects of climate change.”

We know about the disastrous impacts of flooding on our shorelines. We know about individuals in their homes who have had to pay for flooding of their basements, municipalities that are struggling with infrastructure costs and damages to keep their bridges and their roads in good repair. This is a bill that will not help them do that; it will only accelerate the destruction. It will only accelerate the costs that municipalities will have to bear, which are then, of course, passed down to taxpayers. This is a short-

sighted schedule that will certainly benefit developers but will not benefit the people of the province of Ontario, municipal taxpayers and others.

The Premier gets up every day and we hear a lot of words, a lot of tough talk, but I'm here to say that the words we hear do not match the actions of this government. What the Premier says and what he does are two very different things, and you need no further proof of that than this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that it just boggles my mind and it actually is so distressing to see that this government had an opportunity in this budget to address the tragedy in long-term care, but they took a pass. There's nothing in this budget that addresses all the things that we know and all the things that we have learned about what happened in long-term care. This budget is telling seniors in dangerously understaffed long-term-care homes that they're on their own; telling overworked staff that they're on their own, that help is not going to come this year, because it's not in this budget.

This past week, I had a long-term-care town hall in Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, and we talked about all the awful lessons that we learned during the first wave—the shocking Canadian Armed Forces report; the quite obvious need for more well-paid, full-time PSWs. We talked about the need to mandate and to fund a minimum of four hours of hands-on care. We considered evidence that tells us that residents in for-profit homes are four times more likely—I heard this morning 10 times more likely—to die than those in publicly funded homes. Everyone who participated in this long-term-care town hall agreed that urgent action was needed to prevent more lives being lost.

I mean, we've listened, again, to the Premier and Minister Fullerton saying all the right words while we waited for action, but we now know without a shadow of a doubt that these were just empty words, because if they meant it, they would have put it in the budget.

1600

Sadly, instead of action to protect our seniors, instead of putting substantial funding in the budget, the Premier rushed through Bill 218. We know that this is a terrible bill that will protect for-profit, long-term-care corporations from any liability or accountability for deaths during the first wave and now for the new deaths that are happening in the second wave. It is unthinkable that this government would sit on their hands and do nothing when we have the evidence in front of us that 2,000-plus lives were lost during the first wave. People died in atrocious conditions. The government knows it; their own reports tells them that. The Canadian Armed Forces report made it sickeningly clear that action needed to be taken.

But now we know with this budget that this government doesn't take this seriously. There's no new funding for long-term care in this budget. Make no mistake, let me be perfectly clear: With this budget, the Ford government is sending a message to Ontarians that they're not working to protect our seniors in this province; they're clearly working to protect long-term-care corporations, lobbyists

and insiders. Instead of protections for residents in long-term care, this government's priority seems to be protecting for-profit, long-term-care corporations in Ontario.

With this budget, the government had a chance to show that they actually had compassion and cared for the atrocities that have been happening to our seniors in long-term care. Instead of an iron ring around our loved ones, what did the Premier do? He put an iron ring around bad operators in long-term care. This is not new information, and I'm surprised that the government—I don't know what they would have to say about this, but they know that their own commission reported on this, and they stand up in the House and they talk about how health care and long-term care were underfunded for years under the Liberals, and we agree with that. But they themselves have perpetuated this underfunding. They've been in government for two and a half years and they've done nothing to address the underfunding of long-term care and health care.

Mr. Speaker, a recent analysis in the Canadian Medical Association Journal comparing long-term-care outcomes in BC and Ontario concludes that the tragic higher rates of infection and death in Ontario's long-term-care homes were likely the result of a number of policy decisions that occurred prior to the pandemic. These include longer-term problems like Ontario's larger share of for-profit operators, lower funding levels, a larger proportion of shared rooms, a less comprehensive inspection regime and less coordination between long-term-care facilities, hospitals and public health agencies.

The authors identified that Ontario lagged behind BC on comprehensive efforts on infection control and was crucially later in requiring that staff only work in one facility. We know it took the government weeks—weeks—to ensure that PSWs who were part-time and moving from home to home were not doing that. To this day, it's clear from our friends at SEIU that if you work for a contractor—a contracted-out service—that it is possible that, in this province, PSWs are still going from home to home. They do that simply because they can't get full-time work; they can't get benefits; they have to cobble together part-time jobs to get full-time work. And it is simply a function of for-profit operators that cut corners and don't want to pay properly and don't want to pay benefits.

We also know that under this government—how many inspections did this government conduct? I forget the number. I'm sure one of my colleagues will tell me, but it was less than 10. In fact, there have been absolutely no orders issued, no licences revoked in long-term care under this government. We have been saying that not only was the inspection regime completely inadequate, we have also been saying that this government has underfunded long-term care and health care.

Prior to the pandemic, and possibly now, Ontario, if it's not at the bottom of the pack, I'm pretty sure has the second lowest per capita funding in the country. Ontario: We talk about being the economic engine of Canada, and we pull up the rear when it comes to funding health care

and long-term care? And then we wonder, we act amazed, about why we're seeing these kinds of negative outcomes in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Niagara West, come to order, please.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'm glad to see his mask on. That's good.

We need to be perfectly clear that there is no funding—that's fair, right? There's no specific funding in this budget to meet the four hours of hands-on care in long-term care.

We heard when our MPP from London—Fanshawe presented her bill—it's been presented by the New Democrats four times—that we need to mandate and fund four hours of hands-on care in our long-term-care homes in this province. The government supported that bill. But essentially, they paid lip service to this, because if they were really committed to doing what they said—they voted in favour of the bill and then sheepishly neglected to put the funding in this bill to ensure that this happened.

Their own commission said that. Experts have been saying this for years and years. Personal support workers, health care workers have been pleading with governments of all stripes—Conservatives, Liberals and Conservatives again—to put in place adequate staffing so they don't have to work short, so they don't have to ignore the pleas of their residents in long-term care when they need help because they don't have the time to attend to them. How is this not in this budget?

There are no new commitments in this budget to make sure that we proactively move residents from three- and four-bed wards. We've heard about instances where our seniors are in wards. They put curtains up to try and do some form of infection prevention and control. But we have even heard of long-term-care facilities where non-positive residents are in the same ward as COVID-positive residents. How is this possible? How is it possible? I will tell you the answer: The answer is that there's no funding in this budget to prevent that from happening.

This is a cut. No matter what you say, and what the government will stand up and say—you'll hear them stand up and throw big numbers around, but the fact is that this government has cut by \$100 million planned spending in long-term care that they announced in March of this year. They cut long-term-care funding from a planned spend in March, \$100 million, when we need so much more to support our loved ones in long-term care.

All across my riding, all across Ontario, it's a thing that people talk about. It's a thing that people share their sorrow about. We've heard from families of lost loved ones. We heard that they feel that their grief had nowhere to go. They couldn't see their loved ones. They died alone. They couldn't hold proper funerals. The government has now taken away their ability to seek justice in the courts, and just to add insult to injury, the government has neglected to put any funding in this budget.

They can get up and say all the words they want. They can talk about how there's nothing more important than protecting seniors in the province of Ontario. But you

know what I say? Show me the money. There's nothing like a Tom Cruise movie to—

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Bring it home.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —bring it home. Thank you.

I'm going to have to move off on that. I'm going to have to move on, but I'm saying that it's hard to move on because I'm actually outraged that this is the state of long-term care, the evidence that this government does not actually think that it's their job to protect seniors in this province.

1610

We talk a lot about small businesses in the province. In my riding, it's small businesses—we all know that they are the backbone of the economy. Small businesses are the working people of this province. They employ people. They provide us the goods and services that we all need. They ensure that we have vibrant local streets. They're the restaurants, they're the service providers; they are the hairdressers, the spas. We know these small businesses are important to us, and often we know who those small businesses are. We go, time and time again. We know the owners; we know the staff. They're important to all of us, in all of our ridings.

We have spent so much time in this province, in this House, talking about small businesses, and that is critically important. It's critically important. We need good health care policy; we also need good economic development policy in the province. They go hand in hand.

I participated on the standing committee on finance over the summer and into the fall. We had 100-plus days of testimony. We heard from over 500 businesses. There were 130 written submissions. And just last week at the finance committee, we again heard from small businesses across the province who are still—and have been—asking for help from this government, asking for direct emergency funds to help them keep the doors open. And still, despite these pleas, what we have right now in front of us is a budget that yet again tells small businesses: “You are on your own.”

I'm just going to quote from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This was back in October, before we were so deeply into the second wave and before many communities were in the red zone, as they are now. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business had this to say: “Eight in 10 small businesses are worried about the impacts of a second wave.” They went on to say that they were looking for this government to “ensure strong and immediate ... supports are in place for any sectors that are affected by new public health restrictions.”

They went on to say, “It will be a massive failure on the part of the provincial governments if they announce further shutdowns without comprehensive, ready-to-go supports in place.” More than half—actually, 56%—of Ontario small businesses say that “they will not easily survive a second wave of shutdowns.” The CFIB is asking this provincial government to “provide businesses with” easy “access to immediate financial support to cover their ongoing costs (rent, property taxes, municipal taxes,

etc.)—their overhead. They would like to see the province “offer significant support for employee and contractor wages, including an income stream for the business owner.” They’re asking the government to “suspend evictions and property seizures of shut down businesses.” These are very clear and very specific requests from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, but it doesn’t appear that the province has heeded any of those calls.

We’re now nine months into this pandemic, and small businesses are looking for a lifeline from this government. Nine months—and what’s happened in nine months? They’ve done everything they can to keep the doors open, to keep people employed. They have accessed all the programs, if any, that were offered by the federal government. They’ve taken on the \$40,000 loan from the federal government. They’ve used up their lines of credit. They have taken any kind of other available loans that were available from their banks. They’ve even maxed out credit cards. So there’s nothing left. There’s no cash flow. There’s no money. There’s no liquidity for small businesses to make payroll. There’s nothing left for small businesses to keep people employed.

I’ve been hearing from small businesses and in the financial industry that credit is getting very tight. We’re in a very risky environment for financial institutions to offer credit. To get access to a loan now is very, very difficult. We’re in a time of massive uncertainty. Not only are financial institutions not willing or having difficulty making the decision to extend credit, we are also in a time when businesses understand that these are uncertain times, and they have to make tough decisions. There are businesses that have certainly closed and have been boarded up, but there are also businesses that have made the hard decision to close on their own because the risk is so great. They see it’s not worth the risk for them to put debt on top of debt, for them to take the deferred tax payments that this government has offered or the loans because all of those bills will come due. They could not clearly see how they would ever be able to pay these bills back.

I had a business in my riding who was very clear to me and said, “We managed to survive the first wave. But the costs for me to reopen, the risks for me to reopen”—they chose not to because they were concerned that that alone, the cost to reopen, would be all it would take to bankrupt their business.

We all know that consumer confidence is a key indicator in the health of our economy. And it’s not here. What this government has presented is not instilling confidence in small businesses across the province. We know that consumer confidence is also not rebounding as it should if we’re looking to have an economic rebound. So my question is, again, where is the sense of urgency from this government? Businesses are folding up now—now.

The MPP from Willowdale likes to talk a lot about his childhood—and I don’t mind listening—about how he watched his parents operate a convenience store. I’m

assuming it was in Willowdale. Who knows? I may have bought some gum there. You just never know. But I would like to say that we heard a shocking statistic from the Ontario Convenience Stores Association at the finance committee last week. The average in the province of Ontario: One or two convenience stores a week would close. But now they’re looking at figures of five and upwards—five convenience stores a week are closing up in the province of Ontario.

Despite months and months of pleas—nine months of pleas—the government is offering no direct financial supports to business. When I say direct financial support, if you have a business and you don’t have any liquidity, you don’t have cash reserves, you don’t have the ability to buy stock, you don’t have the ability to pay your rent, that’s what we’re talking about when we say direct supports. We’re not saying that this government needs to create perhaps a program down the road that might help them. We are saying that right now—right now—businesses are closing. They’re struggling with loss of revenue. They’re struggling with all the higher costs associated with COVID. They’re struggling with the ability to have to change the model of how they deliver their businesses. And they’re struggling with the notion that some customers will not return. Some people that have used their services or their products will just not return to their old purchasing ways. These are huge, huge challenges, huge, huge worries that are weighing down small business operators in the province of Ontario.

So what is this government doing? What has the government offered? I mean, they have a grant. They will offer businesses \$1,000 to offset the cost of PPE. When I say offset, I mean offset, because it has been made so clear to the members of the finance committee that this is an inadequate amount. It’s almost an insulting amount.

A business in my riding one time had to spend \$4,000 to clean their facility—\$4,000 just to clean. That doesn’t include the cost of any other PPE or the ongoing cost to keep his facility clean.

1620

This is a small business owner who is going above and beyond, doing the responsible thing to keep his customers safe, to keep his employees safe, and the government is saying, “You’re on your own. You want to spend \$4,000 to clean your facility? We think it’s a good idea, but you are on your own.” As we tighten the health measures in the province of Ontario, which we need to do because of the exploding cases and the terrifying projections, we should be offering businesses support instead of just allowing them to struggle on their own.

The government has also announced a \$300-million program—or \$300 million, actually; let’s just say it’s \$300 million—to support businesses. But this program misses most businesses. It’s targeted at businesses that are in the red zone. In fact, it’s in this budget, but it’s something that the government has already announced. Given some of the qualifications, these may be too high for businesses to be able to qualify. But I need to make perfectly clear that this is not a program, and that’s why I made this distinction—

the money is here, but there is no program. It is not in the field. It's not up and running.

For businesses, there's an absolute lack of clarity as to how they can access this funding, if it's even available. This is being offered to them, they would like to access it, but just like some of the other programs—the CERB programs, some of the other rent abatement programs—they're confusing, and the barrier to apply could be too high. Really, I would have to say, for small businesses, it's just too little, too late. Businesses are closing now.

Again, this is during a time that this government has \$9.3 billion sitting on the sidelines. They haven't deployed this program—it's not in the field—and their \$9.3 billion is not in the field. If there is a program that allocates this \$9.3 billion, I'd like to hear about it, because it's not in this budget, it's not in the estimates that are before the House right now. The FAO's most recent analysis is the most recent, and it's the most accurate. So if the government wants to challenge that \$9.3 billion, they can do so by disclosing their estimates, disclosing their spending plans, because it doesn't show in this budget.

This government likes to say that holding onto \$9.3 billion, the vast majority of which came from the federal government, is prudent. They say that they're saving for a rainy day. Like, hello—

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: It's raining.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's raining. The roof is leaking. It's coming through the roof for small businesses. They need this government's help, and they need it now.

The government previously offered deferred tax credits. They are now offering tax exemptions. They're making the employer health tax exemption a permanent exemption. For businesses that qualify, for businesses that have a payroll of that amount and for business that don't have to close up or go bankrupt, this may be of benefit. But we all know that if you don't have the revenue, if you don't have the customers, if you don't have the employers, this is cold comfort. It really amounts to nothing but a hill of beans for businesses that won't make it to the end of the year to be able to file their employer health tax exemption.

Really, again, what is this government saying? "Well, if you can make it on your own, if you can survive this—we're not really going to help you now, but if you can survive this, down the road, we'll offer you a tax break." Honestly, come on. Small businesses are being boarded up right now, this year, and this tax break will do absolutely nothing to help them. Why is this government so late to the game, Mr. Speaker? They were so late to the game to provide protections in long-term care. They were so late to the game to fund health care to make sure that people could access flu vaccines, which they can't easily; to make sure that we had an efficient, effective COVID-19 testing program. They're late on all this. What is the expression? A day late and a dollar short. That is really what speaks to this budget.

Mr. Speaker, as you might know, we in the official opposition, at the very beginning of COVID-19, thought that it would be important that we got out in front of this, that we were proactive, that we made sure that we were

protecting small businesses, and we proposed our Save Main Street plan. It was a plan, essentially, for working people who needed jobs and who needed financial stability, which would play a role in driving the economic recovery of the province of Ontario. We proposed at the time, and we've since updated it, that we need to understand that COVID-19 revealed how many workers were just a paycheck away or so from being able to make ends meet. We also understood that small businesses were employers and they were important to protect. We proposed plans to ensure that we could keep workers on the payroll.

We proposed a ban on all evictions, lockouts, or eviction threats by commercial landlords, and we thought that should be in place until the pandemic ends.

We proposed a utility payment freeze for small and medium-sized businesses.

We proposed a stand-alone 75% commercial rent subsidy—one of the biggest overhead costs for businesses is their rent—for up to \$10,000 a month.

We wanted a fund for businesses that faced historic barriers—by that, I mean communities where they are greatly impacted or suffer more greatly from the impacts of COVID-19, like Black, Indigenous, people of colour communities, Black-led businesses. These are community entrepreneurs who have historic barriers accessing credit; they struggle, but still ensure that they provide a service for their community and that they employ people in their community. We understood that it was important that we create a fund to help overcome those barriers. Those barriers are a whole other problem that we could be talking about another time, but we understood that they exist and that they needed to be addressed.

We understood that any made-in-Ontario recovery would need to have paid sick days. How does the government miss the idea—the very basic, fundamental notion that is just common sense. If people are part-time, if they're low-income, if they're struggling to put food on the table and pay rent and they're sick and they can't get paid sick days, what do you think they're going to do? We wanted to make it easier for people to do the right thing and stay home when they're sick. Two paid sick days—that's what workers were offered in the province of Ontario. One of the first acts of this government was to take those paid sick days away. If they didn't understand then the importance of paid sick days, I don't know what needs to happen in this province for them to understand, beyond a pandemic, that paid sick days are important. They're an important economic policy, and it's good health policy.

We talked a lot about what we called the K-shaped recovery and that we needed to have what we called a she-recovery, because as we know, women are, again, more negatively impacted by COVID-19.

We needed to cap class sizes and school bus capacity so that parents and moms who were working felt confident enough to let their kids go to school, so that they felt that they were being a responsible parent letting their kids go to school, so that they could get back to work. That's what

we proposed. We know that we needed then, now and in the future safe, non-profit and public child care spaces. It's a fundamental component of a good economy that women can get to work, parents can get to work, and that child care is not something that is just about individual families; it's something that is important for the entire province and important for our economic recovery.

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We talked a lot—which this government doesn't seem to want to talk about—about insurance-gouging. We heard the Premier get and up say, "I don't like that. That makes me mad, these greedy insurance companies." But what has happened? What has the Premier done about this? Nothing. So businesses can't get their expenses covered, they can't afford the premiums that are going through the roof for business insurance—if they can even get coverage. This is a fundamental policy that could have been included in government policy or in this budget that would be a substantive support to small businesses—something that they've asked for and that would allow them to continue to operate. That's missing from this budget.

There is so much missing from this budget, Mr. Speaker. In the time that I have left, I'm going to go see if I can cover it all, but, really, in a document of this size, there are so many Ontarians who are left out by this action plan of the government.

The government talks about previous rent relief programs, but there's no mention, no funding for new rent supports for businesses other than the federal government program, yet again. Really, as I said before, there's no mention of job losses and the significant impact COVID-19 has had on women, Black, Indigenous people and people of colour.

We know that women work disproportionately in part-time, low-wage jobs. They work in health care. Women have been on the front lines of this pandemic, working in low-paid jobs as personal support workers. In my long-term-care town hall, I had a PSW who said, "I love my job. I love my residents. I love hearing their stories. I love looking after them." She feels that it's a caring profession, and she's proud of what she does, but she was in tears because she cannot handle the unbelievable burden that faces her in her job and then the unbelievable burden that she has when she goes home to make sure that her kids are safe and that she has enough money to pay the bills. How is it that we can call these people front-line heroes and our health care heroes and bang our pots—which we should do—but we forget to include them in the budget? How is that at all possible?

There's also no residential rent relief, or no clear ban on residential evictions during this pandemic. People who run small businesses, people who work in small businesses—they live in Ontario. They live in apartments, they live in rented homes in this province. So not only do small business owners face commercial eviction, not only do they face the struggles of trying to keep their business open, trying to squeeze incredibly thin margins out of what they do for a living, but they then have to deal with the fact

that this government is not prepared to help them when they are struggling to pay their rent in their own homes. I don't see how the government cannot seem to make a connection. They talk about small business owners being the backbone of the community, but I think the government should show a backbone and support them.

If this is not bad enough, the government has made clear by their budget that when the pandemic is over, we will be faced with more brutal and painful cuts—because, really, they're planning to cut \$4 billion out of the budget next year. I don't know what kind of magical thinking this is on the part of the government, that they can underfund and underfund and still find money that they can cut from vital services. We know that these cuts only hurt people.

I want to say that this budget should have made investments to bend the curve of the second wave and support people through it. We would have liked to see immediate funding and relief for the hospital sector—and sustainable funding, not this one-time funding. We know we need to hire an army of public health staff and also to hire an army of PSWs—to do the contact tracing, to look after our PSWs. BC hired 7,000 PSWs; Quebec hired 10,000; this province, this government—none. We would also ensure that we raise their pay by at least \$5 an hour and reach the four hours of hands-on care per resident that we know we need and that residents and seniors deserve as soon as possible.

We would fund a class-size cap of 15 for the pandemic, and we would ensure that there was ongoing funding for class-size reduction after the pandemic, because we see a worrisome rise in COVID-19 cases and outbreaks in schools across this province, and schools are critical to our economic recovery.

We would like to have seen, but we don't see any, direct or meaningful financial supports for small businesses and workers facing lost income, and paid sick days for all workers.

After all the people of Ontario have done to look after themselves and look after their neighbours—the caring gestures that we have seen all across the province, the innovation, the entrepreneurs who have shown what Ontarians are made of—they could have expected a lifeline from this government. They could have expected a budget that would have given them some hope. Instead, this government is saying they're on their own, and it looks like they're going to have to wait until they can see relief.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have an opportunity for questions and responses. I turn to the member from Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: I have a lot of questions and very little time, so I'll get right to it.

If I could direct the member's attention to table 3.4 on page 173—she talks about the government sitting on \$9.3 billion of unspent funds. So how do we reconcile—about two thirds of the page down—drawdown of the standard contingency fund, \$53 million; projected drawdown of the COVID-19 health contingency, \$3.852 billion; and drawdown of the Support for People and Jobs Fund,

\$1.034 billion? This is funding that has gone to pay for 900 million gloves, 50 million gowns, six million face shields.

Further, on page 187, we see that the contingency remaining now totals \$2.6 billion. That represents 80% of the spend on the \$9.3 billion the member references. How do we reconcile this when the member is saying that we are sitting on \$9.3 billion?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We know that this government likes to play financial games with the numbers. We've seen when they inflated the deficit—and the Financial Accountability Officer and the Auditor General had to straighten you out. So if you are spending the \$9.3 billion, what is the program? Is it in the field right now?

Right now, what we have before us is the FAO's economic and budget outlook. We have, right now, estimates before this House that show that it's \$9.3 billion.

So my question back to the member from Willowdale is, what is this program of which you speak, and how are the people of the province going to benefit?

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank the member for her very thorough speech on this bill and ask her about the commercial eviction ban. Given that the commercial eviction ban is based on the deeply flawed CECRA criteria for eligibility for businesses, I wondered if she would comment on how many businesses will actually be able to benefit from this eviction ban, and what more could have been done to support small businesses.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for the question.

I would say that we know that the plans from the federal government were deeply flawed. My constituents had a very difficult time accessing the program, if at all. It required, as we know, landlords to participate, and that was a huge barrier. We now know that the commercial eviction ban is still based on a flawed program at the federal level that this government has done nothing to correct. We would like to hear the numbers. What is the projection from this government? How many commercial evictions do they think they will prevent with this program? We don't know the answer to that.

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Finally, I would like to say: Why does this government also not provide rent subsidies? It's one thing to ensure that people don't get evicted, but if they could pay their rent, they wouldn't be evicted in the first place.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I listened intently to the remarks by my colleague from Hamilton. Of course, the member opposite and I have the pleasure of sitting on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and this past summer our government and the committee held an unprecedented amount of consultations across the province.

I'm sure the member opposite will recall hearing time and time again from members of the tourism industry who

wanted to see a tax credit brought in to help support the tourism industry in Ontario. So I'm wondering if the member opposite could comment a little bit about the staycation tax credit that our government is introducing and how positive this will be for the people of Ontario, based on the testimony that both the member opposite and I heard from countless small businesses over the summer.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

Yes, we participated on the standing committee on finances, and we did hear businesses time and time again plead for support from this government. That was in June. That was in July. That was in August. That was in September.

We understand the importance of tourism to the province of Ontario. We heard from a business that was 135 years old that said, "We survived the Spanish flu. We survived the First World War. We survived the Second World War. Without supports from this government, we don't know whether we're going to survive COVID-19." While these businesses will take anything that this government chooses to offer them to keep their doors open, this is coming very late for the province of Ontario, and it should have been in the field months and months ago.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I also listened intently to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas on her review of the budget. I have some sympathy, as I used to be the finance critic.

What surprised me about the budget is that as COVID-19 ripped through long-term care and as other provinces reacted—as you stated in your speech, Quebec hired 10,000 PSWs, BC hired 7,000 PSWs. I don't see in the budget—there's talk about recruitment, but did you see any proof that there's a plan to actually hire PSWs and pay them full-time wages and full-time benefits?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I feel your pain, being the finance critic. Finance is about everything, and sometimes, as in this budget, it's about nothing.

So what I would like to say is that there is no hiring plan. There's no human resources plan. We hear the right words; the Minister of Long-Term Care and the Premier get up every day at 1 o'clock and say the right words, but you have to look at this budget to see that what they are saying and what they are doing are two completely different things.

You would think, as your constituents and mine would think, that we would be way into hiring PSWs. We all knew a second wave was coming. We needed to staff up. It didn't happen when it should have happened, in the first wave. We had every opportunity to make it happen in the second wave, and there's no plan to hire and there's absolutely no funding to do it either.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Mr. Stan Cho: I'm glad that the member brought up the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in her debate; it's a very important organization. She mentioned

that in October they asked for immediate financial supports for small businesses and their members. Well, I'd like to quote the CFIB from just over a week ago. They said, "There is positive news in" the "budget that answers several CFIB pre-budget asks for small business owners. The government's focus on lowering profit-insensitive taxes like the employer health tax and business education tax is a helpful approach to recovery as small business revenues remain low, and frees up cash for small businesses to spend on other priorities."

I'm glad the member recognizes the importance of the CFIB. I'm wondering if she's had an opportunity to review that quote, as well as several other supportive quotes not just from the CFIB but from the entire small business sector.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: As I have been saying, while these tax breaks that the government is offering to small businesses hold out the potential to help small businesses, it's essentially saying, "If you make it through the year, at the end of the year we'll give you some tax breaks."

If you wanted to make sure that small businesses survive in order to be in a position to access your employer health tax or business education tax breaks, you would have given them some funding, some liquidity, some direct cash infusion to allow them to make it to that point. For the businesses that are able to struggle and keep the doors open, this may be a benefit to them, but we know right now that too many businesses are closing and they will never, ever be in a position to access these credits.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for a short question and a short answer. The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: You talked about the impact of the pandemic on Black, Indigenous and people of colour. Could you let us know how this budget is going to help those people—or lack thereof?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, I wish I could give you a direct answer. I wish I could find any substantial, concrete evidence that the government not only listened for hundreds of days and thousands of hours to the struggles of people but they actually did something about it.

What we know is there's a mention of it in the budget, but there's no program directly designed to ensure that Black-led businesses, Indigenous people of the province of Ontario, whom we haven't even talked about, people of colour—

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

Interjection.

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

I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Pursuant to standing order 7(e), I wish to inform the House that there will be no night sitting tonight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The government House leader has informed the House there will be no House sitting tonight. Thank you.

Further debate?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 229, the budget bill introduced by my good friend and colleague the Minister of Finance. This is not a bill or a budget for normal times in Ontario. Our province is going through one of the worst crises that the people of Ontario have ever had to face.

COVID-19 is, first of all, a health crisis, one that's on a global scale. It is also a threat to health and to life. We mourn all of those who have died and offer our love and support to their families. We pray that as we learn more about this virus, we will continue to learn more about additional measures needed to keep people safe, particularly for the elderly and frail in long-term care.

Protecting the people of Ontario is our number one priority in this budget, and we hope for a vaccine—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: We hear positive reports of progress on a vaccine, and we know there are smart, hard-working scientists in Ontario and all over the world who are working to develop a vaccine.

Close to my community, McMaster University is doing research as it works to build its Global Nexus for Pandemics and Biological Threats.

As we search for a vaccine, we know that COVID-19 is a double threat. It's not just a threat to our health; it's a threat to our economy. We have moved swiftly to protect health and also to protect people and businesses, and we have taken these measures in partnership with federal and municipal governments.

There are three pillars of the budget our finance minister has introduced: protect, support and recovery.

First, we increased health investments to \$15.2 billion for front-line health care workers and to protect people from COVID-19.

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Second, we will build on our earlier relief to provide a total of \$13.5 billion in direct support for families, workers and employers, in addition to the \$11.3 billion in cash flow support.

And third, we are removing barriers to recovery and providing \$4.8 billion to protect and create jobs now and in the future.

In this budget, Ontario's action plan increases our COVID-19 response to a total of \$45 billion over three years. These three pillars are based on a promise made by the Premier—a promise that he made when the pandemic began and one the finance minister reminded us of in his budget speech. Our government will do whatever it takes to get you through this, and as both the Premier and the Minister of Finance have said, this promise has not changed, and it will not change.

The first and most important pillar of our budget is our promise to protect the people of Ontario. Our front-line health workers and essential workers continue to protect us during the pandemic. The people of Ontario are protecting each other by following public health advice, wearing masks, social distancing and washing their hands.

They are doing their part, and our government is doing its part.

Across Ontario, since the beginning of the pandemic, we have made sure that our 141 hospitals and health care facilities had the funding and support they needed. For our 626 long-term-care homes, we made sure they had the support they needed for PPE, staffing and infection control. In this budget, the government is providing an additional \$572 million to ensure Ontario hospitals have the necessary resources to continue providing care for those who need it. That means that, in total, hospitals will receive \$2.5 billion more this year than they did last year.

Since March, the government, working with Ontario's hospitals, added an additional 3,100 hospital beds to ensure our communities are ready for any scenario. In my community, this includes more than \$10 million to fund up to 40 new beds at Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington and 40 beds at the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital in Oakville.

Ontario has built the most robust testing network in the country, which includes 161 assessment centres and mobile and pharmacy testing locations. We are leading the country in testing for COVID-19, with over 5.3 million tests completed since March. And, since March, we have purchased \$1.1 billion in personal protective equipment to protect our front-line heroes so they can do their essential work safely. That is 300 million masks, 900 million gloves, 50 million gowns and six million face shields.

In September, we introduced our \$2.8-billion plan for the second wave, which includes \$1.4 billion for more testing and contact tracing, \$70 million for the largest flu shot campaign in Canada's history and \$284 million to clear the backlog COVID-19 created in our hospitals, ensuring that 60,000 surgeries will now go ahead.

I am proud to be part of a government that will do whatever is necessary to keep people safe, to provide all the funding and support necessary to fight COVID-19 while ensuring that other medical services can proceed.

For over two years, I have had the honour to serve as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Long-Term Care. In this time, I have met with staff, residents and families of long-term care. We know the devastating effect COVID-19 has had on vulnerable seniors in long-term-care homes. We are identifying, managing and preventing COVID-19 outbreaks by strengthening infection prevention and control across hospitals and long-term-care homes with an investment of \$60 million. This fall, we invested a further \$540 million in new funding to help protect residents, caregivers and staff in long-term care homes from future surges. This includes \$405 million to help homes continue prevention and containment through enhanced screening, staffing supports and purchasing additional supplies and PPE.

Speaker, we have given every home a secure supply of eight weeks of PPE from government stockpiles. As we have done this, we are also ensuring more new and redeveloped long-term-care beds for people who need them. With a wait-list of more than 38,000 people, time is of the essence.

We will make Ontario the leader among Canadian provinces in terms of the quality of care our beloved ones receive.

Our government is investing \$1.75 billion to build more beds and upgrade existing ones, which is part of an investment that will create 30,000 new beds. In my own community of Oakville North–Burlington, we are selling surplus lands with the requirement that the buyer must build two long-term-care homes on the site. This means that 512 new long-term-care beds will be built on land beside the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital. These new beds are great news for our community. It means more beds in modern, high-quality facilities, and it means that seniors can remain in their community when they need long-term care.

The government also announced new funding for 73 long-term-care homes through its modernization program. This includes \$23 million more for the new Wellington Park Care Centre in Burlington to provide quality care and build more beds for its residents.

But it is not just about the quantity of beds; the quality of care is even more important. That is why we are committing to an average of four hours of direct care per day for our loved ones living in long-term-care homes. This would be an increase from the current 2.7 hours. Ontario, I'm proud to say, is the first province in Canada to do it. It will increase the amount of direct care and the quality of life for residents. It will also help make being a PSW or a nurse in long-term care a more rewarding career.

Let me just take a moment to thank all of the PSWs and nurses and other staff in long-term care for the work that they do. They do difficult but vital work. The care and love they offer residents in long-term care is beyond price. They deserve our recognition, our respect and our thanks. We are committed to them, and that is why our government provided pandemic pay and provided a \$3-per-hour increase for PSWs for the rest of this year. I hope that this increase can continue. It is money well spent on people who deserve it.

There are other great investments in health we've made, including support for community paramedicine for people waiting for long-term care, mental health supports during COVID-19 and others. They are all part of protecting Ontarians during COVID-19 and beyond.

Support is the second pillar of our plan. Ever since COVID-19 began, we have promised to be there to help those struggling the most. In this budget, we are expanding our support—and we will look at new ways to support people through the pandemic.

Ontario's seniors are the people who built Ontario and made it what it is today. They deserve our respect and thanks. All of us know of seniors in our own families who have struggled and worked hard so that their children could have better lives. I know this is true in my family, and it is a common story, particularly in many immigrant families. Thousands of people came to Ontario from other countries with a few dollars in their pockets and sacrificed to give their families a better life. They loved Canada and they worked hard to benefit their own families, but also,

they made our whole province stronger and more prosperous.

To all of our seniors, we owe you a debt of gratitude, and we want you to know that our government will stand with you. Here are some of the measures we have taken: We've provided \$75 million in relief by doubling the guaranteed annual income system payment for 194,000 of our lowest-income seniors; we've allocated \$16 million to the Ontario Community Support Program to help deliver 230,000 meals and other essentials to low-income seniors and persons with disabilities; we've also increased funding to the Seniors Active Living Centre Program by 22% for a total of \$17 million.

1700

I am pleased to see this budget has proposed a new seniors home safety tax credit for the 2021 tax year. For many seniors, staying in their homes requires expensive improvements, such as wheelchair ramps and stability bars, to make them safe and accessible. As PA for long-term care, I hear from seniors that they want to stay in their homes as long as they can. This investment will help tens of thousands of seniors remain in the homes they love longer. The tax credit would be worth 25% of up to \$10,000 in eligible expenses and will be available to every senior, whether they pay taxes or not.

This September, we saw the reopening of schools across Ontario. Our government invested \$1.3 billion to make sure it happened safely. We have also ensured that we are providing our students and educators modern, up-to-date learning facilities.

In my community, a new public school funded by our government just opened in Oakville in September. We are also funding the building of a new Catholic elementary school and a new public high school. These three investments total almost \$69 million in funding from the Ontario government. They are part of the \$13-billion capital investment for new schools over 10 years, with \$1.4 billion more this year and \$1.9 billion more next year.

For parents with kids in schools, we are also helping with some of the additional costs due to COVID. Parents will once again receive a payment of \$200 per child 12 and under and \$250 per child 21 and under with special needs. This \$380-million investment in families builds on the \$378 million already provided to parents during the first wave of COVID-19.

We are also launching the \$100-million Community Building Fund that will support tourism, culture and sports organizations; \$26 million for Ontario Parks and to expand and protect Ontario's green spaces; \$25 million for Ontario arts institutions. Tourism is important to our local economy. The tourism minister was recently in our community to announce \$450,000 to promote local tourism as we rebuild from the pandemic; \$100,000 of this funding will support the Burlington Sound of Music Festival to ensure that this much-loved event is viable in 2021.

The third pillar of our budget plan is recovery. We can see a light beyond COVID, but we need to see more jobs, more investments and a greater prosperity return to Ontario. We need sustained economic growth.

Throughout the pandemic, I've worked with local businesses and our chambers of commerce identifying how the government can assist business and what the obstacles and challenges are to recovery. Our government is committed to economic recovery and maintaining a competitive edge. This was evidenced by our government's investment recently of \$295 million to Ford Canada's \$1.8-billion plan to make Oakville a hub for electric car production in North America.

We also need to act now to reduce the tax burden on job creators and ensure Ontario is an attractive jurisdiction to invest once again. Back in March, we more than doubled the employer health tax exemption to \$1 million, benefiting 30,000 employers. We have heard from employers across Ontario that this measure helped them keep workers on the job during COVID. We are now making this permanent.

We will reduce the high business property tax rates for businesses by \$450 million in 2021. For many employers, this represents a reduction of 30%, so 94% of Ontario businesses will in fact benefit. These taxes are a tax on creating jobs. We want businesses to thrive and create jobs in our province.

We have also heard from many municipalities that they want the flexibility to provide targeted relief to the businesses in their communities that need it the most during these tough times, so we are proposing to give municipalities a new tool to provide a property tax reduction for their small businesses. Ontario will match these municipal property tax reductions to further reduce taxes on jobs.

Ontario loses too much investment because businesses that want to invest in Ontario tell us that our hydro prices are just too high. We are fixing that with a plan to reduce the job-killing electricity prices. Job creators will see reductions in costs from 14% to 16%. The past government's failed green energy scheme drove hydro prices for businesses through the roof. For example, the price of electricity for commercial businesses increased by 118% from 2008 to 2019. This is more than five times the rate of inflation. As a result, Ontario will go from being one of the least competitive jurisdictions, because of the high cost of electricity, to one of the most competitive, better than the US average and most Great Lakes states we compete with for manufacturing and commercial jobs.

The government is investing an additional \$181 million in employment services and training programs to connect workers in the industries most affected by COVID-19 with industries facing a skills shortage. This includes \$100 million through Employment Ontario for skills training. It also includes \$60 million to help support workers acquire in-demand skills rapidly to support a faster transition to a new job. This is the time to make this vital investment in training and skills training which, taken together, will contribute to our recovery.

Working together, our government will protect our health, support individuals, families and seniors, and work towards an economic recovery led by our businesses and their hard-working employees. In this time of crisis, it is all of the people who have gone above and beyond who

inspire us: governments, social service agencies and businesses who came together, but it is people, individual Ontarians, who have shown the way. This is what we have come to know as the Ontario spirit, but what it truly represents is the human spirit. We supported our businesses, large and small, during the pandemic, and now it's our businesses and their hard-working employees who will lead us to our recovery. We need them to flourish and to rebuild our economy, to bring back jobs and prosperity, and I know they can.

I'm pleased to support the budget bill and encourage all of my colleagues in the House to support it as well.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was quite interested when the speaker talked about the \$1.5 billion that is in the budget to create new long-term-care beds and to hear her stand in her place and talk about the commitment to four hours of hands-on care, which is something that's very important. Let me tell you, Speaker, four hours of hands-on care when we are at 2.7 means \$1.1 billion in investment, if you pay your worker 24 bucks an hour, and it means \$925 million, if you pay your workers 20 bucks an hour. Where in the budget is that money?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you to the member opposite for her question on long-term care. I know she's also very passionate about this particular file.

Our government is making Ontario the national leader in average daily direct care in long-term-care homes. This isn't something we can do overnight. We need to hire tens of thousands of new employees, train them, deal with regulatory issues and more. But the work begins right now, and our loved ones will begin to feel improvements as early as 2021.

We will do whatever it takes to make our long-term-care system the best in the country. As we mentioned earlier, we're investing \$1.75 billion in our long-term-care system, including over half a billion dollars in new funding for long-term care this year alone. Our government will continue to provide support to make sure we can offer the most average daily direct care in Canada.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Well, thank you, Speaker. It's always good to see you in the chair.

Rural broadband is a subject that I think we hear in all parts of Ontario—expanding it. That's exactly what we did in the Ontario budget: \$680 million over four years. I'd like the honourable member to speak about what the effect will be of that expansion of rural broadband in businesses and households across Ontario.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you to my colleague for this excellent, excellent question. You're quite right: One of the greatest frustrations during COVID has been the lack of reliable high-speed Internet and cell service for many households and businesses due to the lack of adequate broadband infrastructure. These days, a lack of reliable Internet can make it almost impossible to

actually earn a living, as we saw that many people were working from home during COVID. It made it particularly challenging for those who needed to get an education online. So we wanted to be able to make sure going forward that these structural problems would be fixed.

Our vision is to see a broadband connection in every Ontario home, business and farm. This is the vital infrastructure of the 21st century. That is why we're making additional investments of over \$680 million over the next four years, which will in fact be doubling our commitment to improving connectivity in Ontario programs. It's a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to follow up on the question that was asked by my colleague the member for Nickel Belt. I too was surprised to hear the member across the way talk about the commitment to implement four hours of hands-on care when this budget actually cuts long-term-care funding. We know that the March fiscal plan of this government had long-term care budgeted at \$4.63 billion. This new budget reduces that to \$4.53 billion. So I'd like to hear from this member how in the world they expect that they're going to implement four hours of hands-on care, which requires a huge investment, when they are actually cutting dollars for long-term care.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you very much for that question from the member opposite. I've also listened very intently to some of the comments that were made earlier, and I'm really struck and surprised and shocked by this notion that somehow we are investing less in long-term care rather than more. If ever there was a time that a light was shone on the desperate need in long-term care for additional funding, it was during COVID. We've had tragic deaths in long-term care.

Regrettably, as you know, from 2011 to 2018, prior to our government coming into office, only 611 beds had actually been built by the previous government, and regrettably, it was your NDP opposition that supported them that whole time.

If anything, we're investing \$1.75 billion to build more beds. We're also investing to be able to ensure that—

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker. We have 4.6 million seniors in the province of Ontario, and they represent about 16% of the population. From time to time, we have the opportunity to speak to seniors' advocates—I know you do—and one of the aspects they bring up in our conversations is the importance of seniors staying in their homes and having the ability, the financial ability, particularly, to make renovations in their homes.

I would like the member from Oakville North–Burlington to talk about the tax credit for seniors, focusing on renovations, in the Ontario budget and what she perceives to be the uptake of that particular tax credit and the effect it will have on seniors' lives.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you to my colleague for that question. Indeed, many seniors prefer to stay in their homes for as long as possible. We've seen that

as well with seniors who are actually on a waiting list to get into long-term care but, if it were possible, would prefer to be able to be well supported in their homes. So this particular Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit will actually apply for the new year, 2021. It will allow for improvements that are otherwise somewhat expensive, such as wheelchair ramps and stability bars, and tens of thousands of seniors will be able to benefit by being able to stay in their homes longer. The tax credit will be worth 25% of up to \$10,000 in eligible expenses, and will be made available to every senior, whether they pay taxes or not.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We're going to return to the idea that this government thinks that they are funding four hours of hands-on care in the province. We're going to be like a dog with a bone with this, because our seniors deserve this, and they don't deserve empty promises.

The government's own spending—in the March fiscal plan in long-term care, the budget was \$4.63 billion. The new total spending in long-term care is \$4.535, which is a reduction of \$100 million—nowhere near the investment, the increase that would need to be between \$900 million and \$1.1 billion to actually fund four hours of long-term care.

Can the member from Oakville North–Burlington please explain to us the discrepancy between a hole in the budget that is there that does not provide for the funding that we need, and the words that you're saying about long-term care?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. I would like to repeat that the investments that this government has made in long-term care are historic. Never before has a government invested as much into ensuring not only the safety of residents in long-term care during this tragic time of COVID, but also building modern facilities. Some facilities that date back to the 1970s consist of ward rooms, which is one of the reasons that COVID spreads so readily in those homes.

We're investing \$1.75 billion to build more beds and upgrade existing ones, and that's part of our government's commitment, the Premier's commitment when we were running in our election, to create 30,000 new long-term-care beds over 10 years. Do you know what else? We're going to achieve that goal, because the Premier keeps his promises, and so does the Minister of Long-Term Care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We really don't have time for another question and response. We only have 20 seconds left. But we do have time for further debate.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm going to start where we just left off in this debate. But I'm going to move quickly through the supports that are required for older adults that are missing from this budget. I find it very fascinating, as we're sitting here and we're speaking about this, that there's the Time to Care bill from the member from London–Fanshawe, my colleague; the More Than a

Visitor Act from the member from Windsor West; the Till Death Do Us Part act from the member from Waterloo—none of which would have enough funding to be able to ensure that we actually pass those in the fullness that is needed to support vulnerable older adults in the province.

But I am going to recommend that the government consider fast-tracking my bill, the Seniors' Advocate Act, because seniors are going to require an advocate to deal with the fact that there is a cut or, as my daddy always says, "There's a hole in the bucket." That's what I kept thinking about as I was listening to this. Knowing that Bill 218 just passed yesterday, there's going to be a lot of advocacy needed. I'm actually going to leave the remarks to what is needed for older adults at that, because I know that many of the other members on this side will take that up as well.

I do want to take a minute to speak about the attack on the environment that is found in this budget. My office—and I'm assuming many other members' offices—has been inundated with emails from people who are asking for schedule 6 to be pulled because of the attack on environmental protections. Some have sent in form letters, which, I'm sure, again, many members have read. I'll just read a couple of little parts of it. They are calling on us to work within our power to see that schedule 6 is struck from Bill 229. In particular, they talk about the need to invest in climate action that will address climate change, and they've written, "This turns 75 years of planning on a watershed basis on its head, at a time when we need to plan better on that basis to protect our society from climate change."

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They also speak about the need to protect Mother Earth. I will take a minute to read again from the form letters that we are all receiving. It states, "In total, these changes will gut the purpose, goals and power to operate of Ontario's conservation authorities.... They are also the envy of jurisdictions around North America.... Narrow, profit-driven demands from regressive and selfish development interests should never be the driver for changes to organizations that are this important to the protection of Ontario's citizens and its environment." I couldn't agree more.

I've had residents from my own riding of Kitchener Centre also write to me, and I'm very grateful for their ongoing advocacy and, to be honest, a little bit disappointed that they have to keep writing to me about the attacks on the environment that keep being embedded in omnibus bill after omnibus bill.

Thank you to Ken Vander Linden, who wrote to me and said, "Within Bill 229, the government is planning to chip away at the power of conservation authorities, including Grand River CA, and place that power at the feet of the Minister of Natural Resources to make decisions on controversial developments. Thus, science-based decisions made by the CAs regarding source water protection, flood plain management or environmental protections of sensitive areas could be swept away at the hands of one person to appease developers (financial donors). When

short-term economic growth is the driving factor, poor decisions are made for Ontarians and our local environment.”

Thank you, Ken, for that reminder, because it’s hugely important that we pay attention to what is needed in this budget, to ensure that we protect Mother Earth. Without Mother Earth, we will have no work to do and no need to be sitting here, to be perfectly honest.

Another constituent, Clare Wagner, has also written to me. She said, “I strongly oppose the proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act set out in schedule 6 of Bill 229 that curtail the role of conservation authorities in watershed planning and management. I am also deeply concerned that these proposed changes were brought forward in a budget bill, thereby overriding my right to comment under the Environmental Bill of Rights. I request that you remove schedule 6 in its entirety from Bill 229. Ontario’s conservation authorities are a unique and widely respected innovation.”

I think that piece is really important for the government to hear. The Ontario public recognized that when they embed things like this into omnibus bills, they’re doing so in an attempt to get around hearing from the public. When it comes to not hearing from the public on things that are undermining the Environmental Bill of Rights, they’re putting all of us in danger, especially at a time when we should be investing in actions that will address climate change, not taking the money away and hiding money so that we don’t actually do the work that needs to be done.

To all of the residents of Kitchener Centre and across Ontario who are writing: Please keep writing to us. Please keep writing to the ministers on the other side and to your advocates on this side of the House as part of the official opposition, because we will not stop fighting on your behalf.

I’m going to spend the rest of my time putting on my hat as the critic for anti-racism and the critic for citizenship and immigration, as well as the chair of the Ontario NDP’s Black caucus. It is interesting to me that in every speech about this particular budget, there has been a moment when the minister has spoken about racial justice. It’s wonderful that we are even having that discussion and that space has been made in this House to talk seriously about what’s needed to invest in Black communities. There have been a lot of discussions about the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan, for instance, which, while great in theory, does leave many people wondering what the actual strategy is that the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan is supposed to be connected to.

Oftentimes I stand in this House and I ask, “Please just be transparent with the strategy,” and the response is, “Well, we’re putting extra money into the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan.” What I find worrisome about that response is that there’s no clear understanding that the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan is literally one tool that should be attached to a broader strategy to address racism and the root causes of racism—and that racism in the midst of a pandemic, COVID-19, is something that I am contacted about on a regular basis. If we do not address the

root causes of racism with a clear, solid strategy, we will never achieve the health equity goals that we say we are supposed to be fighting for, not just during the pandemic, but well beyond. I wanted to make sure that, on record, we had a bit of a discussion about the need for this strategy, especially at this time.

I think it’s also important to note that, earlier this morning, when the minister was speaking to the budget bill, he said that a good plan is needed for COVID-19 recovery. I totally agree. I also think that a good plan is needed to address racism in Ontario. What I’m hoping for is that at the end of this time that we have together, somebody will show me the plan—show me the money.

The other part of a racial equity strategy during a pandemic that seems to be missing from the budget is around education, and I find this quite fascinating. In schedule 9, there are amendments to the Early Childhood Educators Act. In schedule 10, the Education Act is opened up. The Ontario College of Teachers Act is also mentioned in schedule 33. In none of those schedules is there any mention of addressing racism. Some people might say, “Well, maybe that’s not a priority during a pandemic”—not BIPOC folks. Black, Indigenous and racialized Ontarians know that this is extremely important, but other folks might say, “Well, it’s not time for that.”

I want us to take a minute and think about schedule 9. In the Early Childhood Educators Act amendments, there are a number of changes that are hugely important. For instance, they’re going to make amendments to the act so that teachers who are convicted of anything related to child sexual abuse will have their teaching licence revoked. A new section is going to mandate the Ontario College of Teachers to have a sexual abuse prevention program, and that prevention program includes a series of measures for preventing and dealing with abuse that includes training, the creation of guidelines and educational requirements for members, and that is fantastic. I think you should give credit where credit is due. That is extremely important.

I also think it’s extremely important to stand by the things that we say as ministers about what we are going to do in education, which leads me to the Minister of Education, who said that the province was going to add racist behaviours or comments to the list of acts that are considered professional misconduct for all educators, so that they would be subject to discipline. That is something we have been told and, in fact, a lot of Black community advocates have reached out to me and said, “Wow. The work that we are doing to make change in education to support Black, brown and Indigenous students is working. Changes are going to happen.” But then I look here and I realize maybe they’re not going to happen. Maybe it’s just going to be empty words, which I’ve heard from the Liberals in the past. They, too, were supposed to have a solid, robust plan to address racism. It started with the directorate, which clearly was not as robust, because the Conservative government was able to dismantle that in next to no time.

There were questions about the connection of the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan to the Anti-Racism

Directorate work. I still have people asking me if the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan and the new investment for funding for that is going outside of the 70 organizations that were originally funded by the Liberal government that were all based on particular regions that didn't include, for instance, Waterloo region, where my constituents are from, where we have report after report of an overrepresentation of Black community members being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, disproportionately impacted by precarious jobs and the precarity of front-line work. We've talked about investments in PSWs and the front-line health care workers. We know that many of those people are racialized women, are Black women on the front lines. That disproportionate impact was not discussed before. It's not being discussed now, and when there's an opportunity to look at ways for us to make systemic change by actually including and embedding a requirement to do anti-racism work in education, in teachers' college, as early childhood educators, as post-secondary educators, it is not here, and there is no investment. There is the financial investment—which is always a question that I have for the government: Are we going to invest in words, thoughts and prayers? Or are we going to invest with actual dollars and set money aside so that we can do the equity work, invest in programs like culturally responsive teaching so that educators do know how to address racism in the classroom when situations arise? When are we going to see that kind of investment in a robust way?

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Most importantly, I've had a number of people who have written to me, and they've also written to the Premier and they've written to the Minister of Education—I've been c.c.'d on many of these emails, so I know that it's happening—and they've asked for racial equity, racial justice or addressing racism to be embedded in the Education Act. If we can do it for folks who are advocates to address sexual abuse and childhood sexual abuse, then we can most certainly do this for BIPOC communities. I would argue that many of the racialized people on the front lines would love to see you doing that and would probably love that—than every time you come, you stand up in the House and you say, “We're so grateful.”

I truly believe that gratitude is demonstrated in your actions. Gratitude is demonstrated in your investments. It doesn't matter what you say. If you stand up and you say that you're really pleased with the work of PSWs and our front-line heroes and you commemorate the work that they're doing, the real thing that they want to see, the real difference that they want to see is that your budget reflects that; that your budget reflects that gratitude; that within your budget are investments that will ensure that they can in fact raise their children in schools where they don't hear the N-word. Imagine that. You can actually invest in the programs and require teachers to ensure that they have the skills to be able to address that.

You could invest in programs to ensure that racialized people are not the majority of the contract academic staff members in post-secondary education. We've had conversations during the pandemic where we've said, “Do you

know who's going to save us from the pandemic? New, bright researchers in the post-secondary sector.” We've heard people say that. Do you know that a lot of those new, bright researchers are being taught primarily by contract academic staff members who have to go to the food bank to get food every day because they are not making enough money to be able to care for themselves? Well, if you want to invest in where you see the solution to be, then you've got to show that investment in this budget. That's how you show your gratitude. That's how you demonstrate that you understand that this budget is going to have a long-lasting impact on a number of people that you say you're really, really in need of during these challenging times.

When we have these discussions—part of why I decided I would spend more time talking about addressing racial equity and racial justice in the budget than I would about some of the other issues that are also found, or not found, in this budget is because many people think that we can deal with racism later. But I'm here to tell you that report after report after report in region after region after region is demonstrating that Black, brown and Indigenous people are disproportionately impacted in negative ways by this pandemic, whether it's because they are the front-line workers, whether it is because they are having to navigate precarious work, or whether it is because they are newcomers.

Do you remember that program during the height of the first wave, and everybody was saying, “We're going to get doctors who don't have their licence to be able to practise medicine here yet, and we're going to offer them opportunities to practise medicine, because we need them, because we have a dearth of doctors and health care workers at this time. And do you know what we're going to give them? Nothing. That's what we're going to do. We're not going to allow any of those hours to go towards their ability to be fully licensed to practise health care in this province”? That's what happened. Those folks don't believe you when you say, “I'm very grateful to the front-line health care workers,” because the offer was made to not actually invest in them.

This budget was an opportunity to change the tide. You could have moved in another direction. You could have made sure that every single person you say you care about, who are helping to navigate and move us through this pandemic, had every tool that they needed to be able to do so—from the people who are taking care of all of our children while the schools are still open to the people who are taking care of the elders who took care of you. When they were at their healthiest, they took care of you.

We could have shown gratitude in this budget, but all of these gaps and all of the holes and all of the loopholes and all of the embedding of weird things into omnibus bills, and all of these discussions about, “Well, we did invest, except we didn't really invest, except we invested before and we're just going to call it something else now”—that doesn't show any kind of gratitude at all.

But guess what? There's always hope. The hope is that you will take seriously the conversations that we're having in this chamber, that you will know that these conversations are coming from a place of love and care and desire

to do better in Ontario. The hope is that you can take it back to your own caucus and you can ask for some of these amendments, because—do you know what the funny thing is? On this side of the House, we actually don't care who takes credit for what; just do good work. Just invest. I will speak for myself: I don't care; you can take the seniors' advocate bill, you can call it something else and you can just pass it. Just do it, so that people know that there's an outlet and a space for them to tell you what is happening and feel like they're not alone.

Right now, BIPOC communities feel like they're alone. With all of these reports coming out, with nothing in the budget to demonstrate that what they need is being invested in, and knowing that they are at higher risk of contracting this disease, they feel alone.

But I'm going to remain hopeful, because I am an eternal optimist. I did an interview about the budget in my own riding, and they said, "The Legislature has not gotten you down yet." It's not going to work—it's not going to get me down, eternal optimist here. I will continue to spend the time I have reminding everybody that you folks have power. You have power to make change. You have power to do better. You have power to do differently. You have power to invest in the communities that need you right now. I will just keep reminding you about all of the things that you're not doing with your power, but I'm doing it from a place of love.

One day, hopefully, you'll listen to it, and I'm hoping that there will be amendments made. I hope that there will be schedules that will be pulled out. I hope that all of a sudden I'll get a note saying, "Guess what? The Solicitor General, who's responsible for anti-racism initiatives, said we should deal with racism, because it's a pandemic in a pandemic."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The first question goes to the member from Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: It's now six times we've heard from the members opposite talking about a supposed reduction in funding for long-term care, and that is categorically false. So I'd like to remind the members, because they were told this on November 5, in the budget lockup, by the Ministry of Finance—if you could direct your attention to page 194, footnote 9: "For presentation purposes in the 2020 budget, all one-time COVID-19 related spending has been included separately...." This includes within the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care, and does not reflect a change in the ministry allocations itself.

If you direct yourself to page 193, halfway down, you'll see that the actual funding for the Ministry of Long-Term Care goes from \$4.3 billion this fiscal to \$4.4 billion next fiscal and \$4.5 billion in the year after that.

Given this clear, objective, empirical evidence that funding has not been reduced, I'm wondering if the member can change her tune about how she's saying LTC is not being funded to meet that goal of nation-leading four hours of care.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I would just like to say that my tune will not change, because right now, during the second wave, we still have elders dying in long-term care, so

clearly the amount that was budgeted before and the amount that was budgeted before that were insufficient.

Maybe what we need to talk about is, what is the sufficient amount of money that needs to be earmarked to ensure that elders across Ontario are provided with the love, care, respect and support that they need, because we're seeing that the amount of money that has been budgeted is not doing enough. We're also seeing that the people who we need on the front lines, like the PSWs, are still in precarious positions. They are still having to cobble together part-time jobs in order to be able to do the work. So you can talk about footnotes—which is hilarious—and I will talk about the lives of elders in Ontario, and I will demand that more money be invested in the seniors' sector.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the MPP for Kitchener Centre. I always learn so much when you speak. I listened intently. I am sorry to hear—I'm not surprised—that Black, brown and Indigenous people in the province feel that they are alone and feel that their needs, their disproportional impacts from COVID, are not reflected in this budget. I wonder, given the fact that we have a bill before the House that fast-tracks Charles McVety's application to get university status in this province, how they feel that this person, who is a known Islamophobe, with other forms of hate speech quite well-documented—this is a person who goes to the front of the line, gets special access, but Black, brown and Indigenous people merit a footnote in this budget.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you to the member for this question. I do think it's really important for the government to recognize that while they want to see each of these as separate incidents and separate bills that don't have any relation to each other, for Black, brown and Indigenous people, each one of those separate things is a signal of what you care about. They are a signal of your value system. We fare very low if the priority is to put into a bill that's supposed to help small and medium-sized enterprises navigate the pandemic—giving power to somebody who is a known Islamophobe, who is homophobic etc. If that is the priority instead of investing in an anti-racism plan, we have a long way to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question goes to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I appreciate the remarks from the member for Kitchener Centre. I always appreciate the optimism. She always charges in here every day and brings that warm optimism. I certainly appreciate that.

She talked a little bit about seniors and how important it is to support seniors. One of the things that I have heard a tremendous amount of positive feedback on from my constituents is the Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit, somewhat similar to an idea that was brought forward in a 2008 federal budget, the Home Renovation Tax Credit, as a way that can spur economic activity, while at the same time, ours has this added benefit of targeting the support

directly at seniors to allow them to stay in their homes longer.

I'm wondering if the member opposite could perhaps comment on whether she is also hearing from constituents who are excited about this idea and the potential it has to help allow them to stay in their homes longer.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. To be honest, I'm hearing from seniors that they're struggling to maintain the homes that they have and that the rising costs of home ownership or even rentals is really the problem.

In my particular riding, there's a group called Seniors Living Together that does not have enough money as individual seniors to access affordable housing. So they have to pool their resources in order to get housing that does not even exist right now because of the skyrocketing prices.

It actually goes back to my last response, where a lot of the pieces are starting to come together during this pandemic. If you don't actually invest in affordable housing stock and ensure that there's affordable housing available, the seniors will never be able to access that credit no matter how good it is. If you don't ensure that they have access to home ownership or that they're able to hold onto their homes, or that they're able to hold onto their homes while they also have to pay exorbitant amounts of money to get one of the partners into a long-term-care home, then they will never be able to access the credit that you're speaking of. So I do think it goes back to, let us address the root causes of affordability, the issues with affordability in the province, in order for us to do better for the elders in Ontario.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too appreciate the optimism of the member from Kitchener Centre and love when she shares her knowledge about racism, discrimination, how systemic it is and how it's all connected.

My question has to do more specifically with Indigenous people. We've all heard that there are 36 First Nations on boil water advisories. We know from Neskantaga that they have been on boil water advisories for 25 years. They were at Queen's Park two weeks ago to ask the government to help them.

We also know, through the budget, that the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs will see its budget cut in half, from \$147 million to \$74 million. I will need her optimism to show me how we take the severe cuts to the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and help the 36 First Nations that want clean drinking water, that want to be able to have a clean shower in their homes, with the cuts that we saw in this budget.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you to the member for this important question. It's interesting; it's not just that they need to have access to clean drinking water in order to eat and shower etc., but the first rule of trying to navigate this pandemic is to wash your hands regularly. How are people who are on clean-water advisories or drinking water advisories able to actually navigate that?

When we talk about the signals that we have within this budget, the fact that we're cutting the one space where this government has decided they would actually invest in Indigenous communities—I have questions. But I also have a thought that on the other side, they will say, "Well, this is a federal problem." My optimism is to stop playing interjurisdictional Ping-Pong. Our job is to ensure that people can navigate the pandemic in Ontario, and that means investing. Maybe if we reallocate from some of the places, we can ensure that Indigenous communities have what they need.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I thank the member opposite for her comments today. The Ontario Black Youth Action Plan supports better outcomes for Black children, youth and families in Ontario. The member briefly touched on members of the Black community, and our government is committed to tackling systemic racism and ensuring that we build a prosperous Ontario for everyone.

One thing you mentioned is investing, and I just want to make sure that it's clear that we are investing \$60 million in the Black youth action plan. It's a program that already supports more than 10,800 people annually. Can the member comment on the \$60 million that has been put in the budget?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I know that it's \$60 million over the course of three years, and I know that in the past, the organizations that have been able to access the funding are in limited areas. They were in certain regions, and not every region was able to access that funding.

I also know that when they did their exit interviews—so after, they had to provide a report if they got one year's worth of funding or two years' or three years'—there was no consistency in that exit interview. There was never an opportunity for their work to be plugged into a broader strategy. That's the reason why I keep asking, not for that financial investment; I understand that we're only willing to give \$20 million per year for three years—got it. But I'm just wondering if there is a way that we can plug the Black youth action plan into a strategy that addresses the needs of Black youth.

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

Ms. Mitzi Hunter: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House on behalf of the people of Scarborough–Guildwood. Today, it's an important debate that we're having on Bill 229, and I cannot overstate enough how critical this budget is in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic recession that has resulted from this pandemic.

It's a historic moment; yet, again, this government has missed it, has done too little for what is required at this time. Frankly, Speaker, this budget is a huge disappointment. It does not go far enough to deliver on the protection and the supports that Ontarians need at this critical time of a health crisis.

This budget shamefully neglects Ontario's students, parents and education staff by failing to provide funding

to respond to the COVID-19 pressures, and it merely includes funding that has already been announced. Despite constant outbreaks, the government has not implemented the measures that parents and education staff have been clearly asking for since the summer—since, actually, before the summer: to follow the advice of health experts and educators to reduce class sizes to 15 to ensure social distancing and the safety of students and our education workers.

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I listen to the minister respond oftentimes by saying, “Well, there aren’t many outbreaks.” If you look in Scarborough, you will see the number of schools that are in outbreak, because Scarborough is a hot spot, and where the virus exists in communities, it comes into the schools. As a result, we’re seeing the spread of COVID-19 within our schools, like the 13 positive cases that are currently in Lester B. Pearson high school in Scarborough. Not only is this a health risk, but seven staff and 69 students are being asked to self-isolate, interrupting their lives, their families’ lives, their work, their education and the learning.

The government has prioritized providing individual families with \$200 per child under 12 and \$250 per child with special needs under 21, regardless of their income or their need, rather than investing in more educational supports and in classroom learning. The Ford government must have plans to further cut education, because there is less money in the system per student to make the numbers add up.

Before the pandemic, there were substantial education gaps between marginalized and non-marginalized communities. These gaps will likely continue to deepen and to increase without additional funding and support to target resources to students who need them the most and in communities where they are needed the most. I really worry every single day about the students in Scarborough who are under-resourced. They’re just going to fall behind without more supports in schools to deal with the disruption in their learning. There needs to be investments in more special education teachers and other caring adults in our school system. What about the devices and the connectivity that are needed to keep learning uninterrupted through the pandemic? There are many families that simply just cannot afford it.

There’s not much in new funding for colleges and universities, either. Despite students being required to continue to pay their full tuition, the reduction in educational offerings and the fact that post-secondary institutions have increased uncertainty because international student enrolments are down, there’s no response from this government to stabilize that sector. If post-secondary institutions are to play a key role in the training of the next generation of workers as the economy rebounds, the government will have to provide financial supports for post-secondary institutions and students who attend them, especially in smaller and more rural and northern communities. They too deserve an option.

Students faced a summer of unemployment, and youth unemployment remains high as jobs and internships dis-

appeared during the lockdown. Now, under this government’s cuts to OSAP, many are left wondering how to pay their tuition. Once again, it’s marginalized students who will be the most impacted and the least able to bear this burden. This could have a scarring effect on our youth, and the government must pay attention to this.

I will say that I am happy to see in this budget funding for micro-credentials. Employment services and training programs are critical. Although there is mention of it, the scope does not recognize the size of the problem in the economic recovery. It really is just a little bit of help.

Lastly, in terms of education funding, this budget offers nothing for child care, despite the huge need and the overwhelming challenges we have heard persistently. We know that reliable, affordable child care will be essential to ensuring that women resume employment to pre-pandemic levels, and that the pandemic poses challenges for safe child care. But there is no new funding to ensure that child care is safe for children and staff, and accessible to the families who need it.

Speaker, despite all of this that the government could have done in a budget where they purport to support and to protect, what they fail to do is to continue to protect the environment, because time and time again we see the government wants to meddle. I’ve heard from dozens of constituents and organizations who have expressed serious concern about the changes to the conservation authorities. Some 95% of Ontarians live in watershed communities, like in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, which require careful and considerate environmental management. I have to say, we are currently being well-served by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. I have met with them multiple times. Many organizations dedicated to the environmental stability of Ontario have expressed their deep concerns about schedule 6 of this bill, including the Canadian Environmental Law Association and the TRCA.

The TRCA does excellent work, and they want to continue to do this necessary work. They issued a statement that is alarming: “There are substantial concerns regarding proposed amendments to conservation authorities’ roles in permitting, planning and enforcement.... This will impact TRCA’s ability to independently represent its interests in respect of: advice provided to municipalities on natural heritage matters; advice provided to municipalities on natural hazard matters; advice provided to municipalities to ensure coordination with TRCA’s regulatory permitting requirements”—and it continues.

Speaker, this government is continuing on its path of weakening environmental protection by opening the door for the minister to override decisions taken by conservation authorities for their own political reasons. Conservation authorities have good reason to be worried because they have seen this government’s track record. They’ve cancelled rebates on electric vehicles, they have ripped out charging stations along the 400-series highways, they are currently tearing down windmills in eastern Ontario and they moved to open our protected green space and wetlands to developers.

Our farmers and our agri-producers are strong on protecting the land and the environment for future generations. That is not what we're talking about here. This government seeks to divide urban and rural, and, Speaker, we shouldn't let them. Our farmers don't want to see flooding or extreme weather. What this government is doing is putting that future of the environment at risk by once again overreaching.

Speaker, I cannot finish my remarks without talking about the dismal record in this government preparing for a second wave. This is a second-wave budget. We are months into the year, and yet there is very little in this budget that actually speaks to the biggest need that we have in this province at this time. This government cannot claim that they didn't know how bad the public health situation would get, because they have been told by their own experts and the secret advice that they are currently receiving. They simply have ignored those warnings. They knew we would be facing a serious fight in the fall and the winter, but this is the best that the government can offer.

I cannot believe that in this budget we do not see investments in acute health care, as well as in public health. This is a missed opportunity from this government. We know that hospital capacity—the minister said that this morning—is at 100% right now. What is astonishing

is that the Minister of Long-Term Care has actually downloaded responsibility for the front-line defence of this pandemic onto the backs of public health without any funding to back it up. This is disgraceful, and there are consequences to this in our long-term care. I have spoken in this House about the devastating effects of long-term care in hot spots like my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. There are two long-term-care facilities, Kennedy Lodge and Rockcliffe, that are in full outbreak, and residents are dying. There is no excuse for this government to not appropriately fund long-term care in this budget. It is a missed opportunity.

Speaker, families, communities, teachers, residents of long-term care, education workers have all been betrayed by this government in this budget. There is no protection there that is required at this time to deal with the extent of this pandemic and the future economic recovery that we are expecting here in Ontario. I would say to this government, “Go back to the drawing board and do better next time.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We won't have time for questions and responses today, because it's that hour when we move into a different part of the agenda.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
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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Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
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
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
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	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
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 / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
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
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
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	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

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